



N° 246
2000



43rd GENERAL CHAPTER
Rome, 1st May - 15th June 2000

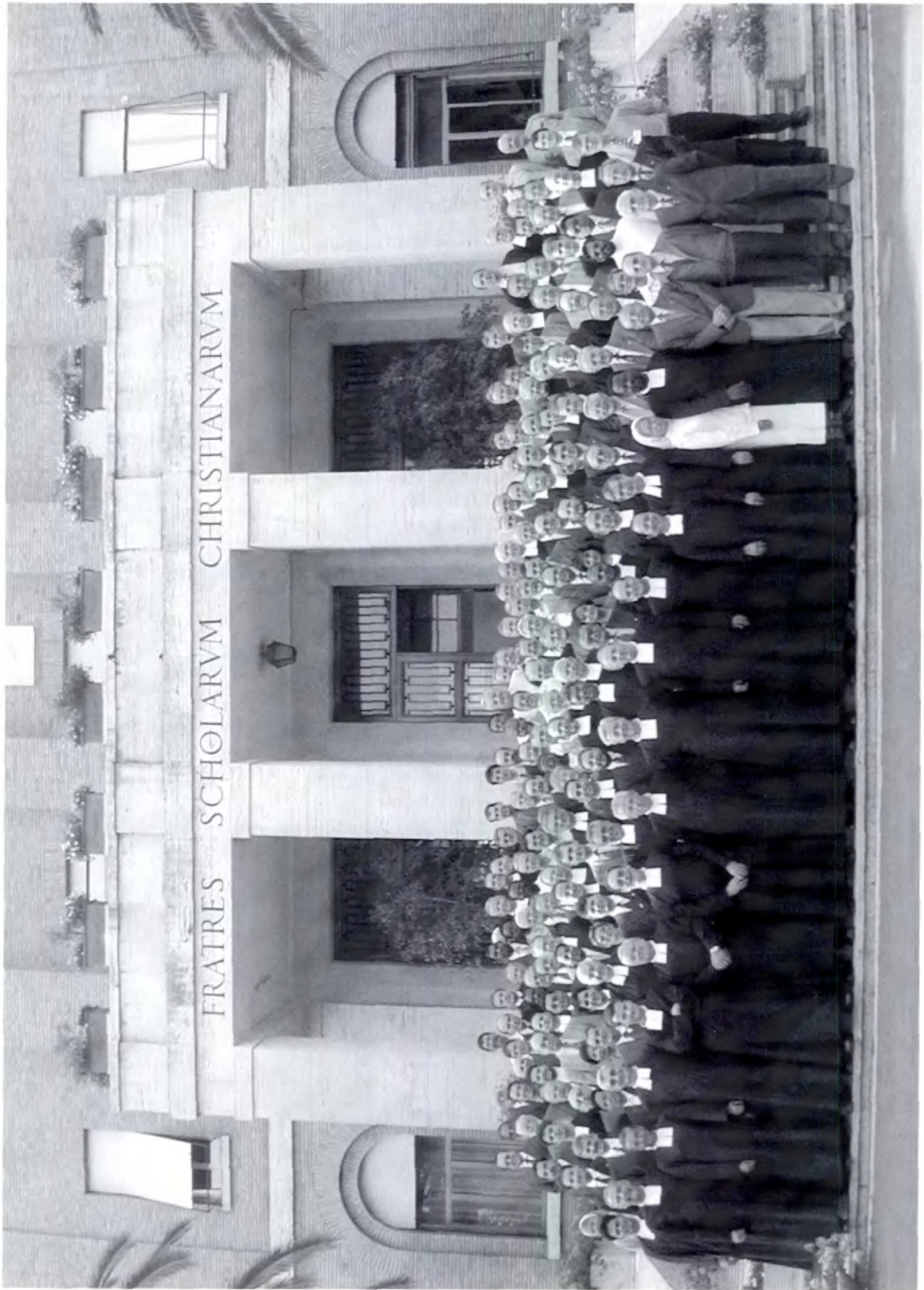
**Bulletin of the Institute
of the Brothers of the Christian Schools**

N° 246 - 2000

43rd GENERAL CHAPTER

Development and Documents

**Generalate
Via Aurelia, 476
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Members of the 43rd General Chapter on the steps of the Generalate.

THE 43RD GENERAL CHAPTER AND THE GREAT JUBILEE YEAR



The Jubilee Year 2000 provided a wonderful stage for the 43rd General Chapter. The great care taken by the Church in organizing Jubilee events, the renovations of the civic infrastructure and the preparation of the monuments by the city of Rome, and the extensive activities of the Jubilee and Preparatory Commissions of the Casa Generalizia coalesced to provide a busy and intense seven weeks of activity, from May 1 to June 15, at the 43rd General Chapter.

In addition to the Church's celebrations of the Jubilee Year, the Institute celebrated two important Jubilee events of its own during the Chapter. The first of these took place on May 15, 2000, the 50th anniversary of the naming of St. John Baptist de La Salle as Patron of Teachers. Shortly following this event came the Centenary of the Canonization of St. John Baptist de La Salle, on May 24, 2000. The Preparatory Commission for the General Chapter invited Brothers and Partners to join in these celebrations in a novena of prayers between these two dates. Articles about these two memorable events can be found elsewhere in this Bulletin.

The fraternal, positive and energetic spirit of the 43rd General Chapter flowed from a growing and deepening sense of internationality in the Institute. In the year leading up to the Chapter, its members, 128 Brothers and 23 Partners in all, were extending their horizons and making contact with each other within and beyond their Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations. The growing sense of interdependence and the need for international cooperation was a key issue in the many pre-General Chapter meetings. The Center of the Institute, too, had played a role in promoting this internationality and awareness, through the Five Colloquia held between 1993 and 1998, and the publication of several documents including *The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission* (1996), *Missionary Policy of the Institute* (1998), and *The Report of the Brother Superior General to the 43rd General Chapter* (1999). The many meetings, formal and informal, between Regions and Districts during the Chapter showed the interest and eagerness of all to come to a more profound awareness of the challenges and hopes of Brothers and Partners worldwide.

The use of electronic technology and the establishment of an Institute Website also added to the growing awareness of the internationality of the General Chapter. This site, located on the Web at *lasalle.org* (for Europe and Africa) and at *lasalle2.org* (for the Americas, Asia and Oceania) provided a needed means of rapid and extensive communication not only to the members of the Chapter, but for Brothers and Partners worldwide. Events leading up to the Chapter were publicized as they occurred, and necessary information, such as the summary of notes and the Chapter calendar, were communicated easily and quickly through this site or through the use of email. During the Chapter the Press Bureau used the website to publish regular reports on the proceedings and activities, thus permitting many around the world an easy and swift contact with the Chapter. As the Chapter progressed on its seven week schedule, the number of observers tuned into the Institute Website grew on a daily basis. In this *Bulletin*, we have identified where a reader can find corresponding information on the Website by parenthetical references.

The prayer for the General Chapter, sent out a year in advance by the Preparatory Commission, begins with an evocation to the Holy Spirit: "Holy Spirit, whose mission it is to direct and guide our lives, draw down upon us the wind and fire of a Pentecost for our times." Indeed, the Spirit of Pentecost was present at the 43rd General Chapter in the many voices which form the chorus of the Institute today. This *Bulletin* is an echo of those voices.

**Br. Ronald Gallagher,
Secretary General**

Preparatory Commission of the 43rd General Chapter

Preparatory Commission of the 43rd General Chapter

1st May—15th June 2000: the 43rd General Chapter was held in the very middle of the Great Jubilee of the year 2000 which brought a considerable number of pilgrims to Rome. So the visas and air tickets could be obtained without any problem, the members of the Chapter had to be chosen a year before the date appointed by the Rule (art. 105a).

The Preparatory Commission: its members and its role

That is why, in the Spring of 1997, the Superior General and his Council appointed the members of the Preparatory Commission – Brother Secretary General Ronald Gallagher, who was to be the President; the Regional Superiors of ARLEP and RELEC; Brothers José Manuel Agirrezabalaga and Aad van Bentem; Brothers Baptist Croos, Visitor of Sri Lanka, and André

Dubuc, auxiliary Visitor of French-speaking Canada; the Secretary of RELAL, Brother Valerio López Astrain; Brothers Sylvain Consimbo former Visitor of West Africa and then Director in Niamey, and Jean-Baptiste Seguin, “neither Director nor Visitor” at the time but in charge of the pastoral team for the District of France; and Brother Alain Houry, Director of Lasallian Studies in Rome, appointed a secretary of the Commission. Several had first-hand experience of one or two General Chapters, all of them of international Assemblies. French was accepted as the language for communication in the Commission, since that would be the reference language for the Chapter texts, as in previous Chapters.

The existence of the Preparatory Commission would end when the Chapter adopted its work programme, which took place on Saturday 6th May. Those members who were not Capitulants and who were not required to return to their work in their District, would remain at the

disposal of the Chapter in various positions. As Brother Ronald had announced his intention to end his mandate as Secretary General with this Chapter, Brother Valerio would succeed him in this office. Brother Jean-Baptiste, who was the first replacement for France and who became Capitulant, would soon be appointed auxiliary Visitor following the election of Brother Claud Reinhardt as general Councillor.

The *Administrator's Directory*, published in 1989, states that the mandate of the Commission is to study and organise the preparation of the Chapter. Its role then is to gather all appropriate information, to collect and classify the notes, to make suggestions to the Chapter for its work, to work out a plan for the running of the Chapter, especially indicating the “officers” useful for its functioning and the method of their election (p13). To clarify its work, the Preparatory Commission studied the functioning of the 1993 Chapter (its account would often be helpful) and the Chapters of other Congregations. Two American Brothers were put at its disposal: Brother Andrew Steele, for the IT of the Chapter, and Brother Donald Johanson, to set up a Website. Thanks to them, the Chapter members and all those who could link up to the Internet were able to follow the preparation and then the working of the Chapter almost directly.



Having come from most Regions, the Commission members were in a good position by their functions to acquire a global view of the Institute, especially as the calendar attached to their nomination fixed their first meeting (8th-17th June 1998) at the time of the Colloquium on Evangelisation, Communicating the faith today: the rereading of the preceding Colloquia and meeting numerous participants widened the preoccupations of the Commission on a world level. The other meetings were held in the month of October 1998 and 1999, and on 17th April 2000 until the end of the first week of the Chapter.

Competition for the Chapter LOGO and prayer

The meeting of June 1998 allowed the Commission to make suggestions for Circular 445, convoking the Chapter, which was almost ready for publication. Before dispersing, the Commission launched an international competition to create the LOGO for the year 2000 Chapter, offering the winner three days at the Chapter, on one of the Jubilee feasts of the Institute: 15th or 24th May. There were not only professionals who set about the graphical design: one class sent in many projects. Some arrived by special delivery, others came by e-mail...

How were we to choose the best productions? The 140 projects were displayed and the Brothers of the Central Community were invited to make a first choice. Then the Commission sought the services of professionals in graphic communication in order to have technical advice. Of the 6 projects in the short list, that of Mexican Brother Felipe Ocádiz, from the delegation of Japan, was placed first. This was not only by the Institute, since he also received a Roman prize for religious communication. Brother Felipe, however, could not be released from his professional work before the summer holidays: he would be in the Mother House only towards the end of August. It is not easy to say how many copies have been reproduced of this LOGO, plus its appearance on the Internet (it was the first document to appear on the Chapter site). During the Chapter and just before leaving after 15 days of work with the Capitulants, the partner Consultants presented the Chapter with an imposing candle, emblazoned with the LOGO, recalling their presence in prayer. On 15th August, during the Youth Gathering, the LOGO welcomed almost 1,500 youngsters to the sanctuary of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

Just for the record, under the design the word CHAPTER was reproduced in several languages and in several alphabets. So we asked the Brothers of different countries how to say "chapter" in their language: the reply received in Arabic was "chapter", but in the sense of "chapter in a book"! We are never sufficiently precise in our questions... So the printed documents were distributed in a version which was only corrected in a few photocopied issues.

Another competition was launched more discreetly: each Region was asked to suggest a prayer for the Chapter. Seven projects finally arrived, in a great variety of styles. The members of the Commission, consulted by post (not all had e-mail), hesitated to give a final choice and were almost equally divided between two of them. One of the members suggested an amalgamation and it was a fusion of the two which was put to the whole Institute in 3 languages. Other translations were made: we received them in German, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese...

Gather the relevant information and prepare the Chapter deliberations

First hand information on the life of the Districts came from the reports which each of them sent to the Brother Superior, especially their expectations and the questions which they wanted discussed at the 43rd General Chapter. When the report had been edited by the District Council, which was quite often the case, the appraisal of the positive and negative in the life of the District was just as enlightening, even though it was more difficult to make an evaluation of it. At their meeting in October 1998, the members of the Commission first of all made a summary of it in the original language then, in 3 languages, as detailed a synthesis as possible. A study of the 5 Colloquia revealed topics that the Chapter should take account of.

14 topics arose out of this work: they were presented, with a short reflection from the Commission, in the appendix (p. 9s) to the Letter from the Preparatory Commission to the Brothers of the Christian Schools and to all those who wanted to contribute to the 43rd General Chapter (8th December 1998). It quickly became evident to the Commission that the Chapter was not going to treat everything: it would be a harmful weakening of the depth of the questions. So a "central topic" had to be suggested to the Chapter, from which the different questions could be fruitfully treated. To make the Chapter deliberation easier, the preparatory Commission suggested, as a general topic: The response of Lasallian education to the needs of the young, in the diversity of cultural, religious and social realities in the world of today (p. 3). And the last page of the Letter suggests a regrouping of the topics according to a procedure which would be the Chapter's own.

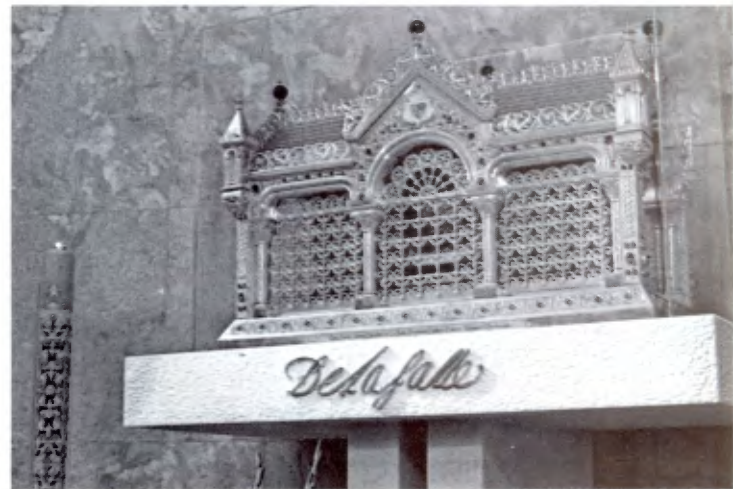
The Commission did not deem it judicious to send a questionnaire to all the Brothers, however useful it would be to heighten awareness of the topics for study. In fact it was very difficult to place oneself straight away on the international level and to distinguish if a topic which was judged to be important, should be the concern of the General Chapter or if it would be more fruitful to study it at a local level. It would be better to ask the Regions to give the 2 or 3 major "challenges" that they meet with, and what they expected of the 43rd General Chapter. The notes are, of course, an important method of communication of the concerns of the Brothers and also of their partners, especially when they are the fruit of group reflection. It was requested that the notes should treat of one topic only at a time: not all kept to this and their development was a little more complicated.

A piece of first class information was also put at the disposal of the Institute: the Report of the Brother Superior and his Council (Rule, 111), including those of the different general services, would be published at the end of November, 1999. The report of the Brother Econome General and of the International Economic Council would be given out at the beginning of the Chapter. Bulletin n° 245, Report on the Colloquia, and the pastoral letters of Brother Superior would be distributed widely. The Preparatory Commission hoped for a more refined evaluation of the Shared Mission, an appraisal of the Mission 100+, and asked the Personnel Bureau for more precise statistics, especially concerning the perseverance of Brothers.

Summary of the notes, translation and grouping by topics

The October 1999 meeting devoted a large part of its time to the summary and classification of the notes because the reading of nearly 500 notes necessitated a review of the classification set up the year before. It was necessary to "stick" closer to the concerns they showed and to modify the numbering system to allow for finding the notes on computer. Furthermore, nearly half the notes treated of more than one topic: they had to be numbered according to several topics. It was an enormous task for Brother Andrew to put the summary of all the notes on a floppy disc, grouped by topic and in each language, for the summary of the notes had been translated into the 3 languages by the Commission members.

A plan was made to translate, or have translated, most of the notes in full: those which were in Italian, Dutch or Portuguese, had to be read in one of the 3 languages of the Chapter; those which came from groups, were to be available in the 3 languages; and those which presented a study that a summary would not make sufficiently understandable. Those notes would not be translated which treated of solely local questions, and had not much relevance to a General Chapter; notes which were so short that they appeared almost in entirety in their summary... and some notes that a mistake in transmission led us to believe that they had already been translated! Two "articles", more than 30 pages long, would not be translated either: those who did not want to read them whole could be content with a substantial summary.



For the first days of the Chapter, big files, for English-, French- or Spanish-speakers were made available to members of the Chapter in the areas where they lived or where they met. Each one offered all the notes: first in the original and, most often, with their translation. They were classified by topics, each section being preceded by a corresponding summary; and the notes which contained several topics were reproduced as often as necessary, either whole or only the relevant part. Capitulants and Consultants would often refer to these files to clarify their own thinking or their work in Commission by this contact with the notes.

For the members of the Preparatory Commission, this work on the notes, as well as on the "Regional challenges" (a synthesis of which would be given in the Second Letter, after the list of the members of the Chapter), gave rise to a new plan. Not only would the Chapter not be able to treat everything, but it would need a more central topic than the one suggested. The Second Letter, of 21st November 1999, expressed its new suggestion like this: Associated for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21st century. On 8th May 2000, after a time of personal and collective judgement, it was practically this formula that the Chapter would adopt as the central theme of its work.

Suggestions for the work of the Chapter

The Commission did not itself have to guide the Chapter's work, but it fell to it to make suggestions to ease the work. It had the responsibility for organising the first week (it was most unlikely that a Chapter could immediately alter the organisation of the opening days, dedicated as they were to get to know one another and to find out what they might take as aims) and to suggest steps for the succeeding "phases". That included the choice of period when the partner Consultants would work with the Brothers, the definition of the aims of the different phases of the Chapter, the regulation of the general Assemblies, the choice of "officers" of the Chapter (moderators, co-ordinators, secretaries...), the time and the manner of the "elections" of the Brother Superior, of his Vicar and the rest of his Council. The Commission made suggestions for all these, and the Chapter made its own choices.

The one exception was the presence of the partner Consultants, which the Circular for the convocation of the Chapter had to decide. Opinion was divided in the Commission: should a week be left for the Brothers to become aware of the diversity of the Regions and to decide upon the central theme of the Chapter? or to do that with the Partners invited to the Chapter? A minority leaned towards the second position: Lay people, more than the Brothers, needed time to become aware of the diversity of the Institute, and to familiarise themselves with the Chapter procedures. They also had things to understand in the Brother Superior's report. The General Council was asked to decide between the opinions and came down clearly in favour of the first formula: the first week would be for the Brothers alone. That may be why more than one lay person found it difficult to integrate into the life of a Chapter which had been going for a week.

The dividing of the time of the Chapter into different Phases, each with different aims, required flexibility: it was necessary not to anticipate the Chapter's decisions. Topics to suggest for the Commissions, a tentative Calendar for the time for work in Commission or in General Assembly, and for the "free time"; researching documents to make the work easier; organisation of the feasts of 15th and 24th May (and a prayer for these 11 days) with the JUBILEE Commission of the Mother House: there was a lot to foresee.

What took most time was finalising the minute detail of the Rules of Procedure of the Chapter, to allow freedom of expression and progress in work of a group of 120 to 140 people. On the basis of the Rules of Procedure of the preceding Chapter, and taking account of the comments and notes on the subject, it was possible to present a solid framework. On some points, the Chapter, as was its right, altered it a little. It was also necessary to find a vocabulary adapted to the new situation in which 23 partner Consultants (there were not simply 20 Lay people, but also 3 representatives from other Lasallian Institutes of consecrated life) and 9 Brother Consultants would work with the Brother Capitulants. Everyone had the right to speak at the Chapter and were "members of the Chapter", but only the Brothers of right, elected or nominated, had voting rights in the general Assembly and were "Capitulants". It has to be said that this vocabulary was not always adhered to during the Chapter, even though the responsibilities of the ones and of the others were clearly distinguished.

The preparation of the Web site

During this preparation time, Brother Donald worked magnificently to set up the Web site for the Chapter and the electronic stand in the entrance hall. A press Committee was envisaged during the time of the Chapter. The decision to provide all the texts in 4 languages on the Internet (Italian is obligatory when one is in Rome), with all that entailed in translating, delayed its installation and the communication of news during the Chapter. But the presentation of the Districts, the disposal of reference texts and many other services allowed the Capitulants and all those interested in the starting of the Chapter to find something of interest. It is possible that those who had no access to the Internet felt a little frustrated if those in charge of the District had not organised paper communication of the information which they would have obtained from the Net.

The number of visits to the Chapter site showed that this initiative offered a great service. The Preparatory Commission cannot be credited with this since it was not directly concerned.

What was the value of the work of this Commission? That is hard to say when one was a member. I shall restrict myself to summarising the evaluation made by the Chapter: this was undoubtedly the best prepared Chapter, but we must go about the next one differently!

Brother Alain Houry

MEMBERS OF THE 43RD GENERAL CHAPTER

MEMBERS BY RIGHT



Br. John Johnston
Superior General



Br. Alvaro Rodríguez
Vicar General



Br. Martín Corral
General Councillor



Br. Marc Hofer
General Councillor



Br. Pierre Josse
General Councillor



Br. Gerard Rummery
General Councillor



Br. Raymundo Suplido
General Councillor



Br. Ronald Gallagher
Secretary General

ELECTED MEMBERS



Br. José Manuel Agirrezabalaga
Central Spain



Br. Felipe Ampuero
Peru



Br. Francisco Andrade
Ecuador



Br. Jan Antolee
Poland



Br. José Antolínez
Valladolid



Br. Ismael Beltrán
Valencia



Br. Jean-Pierre Berger
South Belgium



Br. Jean Bernier
French Canada



Br. Bruno Bordone
Turin



Br. Martin Borg
Malta



Br. David Brennan
San Francisco



Br. Michael Broughton
Singapore



Br. Juan José Brunet
Bilbao



Br. Frank Byrne
New York



Br. Stanislaus Campbell
San Francisco



Br. Nicolas Capelle
France



Br. Francis Carr
Midwest



Br. Felipe A. Castellán
Central America



Br. Bernard Collignon
Douala



Br. Michael Corry
New York



Br. Anthony Cummins
Australia



Br. Jacques d'Huitema
France



Br. Gabriele Dalle Nogare
Turin



Br. Luis Arturo Dávila de León - North Mexico



Br. Stan Decock
North Belgium



Br. Stephen Deignan
Ireland



Br. José Antonio Diez
de Medina - Bolivia



Br. Henry Dissanayake
Colombo



Br. André Dubuc
French Canada



Br. Brian Dybowski
New Orleans-Santa Fe



Br. Dominic Ehrmantraut
Lwanga



Br. John Fernando
India



Br. Peter Foo
Penang



Br. Jorge Gallardo de Alba
Japan



Br. Frederic Gay Illa
Catalonia



Br. Alain Gicquel
France



Br. Victor Gil
Thailand



Br. Alberto Gómez
Andalucia



Br. Nicolas Gonzalez
New Orleans-Santa Fe



Br. Paul Grass
Midwest



Br. David Hawke
Australia



Br. Joseph Hendron
Great Britain



Br. José Vicente Henry
Valbuena - Bogota



Br. Carlos Alberto
Jamade Hirmas - Chile



Br. Yemanu Jehar
Lwanga



Br. Thomas Johnson
Mid West



Br. Jesús Juárez
Madrid



Br. Paul Kaiser
Central Europe



Br. Lucas Kyin Thein
Myanmar



Br. Maurice Lapointe
French Canada



Br. Louis-Paul Lavallée
French Canada



Br. Giuseppe Lazzaro
Rome



Br. Jon Lezámiz
Bilbao



Br. Francisco López
Panama



Br. Armin Luistro
Philippines



Br. Arno Francisco Lunkes
São Paulo



Br. William Mann
Long Island-New England



Br. Francis Manning
Ireland



Br. Lawrence Manuel
Pakistan



Br. Maurice Marchand
South Belgium



Br. Josep Martí
Catalonia



Br. Juan Pablo Martín-Dueñas
Valladolid



Br. Jardeino Menegat
Porto Alegre



Br. Koassi Michael Messan
Gulf of Benin



Br. Jorge Enrique Molina
Bogota



Br. Joseph Montanier
France



Br. Joaquin Morató
Catalonia



Br. Louis Morel
France



Br. Jean-François Morlier
France



Br. Pascual Muñoz
Valencia



Br. Humberto Murillo
Medellin



Br. Aloys Ndimukihe
Rwanda



Br. Ferdinand Nkadilu
M. Congo-Kinshasa



Br. Benedict Oliver
Baltimore



Br. Félix Francisco
Peña Lora - Antillas



Br. Mario Presciuttini
Rome



Br. Hilaire Raharilalao
Antananarivo



Br. Claude Reinhardt
France



Br. Claude Robbe
Mideast



Br. Michei Rubin
France



Br. Genaro Sáenz de
Ugarte Argentina-Paraguay



Br. José Sarasa
Bilbao



Br. Robert Schieler
Baltimore



Br. Jean-Baptiste
Seguin - France



Br. Iñaki Sein Goñi
Caracas



Br. Sean Sellors
Great Britain



Br. Guy Séverac
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Br. Patrick Tierney
Hong Kong



Br. Luís Timón
Madrid



Br. Pierre Tobie
France



Br. François Tran Van Anh
Vietnam



Br. José Ivo Ullerich
Porto Alegre



Br. Raúl Valadez
South Mexico



Br. Salvador Valle
North Mexico



Br. Aad van Bentem
Holland



Br. Antoon Van Ooteghem
North Belgium



Br. Dominic Viggiani
Toronto



Br. Mario Vinumbrales
Andalucía



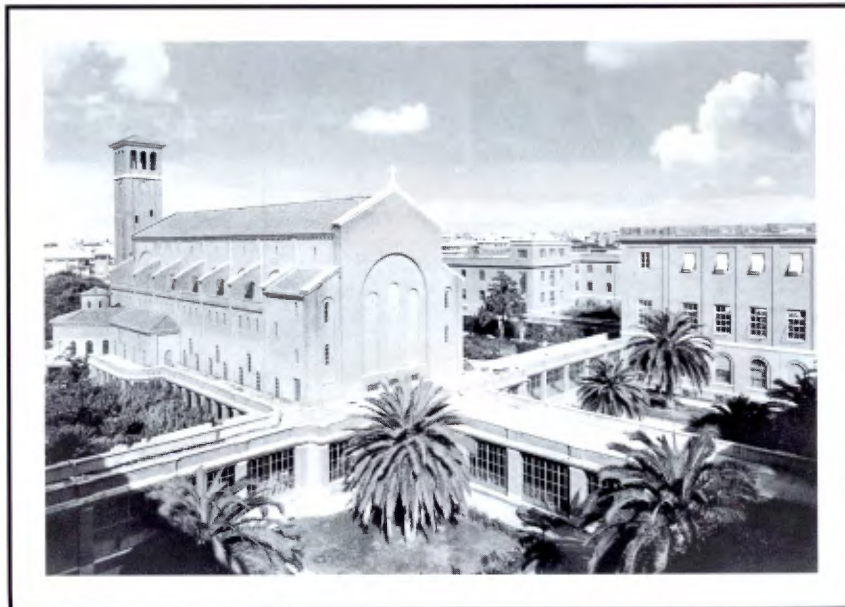
Br. Rodolfo Vivanco
South Mexico



Br. Gabriel Zambrana
West Africa



Br. Jesús Zamora
Valladolid



APPOINTED MEMBERS



Br. Adalberto Aranda
Director of CIL



Br. Emmanuel Alabi
RELAF



Br. Noël Bois
Director of SECOLI



Br. Olavo José Dalvit
RELAL



Br. Juan Fuentes
ARLEP



Br. Aidan Kilty
Formation Secretary



Br. Jordi Oller
General Bursar



Br. Robert Schaefer
USA-Toronto



Br. Krzysztof Sieminski
RELEC



Br. Arockia Doss Soosai
PARC

BROTHER CONSULTANTS



Br. Thierry Bonneau
France



Br. Gerardo Castillo
RELAL



Br. Anton de Roeper
Education Secretary



Br. Lanès Escarmant
French Canada



Br. Rodolfo Meoli
General Procurator-Postulator



Br. Enrico Mueller
Italy



Br. Anicet Poda
RELAF



Br. Fadi Steir
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Br. Thomas Walsh
REBIM

PARTNER CONSULTANTS



Eric Bryan Amaladas
PARC



Marge Beauvais
USA - Toronto



Nigma Beltrán de Poveda
RELAL



Paul Byron
REBIM



Antonio Cardone
Italy



Marcos Luciano Corsatto
RELAL



Denis de Villiers
French Canada



John Dunn
PARC



Charles (Skip) Gaus
USA-Toronto



Bernadette Albert Labbad
Mideast



Joël Le Natur
France



Albert Leroy
RELEC



Hna. Verónica Martínez
Guadalupana Sisters



Elie Michiels
RELEC



Maricruz Miquel Aguilera
ARLEP



Hna. Theresa Claire Nguyen
Lasalian Sisters - Vietnam



Carmelita Quebengco
PARC



Maximilien Rakotoarivony
RELAF



Leonardo Rollino
Union of Catechists



Teklemariam Samuel
RELAF



Gery Short
USA-Toronto



Jaime Torres
ARLEP



François Tribout
France

PHASES AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE 43rd GENERAL CHAPTER

As the 43rd General Chapter developed, three well-differentiated phases could be seen.

1

• **FIRST PHASE: May 1 -8.**

During this week the Chapter members got acquainted with one another.

There were reports as well as display panels with various materials which highlighted the different Regions of the Institute.

Two videos that were shown were especially helpful in giving a general vision of the Institute.

Norms were established for the Chapter's organization – there was the election for Chapter officers and topics for discussion were decided as was the calendar for anticipated events.

2

• **SECOND PHASE: May 8 - 21.**

During this phase the 23 Partner Consultants who had been appointed to participate in the General Chapter were present.

The major work of this phase consisted in studying the topics of the mission of the Institute and that of Association.

For this discussion of different aspects, 6 Commissions were created: 1) Association 2) Service of the poor through education 3) Evangelization 4) Formation 5) Structures of accompaniment and animation 6) Government.

3

• **THIRD PHASE: May 22 - June 15.**

The work of the Chapter during this phase centered around 8 Commissions: A) The Identity of the Brother B) Formation of the Brother C) Urgent Needs in Education Today D) Facing our Demographic Reality and Living the Association for the Educational Service of the Poor E) Associated for the educational service of the poor F) Government and Management G) Communication H) The Rule.

Each Commission was charged with preparing reports that were to be distributed to the Assembly. Once approved by the Assembly, propositions for the Chapter would come from these reports which, in turn, would also be discussed and voted on by the Assembly.

Information of various types concerning the General Chapter was available. The Internet web site offered regular updates of the work that had been accomplished and reported the events that took place during the Chapter.

Brother Superior General and the Council published Circular 447, which contained the propositions and recommendations of the General Chapter.

And now, this Bulletin, as a testimony for the future, offers a summary of what the General Chapter was, a synthesis of the topics discussed, some of the documents that came from the Chapter or that were drawn up for the Chapter, and a review of some of the outstanding events that took place during the course of the Chapter.

This information and documentation is grouped in three chapters which correspond to the three phases of the General Chapter.

THE FIRST PART OF THE CHAPTER

Objectives and Commissions

Even before the arrival of the 128 Brother Capitulants and Consultants for the opening of the 43rd General Chapter on May 1, the Preparatory Commission and the Chapter Staff had been hard at work for several weeks.

The first phase of the General Chapter, from May 1 to May 8, included the following important objectives;

- Meeting one another;
- Celebrating the life of the Institute;
- Gaining a global vision of the Institute;
- Setting up structures and electing officers;
- Discerning a theme for the Chapter.

From the Chronicle of the 43rd General Chapter...

Before the Chapter

Immediately upon arriving Capitulants had to sign in, have their picture taken, or rather, "become a number" as is said in today's developed world! Each member was given a folder which contained everything one needed in order not to become bored before the opening of the Chapter. Inside the folder were the official credentials with the seal of the Institute, signed by Brother Superior General and countersigned by the Brother Secretary General. Truly, the Preparatory Commission had done its work well.

Several Regions took advantage of the time there was before the Chapter began by getting to know one another: RELAF, RELAL, ARLEP...Others used this time to set up the display of their Region. Before the Chapter, each Region had been invited to prepare display materials. Brothers could be seen looking for thumbtacks or positioning a large poster...all so that the other sectors of the Institute could get to know the activities of each Region. The image of the Institute slowly became apparent. There was no panel assigned to award any first-place prize but the vitality of all the Regions of the Institute was clearly seen - it can be said that the Institute is alive and well everywhere. There was barely enough space for the memorabilia.

THE GENERAL CHAPTER STEP BY STEP

Monday 1 May - Official opening ceremony

- *It was 4:00 PM when the Assembly intoned the Veni Creator.*

Brother Secretary General gave some practical instructions before Brother Superior took the floor.

- *Brother Superior General's opening address*

Brother Superior made his intervention in the three official languages of the Institute, French, Spanish, and English. On the occasion of the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, he made an appeal for living a life of simplicity in solidarity with the workaday world. He stressed the meaning of a Chapter: we are gathered together as those responsible for the entire Body of the Institute. This Chapter should be, then, the effective expression of the unity that exists among us.

- *Signing the Chapter Register*

After his opening address of welcome, Brother Superior read the act which constituted the 43rd General Chapter. Then he called each member of the Chapter to come forward to sign the Chapter register. Brother Superior and the Councillors

signed first, followed by the Capitulants and the Brother Consultants. All were present and accounted for:

151 participants:

119 Capitulants: 8 members by right, 101 elected members and 10 appointed Capitulants.

9 non-voting Brother consultants.

23 Consultant Partners, who signed the register on May 8th.

- *The Chapter's "interim" officers*

Brother Superior, supported by the Rules of Procedure, then proposed to the Assembly an interim Secretary, Brother Alain Houry, and also an interim moderator, Brother André Dubuc from French-speaking Canada. Both were members of the Preparatory Commission. The Assembly ratified Brother Superior's choices.

- *Brother André Dubuc took charge immediately* and he invited Brother Ronald Gallagher, Secretary General, who was President of the Preparatory Commission, to present the work of this Commission to the Chapter. Brother Ronald reported that the Commission's work was outstanding in terms of how it classified notes, how it chose a theme to present to the Chapter, and in its practical and physical organization, as well as its translations...

- *After the reading of this report, the Capitulants watched a video entitled "Challenges."* It dealt with today's Institute and it was filmed on location in various countries where Brothers and partners face the challenges of the Lasallian mission in today's world. It also highlighted the Brother today, community life and the formation of the young.

- *Before proceeding to the Chapel for the opening Eucharistic Liturgy, Brother Superior presented three gifts* to the members of the Chapter: a six-decade rosary, the traditional rosary of the Institute, and FSC lapel pin, and a boxed set of Brother John Johnston's pastoral letters.



Signing the General Chapter's Register.

Tuesday 2 May

- At 7:00 AM we met in language groups for morning prayer.
- At 9:00 AM we all met in the Chapter Hall in General Assembly. Brother Superior invited us to reflect on the text of Romans 10: we are messengers of the Good News.

• *Language group meetings*

At 9:15 AM we gathered by language groups. The purpose of this meeting was to get to know one another.

• *Presentation of the Regions*

In the Chapter Hall the situation of each Region of the Institute was presented, along with some concerns and urgent issues. Regions were presented in the following order:

- The Region of Italy, presented by Brother Giuseppe Lazzaro,
- The PARC Region, presented by Brother David

Hawke,

- French-speaking Canada, by means of a video,
- RELAF (Region of Africa), by Br. Koassi Michel Messan, Aux. Vis. of the Gulf of Benin, and by Br. Emmanuel Alabi Babatunde.
- REBIM (Region Great Britain-Ireland- Malta), by the three persons in charge of the Region,
- France, presented by Brothers Jacques d'Huitemau, Visitor and Regional Coordinator, and Jean-François Morlier.
- ARLEP (Spain and Portugal), presented by text given to each Chapter member.
- USA/Toronto, presented by Br Robert Schieler,
- RELEC (Central Europe), presented by Brothers Aad Van Bentem, Regional Coordinator, and Jean-Pierre Berger,
- RELAL (Latin-America), presented by Brs Jardelino Menegat, Regional Coordinator, and Felipe Castellán.
- Mideast, presented by Brother Régis Claude Robbe, Visitor.

Wednesday 3 May

• *Report of the Brother Superior General*

At 9:00 AM, Brother Superior gave his report from the rostrum, surrounded by the six General Councillors, Brothers Álvaro Rodríguez, Martín Corral, Marc Hofer, Pierre Josse, Gerard Rummery, and Raymond Suplido.

After the opening prayer, Brother Superior offered a synthesis/commentary about the Report which each Brother had received some months before. The text of this intervention was distributed to the Chapter members. The first part dealt with the Lasallian charism and the need to clarify language in order to avoid confusion.

In the second part, Brother Superior concentrated on the Brother's mission, developing this thought along three aspects: faith education, educational service of the poor, and formation in social justice.

The third part of Brother's report dealt with issues of Central Government. Here he underscored the changes and evolution that had taken place since the Chapter of 1966-1967.

In his conclusion, he alluded to the possibility that the Chapter Assembly might ask pardon for the 320 years of infidelity...and of fidelity.

• *Language groups - Questions for the General Council*

After a break, the Capitulants met by language groups to prepare questions for the Brother Councillors.



Brother Superior General greets the Capitulants.



The General Council reports to the General Chapter.

- Each language group was asked to designate two representatives for the Central Commission and two for the Liturgy Commission.

For the Central Commission,

- the French-speaking group designated Brothers Hilaire Raharilalao and Nicolas Capelle,
- the English-speaking group designated Brothers Aidan Kilty and Emmanuel Alabi Babatunde,
- the Spanish-speaking group designated Brothers Genaro Sáenz de Ugarte and José Manuel Agirrezabalaga.

For the Liturgy Commission,

- the French-speaking group designated Brothers Thierry Bonneau and Fadi Sfeir,
- the English-speaking group designated Brothers Stanislaus Campbell and Anthony Cummings,
- the Spanish-speaking group designated Brothers Adalberto Gómez and Humberto Murillo.

• Inter-Regional meetings

The afternoon was devoted to inter-Regional meetings. Each Region of the Institute was to meet at least once with three other Regions. Simultaneous translation was available to facilitate the interchanges. The purpose for these meetings was to increase the Brothers' knowledge of the Regions and the specific issues important to each Region.

- After supper, Chapter members were invited to a meeting hosted by the District of San Francisco, for the purpose of envisioning the scenarios for the future of the Lasallian Mission in the world of education. The team that carried out this work, "Global Business Network", was present to help us dialogue.

Thursday 4 May

- During the morning's two General Assemblies, Brother Superior General and the Councillors

responded to the questions they had been given. The dialogue was very frank and the different interventions made for an interesting discussion. No problem was avoided. The General Council demonstrated that they knew the Institute very well indeed.

• Responses of the General Council

- Brother Pierre Josse responded to the issues raised concerning service to the poor.
- Brother Gerard Rummery dealt with the issue of faith education.
- Brother Superior also dealt with this topic, adding some words about the future of the Lasallian Mission in some countries such as France.
- Brothers Raymundo Suplido and Marc Hofer responded to questions concerning the "Mission 100 Plus" and the commitment of the Brothers and partners in mission countries.
- Issues about identity and visibility were also raised in the interventions of Brother Álvaro Rodríguez.
- Some questions concerning government and the report itself were clarified by Brother Martín Corral.

- ***The Rules of Procedure.*** The Rules of Procedure were discussed in light of the Chapter's work, both in Commissions and in General Assembly.

• Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

At 5:00 PM, meeting in General Assembly, after lengthy discussion and explanations, Chapters 1 to 4 and the Annex were approved.

- Brother Aad Van Bentem was the interim moderator for this part.

Friday 5 May

• Day of Recollection

At 9:00 AM we had a prayer service in the chapel. The principal focus of the prayer was that of communion: we gather together in Chapter to live out this communion. A page from Canon Blain, speaking about the name of Brother which the first teachers adopted when they changed the habit, accurately describes who we are. Brother Superior commented on this passage of Blain, stressing the words Brother and charity which should be the soul and the life of the Institute.

The celebration concluded with the singing of the Lasallian litany.

- The same atmosphere of reflection and prayer continued during the afternoon until 5:00 PM. At that time the Capitulants gathered together by language groups to talk about a central theme for the Chapter, to envisage the creation of certain commissions, and to designate some Brothers to fill the positions of moderator, scrutineers, secretaries, and chronicler.

Saturday 6 May

- **General Assembly**

The main focus this morning was the discussion concerning the Chapter's central theme.

- **The Chapter's central theme**

– The spokesperson for the Spanish-speaking group, Brother Francisco Andrade Ortiz, emphasized the great diversity of our Institute. When speaking of the concept of association in terms of our partners, it should not be forgotten that the Chapter is convened first of all for the Brothers. Therefore, there must be made mention of consecration and community. The Spanish-speaking group was satisfied with the theme.

– Brother Sean Sellors, speaking on behalf of the English-speaking group, was in agreement with the central theme as an excellent starting point.

– The French-speaking group had two spokespersons: Brothers Koassi Michel Messan and Jean-Pierre Berger. They thought that the function of a theme is that it be motivating, dynamic and integral. They suggested a theme that was slightly different and that would not ignore the richness of the colloquia but would in fact use this knowledge as well as ARLEP documents and also some of the scenarios from the District of San Francisco.

- **Committee of the Whole**

In order to facilitate the Chapter's work, the moderator suggested that the General Assembly meet as a Committee of the Whole for the purpose of discussion, as provided for in article 27 of the Rules of Procedure. This would allow the members to exchange opinions concerning the central theme. This discussion would not be binding on the Chapter. The Committee of the Whole could make recommendations to the interim Central Commission.

To lead this discussion Brother Hilaire Raharilalao was selected as moderator and Brother Aidan Kilty was chosen as assistant. Both were members of the Central Commission.

– Some were in favor of one central theme while others preferred a way that would respect more the

Chapter's own life.

– Many felt that they could identify with a theme that united consecration, association, and mission.

– Some Capitulants thought that the issue of faith education ought not to be forgotten as Brother Superior had pointed out in his comments.

– Others felt that the idea of educational service to the poor should be more strongly emphasized.

– Some suggested that there be more than one theme for the Chapter.

This brief discussion was very good and it served to help the Preparatory Commission guide the work of the 2nd phase, which began on May 8th.

- **End of the Preparatory Commission**

At 11:00 AM the work of the Chapter resumed. Brother Andre Dubuc took up his position as interim moderator and lead us as we discussed and then approved phases 2 - 6 of the Chapter, proposed by the Preparatory Commission. We then proceeded to elect the Chapter Officers.

- **Chapter Officers**

– The 4 Scrutineers suggested by the language groups were elected unanimously, by raising of hands.

* Brother Nicholas Gonzalez, from the District of New Orleans-Santa Fe.

* Brother Fadi Sfeir from the Mideast District.

* Brother Juan Fuentes Padilla, from the ARLEP.

* Brother Enrico Mueller, from Turin.

– The Chapter Coordinator: Brother Maurice Lapointe.

– The three moderators put forward by the three language groups:

* Brother Joseph Hendron for the English-speaking group.

* Brother José Antonio Diez de Medina for the Spanish-speaking group.

* Brother Claude Reinhardt for the French-speaking group.

– The Chapter Chronicler: Brother Bernard Collignon.

– The three Chapter Secretaries:

* Brother Alain Houry for the French-speakers.

* Brother Luis Timón for the Spanish-speakers.

* Brother Bryan Dybowski for the English-speakers.

• And so Brother Andre Duboc's work was finished. The Brother Coordinator, who had just been elected, took his place in front to complete the Assembly's work.

Brother Superior publicly thanked the members of the Preparatory Commission and the interim moderator for the Chapter's great beginning.



SUMMARY OF THE THEMES DISCUSSED BY THE GENERAL CHAPTER

Brother Claude Reinhardt

I

To give an overall view of the General Chapter, we thought it appropriate to use a presentation prepared by Brother Claude Reinhardt, General Councillor, for the Brothers of Ireland. In this presentation, Brother Claude briefly presented the key points of the Chapter.

This is his personal vision, but it no doubt is in line with the thinking of those who lived the Chapter experience.

For the Bulletin of the Institute, we chose this text for its precision and conciseness. We divided it into three parts so that it corresponds to the Chapter's three phases as well as to the three sections of this report.

A. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHAPTER

1. PREPARATION FOR THE CHAPTER

As indicated in the Rule, the Chapter was announced in a circular from the Superior General. A Preparatory Commission was set up with Br Ronald Gallagher as coordinator. The members of the commission represented the major cultural and linguistic regions of the Institute.

As part of the preparation, there were also the notes sent in to the Chapter by Brothers or groups of Brothers. There were many notes, differing in length and especially in their contents. Some concentrated on specific details of our life; others dealt with extremely important subjects, which deserve to be considered in greater detail in the years to come. These include the question of our identity, and our responsibility regarding the schools where there are no longer any Brothers. The question has been raised, however, whether, in preparation for the next Chapter, it might not be better to have the Brothers give their reactions to a report or a «discussion paper», instead of having them write such a variety of notes which, while clearly valuable, are not always easy to work from.

The other and, in my opinion, the most important contribution to the preparation was the report drawn up by Brother Superior and his Council. It was a very interesting and complete document, full of observations, questions and suggestions. It had taken a whole year to prepare, and the Capitulants appreciated greatly its up-to-date presentation. This major report was complemented by a short oral report by Brother Superior John Johnston, in which he indicated a number of clear distinctions that needed to be observed in the use of vocabulary and in questions of identity, when speaking of the Lasallian Family. In my opinion, this report had a marked effect on the tone and spirit of this Chapter.

2. SOME STATISTICS

Regarding the delegates, it is interesting to note that two-thirds of those attending the 43rd General Chapter had never attended a General Chapter before. This made it easier to try new ways of approaching problems and allowed for greater flexibility.

The presence of "young Brothers" as delegates or consultants at the Chapter was quite rightly noted and much appreciated. I shall return to this point later.

Another characteristic of this Chapter was its great fraternal spirit. This raised the following question for the capitulants and myself: how could we communicate something of this spirit? Documents are long and often lack warmth, and yet the success of this Chapter can be put down to a great extent to its fraternal spirit. This spirit was revealed in attitudes such as:

- the real interest shown in the presentations prepared by other Districts, and the respect shown for what others had to say;
- the serenity, respect and lack of «political» campaigns that characterised the elections;
- the agreement on what constitutes essentially the identity and mission of the Brother, which enabled the members of the commissions to make real progress in their work: and also the fact that most propositions secured a very high proportion of votes in favour, or unanimous approval.

3. A CENTRAL THEME

The Chapter did not take long to decide to adopt the theme proposed by the Preparatory Commission : “Associated for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21st century.”

Then the various commissions were set up. Initially these included lay consultants. With their departure, new commissions were formed to work on propositions and to present them to the plenary assembly for its approval. I shall simply give the names of these commissions:

The identity of the Brother / Formation / Urgent educational needs / Facing our demographic situation and promoting association for the educational service of the poor / Associated for the educational service of the poor / The government of the Institute / Communication / The Rule.

4. THE ELECTIONS

They took place in three stages: 1. Election of the Superior General; 2. Election of the Vicar General; 3. Election of the Councillors.

As I mentioned earlier, the elections as a whole took place in a spirit of grace and thanksgiving.

5. CHAPTER TEXTS

You were able to follow the various phases of the Chapter on Internet, thanks to the communication skills of Brother Donald Johanson and the Chroniclers. In addition, you have received the Chapter message in a form that is illustrated and pleasant to read.

The most important document is, of course, the official text of the propositions, and the process which led up to their acceptance by vote. There are therefore «normative» texts which will govern our work for the next 7 years; and there are texts I would call «inspirational» or «for reflection». These are the homilies given on the important feastdays, messages sent and received, such as, for example, the message from the Pope, personal statements, talks, meditations and shorter prayers - so many inspirational texts which helped to prepare the ground for decisions, and to build up the spirit of the Chapter I mentioned earlier.

I shall now describe in greater detail the work and results of the Chapter. I shall follow the same procedure for each of the different points: stating the case, quoting possibly from an “inspirational” text, and indicating the decision in the form of a recommendation or a voted proposition.



A partial view of the Chapter Hall during a general session.

B. OUR PRESENT-DAY SITUATION

1. FACTS

I should like to begin by stating a few facts mentioned by the capitulants. To these I shall add others, as well as a few personal observations. In this way I hope to «set the scene» before going on to deal with the Chapter propositions.

2. IN THE INSTITUTE

The demographic situation of our Institute could discourage us, seeing that

- 61% of the Brothers in the Institute are over 60 years of age.
- 7 Districts have an average age of over 70. In this group there are 1,794 Brothers.
- 8 Districts have an average age of under 45. In this group there are 375 Brothers.



Two General Chapter commissions at work in different rooms.



In economically developed countries, the vocations crisis affects almost all the apostolic religious congregations and all dioceses. The lay teaching congregations are particularly affected.

Some Brothers, and sometimes we ourselves, are tempted to be discouraged, and to doubt the value of a vocation like ours at the present time. You hear Brothers saying things like: «We're the last ones. What's the point of inviting others to join us?»

Some Brothers identify our vocation with our ability to run educational establishments, or with the volume of our work or the number of tasks we can accomplish. When we are no longer capable of this, they think that our identity is diminished.

Brothers, we need to see our international Institute in global terms. We have, of course, every right to feel sorrow at the lack of vocations in our Districts, but we should also rejoice at the hope and joy represented by our young Brothers. While they are far and few between in our own Districts, they are more numerous in poor countries and in other continents.

What is more - and this Chapter laid great stress on this, repeating what the 42nd Chapter had said before - our apostolate does not end when we reach the official retirement age. In fact, a commission was set up to consider the following topic: «Facing our demographic situation and promoting association for the educational service of the poor». I shall say more later about the propositions it made.



Two more views of the Chapter Hall during general sessions.

3. IN THE CHURCH

If we allowed ourselves to become discouraged, we could also complain about the lack of confidence placed in religious in certain dioceses, and about a lack of interest in some places, for our mission.

In certain dioceses in Belgium and France, for example, the diocesan control of Catholic education has become very powerful. Certain diocesan education directors, appointed by the bishops, are very happy to work with us and they recognise the contribution made by congregations. Others, on the contrary, understand or accept less easily the initiatives and the functioning of our congregational sponsorship.

4. IN OUR SOCIETY

We could become discouraged also on realising the difficulties involved in our apostolate at the present time. These include the rapid changes in young people's behaviour, the unreasonable demands of certain families, the status of our schools in various countries involving varying degrees of financial help or none at all. And this is not to mention the countries where Christians are a very small minority, or where other religions are not happy with their presence among them.

It was after taking all these different factors into consideration, that the capitulants identified a number of challenges that faced us in today's society. The purpose of this was to see how, with the force and resources we have at our disposal, we could attempt to provide a response in line with our charism. They identified four challenges:

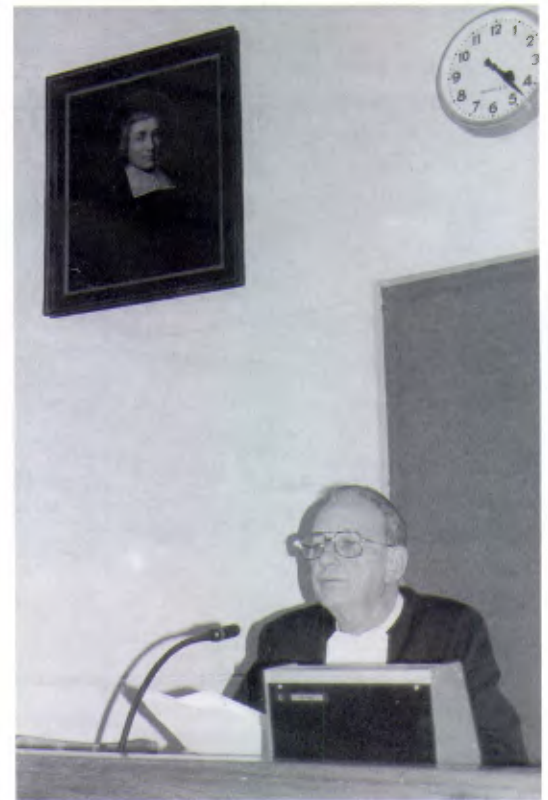
- the rights of the child
- educational renewal
- the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, where this is possible
- the Lasallian presence in multi-religious societies.



WELCOME TO THE 43rd GENERAL CHAPTER

1 May 2000

**Brother John Johnston,
Superior General**



**Intervention of Brother John Johnston,
Superior General.**

General Chapter Delegates and Consultants, as representative of all our Brothers, partners, and associates throughout the world, I welcome you to the 43rd General Chapter of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

I welcome you to the General Chapter of the Year of the Great Jubilee, the first Chapter of the new century and new millennium; the Chapter during which we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Proclamation of St. John Baptist de La Salle as Special Patron of all Educators of Children and Youth and the 100th anniversary of his canonization.

Labor Day (Festa del Lavoro)

In many parts of the world, including Italy, May 1 is Labor Day (or the Feast of Work), a day that reminds us that John Baptist de La Salle founded our Institute primarily for the children of artisans and of the poor.

Celebrations, marches, and demonstrations today help us remember that God is calling us to "solidarity" with people of the world of work.

The events of this day are reminders also that God is calling us to live simply as people of modest condition, to work for our livelihood, and to share the lot of the poor. (Rule, 32. 32a).

Feast of St. Joseph the Worker

To bring an explicit faith dimension to this day, the Church has instituted the feast of St. Joseph the Worker.

Joseph was indeed a worker, a laborer, an artisan. Every day he shared the lot of the poor. He earned his livelihood and supported his family as a carpenter.

In his Testament, dated four days before his death, St. De La Salle recommended that the Brothers have a special devotion to St. Joseph, whom he called the Patron and Protector of their Society. Consequently our Rule exhorts us to invoke St. Joseph, an exhortation that is particularly appropriate for us this afternoon. That same article of the

Rule proposes Joseph as a model for our whole life: Joseph, the man of confidence and faith in God; Joseph, the just man; Joseph, the humble man. With Mary he raised and educated Jesus. (Rule, 77)

The Founder reminds us that just as God made Joseph responsible for the welfare of Jesus, he has made us responsible for the children he confides to us. De La Salle urges us to imitate Joseph, "who had nothing more at heart than to provide for the needs of the Child Jesus." (Med. 110.3)

Logo

On the top of page one - and on many items and documents you will receive during these days - you note the official logo of the General Chapter, creation of Brother Felipe Ocadiz from the District of South Mexico, currently serving in Japan. We recognize in the logo

- 1) a star, which signifies the spirit of faith;
- 2) a Chinese character, which means very important;
- 3) the Cross of Christ, which reminds us of our identity as Christians;
- 4) a human figure with arms outstretched, sign of Lasallians striving to embrace as brothers and sisters all those confided to their care;

5) a figure pointing in all directions, symbolizing the unity in diversity of Lasallians;

6) a horn on the lower left, which signifies that God is summoning us to the service of the Church and the world;

7) a Mesoamerican symbol for "word" on the lower right, signifying the dialogue which must characterize the General Chapter;

8) the color blue, which reminds us of the waters of baptism.

This description does not exhaust the meaning of the logo. In prayerful meditation each of us can find in it his own meaning.

Union

Among the recommendations the Founder made to the Brothers in his Testament is a moving exhortation "to maintain an intimate union" among themselves.

We capitulants need to take this recommendation to heart, interpreting quite literally the words "intimate union."

This expression of De La Salle is not surprising. It is consistent with many passages of his meditations: "Union in a community is a precious gem, which is why our Lord recommended it to his apostles before he died. If we lose this, we lose everything . . . A community without charity and union is a hell . . . Preserve (union) with care, therefore, if you want your community to survive." (Med. 91.2, 65.1)

According to our Rule, the General Chapter is "constituted as an image of the whole Institute." It is the "ultimate expression of the communion that exists among all the Brothers."

Union among us as we strive to discern God's will is a precious gem. If we lose it, we lose everything. A General Chapter without charity and union would be a hell.

Preserve union with care, we can imagine our Founder saying to us today, if you want your General Chapter to succeed.

God in his Providence, that is to say, in his love and concern for the life and mission of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and of Lasallian partners and associates, has called us together as representatives of our Brothers. A few of us are here by right of office or appointment, but most have been elected by the Brothers of our sectors and sent to Rome as their delegates.

We are very aware of the great diversity that characterizes us: diversity of culture, race, language, political and economic realities. Religious situations are strikingly different. Diverse also is the average age of the Brothers: ranging from 42.4 years of age in one region to 75.1 in another. One region has 194 Brothers in temporary vows, while two regions have only one. We are conscious of our numerical diminution. We are perhaps not aware, however, that of some 500 religious institutes of men, we rank number six, after the Jesuits, Franciscans, Salesians, Capuchins, and Benedictines. Following us are the Dominicans, Divine Word Missionaries, Redemptorists, Marist Brothers, and Oblates of Mary Immaculate. As delegates we bring these realities to the General Chapter, together with the challenges, questions, and proposals of our Brothers.

Responsible for the entire Body of the Institute

This afternoon, however, we become capitulants. As capitulants we recognize, acknowledge, and accept responsibility, as the Rule says, "for the entire Body of the Institute." (Rule, 193)

It is our solemn duty, before God and before all the Brothers of the Institute, to make the decisions that we believe to be in the best interests of the entire Lasallian world. "Intimate union" among ourselves will enable us to enter into sincere dialogue.

We have come to this Chapter with positions resulting from our personal reflections and from those of our communities, districts/sub-districts/delegations, regions, and interregional precapitular meetings. We need to express these positions to our fellow capitulants, and we need to listen attentively and respectfully as they express their positions to us.



At the beginning of the General Chapter.

As Atticus Finch said in the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, we have to climb into one another's skin and walk around in it. Everyone must be convinced that he can say what he sincerely thinks and that his Brothers will listen to him carefully and take his views seriously, whether or not they agree with them.

It is obvious to all of us that a General Chapter is not a political convention or assembly. Nor is it an athletic contest that determines winners and losers. It is rather "the ultimate expression of the communion that exists among all the Brothers."

The Rule mandates the General Chapter to perpetuate "living fidelity to the special charism of the Institute." (Rule, 103) For this purpose we need to create a process that will enable all of us to leave the Chapter as winners; winners because we will have discerned together the will of God in our regard.

Very often the answer, decision, proposal or action for which we are searching emerges in the process we call "synergy." Synergy, according to my dictionary, is the cooperative action of distinct agencies, such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the effects taken independently.

Stephen Covey, writer on effective leadership, says that the process of synergy unleashes the greatest powers within people. It opens the mind and heart to new possibilities, new alternatives, new options. Results can be totally unexpected, but very satisfying. Synergy happens when relationships are grounded in love and intimate union, and when dialogue is sincere, open, and respectful.

That great document of the 39th General Chapter, popularly called *The Declaration*, was the fruit of synergy.

Prior to the Chapter, there was no movement to compose a document on the identity of the Brothers and their mission. It "happened" because the capitulants dialogued with one another in mutual respect. In the process, they opened their minds and hearts to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Sharing in the Body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread

In a few minutes we will celebrate the Eucharist - for the first time as the General Chapter community. The celebrant will be Archbishop Marcello Zago, Secretary of the Congregation of Evangelization. Archbishop Zago is former Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He was Special Secretary of the synod on consecrated life in 1994. I had the pleasure of working

with him as Assistant Special Secretary.

"The mystery of the Eucharist energizes every aspect of the Brother's life." (Rule, 70) We want this Eucharistic celebration this evening to energize each of us. In the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we really share in the body of the Lord.

Christ Jesus gathers us in communion with him and in communion with one another. He sends his Spirit upon us and "mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation." (LG 7) "As there is one loaf, so we, although there are many of us, are one single body, for we all share in the one loaf." (I Cor 10:17).

We are the sign of the communion that exists among all our Brothers.

As capitulants we have the duty, as the Rule says, of perpetuating "living fidelity to the special charism of the Institute." That is another way of expressing what I tried to say in my pastoral letter for this Jubilee Year: *The Challenge: Live Today our Founding Story*.

The 43rd General Chapter is a Providential means to help us, our partners, and our associates to live faithfully and dynamically today the charism the Spirit bestowed upon John Baptist de La Salle, the charism manifested so poignantly in our founding story.

Brothers, we know that Christ will take us into communion with him and with one another, and that he will make us his body.

In union with him and with one another, let us stand before the Father with arms outstretched and pray: Speak, Lord, your servants are listening. Lord, we have come to do your will. What will you have us to do?

The Rule exhorts us to learn docility to the Spirit from the total yes of Mary, Mother of Jesus.

Four weeks ago the General Council again made a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Good Counsel at Genazzano. Our intention was to pray for the General Chapter through Mary's intercession. Together this afternoon, let us pray:

Our Lady of Good Counsel, pray for us.

*St. John Baptist de La Salle,
our beloved father and founder,
pray for us.*

Live Jesus in our hearts!

Forever.

**Homily given by Archbishop M. Zago OMI
Opening Mass of the Chapter of the Brothers
of the Christian Schools
May 1st - St Joseph the Worker**

The two readings in today's liturgy describe for us two aspects of the life of St Joseph, the husband of Mary and foster father of Christ. The Gospel recalls the setting in which he lived: the small town of Nazareth, his work as a carpenter, his relations with his extended family composed of parents and cousins, his simple status. He fitted into his human and religious setting without drawing much attention to himself. And it was there that Jesus grew up. When he showed his exceptional knowledge and acted in an extraordinary way, the people of his town were shocked, because they identified him with his setting.

The first reading, taken from the letter to the Colossians, describes Joseph's soul, the motives for his actions, his philosophy of life. Joseph had not experienced the paschal mystery lived by faith, although he had some flashes of light, such as in his dream of the angel, in some of the signs of glory surrounding Jesus' birth, in the visit of the Magi and shepherds, in the wisdom shown by the adolescent Jesus, in his relations with them, and in the progressive discovery of who the son was, who had been entrusted to his care. Jesus became increasingly the centre of family life. If we read the passage from the Colossians, applying it to Joseph, there emerges a whole spirituality of the Kingdom that Jesus would proclaim in his public life, but which already existed in his hidden life. And, above all, it is easy to understand that Jesus was at the centre of Joseph's life: and Joseph sought to understand and live out the mystery that had been revealed to him obscurely.

A man of his times, centred and rooted in the love of Jesus, these were two aspects of Joseph's life.

These two aspects, suggested by the readings and by the example of Joseph, are important also for the renewal that every General Chapter has to discern and propose to the Institute, in accordance with its own charism.

First of all, one needs to take as a starting point, or take into account, the context in which one lives. Just as Jesus became embodied in a family, in a village, in a culture, so as to transform it from the inside, so also every charism is not only born, but also grows and bears fruit if it takes into account its own context; if it responds to its challenges and to its deepest expectations. We know that today, the socio-cultural context is changing rapidly and profoundly everywhere. The charism must be embodied in it so that it can transform it, just as Jesus did. The young people of today live in times that are different from those of St John Baptist de La Salle. They need to be reached in their context so that they can be evangelised and helped to live according to the values of the Kingdom.



Opening of the General Chapter.
The Capitulants walk in procession
to the Founder's Church for the Eucharistic Liturgy.

The second condition necessary for the charism to grow and live is that it be lived in the charity of Christ. When the Vatican Council spoke of the variety of charisma, it saw them as an expression of the activities and attitudes of Jesus: "Religious must take every care that through them the Church is everyday more successful in presenting Christ to the faithful and to unbelievers: Christ in contemplation on the mountain, proclaiming the Kingdom of God to the crowds, healing the sick and infirm, converting sinners, blessing children, and doing good to everyone, obedient to the will of the Father who sent him" (LG 46).

In other words, the Christian mission is always a way of pursuing the mission of Christ. You continue the mission of Jesus, you announce that mission to children and young people. You are his collaborators. He is the main one who acts. For this reason, Christ is at the centre not only of your spirituality, but also of your concrete mission. And the admonishment of Paul to the Colossians takes on its full meaning for the De La Salle Brother and for all the Lasallian Family: "Show yourselves thankful. Whatever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him...Serve the Lord Christ"

I cannot end this homily without expressing my appreciation for your Lasallian vocation. One of the major challenges of the mission today is the authentic education of young people. The encyclical on the missions calls it the "Areopagus" of today's mission, to indicate the challenges involved, the need to understand young people and value them, and to find the ways and means of reaching them. On this Areopagus, often there converge so many other areopagoi, such as, those of the media, of poverty, of immigration, etc., all of them indicated as challenges for today's mission. Everywhere, the Church sees young people needing to be evangelised. And among young people are to be had the most beautiful experiences. The Pope sets us an example. The greatest contribution we can make to the Church today is to put into practice the insights of St La Salle.

May Mary and Joseph help you.

May the numerous saints and martyrs of the Lasallian family be a model and an incentive for you.



Monsignor Zago receives the gifts for the Eucharistic Liturgy.

“BROTHERS” the name that fits us best

Day of Recollection - 5 May 2000

Brother John Johnston, Superior General

We do not often read Canon Blain for insight into the meaning and significance of our vocation. Nor do we normally read him for inspiration to live our consecration to God more wholeheartedly. Nevertheless, I think the passage we have just heard is remarkable. Canon Blain provides us with valuable information and expresses himself in language that is clear and, in my opinion, moving. Moreover, for us, capitulants and consultants, this passage is pertinent and challenging.

Some of the early disciples of John Baptist de La Salle discerned that God was calling them to live a new and still evolving form of consecration to God as educators of poor children. They stopped “vacillating” and said yes to the Lord. They adopted “uniformity of lifestyle and equality in all things” and “joined together to form a single body.” They conducted schools not for financial gain but “gratuitously.” They ran their schools in such a way “that Jesus Christ might reign in them.”

To witness to their new understanding of themselves, they adopted a unique garb. This innovation, according to Blain, led to a change of name. They decided that “schoolmasters,” usually applied “to those who practice this profession for gain,” was no longer “fitting.” They concluded that the name that fit them best and “belonged to them” was “Brothers.” It was a name that “nature gives to children who share the same blood and the same father on earth, and which in religion describes those who have the same spirit and the same Father in heaven.” Consequently, Blain says, they took the name “Brothers.” They called their new society “Brothers of the Christian and Gratuitous Schools.”

Blain gives us his personal judgment of the Brothers’ choice. He writes that “this appellation is the correct one, because it encompasses the definition of their state and indicates the mission proper to their vocation.” That is a sentence that warrants reflection. The very word “Brothers,” he says, embodies the meaning of their vocation and mission. It teaches the Brothers the excellence and “dignity of their state, and the holiness proper to their profession.” Furthermore, the name reminds them “that the charity which gave birth to their Institute must be its soul and life.”

These words recall the title of the first of the Meditations for the Time of Retreat: “That God in his Providence has established the Christian Schools.”

God in his Providence, that is to say, in love and concern for children marginalized and even excluded by poverty, enlightened the hearts of certain persons, calling them to give a Christian education to poor children. Blain is correct, therefore, when he says that “charity gave birth” to the Institute and that “charity” must be its “soul and life.”

Brother John Johnston carries the report to the General Chapter, published in three languages, to the altar.



In language that I find surprising, Blain writes that the title the Brothers adopted “tells” them that “they owe each other mutual proofs of tender but spiritual friendship.” It also “says” to them “that considering themselves as the elder brothers of the children who come to be taught by them, they should exercise this ministry of charity with truly loving hearts.” The first part of this quotation has encouraged not only the Brothers but all Lasallian teachers today to be older brothers and sisters to their youth. The second part of the quotation, however, deserves to be better known.

Like De La Salle himself, Blain refers to the education of children as a “ministry,” and more specifically, a “ministry of charity.” It is a ministry, he writes, that the Brothers must exercise with “loving hearts.”



Canon Blain’s reflection on the effect that this charity should have on the life of the Brothers is extraordinarily timely and appropriate for us this morning: “Charity,” he wrote, “should govern all their deliberations and animate all their projects; it should inspire all their decisions, rule all their undertakings, govern all their words and deeds.”

The passage which is the object of our meditation this morning calls to mind our Rule, which describes the Brothers as men united in one spirit, brothers among themselves, brothers to the adults with whom they are in contact, older brothers to the young people confided to their care, brothers to all.

The passage reminds us also of John Paul II’s strong affirmation of the vocation of the Brother. The term “brother,” he says, “suggests a “rich spirituality”: a spirituality of living as brothers of Jesus Christ, brothers of one another, brothers to everyone, “especially the lowliest, the neediest.” It is a spirituality that invites us to dedicate ourselves to “greater brotherhood in the Church.” Furthermore, he writes, “As they live their vocation, Brothers “proclaim to all the Lord’s words: You are all brothers and sisters.” (Mt. 23:8, Vita Consecrata, 60)

General Chapter capitulants and consultants, with John Baptist de La Salle and the early Brothers we share the “same blood,” the “same spirit” and the “same Father in heaven.” They decided that the name “Brothers was the one that fit them best.” Throughout our history this name has served us well. It helped our predecessors and it has helped us appreciate the excellence, the dignity of our state, and the holiness proper to our profession.

We are proud to be Brothers. We thank God for choosing us. We accept with gratitude and humility the privilege and responsibility of being capitulants and consultants. We ask God to fill us with the charity that gave birth to our Institute, the charity that today must be its soul and life. We ask God for the enlightenment we need to make decisions that will help our Brothers, our partners, and our associates to live today our founding story. That, Brothers, is what this General Chapter is all about.

Amen.



THE SECOND PART OF THE CHAPTER

Objectives and Commissions

With the addition of the 23 Partner Consultants, the General Chapter reached its full compliment of 151 members and began work in Phase 2 on May 8. The general objective for this phase of the Chapter was the discussion of the overall Mission of the Institute, and especially all aspects in which our partners are implicated. The question of **Association** in today's Institute was foremost among the topics considered.

The Chapter voted on May 8 to adopt as theme for the Chapter the statement proposed by the Preparatory Commission: **Associated for the service of the poor through education as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21st century.** On May 9, the following work Commissions were accepted by the Assembly:

Commission 1	Association
Commission 2	For the service of the poor through education
Commission 3	Evangelisation
Commission 4	Formation
Commission 5	Structures of Accompaniment and Animation
Commission 6	Governance

THE GENERAL CHAPTER STEP BY STEP

• Beginning of the second phase

On Monday, May 8th, with the arrival of the partner consultants, the Chapter entered its second phase. The first phase was a time for important listening in order to know the realities and the challenges of the Institute at the beginning of the new century. During the second phase Chapter members made propositions which took into account these challenges and realities that we had discovered.

• General Assembly

The second phase of our work began. At 9:00 AM Brother Maurice Lapointe began his duties as Chapter Coordinator. Brother Claude Reinhardt was the moderator for this session. He invited the consultants to introduce themselves and then to sign the participant register for the 43rd General Chapter.

• CIL 2000

Brothers Adalberto Aranda and Jon Lezámiz

from the CIL staff spoke about the last CIL session on "mission at the service of the poor." They stressed the importance of the experience of the two months that preceded the CIL session.

• *The colloquia*

Brother Nicolas Capelle then highlighted what he termed the "strong tendencies" of the five colloquia.

– Controlled economies: the importance of large companies, corruption, tax havens, the movement of assets, drugs...

– Instability: working conditions, unemployment, poverty...

– The person: individuals find themselves alone in facing life's great questions. The future of mankind becomes a concern.

– Families: profound changes in families everywhere; in the case of the young, parents sometimes rely too much on schools.

- **Video: The Lasallian Mission**

After our break we saw a second video, entitled, "The Lasallian Mission", which depicted the work of the Brothers throughout the world.

- **Axis or central theme**

At the end of the morning, Brother Coordinator Maurice Lapointe presented the Central Commission's plan for helping the discussion concerning the theme and concerning commissions. The theme had been altered during the exchanges and was now an axis rooted in challenges. After the discussion on Tuesday, May 9, the initial proposal of the Preparatory Commission was again brought back: "Associated for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response for the 21st century."

- ***Listening to the partners***

The first afternoon session was devoted to listening to the lay partners, religious and the representative from the Union of Catechists.

- ***Formation of the commissions***

The Preparatory Commission had made concrete proposals concerning commissions. The different language groups had reached almost the same results.

The Central Commission, which had the different lists, proposed the establishment of six commissions:

1. ASSOCIATES: 34 members.
2. FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF THE POOR: 32 members.
3. EVANGELIZATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE: 23 members.
4. FORMATION: 24 members.
5. ACCOMPANIMENT AND STRUCTURES FOR ANIMATION: 13 members.
6. GOVERNMENT OF THE INSTITUTE: 23 members.

Two other commissions would eventually be formed at the beginning of the third phase on May 16th.

7. PUBLIC MESSAGE FROM THE CHAPTER.
8. FINANCES.

- ***Work in Commissions***

On May 9 in the afternoon the work in commissions began. Brother Claude Reinhardt gave the work outline before members went to their commissions: statements, observations and propositions. Commission work took several days. Assembly discussion was due to begin on Tuesday, May 16, at the morning session.

- **Sunday, May 14, vocation Sunday** and vigil for the feast of Saint John Baptist de La Salle; at 7:00 PM there was a prayer vigil that had been organized by the liturgy commission.

- **Monday, May 15, Feast of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.** This was a break day. We met in the chapel for a common prayer in three languages.

- ***The Pope's message***

At 9:00 AM there was a brief general assembly. Brother Superior began the session with reading Article 1 from the Rule, after which he read a prayer from the Mass of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Then he read a message from the Pope on the occasion of the centenary of the canonization of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the fiftieth anniversary of his being proclaimed *Special patron of all teachers*.

- ***Visit to the Brothers' schools in Rome***

The Brother Capitulants were divided into five groups for visiting the Brothers' schools.

The English-speaking group visited *Villa Flaminia* with Brother Enrico Mueller. The Spanish-speaking group went to *Istituto Pio IX* with Brothers Gerard Rummery and Pierre Josse. The French-speaking group went to the *Istituto de Merode*, located at the Spanish Steps with Brother Rodolfo Meoli. The other two groups went to *Istituto Pio XII* by car with Brother Martín Corral and Jacques D'Huitemau and a Spanish-speaking group went to *Colle La Salle*.

- ***Mass for the Feast of St. John Baptist de La Salle***

At 6:00 PM the Eucharistic Liturgy was held and it was presided by Cardinal Pappalardo, the emeritus archbishop of Palermo. He had been affiliated to the Institute in 1964.

In his homily the Cardinal highlighted some of the important aspects of our life: stability and association.

- ***Presentation of commission work***

On Tuesday, May 16 at 9:00 AM we listened to the reports from the various commissions, in this order:

- Commission 4: Formation.
- Commission 3: Evangelization.
- Commission 1: Associated today for the educational service of the poor.
- Commission 2: Educational service of the poor.
- Commission 5: Structures of animation and accompaniment.
- Commission 6: Government.

- ***Exchanges with the Brother Bursar General and Brother Noël Bois of SECOLI***

On Thursday, May 18, Brother Jordi Oller, Bursar General, and Brother Noël Bois responded to questions from the Assembly concerning financial matters. The responses were clear and satisfactory. Their report was especially clear and well done.

- ***Meeting of lay partners***

During this time the lay partners met among themselves to draw up their message to the Brothers.

- ***Second commission report***

Those Commission that had to revise their propositions met again at various times and on Friday, May 19 the second round of presentations began.

- ***Closing of the Chapter's 2nd phase: gratitude for the lay partners and their departure***

This "official" ceremony began at 5:00 PM in the Chapter Hall.

Ms. Bernadette Albert Labbad said a few words on behalf of the consultants. She thanked the Chapter for its hospitality, lived fraternity, and the exchange of ideas. She stressed the difficulties of an assembly of this type: its inter-cultural nature which make difficult a single message; the search for a language which is clear and solid for all.

The Partners left with some convictions in terms of association among Brothers and Partners and they left us some suggestions for following Chapters.

Then several partners shared their impressions of the two weeks they had spent in Rome. As a remembrance of these days, they left us a very large candle inscribed with the Chapter logo.

We then recited together, each in his own language, a prayer of commitment to shared mission.

Brother Superior concluded: In our time, the charism of De La Salle no longer belongs exclusively to the Brothers. Other persons live it out as well, such as those associated with us.

- ***Events during the General Chapter***

Various events occurred during this second phase of the Chapter:

- ***XVI Lasallian Games for the Region of Italy***

Capitulants were invited to attend the opening ceremony of the Lasallian Games. The ceremony took place on the grounds of the school next door. The ceremony, which was very colorful, was

presided by the Brother Superior General.

- ***Visit to San Egidio***

On Thursday, May 11, the members of the Chapter visited the San Egidio Community. The Institute and Brother Superior have close ties with this community of lay persons that was formed in 1968.

To begin the visit, we were presented with the nature of this very special community: lay persons who gather together to pray and meditate on the Gospel and to live it out in their daily lives. A video, as well as interchanges with some members from this community, allowed us to get to know a little about San Egidio from the inside.

We participated in their evening prayer service at the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere.

- On Friday, May 19, Chapter members were pleased to find on top of their desks a "Spring Marathon" cap from the great demonstration in support of Catholic Schools in Italy. The caps were compliments of Brother Giuseppe Lazzaro.

- There was also a letter from the children who participated in the XVI Lasallian Games. This letter contained words which said everything about what young people expect from us today: "You are our hope."

- Each Capitulant and Consultant also found in their places a copy of a book by Ms. Elena Trucchi, entitled: "*Omaggio de Charles Gounod a Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*". Ms. Trucchi spoke to us about the book and gave us each a copy. Her mother, Mariella Trucchi, for her part, explained how Gounod had become fascinated by the personality of De La Salle, to the point where he composed three musical pieces in honor of the Saint.

- A more simple token, but more moving as well, was the card with the Chapter logo on it that was made with banana tree bark by 13-18 year old children from the Intiganda Center for street children in Butare, Rwanda. This center has been administered by the Brothers since 1989 and currently serves 70 children.



II

C. A THEME, CHALLENGES AND OUR PROPOSITIONS

The theme chosen by the Chapter was the one proposed by the preparatory commission. It was chosen after discussion, each word having a special importance:

«ASSOCIATED FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF THE POOR AS THE LASALLIAN RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY»

1. We have been **ASSOCIATED** for a long time now, and our Institute has a rich tradition and a deep understanding of association.

On June 6th 1694, John Baptist de La Salle and 12 companions formed an association to consecrate their lives to God through the Christian education of poor children.

The last three Chapters have increasingly laid stress on association:

the 40th Chapter undertook a serious study of the origin of the vow of association;

the 41st Chapter turned its attention to the Lasallian Family;

the 42nd Chapter considered the question of the Shared Mission.

The Church, in line with Vatican II, continues to remind all baptised persons that their Christian life has a missionary dimension, and John Paul II, during the private audience for the capitulants on June 9th last, had the following to say:

«Your recent Chapters have enabled you to reflect on the participation of lay persons who wish to associate themselves with your mission, and live, in their own way, according to the Lasallian charism. I am particularly interested in this form of collaboration which makes it possible to join forces for more effective missionary action. The presence of lay people at your side is a clear indication of the increasingly important role they are called to exercise in the life of the Church».

With a view to promoting association, the Chapter adopted a number of propositions. I shall quote two of them:

Proposition 1

In order to encourage and support the development of Lasallian association for the educational service of

the poor:

That in the next seven years, each Region, District, Sub-District and Delegation decide on practical steps to promote the creation and development of groups of Partners and/or Associates and Brothers, as well as Partners and/or Associates among themselves, which will reflect on their identity in the context of the Lasallian mission, and to develop forms of association.

Proposition 3

That Brother Superior General and his Council, in consultation with the Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations, organise an international meeting of Brothers, Partners and Associates, around the year 2004, with a view to:

- sharing experiences of association
- analysing and evaluating the implementation of the process of association; and
- presenting plans of action for the next General Chapter.

That, after this meeting, the Centre of the Institute publish a report describing the experiences of association that are most original and significant.

We are associated **FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF THE POOR**: this is the second part of our central theme.

The origin of our Institute and the formula of the vows by which we consecrate ourselves are clear.

In certain situations, however, we are far from the direct service of the poor. In many cases, this is due to the rapid development of our schools, and to local and historical circumstances, which we are not going to judge.

During the Chapter, the presentation of the Regions of the Institute was very useful, because it showed all the efforts that had been made in the last few years to serve the poor, by creating new works, or by courageous changes of direction adopted by existing establishments. Another encouraging factor has been the discovery that the young people we have invited to collaborate with us in our social or educational work, have discovered the Lasallian spirit in these experiences.

The Chapter had the following to say regarding this:

Orientation

...The following appear to be the characteristics which will allow us to identify a work as Lasallian in respect to the educational service of the poor:

- adopting an educational programme on justice and solidarity, which will give a specific direction to the activities undertaken, to the experiences proposed to the young people, and to the kind of relationships that are built up;
- thinking of ways (facilities and pedagogical strategies) to make these centres accessible and effective for young people in difficulty;
- creating ways so that poor youth and their families feel welcome and at ease in our institutions.

Proposition 12

In view of advancing the educational service of the poor, the General Chapter requires the Visitors of Districts...and their Councils to evaluate the degree to which the work of the District...contributes to the educational service of the poor. The analysis of this evaluation ought to result in an action plan ...

2. RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND SERVICE OF THE POOR

This was another challenge the Chapter considered. It was one that our former Superior General, Brother John, had very much at heart, having become aware of the problems that existed on his journeys all over the world.

This is a cause taken seriously by many associations and organisations. We cannot remain insensitive to this question. In many countries where our Brothers are working, the rights of children are ignored, resulting in child labour, financial exploitation, prostitution. And in the developed countries of the West, the lives of many children are afflicted by serious shortcomings: broken or non-existent families, orphans, children victims of moral or physical violence.

And to the rights of children, we could add that of being brought up and educated in peace!

Here is one of the propositions adopted by the Chapter

Proposition 14

In order that the rights of the child be considered as

a major focus of concern for the Lasallian mission of education during the next seven years, each District...should include this question in its plan of action. It will appoint at least one Brother or partner who will help it:

- to cooperate with local organisations which work to promote the rights of the child;
- to detect local violations of the rights of children;
- to alert local authorities when children's rights are violated,
- to ensure that its schools and universities teach and observe the rights of the child,
- to maintain contact with the secretariat for the educational mission.

This project will be evaluated periodically.

The rights of the child are linked with the service of the poor. If we are to identify the needs of children from poor or low-income families, we too need to live as persons of modest means. The Chapter invites us to do so in

Recommendation 6

As a way of encouraging personal and community conversion, each District sets up a structure which will enable Brothers and communities to examine to what extent they live as persons of modest means, and have contact with such persons (living standard, kinds of relationships, access to communities and schools, involvement in social and educational activities). It evaluates also how the concern for the educational service of the poor influences the way it administers its goods.

Districts must allow their youngest Brothers to feel free to devote themselves to the service of the poor, as we read in

Proposition 22

In order to enable Brothers, especially the younger Brothers, to choose to work in the educational mission of the poor, and to lead a meaningful community life, each District, at its next District Chapter

- will evaluate the present work of the Brothers in the establishments and the governing structures of the District;
- will draw up a plan reflecting future changes in the deployment of Brothers in existing establishments and in those still to be created;
- will determine what needs changing in the governing structures of the District.

3. EDUCATIONAL RENEWAL

Whenever we consider the people our mission is intended for - by preference, the poor, children from working-class and modest-income families, those who are most at risk in our society - we must also give some thought to the way we teach, to our pedagogical approach, to the kind of educational service we provide in our schools and in our more specialised centres, in more than 80 countries in the world.

In a society characterised by great technological changes, by instantaneous communication and access to information, by relativism regarding values and points of view.

What actually are we teaching?

What intellectual training do we offer? What intellectual structures?

What kind of school community are we creating? Is it a human and welcoming community which forms its pupils? Is it also one that is Christian?

The thinking of the Chapter on these questions was stimulated by the homily of Fr Cloupet who, before being Secretary General of Catholic Education in France, had spent many years in the classroom.

Despite the new kinds of problems which beset young people and families today, despite the kind of behaviour we find difficult to understand and accept, we have to hold tight to the conviction that education, when it is inspired by faith and undertaken with the professional conscience of a Christian, can be an apostolate. This is what Fr Cloupet reminded us of. I quote:

«The genius, inspired by the Spirit, of the person the anniversary of whose canonisation we are celebrating today, consisted in realising that teaching offered marvellous apostolic possibilities. It was a very significant decision that Canon De La Salle made at Easter 1680 when he invited to his table the teachers of the neighbouring little school which had recently opened: he made the role of the teacher a valuable factor in the mission».

The Chapter adopted a number of positions vis-a-vis educational renewal:

Recommendation 10

That the Districts and Regions organise continuing formation programmes for Brothers and Lasallian Associates and Partners, which will enable them to respond positively to the rapid, profound and worldwide changes that affect modern society.

Recommendation 11 (extract)

That ...all Lasallian establishments stress in their educational programmes the following characteristics

which should identify them clearly as being ours:

- a) the sense of community and fraternity as a response to individualism and loss of identity;
- b) the fight against poverty and situations of injustice;
- c) education for justice and peace, tolerance and solidarity;
- d) formation of persons who are both just and free.

Recommendation 12 (extract)

Undertake new projects in the field of literacy.

Proposition 15 (extract)

That the Institute secretariat for the educational mission, using current means of communication, establish a network of Brothers and Lasallian Partners. The purpose of this network will be to share information, ideas and research in the following areas.

- the rights of the child;
- the means for developing educational communities which are fraternal and rooted in the Gospel;
- pedagogical innovation, schemes for educating and evangelising.

4. EVANGELISATION AND EXPLICIT PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

As you are well aware, this is an area in which the society of one country can be very much different from another. I don't know if Ireland is a very Catholic country. Statistics published in the papers show that there is a rapid decrease in religious practice among young people in your country. In France, those who go to Mass regularly are a small minority. However, is it possible to measure faith, or at least interest in spiritual life and the search for God? The answer, of course, is no.

The recent World Youth Days in Rome showed us that our criteria and our language are out of date, and reflect less and less the reality and concerns of young people today. Youth pastoral work, as traditionally practised in parishes and schools, has to change its methods and approach. John Paul II, despite his age, has proved to be a sound pedagogue: as early as 1985, he realised the importance and impact of vast international gatherings, and especially in his two main homilies during the Rome World Youth Days in 2000, he found just the right way to speak to the young people. If you listened carefully, you will have noticed that his homilies were composed in the form of a dialogue. He took as his model Jesus speaking directly to the individual, to each individual and, in this case, to each young man and woman. This model could be good for us too.

To proclaim Jesus Christ is difficult, but we cannot stop trying. Did he not come for each one of our brothers and sisters? Does not the Gospel have to be preached to the poor?

In this connection also, I'd like to quote from Father Cloupet's homily on May 24th last:

«My friends, do not worry if in this country or that, you are less numerous: be worried, on the other hand, if your apparently prosperous houses, with their fine reputation, and much appreciated even by an elite clientele, if these houses do not proclaim, or do so too imperfectly, the Good News of Jesus the Saviour...There is a silence that is culpable, pusillanimity that is criminal The poor that lived in Rheims in the 1680's can still be found today in Recife, Fiji, Madras, San Francisco, Marseilles or in Istanbul - children without education loose on the streets. But there are other children also - those who live in the fashionable parts of New York or Paris, Beirut or Tokyo. For these, often, life has no meaning; their difficulties in deciding what to be are much greater than simply finding a job. What they experience is a new and arid form of poverty: an absence of meaning in continuing to live. Following the example of your holy Founder, you must once again go out to meet them, find the kind of language that gets through to them; understand their new requests and needs. One can be completely destitute from one point of view, but very well provided for from another. Christian schools - yours - profess to promote human growth through an untiring search for truth and love. They must clearly and effectively show their willingness to draw up their educational programme, based on a Christian understanding of man, so that it will contribute to the building up of a society that accepts the spiritual dimension of the individual and of history».

To renew and give new impetus to the proclamation of the Gospel, the Chapter adopted the following proposition:

Proposition 16

That, before the end of 2001, each Regional Coordinator, in coordination with those responsible for Districts..., establish a commission for the stimulation and education of faith, whose task will be:

- to study ways and means of adapting our language and our methods of educating in the faith to the culture of young people in the 21st century;**
- to share information about existing projects as well as available resources so as to help and encourage Brothers and Partners involved in faith education;**
- to find ways of including in school programmes and/or in pastoral programmes social activities to help**

the poor;

- to offer practical suggestions regarding the training and guidance of Brothers and Partners involved in faith education....**

Moreover - as we know well - our Institute has a long tradition of extra-curricular activities, of running holiday camps and retreat groups, of involving young people in social, educational and catechetical work, and running sports activities. Many young people rediscover their faith by committing themselves to this work, and some discover their vocation and opt for a profession with social dimensions. It is by their involvement with the Brothers in missionary activities as young Lasallian volunteers, in the service of poor children and in social centres, that some young people have discovered their vocation to be Brothers.

In this connection, the Chapter adopted

Proposition 13

That each District...urged on by the person responsible for the sector, establish...a commission to provide reflection, leadership and coordination of organisations which, in our institutions, work with and for young people. This commission, having in view the faith development and apostolic commitment of young people, will be responsible for

- directing and coordinating structures responsible for the pastoral ministry of youth;**
- creating and running Lasallian youth groups;**
- providing initial and continuing formation for those accompanying youth groups.**

(With a report and evaluation)

I shall take this opportunity to say a few words about Lasallian youth movements.

This involves communicating to the older students of our schools and centres the spirit of the holy Founder. Some of these young people have shown interest and have accepted the invitation of a Brother or lay Lasallian to take part, even in a modest way, in social or educational work in their own country or abroad. For others, their commitment is stronger, more intense and more long-lasting. At the present time, in certain countries and certain Districts, young Lasallians are more organised, meeting regularly and undertaking projects together. After a number of national and European assemblies in the last few years, the Rome World Youth Days this summer enabled the young Lasallians lodged at the Generalate to become aware of the international Lasallian network.

The next World Youth Days will be held in Toronto in August 2002.

The Canadians are planning to hold two meetings. The first will be for the leaders of Lasallian youth groups, in Quebec; and the second, the World Youth Days properly so called in Toronto. It should be an opportunity to strengthen the cohesion and structure of the movement.

5. THE IDENTITY OF THE BROTHER

Regarding our identity in the Church, in the world and among ourselves, the Chapter formed a commission to go more deeply into the question over the next few years.

Notes were sent in to the Chapter asking capitulants to examine in greater detail the question of vows, our association and our community life.

Personally, I'm very happy with what the Rule says, approved as it was by the Church. I'm happy also with what I read in Canon Law, which classifies us clearly as one of the Religious Institutes which, with the Secular Institutes, constitute the Institutes of Consecrated Life. The articles of the Code of Canon Law which concern us in particular are N° 573 to 709.

But it is more enriching and more stimulating for us and for our ongoing renewal to remember and be grateful for the founding moments of our «Society»:

- the vow of association made by De La Salle and the 12 Brothers in 1694.
- the difficulties experienced by De La Salle and the first Brothers
- their achievements
- the apostolic and individual fervour which led them to make a hazardous commitment in a stable society.

We may have problems or doubts concerning who we are, the possibility of fulfilling our mission today, the effective support of some members of the clergy; we may regret losing the control of some of our establishments, and that our vocation is little appreciated by Christians and young people. And so we need to ask ourselves what we have done and what we are doing now to live our lives as Brothers of the Christian Schools in a worthy manner.

At the beginning of the Chapter, on May 3rd, the second report given by Brother Superior John Johnston made a most valuable contribution to our reflection on our identity. I really think that, as Brother John said, we must avoid at all costs a lack of clarity and confusion regarding our identity. It would be pointless talking about the vocations ministry if our own ideas were confused, if our community were only a «fortuitous association» (expression used by Judith Merkle quoted by Brother John).

Even though the quotation is somewhat long, I should like to quote two paragraphs from Brother John Johnston's report:

«The notion of association has rich significance and is the object of much discussion today...Article 39 of the Rule recalls the «act of association» of 1694, one of the most significant moments of the «historic events» that make up our founding history. De La Salle and twelve Brothers pronounced perpetual vows of association to keep together gratuitous schools, obedience and stability. Then they elected John Baptist de La Salle Superior. In effect, this «act of association» constituted the «Society of the Brothers of the Christian Schools»...When they promised and vowed to unite themselves and live in society with other men...they stated the precise manner they believed God was calling them to live this total consecration. They said with no ambiguity that their purpose in coming together was «to keep together and by association gratuitous schools». By pledging to persevere even if obliged to beg and live on bread alone and to do anything the Society asked them to do, they revealed that their commitment touched the very core of their being. «Wherefore», that is to say, in view of this total consecration to God as Brothers, they vowed association, obedience and stability.

Included in the act of consecration of the early members of the Institute is a commitment to celibate chastity. They professed no vow of chastity, but the Common Rules leave no doubt that celibate chastity was an essential dimension of their identity as Brothers. In like manner, they made no vow of poverty, but they lived poverty from the beginning. It is clear from his writings that De La Salle considered poverty, like celibate chastity, to be another essential dimension of the Brothers' life and mission. A sincere love for poverty enabled the Brothers, he said, to «touch the hearts "of poor children"».

Brothers, the Chapter adopted three propositions to help us to continue in our efforts to have a better understanding of our association, our commitment for life, and our presence as Brothers in the midst of the poor and vulnerable young people of our society, in the midst of our colleagues, and as members of the People of God. I quote:

Proposition 17

The bringing together of an intercapitular commission to study completed or current research on the specific identity and role of the Brother as envisaged by the Founder. This commission will study also the results of completed or current research on the specific identity and role of lay religious in the Church.

Proposition 18

A year will be devoted to the renewal of our community life.

Proposition 19

A year will be devoted to our vow of association for the educational service of the poor.

6. SOME NEW FIELDS OF ACTION

I wanted to spend some time explaining some of the major challenges that face us, and the propositions adopted by the Chapter to try to meet these challenges. I concentrated on only a few propositions, and I leave it to you to read the Chapter documents as a whole and see what other propositions they contain. I shall now limit myself to mentioning a few new fields of action:

- the appeal by mission countries for formators. Most of our young Brothers are in Africa, and they lack formators;
- despite our reduced numbers and certain centres which sap our human resources, we must preserve our freedom of movement to take on new projects;
- certain Districts and Delegations have reached the stage when they can no longer provide their own leadership. The question of mergers and more systematic collaboration need to be considered;
- the Chapter adopted propositions regarding Brothers who have reached the legal retirement age.

I should like to say a few words about this last point:

In some Districts, the Brothers who have reached the legal retirement age are very numerous and not all can remain working in schools. They have found ways of responding to these appeals for help that are compatible with our vocation. For example, in French-speaking Canada, the Brothers have responded in a concerted manner: they have opened small educational centres to help children do their homework, and to look after truants. They have opened other centres to provide spiritual guidance for young people suffering from moral problems. The Brothers have invited young people to work with them in these centres. Some of these are paid, others are Lasallian volunteers. These projects are very encouraging and show that our apostolate does not end when we reach 60 or 65 years of age. There are similar projects in other countries.

The Chapter urges the Brothers to consider the possibilities which are offered to them.

Proposition 20

The Visitor will discern with Brothers who have reached legal retirement age, or the end of their professional career, the kind of apostolic activity they should undertake (location, duration, courses...). By preference, this should be one that benefits the educational service of the poor, and which responds to requests from the District or the Institute to work in existing establishments or in those still to be created.

To implement the Chapter, we need the means to do so, and we have to fulfil a number of conditions.



During the Mass presided by Cardinal Salvatore Pappalardo, on the Feast of the Founder.

The Sanctuary of St. John Baptist de La Salle, on May 15, his Feast Day in the Institute, during the Mass.





LETTER FROM JOHN PAUL II to Brother John Johnston, Superior General

The great Jubilee of the Incarnation will be the occasion of a double anniversary for the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In the course of the month of May, there will be celebrations to mark the centenary of the canonisation of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the founder of your Institute, as well as the fiftieth anniversary of his proclamation, by my predecessor Pope Pius XII, as Special Patron of all educators of children and of youth. This double event affords me the opportunity to unite myself profoundly with your prayers and thanksgiving, as well as with those of all the members of your religious family, and to address a cordial greeting to all, especially at this time when there is gathered about you the members of the 43rd General Chapter of your Institute.

By his pedagogical genius, Saint John Baptist de La Salle was an illustrious pioneer of the education of children and youth of the common people. A veritable apostle, he knew how to be of service to the children who attended his schools, applying himself in the first place to the formation of their teachers. Such an insight remains fundamental to this day, because it underlines that education presumes on the one hand the transmission of human and Christian values, and on the other the example of adults who can demonstrate to the young the nature of a beautiful and well-balanced life. Education is then more than a trade, it is a mission, which consists in helping each person recognise that he or she is irreplaceable and unique, so that each can grow and develop fully. By proclaiming your Founder Patron of all educators of children and of youth, the Church proposes him as a model to be imitated and as an example for all those who have an educational task, inviting them to demonstrate resourcefulness, patience and devotedness, and to discern the needs of youth, responding in this way to their deep aspirations.



It is for the Brothers to make known the grandeur of the apostolate and Saint John Baptist de La Salle's Christian vision of the educator, which retain all their relevance for the world of today. His charism, nourished by the assiduous contemplation of God, Creator and Saviour, and lived out according to the religious ideal of an existence consecrated to the Lord in a fraternal community life, shows that educating, teaching and evangelising form a whole. Education remains incomplete if it does not lead to learning respect for life and liberty, the service of truth and the desire to give oneself. By announcing the Gospel in the schools, which is the aim of your apostolate, you set yourselves to forming each person, to forming the whole person.

I therefore encourage all the Brothers in their mission of education and of evangelisation, especially of poor children and youth and of those experiencing difficulty, showing them that each one is infinitely precious in the eyes of God. In this way they share in a prominent way in the mission of the Church. I exhort them to be true sons of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, supporting one another mutually along the way of holiness. By taking their share in "the work of God" and in fully living the catechetical dimension of their noble task, may they confront at all times in the numerous countries where they are to be found, present and future challenges, especially in these times, in a world in evolution, where many points of reference of moral life are disappearing. As I said to you at the time of your last General Chapter, on the 14th of May 1993, "in all circumstances be teachers, witnesses to Christ and Christian educators by example and by word". May you by this double commemoration in the heart of the Jubilee year, revive the mission which is yours and call on young people to follow the Lasallian ideal in the religious life.

Entrusting you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and of Saint John Baptist de La Salle - you and all your Brothers, teachers, students of your schools and their parents, as well as former students and the Lasallian family who collaborate with you in your mission, I impart the Apostolic Blessing to you with all my heart.

From the Vatican, 8th May 2000.

Joannes Paulus II

A MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNER CONSULTANTS TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2000



The 23 partner consultants invited to the Chapter represented all the Regions of the Institute. They were present for the Chapter's second phase, from May 8-21. They left the Chapter the following message:

*Brother Superior General,
Members of the General Council, Brother Capitulants and Consultants
of the 43rd General Chapter of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools:*

We wish to begin our statement by expressing our most sincere thanks to you for inviting us to participate in this 43rd Chapter, and thus share in the work of developing the Lasallian Mission throughout the world.

The Chapter has been characterized by the vision of service of the poor through education, and we have felt during times of prayer and reflection, in Commission Meetings and General Assemblies the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

It is difficult to express as a synthesis, the many different experiences we have shared with you during the last two weeks, but the richness and diversity of the many cultures and languages has been a source of grace for us and has allowed us to discover with joy the universality of the Founders charism. For that we shall be forever grateful.



Our predecessors who were here in 1993 spoke to us of the generosity of their welcome, and we too have been touched with the warmth and sincerity with which you have accepted us into the Brothers' community.

In the General Assemblies and the Commissions we have felt privileged to participate in a truly democratic process where freedom of speech was an entitlement for all. It was not only in these meetings but also at times of prayer and in the quiet routines of community life that equality and fraternity defined the quality of our relationships and gave us the confidence and security to contribute to the development of the Lasallian Mission.

During the Chapter we have been confronted by two obstacles:

The difficulty of delivering a message in a multicultural context that is affirming, liberating and challenging.

Despite the above comment we must always be prepared to deliver a message that is powerful and uncompromising while respecting the distinctive identity of Brothers and Partners.

Here are the principal elements we would like to present:

- Since the last Chapter so much has been done. Filled with hope, we want to continue to walk alongside you. You are the memory and the heart of St. John Baptist de La Salle's spirituality and pedagogy.
- We shall continue to pray for vocations to the Brothers of the Christian Schools.
- We want to endorse the recommendations and final propositions of this Chapter in the hope that they will bear fruit.
- A great feeling of confidence in our partnership with the Brothers will be generated by the right to a voice and a vote.
- We hope that, with the help of common formation programs, we will be able, together and by association, to refocus ourselves on the Lasallian mission.
- We understand the link uniting Brothers and Partners to be an essential factor in the development of the Lasallian mission.
- It seems important to us that lay people working in Lasallian works continue to be invited by the District and by the Institute to become more involved in Lasallian spirituality and pedagogy.
- We are not convinced that the present style and format of the General Chapter will be appropriate for the future, given the increasing participation of Partners throughout the Institute.
- The next General Chapter would be enhanced by the involvement of the Partners at an early stage of the planning process..

Thank you for your confidence in us, your trust, support and openness to the contributions we have made to the Chapter. We pledge our support to you. No matter where the Spirit will lead us we want always to share this mission with you. Let us continue, with the help of God and our Founder, to face the challenges of our mission together.

May 19, 2000

