

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

**Circular 453**

**ANNOUNCEMENT  
OF THE  
44<sup>th</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER  
(2007)**

GENERAL COUNCIL  
Via Aurelia, 476  
Rome, Italy

June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005  
Feast of St. John the Baptist

Dear Brothers,

## **Introduction**

“Yes, we choose life!” That clear and determined affirmation inspired by Deuteronomy 30:19 concluded the “Statement of the Community of the General Council” that we published in September 2002. We thank you for having made that affirmation your own, as evidenced by the numerous local, District, and Regional initiatives that have taken place during the past few years which all speak of engendering new life.

At this time, we are happy to greet you once again and to send you this Circular that announces an especially graced opportunity for all of us: the holding of the 44th General Chapter. This Circular outlines the initial steps in the preparation of the Chapter.

“An ordinary General Chapter is held every seven years. It is normally convoked by the Brother Superior General” (*Rule*, 104).

“About two years before an ordinary General Chapter is to be held, the Brother Superior announces an approximate date for its opening. At the same time, he informs the Institute of the measures being taken to ensure its preparation” (*Rule*, 105a).

Keeping in mind what the *Rule* says, we announce to you that the 44th General Chapter will take place in May 2007. We point out the role of the Preparatory Commission, as well as its members; and we indicate the dates for the different phases of the preparation of the 44th General Chapter.

## **An Interactive Process of Preparation for the 44th General Chapter**

As we announce the planned date for the opening of the 44th General Chapter and name its Preparatory Commission (*Rule*, 105a), we find ourselves in full agreement with the recommendations of the 43rd General Chapter that the 44th General Chapter should:

- be preceded by “an interactive process...to enable all Brothers to participate in its preparation” (43rd General Chapter, Recommendation 37).
- follow “an alternative model, in order to encourage substantial interchange and to stimulate reflection by the Capitulants on the future of the Institute” (43rd General Chapter, Recommendation 38).

Furthermore, we recommend that this “interactive process” be implemented before and during the Chapter.

To assist in the implementation of such an “interactive process,” we envision the publication of a number of brief key documents that could serve as the basis of discussion and dialogue in communities, Districts, and Regions prior to the 44th General Chapter and among the Districts and Regions during the opening days of the 44th General Chapter.

This series of documents will be entitled “Toward the 44th General Chapter,” and we presently envisage that there will be five in number.

## **Document One**

### **Together and by Association in the Service of the Poor: Toward the 44th General Chapter**

The Brother Visitors, Auxiliary Visitors, Delegates, and Presidents attended an Intercapituar Meeting with Brother Superior and the General Council in Rome in May 2004. The main purpose of this gathering was to reflect on the educational service of the poor (43rd General Chapter, Proposition 12).

In order to stimulate discussion in preparation for the International Assembly scheduled for October/No-

vember 2006 and the 44th General Chapter in May 2007, a twenty-minute DVD video entitled “Together and by Association in the Service of the Poor” has been prepared. It includes interviews with Brother Superior General, Brother Vicar General, and twelve other Brothers; and it was made during the Intercapitular Meeting. The interviewees discuss three main themes: key issues for the future, association, and educational service of the poor.

Two copies of the DVD were already mailed last month to every District, Sub-District, and Delegation of the Institute. An accompanying “activity sheet,” which is also posted on the Institute web site, was included in the mailing to help with individual reflection and group discussion about the themes.

## **Document Two**

### **Report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Rule: Toward the 44th General Chapter**

The 43rd General Chapter mandated that Brother Superior and General Council appoint an ad hoc Committee “to study what implications changes in the Church and in the Institute might have for the present text of the *Rule*” (43rd General Chapter, Proposition 38).

This Committee was appointed and worked on this project during March 2004 and 2005. They met together in Rome and with Brother Superior and General Council during the months of March 2004, December 2004, and March 2005.

The members of the Committee on the *Rule* were the following:

Brother José Manuel Agirrezabalaga, District of Bilbao  
Brother Fernand Bécret, District of France  
Brother Antonio Botana, District of Valladolid  
Brother Pierre Ouattara, District of West Africa  
Brother Gerard Rummery, District of Australia/  
New Zealand/PNG  
Brother Robert Schieler, District of Baltimore  
Brother Leonardo Tejeiro, District of Bogotá  
Brother Michael Valenzuela, District of Philippines

It was their conviction that small changes in the *Rule* would, at the present moment, not be fruitful and that a major reworking of the *Rule* would be needed. Since such a work would need to be accomplished in a consultative fashion with the whole of the Institute, we asked the Committee to prepare a document that:

- articulates the significant developments in recent Church documents and Institute realities.
- proposes the major areas (or lines of thinking) that require this major reworking or change of the

*Rule* that they propose and that explains the reasoning for such a reworking or change.

A document that presents the work of this ad hoc Committee on the *Rule* is being prepared and will be made available to all in October 2005. We believe that it will provide a rich background not only for the 44th General Chapter to examine whether it is time to consider possible changes of the *Rule* but also for the preparation of the International Assembly of 2006.

### **Document Three**

#### **Being Brother Today: Toward the 44th General Chapter**

We believe that it is important that a kind of working document about the identity of the Brother today be prepared:

- to complement the report of the International Assembly of 2006.
- to stimulate dialogue and exchange about this very important topic.

It is our hope that this would be an inspirational document focused on the consecrated life of the Brother in community for mission. The recent working document for the Congress of the Union of Superior Generals

(USG) and the International Union of Women Superior Generals (USIG) on Consecrated Life that was held in Rome in November 2004, “Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity,” provides an excellent model for what is envisaged:

- to address the identity of the Brother today.
- to address the question of a certain lack of visibility and appreciation for the vocation of the Brother in the Church and society today.
- to highlight the centrality of the needs of the young today as an invitation to renewal and re-foundation.

Our idea is that this document would:

- be deeply rooted in scripture and in recent theology of consecrated life.
- draw on recent Lasallian developments - including the sharing of mission in the spirit of Vatican Council II and the centrality of the vow of association.
- call for a spiritual renewal of the Brother - both personal and communal - in the context of the Brother’s educational mission in the Church and lived out in today’s society.

With this circular letter, we announce the appointment of the Committee to prepare such a document by



means of an interactive process that will involve other persons and that will draw upon the international and cultural diversity of the ecclesial context from which the Institute draws its vitality.

Brother Patricio Bolton, District of Argentina/  
Paraguay

Brother Miguel Campos, General Councilor

Brother Timothy Coldwell, District of New Orleans-Santa Fe

Brother André-Pierre Gauthier, District of France

Brother Ricardo Laguda, District of Philippines

Brother Edouard Luzolo, District of Congo-Kinshasa

This group of Brothers should feel free to invite a non-Lasallian theological expert to assist their group, if the group thought that this would be worthwhile.

Our hope is that this document will be in the hands of all by April 2006, provide the basis for reflection and discussion in community and at District or Regional gatherings prior to the Chapter, and allow for significant inter-District and inter-Regional reflection and exchange during the 44th General Chapter itself.

We envisage the document as an instrument that will hopefully lead to consensus and inspiring vitality and not as a document requiring legislative scrutiny. In other words, the document is viewed as a means and not an end.

## ***Document Four***

### **Report of the International Assembly of 2006: Toward the 44th General Chapter**

The International Assembly foreseen by the 43rd General Chapter (Proposition 3 and Proposition 8) will be held in Rome from 23 October to 5 November 2006. It will have as its theme, “Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission.” Approximately 160 delegates will participate in this gathering.

Partial Assemblies will be held in the Regions of the Institute in preparation for this gathering.

The Report of the International Assembly of 2006, which will be published in January 2007, will constitute the fourth in the series of preparatory documents for the 44th General Chapter.

## ***Document Five***

### **Report of Brother Superior and General Council: Toward the 44th General Chapter**

“The Brother Superior makes a report to the General Chapter on the manner in which he and the Council have carried out their mandate. This report also includes the activities of the General Services of the Institute” (*Rule*, 111).

The themes or the content of the Report of Brother Superior and General Council are yet to be decided. Our work continues, and a number of projects are still being developed.

For example, we want you to know that:

- the General Council continues to “pursue and supervise the process of reorganizing Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations so as to strengthen the vitality of those sectors that are in need” (43rd General Chapter, Proposition 27).
- a Committee of Consultants has recently been appointed to help enhance “the effectiveness of the General Services, the hotel service, and the overall running of the Generalate” (43rd General Chapter, Proposition 32).
- the Government Commission of the Institute has begun an exploration with other Religious Congregations of models for possible reorganization of the central government.
- the Government Commission is, with the assistance of some experts, preparing a document on the ownership and management of Institute properties and funds, especially in aging Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations.

Our hope is that this document will be in the hands of

all by March 2007 as the basis for reflection and discussion in community and at District or Regional gatherings prior to the Chapter. It might allow for significant inter-District and inter-Regional reflection and exchange during the 44th General Chapter itself.

## **Announcement of a Short Session of CIL to Assist in Chapter Preparation**

A short CIL program of two weeks will be organized here at the Casa Generalizia in Rome for May of 2006. The participants would be expected to arrive at the Casa Generalizia on the 7th of May and leave the Casa Generalizia on the 20th of May.

The Brothers who participate in this CIL program will reflect upon and share ideas about two of the documents being prepared for the 44th General Chapter:

- *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Rule: Changes in the Church and in the Institute since 1987.*
- *Being Brother Today.*

It is hoped that this multi-cultural sharing of reflections about these two important documents would prepare these Brothers to facilitate an international exchange of ideas when they return home to their Districts and Regions and participate, on the local scene,

in the “interactive process” of preparation for the 44th General Chapter. For this reason, we believe that it is important to send only Brothers in District leadership, or who serve on the District Council, or who are able to facilitate the exchange of ideas in groups of Lasalians to this short CIL program.

You will be receiving more information about this short two-week CIL program in the months ahead.

## **Appointment of the Preparatory Commission**

Foremost among the “measures” taken by Brother Superior General to “ensure (the) preparation” of the Chapter is the appointment of a Preparatory Commission “to study and organize the preparation of the Chapter” (*Rule*, 105a).

The task of this Commission, working closely with the General Council, is stated precisely both in the *Rule* and in *The Administrator’s Directory*, which describes its role as follows:

- “to collect all the information deemed opportune from the Brothers generally and from the various administrative units of the Institute, as well as from study groups or specially appointed commissions” (*Rule*, 105a).

- “to list, classify, and make available the notes and position papers sent by the Brothers to the Chapter; to make suggestions, studies, working schedules, and draft documents that could be useful to Chapter members; to draw up provisional rules of procedure for consideration by the Chapter [the Chapter follows these until it approves a definitive set of rules]; to include in the provisional rules of procedure a list of officers to help in the running of the Chapter, and to indicate how they should be elected” (*The Administrator’s Directory*, 2).

As we make the announcement of the appointment of this Commission, we express our conviction that we believe that what the Institute needs at this time is an inspiring, invigorating, pastoral, and discerning Chapter. Another legislative Chapter - such as the 42nd and 43rd General Chapters, which each produced more than 40 propositions with as many recommendations - is not in our opinion the best option.

From the outset, the Preparatory Commission will be engaged in ongoing dialogue with Brother Superior and Council, and with others whom Brother Superior and Council might want to have included in that dialogue.

We believe that the members of the Preparatory Commission should, from its initiation, develop a process that enables them to be in ongoing dialogue with Dis-

tricts and Regions in the process of preparing for the 44th General Chapter.

In formulating the membership of the Preparatory Commission, we endeavored to balance the following criteria: familiarization with process-style meetings, experience of previous Chapters, age, and international representation.

With this circular letter, we announce the appointment of the Preparatory Commission.

Brother Stefano Agostini, District of Italy  
Brother Francis Carr, District of the Midwest  
Brother Carlos Gómez, District of Bogotá  
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

We thank these Brothers, their Districts, and their educational communities for their availability for this important service to the Institute.

As the process of preparation begins, we draw their attention to the numerous documents that the Districts

and Regions have already sent or will send to Rome as available resources:

- Reports from District Chapters and Mission Assemblies.
- District annual reports and their summaries, which exist for the past four years.
- Reports from Districts and Regions as a result of joint discussions of the Brothers in view of the 44th General Chapter, especially those discussions on the working document *Being Brother Today*.

We sincerely hope that these Brothers will bring their own considerable experience and creativity to the important work of the preparation of the 44th General Chapter that is hereby entrusted to them.

## **Proposed Schedule for the Meetings of the Preparatory Commission**

We propose that the first meeting of the Preparatory Commission take place in Rome in September of this year. The aim of this meeting would be to begin planning the Chapter and to determine a plan of action for subsequent meetings.

We propose, at this time, the dates for the initial and the successive meetings of the Preparatory Commission:



- 12 to 24 September 2005.
- 13 to 26 February 2006.
- 20 October to 9 November 2006.
- 12 to 23 February 2007.

The reason for the lengthy meeting of 20 October to 9 November 2006 is to allow them to participate in the International Assembly from 23 October to 5 November.

## **Dates of the 44th General Chapter**

Because experience has shown that the period between April and June is the most convenient time for the majority of delegates from both hemispheres, we are proposing 1 May 2007 as the opening date and 4 June 2007 as the provisional closing date.

This would be about two weeks shorter than in previous years. The process of prior preparation that has been proposed and the work of the International Assembly of 2006 will, we believe, make it possible to reduce the time necessary for the Chapter. This conforms to the proposal of the 43rd General Chapter that the preparatory work will “make it possible to shorten the Chapter” (43rd General Chapter, Recommendation 37).

The Chapter itself, however, will determine the actual date of closure, taking into account the organization of the Chapter and the work that needs to be accomplished. We announce both dates now, however, be-

cause of the arrangements that need to be made in advance of the Chapter.

## **Some Suggestions for the Organization of the 44th General Chapter**

We suggest that the Preparatory Commission for the 44th General Chapter consider devising a process by which there would be adequate time for inter-Regional discussion and exchange during the Chapter about the document *Being Brother Today*.

We suggest that the discussion about the document *Being Brother Today* in the Chapter might be preceded by a keynote presentation by an inspiring non-Lasallian speaker on Apostolic Consecrated Life addressing some of the main elements in the document.

It is our hope that the Report of the work of the International Assembly of 2006 will be in the hands of all by January 2007 so that it might be studied and assimilated prior to the 44th General Chapter.

We suggest that the Preparatory Commission for the 44th General Chapter consider devising a process by which this Report will be presented for acceptance without undue additional discussion by the delegates, which might be viewed as diminishing the importance and the validity of the Assembly itself. Many of the

Districts of the Institute are now following a similar process as Mission Assemblies or Mission Councils in Districts have begun to complement District Chapters.

We suggest that the Preparatory Commission for the 44th General Chapter consider designing a process by which discussion and exchange during the Chapter might lead to general policies and general orientations - rather than an exhaustive list of propositions and recommendations - which would form the basis of action plans that:

- would be devised by Brother Superior and General Council on the Institute level.
- would be devised by Regions or by Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations on a local level.

We suggest that, as a result of its reflections, it might be possible that the delegates of the 44th General Chapter decide to refine one or more of the “Toward the 44th General Chapter” documents as a future basic reference.

## **The Circular of Convocation of the 44th General Chapter**

“Approximately one year before the date fixed for the opening of an ordinary General Chapter, the Brother Superior, after taking the advice of his Council, sends out the Circular of Convocation” (*Rule*, 108).

When published in 2006, the Circular of Convocation will make known “the names of the members by right, as well as the number of delegates to be elected in each of the Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations” (*Rule*, 108a).

The election of delegates and substitutes will take place only after the publication next year of the Circular of Convocation. At that time, the details of the election process will be addressed. However, the *Rule* establishes the guidelines that will be followed in the preparation of the details of the Circular of Convocation (*Rule*, 106 to 109c).

## **Notes by the Brothers for the 44th General Chapter**

“All the Brothers of the Institute are invited to participate in the work of preparing for an ordinary General Chapter. Each Brother has the right to send to the Brother Superior or the Secretary General whatever notes or position papers, duly signed, he may judge useful” (*Rule*, 110).

It is also possible for groups of Brothers or communities of Brothers to send a communal note to indicate a consensus that goes beyond the views of one individual.

All notes must be received in Rome by 1 September 2006, at the very latest. The process of receiving notes

will be facilitated if they are sent by e-mail to Brother Secretary General: [lgkipper@lasalle.org](mailto:lgkipper@lasalle.org).

Notes can also be sent by FAX to +39 06 663 8821. However, all notes must be received in Rome by 1 September 2006.

Notes can also be sent by ordinary mail to:

Notes for the General Chapter  
Via Aurelia, 476  
00165 Rome Italy

## **Conclusion**

“Since the days of the Founder, a General Chapter is the ultimate expression of the communion that exists among all the Brothers. It perpetuates among them the living fidelity to the special charism of the Institute” (*Rule*, 103).

We are called to live our consecrated life as Brothers with a passion both for Christ and for humanity. It is up to the General Chapter to study the challenges and opportunities proffered by the signs of the times and to consider current theology on consecrated life and our mission within the Church. It is about discerning the richness of our vocation as Brothers, of rediscovering the “enchantment of our consecrated life,” and of tak-

ing in “the newness” that the Holy Spirit is causing to rise up in us (Is 43:18-19). On the way toward the General Chapter all of us are called, interactively, to make stronger our spirituality and the shared mission with the Lasallian Family, living in communion and in solidarity with the whole People of God.

Each Brother, each community, and each District plays an important role in the Chapter process, which favors interchange and encourages reflection on the future of the Institute. As we find expressed in the *Rule*, “the life and development of the Institute depend primarily on the mystery and the power of grace. By the gift of freedom, however, the Lord has willed to place the destiny of the Institute in the hands of the Brothers who are committed to work together so that it will prosper and remain faithful to its mission” (*Rule*, 142).

Brothers, your involvement in the preparation of the coming General Chapter should be one of those privileged moments to realize this conviction expressed by our *Rule*. The Institute depends on your wholehearted participation in the celebration of the Chapter through your prayer and your involvement in the activities organized by your community, your District, your Region, and the Center of the Institute.

We believe that every General Chapter invites all of us to celebrate “the life-giving bond of association that we

share” so that “together, drawing on the strength of each other’s faith and vitality” we can “fulfill the mission God has entrusted to us” (from the “Statement of the Community of the General Council”).

Accompanied by our Holy Founder and by our many Saints and Blesseds, let us ask the Holy Spirit, through the intercession of Our Lady of Good Counsel, to make our hearts generous in “Being Brother Today” and authentic in being “ambassadors and ministers” of the Good News for the young, and especially the poor, of today.

Fraternally yours in St. John Baptist de La Salle,

Brother Superior  
and the Brothers of the General Council