



Bulletin of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

N° 239 – July 1993

42nd GENERAL CHAPTER

Rome, April 5th – May 15th 1993

BULLETIN OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Number 239 – July 1993

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42nd GENERAL CHAPTER – Rome, April 5th - May 15th 1993

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1. A CHAPTER ENDS... A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS...

Brother Paul Grass, Secretary General



Brother Paul Grass, Secretary General

In April of 1991, only five years after the closing of the 1986 General Chapter, which was the 41st in the Institute's history, Brother Superior and the General Council issued a circular announcing the date of the 42nd General Chapter. They noted at the time the change from a ten-year cycle to a seven-year cycle and gave examples of world events to illustrate the fast pace of change as the 20th century ends its course.

As the messages and propositions of this most recent Chapter demonstrate, there was indeed something new for the 42nd General Chapter to present to the Brothers and their Lasallian colleagues, in addition to the perennial attention to the issues that continually confront Chapters at every level of organisation in the Institute.

When the Preparatory Commission met in October 1991 for its first of three sessions, the members realised that the 42nd General Chapter would lack the special urgency and force that accompany the task of writing a significant document that sets the Institute's course for decades, as was the

case in 1966-67 (the Declaration) and in 1986 (the Rule). Nor did the 42nd General Chapter have the advantage of initiating a powerful programme of Lasallian Studies (as in 1956) or of creating a major structural change in the Institute's Central Government (as in 1976). Furthermore, because the 1986 Chapter had already issued a clarion call to conversion along with its finalisation of the new Rule, what was left for the 42nd General Chapter to do in 1993?

Knowing what did **not** need to be done over again actually helped the Preparatory Commission to settle quickly upon the major work to be accomplished in advance of the 1993 Chapter: to involve as many Brothers as possible in examining their actual situation and in presenting their thoughts and feelings to the Chapter. Without pre-judging what the major themes might be, the Preparatory Commission distributed an Institute Questionnaire and encouraged the Brothers to write Notes. By the time the Commission met again in October 1992, its second session, the results signaled the main themes that would require the attention of the Chapter.

The tabulation of responses to the Questionnaire indicated that the group of items concerning personal and community prayer ranked at the top of the list of important issues to be considered by the Chapter. The Notes also indicated great interest in this theme of prayer, but with considerable differences among the Brothers in their understanding of prayer and their preferred practises of prayer. Agreement among the Brothers about which are the essential aspects of their life - prayer, community life, consecration, educational mission - is virtually unanimous, but differences in application according to age, culture, country and local circumstances are quite widespread.

One of the most insistent questions raised in the Notes was that the Institute take into consideration at this Chapter the mounting evidence that the Lasallian charism and vocation extend beyond the boundaries of the Brothers' communities. The theme of the shared mission, therefore, was recognised early on as a dominant question on the minds of the Brothers. The importance of understanding the mission of the Institute in today's changing world and Church, as well as the significance of the increasing participation in that mission by lay people, Sisters and priests, became central themes of the Chapter.

The proposal to invite 20 Consultants - lay people and Sisters - to the Chapter for a period of time in which they and the Capitulants would discuss the shared mission of the Institute was approved by the General Council and presented to the Brothers in the Circular of Convocation. The Chapter itself approved a change in the Rule in order to give the General Council the explicit authority to invite Consultants to future General Chapters.

The work of preparing for the General Chapter included the translation of the more than 600 Notes that had been received in Rome by mid-summer 1992. A set of these documents was made available to the Capitulants in each of the three official languages of the Institute (English, French and Spanish). Because of the extraordinary work of the translators on the Generalate staff, and later, of the other Brothers who assisted the Chapter, more material than ever before was accessible to the Capitulants. The Preparatory Commission read all of the Notes and grouped them according to the major areas of interest. A Summary of the Notes was prepared for the Capitulants and sent to them several months prior to the Chapter. This booklet gave every Capitulant the opportunity to see how many Notes had been sent on a particular topic and to read a concise summary of the various aspects of the topic that were treated by the Notes.

Both during the 42nd General Chapter itself and in the preparation period before it, the beauty and challenge of the new 1987 Rule became increasingly evident. For example, article 17, "A Shared Mission", served as a frequently cited reference point. The Capitulants and the Consultants were encouraged by the Rule and, in turn, challenged one another to put that Rule into full effect. Thanks to the excellent work of the previous Chapter in 1986, the new Rule remains a challenging summary of the Brother's vocation within the context of the mission confided to the Institute by the Church. Relevant sections of the Rule are proving to be an inspiration for all Lasallian colleagues who discover therein a way of expressing the call and the commitment that they accept in their own lives.

The Capitulants and Consultants worked together to understand more fully and to put into practise more effectively the meaning of the "mission confided to the Institute by the Church". From the opening homily on April 5th by Cardinal Martínez Somalo; through the enlightening conferences by Jesuit Father Michael Amaladoss and Claretian Father José Cristo Rey García Peredes; during the warm greeting from Cardinal Pironio; and concluding with the private audience with Pope John Paul II, the members of the Chapter were showered with appreciation by these representatives of the Church and challenged to live their particular vocations within the context of God's plan for the salvation of the world.

Because the Chapter began during Holy Week, the liturgical commemoration of the Passion and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ united the Capitulants in a fraternal experience of the Christian mystery. The Report of Brother Superior John Johnston, together with his personal commentary, gave the Brothers in Chapter a thought-provoking overview of the Institute today and of the mandate so thoroughly carried out by the leaders selected in 1986.

The texts of these conferences and messages contain references to the crucial role of Christian educators, the enlarged scope of the baptismal vocation shared by all Christians, the special charism of John Baptist de La Salle and its

significance for all persons who are called to be educators, the overwhelming needs of the poor and the marginalised in the modern world, the continuing role for the specific religious vocation of the Brother of the Christian Schools, and the work of the Spirit of God to realise the salvation of the world.

The General Chapter decided to devote two of its six weeks to a study of the shared mission with the help of the Consultants. This decision meant that the working sessions of the Chapter were divided into two distinct parts. In the first part all Capitulants and Consultants worked on the same topic - the shared mission - in six commissions charged with studying its various aspects. In the second part, after the departure of the Consultants, the Brothers formed seven new commissions to study those particular areas of the Brothers' life and the Institute that concern the Brothers themselves. One of these commissions, however, continued to study the topic of the shared mission in order to present a final report based on the work of the Capitulants and Consultants from part one.

The expectation of meeting the Consultants, the inspiring experience of hearing their personal testimony and the challenging memory of their presence were powerful forces in the consciousness of the Capitulants throughout the Chapter. The history-making invitation of Consultants at this General Chapter is now a precedent for the future General Chapters that will address the worldwide mission of the Institute and the developing phenomenon of the Lasallian Family.

It is true that the Consultants brought diversity to the Chapter, but it is also significant how the Capitulants themselves represented the worldwide involvement of the Institute. The presence at the Chapter of delegates and observers from Vietnam marked the first time in decades that Brothers from within Vietnam could attend an official meeting of the Institute in the Generalate. Other Brothers from Asia, Africa and Latin America made certain that the General Chapter, numerically representative of the Institute's majority numbers in the Northern Hemisphere, was constantly aware of the diverse challenges that the Institute faces in developing countries.

At the moment when Capitulants were becoming used to working in commission with Sisters, lay men and lay women and to understanding the implications of the lay vocation and its relationship to that of consecrated lay religious, they confronted less familiar but even more widespread issues. What is the relationship of the Lasallian Institute with other Christian religions and with the non-Christian religions in Africa and Asia? What are the implications of carrying out a mission to evangelise alongside dedicated, committed Lasallian associates whose religious background is outside the Christian tradition? What is the role of Lasallian colleagues in various schools and centres who have no explicit religious belief? What is the Lasallian mission in a country where Christians are a small minority of the population? What is the special leadership function of the Brothers within the Lasallian movement? What are the implications of the different levels and degrees of commitment of colleagues who work in Lasallian educational centres and activities?

Diversity within the Institute has come to be accepted as a fact of modern life. At the same time, the sense of unity in the spirit and tradition of Saint John Baptist de La Salle has increased. Just at the moment when Brothers are learning to appreciate the cultural differences among their various Dis-

tricts and educational projects, they are faced with incorporating in the same mission persons who share a wide diversity of religious traditions and beliefs. Several times during the Chapter, one or another commission dealt with aspects of inculturation, of cultural diversity, of the values inherent in every culture, as well as of the need of every culture to be evangelised. Whether speaking of youth ministry, vocation ministry, educational projects, service of the poor, prayer, consecration or community life, Capitulants were constantly confronted by examples of cultural diversity and opportunity.

Throughout the Chapter the experience of knowing John Baptist de La Salle and of carrying the charism which God transmits through him continued to have a profound effect on the Capitulants and Consultants. The constant reference to De La Salle would be annoying and artificial were it not for the fact that everyone with any degree of commitment to the Lasallian educational mission draws strength from De La Salle's life and that the Spirit continues to work through this Saint for our times and through the evolving Institute that he and the first Brothers created. The mixed picture of the decline in number of vocations to the brotherhood in the developed world and the increase in the number of candidates in some developing countries required the Capitulants to react with hope, with trust in God's Providence and with specific plans for action in youth ministry and vocation ministry.

This Chapter, well aware that the Brothers were not expecting more documents, focused its attention on practical steps that will help the Institute during the next seven years to fulfill its role in the Church and in the world of religious education. Among the specific actions that the General Chapter approved are propositions to strengthen formation programmes for Brothers and for Lasallian colleagues, to support community life by insisting on a minimum of three members in a community, to declare 1995 as a Year of Prayer throughout the Institute, to create a permanent Endowment Fund for the Institute, to streamline the organisational structure of the Institute and to add 100 Brothers to join those presently serving in developing areas of the Institute and in educational projects for the poor.

The work of carrying out the Chapter's decisions falls to the Brothers in the communities and Districts throughout the Institute, as well as to the leadership at all levels. Because the majority of Capitulants serve or have served as Visitors, Auxiliary Visitors or Presidents of Delegations, they know how important it is for the vitality of the Institute that the communities, the Districts and the Regions design and carry out activities in the spirit of the Rule and in the practical application of its directives.

Because the custom now is for the Brothers to vote for the candidate for Visitor whose name they wish to propose to Brother Superior and also to vote for the Capitulants, the result is that the same person is often named to both positions. By increasing from four to ten the number of Brothers whom Brother Superior can name as Capitulants, the General Chapter made possible a larger representation at the next Chapter from age groups, sectors of the Institute and types of apostolate that have had little direct participation.

After electing the Brother Superior and General Council, the General Chapter disbands and the members return to

their own activities, leaving the new General Council with a list of projects and activities. One effect of the change from a ten-year to a seven-year cycle of Chapters is the increased possibility that the incumbent Superior General might be re-elected. This, in fact, is what happened on the first ballot, when Brother John Johnston was chosen as Superior General for the term ending in the year 2000. The Chapter voted for a mixture of continuity and change in the membership on the General Council, naming three Councillors from the previous group - Brothers Martín Corral, Pierre Josse and Gerard Rummery - and three new members - Brothers Dominique Samné, Raymundo Suplido and Alvaro Rodríguez. (Brother Superior and the General Council, exercising the option contained in the Rule, have named Brother Marc Hofer as an additional General Councillor.) The Chapter, having elected from among the General Councillors Brother Alvaro as Vicar General, also decided that henceforth the Vicar General will be elected after the Superior General, as is customary, but **prior** to the election of the General Councillors.

As the Message of the Chapter to the Brothers states, the Brothers throughout the world, whatever their age and type of educational service, were on the minds of the Capitulants. The special attention paid to Brothers who are advancing in age reflected the number of Notes on the topic of supporting the older Brothers and of preparing every Brother for the various stages of life. The Chapter also paid attention to the mentoring of the young Brothers and to the continuing formation of all of the Brothers, whatever their age, who carry on the work of the Institute.

The scope of topics considered by a General Chapter has enlarged considerably and will widen in proportion to the growth of the Lasallian movement throughout the world. The number of people today who are directly involved in the Lasallian mission as Brothers, associated teachers and staff, students and clients is about one million. If two or three or more persons are added for each of the above, in order to include parents, former students and benefactors, the figure climbs to three million. The levels of involvement and commitment vary considerably, of course, but that is precisely the point that the Chapter was trying to study and to clarify. As time goes on, the degrees of commitment and the various ways of belonging to the Lasallian Family will become clearer. Throughout this evolution that the Institute is experiencing, the Brothers themselves carry and transmit the light - without realising it at times and in ways that might seem rather dislocated and haphazard.

The 42nd General Chapter was an important community experience of insight and frustration, of joy and puzzlement, for the participants. Faith in God's action through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit was expressed daily in prayer and in work. The documents, photos, names and events presented in this issue of the Institute Bulletin will help the Capitulants recall their six weeks of international Lasallian community in Rome and will indicate to all of the Brothers and their Lasallian associates something of the content and the atmosphere of that 42nd General Chapter which is already history.

The year 2000 awaits and the Spirit moves where it will. ●



Members of the 42nd General Chapter - Rome, 5th April to 15th May 1993

PREPARATION: FROM ITS CONVOCACTION TO ITS OPENING.

2. WORK OF THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION

1. Convocation of the General Chapter (7th April 1991)

It was on the 7th April 1991 that Brother Superior General and his Council published Circular 432, with the title "Convocation of the 42nd General Chapter (1993)". The circular first mentioned a series of events that had happened in the Church and the World since the previous General Chapter. It then announced that Monday of Holy Week, 5th April, 1993, would be the opening day of the Chapter and that the 15th May, feast of our Holy Founder, would, in all probability, be the closing date.

The next thing was to announce the names of those Brothers appointed to the Preparatory Commission. They were as follows:

- Angel Cirera, of Catalonia, Director of the Generalate House.
- Benet Conroy, Great Britain, Auxiliary Visitor.
- Stan Decock, North Belgium, Auxiliary Visitor.
- Gabriel Dubé, Trois-Rivières, Regional Secretary.
- Paul Grass, St. Paul-Minneapolis, Secretary General from the 1st September, 1991.
- Edgard Hengemüle, Porto Alegre, Director of CREL.
- Léon Lauraire, Centre-East France, French Lasallian Centre.

Brother Raymond Lamy, of Quebec, was appointed Administrative Secretary of the Preparatory Commission.

The Circular also fixed dates for the working sessions of the Preparatory Commission. They would be from 6th to 25th October, 1991; the Autumn of 1992 and early Spring of 1993. The five main objectives of the Commission, as indicated in Rule 105a and in the Administrative Directory (art 2) were pointed out.

The Circular then went on to mention those who were to be members of the Chapter by reminding readers of the stipulations of the Rule and the criteria for representation.

Finally, instructions were given on procedures for sending notes to the Chapter.

2. First Session of the Preparatory Commission. (7th-25th October 1991)

The Commission met for the first time as arranged, in Rome, in October 1991. Work lasted from the 7th to the 25th of that month.

During this period a tremendous amount of work had to be done, with full sessions alternating with small group work. Future researchers will find very detailed documentation on the Preparatory Commission in the minutes of the thirteen plenary sessions, which are now stored in the Institute Archives. Several of these were joint sessions with the General Council.

The Commission began its work by appointing Brother Paul Grass, Secretary General, as its chairman.

The following matters dealt with or arranged during this first period, deserve special notice:

- A questionnaire sent to every Brother.
- Rules of procedure of the Chapter.
- Capitulants' handbook.
- Planning each stage of the Chapter.
- The Themes.
- Plans for setting up of Commissions and their work.
- Talks, and who would give them.
- Organisation of translations and translators, typists, secretaries and helpers, etc.
- Information to be sent to Capitulants.
- Letter to the Brothers on the preparatory work of the Chapter.
- Emblem of the Chapter.

3. Convocation of the Chapter (5th April 1992)

Circular 433, "Convocation of the 42nd General Chapter", was published on the 5th April 1992, exactly one year before the Chapter opened.

It was divided into **five parts**:

The **first part** dealt with the distribution of the Capitulants according to Institute Administrative zones. It therefore stated that there would be:

1. Eleven members by right.
2. Three delegates from Districts with 220 Brothers or more: Baltimore, Bilbao, Catalonia, New York and Valladolid (15 delegates).
3. Two delegates from Districts with 110 to 219 Brothers: Andalusia, Australia, North Belgium, South Belgium, Bogota, Great Britain, Ireland (with South Africa), Long Island-New England, Madrid, North Mexico, South Mexico, Montreal, New Orleans-Santa Fe, Poland, Porto Alegre, Quebec, Rome, San Francisco, Turin and Valencia-Palma (40 delegates).
4. One delegate from Districts with fewer than 110 Brothers: West Africa, Germany, Antananarivo, West Indies, Argentina (with Paraguay), Austria-Romania, Bolivia, Caracas, Central Spain, Central America, Chicago, Chile, Colombo (with Pakistan), Douala, Equador, Philippines, Holland, Medellin, Ottawa, Penang (with Hong-Kong and Singapore), Peru, Sao Paulo, Saint Louis, St. Paul-Minneapolis, Toronto, Trois-Rivieres, Vietnam, Zaire (28 delegates)
5. 16 Delegates from the unified District of France and 4 Delegates from the unified District of Canada Francophone (20 Delegates).
6. One delegate from Sub-Districts with more than 20 Brothers: Gulf of Benin, Japan, Malta, Nigeria and Panama (5 delegates).
7. One Capitulant for each Delegation: East Africa, Myanmar (Burma), Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, India, Reunion, Lebanon, Rwanda, Czechoslovakia, Thailand, Holy Land-Jordan, Turkey (13 delegates).
8. Four Capitulants appointed by Brother Superior, to be named after the results of the elections were published.

The **second part** outlined procedures for elections.

The **third part** was based on the answers to the Questionnaire sent to the Brothers by the Preparatory Commission.

The **fourth part** explained the reasons and criteria for certain lay Lasallians attending part of the Chapter.

The **fifth part** also announced the invitation to the Lasallian Sisters and the Union of Catechists of Turin to attend part of the Chapter.

The Circular ended with an appeal for prayers for the good of the Chapter.

4. Preparatory Commission's second work session. (5th to 28th October 1992)

The Preparatory Commission again made the Generalate House their centre during October. Forty two documents now found in the Archives record their work.

Their biggest task by far, this time, was to codify the individual notes from Brothers and the study of the answers to the Questionnaire.

By September 1992, they had received 3,534 answers to the Questionnaire and 619 notes. There were 14 subjects which kept coming up; they are as follows:

A. Mission in Association:

1. It is a shared Mission (educational mission).
2. It should give priority to serving the poor.
3. It should renew its pastoral ministry to youth.
4. It is grateful for the Lasallian formation of Brothers and Lay people.
5. It is grateful to the community of the Brothers who give witness (community as a sign to be seen).
6. It takes place no matter what the age of the Brother.

B. Community Mission:

1. Community of Consecrated men (lay, priesthood, vows)
2. Poor Community (style and living standards in community).
3. Fraternal Community (affective life, function of the



The Preparatory Commission of the 42nd General Chapter during a work session.
From the left: Brothers Angel Cirera, Benet Conroy, Gabriel Dubé, Paul Grass, Raymond Lamy, Léon Lauraire, Stan Decock and Edgard Hengemüle.

Director, retired Brothers).

4. Praying Community (kind of prayer, openness to others, sharing).
5. Community which invites (vocations).
6. Community which trains and accompanies its members (initial and continuing formation, accompaniment/counseling).
7. International Community (interdependence, solidarity, sharing, management).
8. Community which arranges necessary structures (methods of government; Institute, Region, District, Delegation...).

The Commission also discussed the matter of study groups for the Chapter, concerning the most relevant themes; it also foresaw the time-table for the first phase covering the first week.

The Commission wrote to each Capitulant and lay Consultant, sent them the Capitulant's Handbook, a list of Capitulants and Consultants, together with the time-table for the first week, the groups, the commissions and the rules of procedure.

They received the Superior and Council's permission to send out a prayer for the Chapter selected from several which were already being used in various Districts. The prayer selected to be distributed was composed by Brother Vincent Corkery of St. Michael's Institution, Ipoh, Malaysia. It is a kind of witness to the unity of prayer which existed previous to the Chapter:

**Lord, God of freedom,
You have chosen to place
The fate of the Institute into our hands.
On the occasion of our 42nd General Chapter
Strengthen union among us
And increase our commitment to youth.
May your Holy Spirit inspire and guide us
Along the road we have to follow.
May this Chapter be for us
And for the whole Lasallian Family
A true Pentecost experience,
The true source of conversion,
Of constancy in adversity,
And of strength to begin anew.
Mother of Good Counsel,
Take this Chapter under your protection.
Through St La Salle, our Father,
and all our holy Brothers,
Make us docile to the Holy Spirit
And to the will of God in our regard. Amen.**

5. Third Session of the Preparatory Commission (22nd March to 4th April 1993)

When the members of the Commission arrived for their third session, the CIL block (separate wing of the Mother House) had been completely renovated, each individual room having shower and facilities. All this work had begun between two sessions of CIL (three-month Lasallian study and renewal course for Brothers) and continued after the last

CIL session. Future users of the CIL wing will be able to see and enjoy those benefits.

The commission again got down to work in earnest during the two weeks preceding the Chapter. Adjustments and organisation were finalised. There were seven general sessions and a distribution of various last minute jobs took place for individuals or small groups. Here are the main tasks of this final preparatory session: it had to deal with

- Certain articles of the Rule which the Chapter should revise.
- Consultants and Experts.
- Accommodation.
- Side issues of the Chapter.
- Decision on rooms for work and for meetings.
- Preparation of documents, information sheets and folders.
- Organisation of language groups and commissions.
- Finalisation of certain points concerning the themes of the Chapter.
- Priests for the liturgical offices for language groups.
- Administration.
- Communication and information during the Chapter.
- Certain specific matters like the Opening Mass.
- Reception of those attending the Chapter.
- Officials and helpers for the secretariate, translations etc.

This stage was hectic, but events proved its success, as could be seen by the complimentary remarks expressed by Capitulants in public and in private.

The best way to summarise this stage of preparations is to quote the last sentences of the report made at the Chapter's first session by the president of the Preparatory Commission:

"The Preparatory Commission has worked in close liaison with Brother Superior and his Council. We should like to thank them for their remarks, suggestions and their continual support.

The Commission's task covered simply those technical matters which are usually its responsibility, and of course did not attempt to infringe on the legitimate rights of the Capitulants. Its concern has been to keep you informed in as clear a way as possible, by means of the documents it sent you, and to ease the work of the Central Commission which you will elect.

The Commission has also taken into consideration the suggestions of the Brothers: representatives of Regions who met in June 1992, the answers to the questionnaire and the Notes.

We want to express our gratitude to all who helped us in our work, especially the Brothers Translators and Secretaries, and those people who prepared the lodging quarters and the documents which helped you when you arrived.

We are hoping for successful work at the Chapter, which will be good for the future of the Institute, and we are sure that the Holy Spirit, whose inspiration we have just asked for, will help you all in your work".

3. PERSONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The Preparatory Commission designed a Questionnaire and distributed it to all the Brothers in order to identify the major themes of the General Chapter.

This Questionnaire, printed as a tri-fold brochure, was introduced by a letter to motivate the Brothers to respond and by an explanation of the way the responses were to be made. The pamphlet also included a closing reflection.

These sections are reproduced below in their original order; the overall percentages of the responses are indicated alongside each question.

Rome, November 21, 1991

Dear Brother,

We greet you today in the conviction that the preparation for the 1993 General Chapter will be the richer because of your personal participation.

Whatever your age and location, you are sensitive to the hopes, fears, and expectations that arise from your life as a Brother of the Christian Schools in the Church and the world today. We now ask you to reflect on these experiences and to present your considerations as a gift to the Chapter and a personal contribution to the unity and vitality of the Institute.

We need your help, Brother, in four ways: by praying for the worldwide success of the preparatory work; by completing and returning the enclosed anonymous questionnaire; by submitting one or more signed personal notes on the issues that are most important to you, and by participating in community, District, and Regional activities that prepare for the General Chapter.

The questionnaire and the notes will identify for the Capitulants the preoccupations of the Brothers and thereby provide the context in which the General Chapter will address the needs that you have identified.

Three hundred years ago, John Baptist de La Salle, Gabriel Drolin, and Nicolas Vuyart vowed to establish the Society of the Christian Schools even if they had to live on bread alone. Today you also have the opportunity to make a personal investment in the future of the Institute.

Thank you for your help.

Faternally in De La Salle,

Brother Paul Grass, FSC, President,
and the Members of the Preparatory Commission

PERSONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The 1986 General Chapter urged the Brothers to become converted. This call to conversion was contained in a Message from the Capitulants to the Brothers, and in a more permanent form, in the Rule itself.

The time has now come to assess the results of this call. The next General Chapter in 1993 will be able to do this only on the basis of a great number of answers to the questionnaire below. In it you will find a list of questions concerning your personal life and that of the Institute. We would like you to indicate by putting a (X) in the appropriate column whether you consider it **VERY IMPORTANT / IMPORTANT / OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE / NOT IMPORTANT** for this question to be considered by the General Chapter.

In the space provided you can add other questions which are not included in this list and indicate the degree of importance you attach to them.

1: Very important 2: Important
 3: Of Little Importance 4: Not Important
 5: Without response.

1. A MISSION BY ASSOCIATION

	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %
1. The realities of the present-day world and their effect on education and the way institutions function.	51.5	36.3	4.9	1.4	5.9
2. The educational mission in the various present-day social, cultural and religious contexts.	46.3	38.5	7.4	1.3	6.5
3. Inculturation and the proclamation of the Gospel. New or second evangelisation.	51.8	34.5	6.2	1.4	6.1
4. Regional and District plans for better educational service for the poor.	46.7	38.6	8.4	1.6	4.7
5. The Lasallian Family: conditions and means of implementing the "shared mission".	33.1	46.0	12.3	2.7	5.9
6. In the face of the challenges of present-day society, the pedagogical, educational and pastoral creativity of Lasallian institutions.	46.1	39.0	7.7	1.8	5.4
7. The role and responsibility of the Brothers' community in the new situation experienced by Lasallian educational establishments.	48.1	38.6	6.7	1.6	5.0
8. The participation of lay people in consultative and decision-making bodies of the Institute.	18.4	46.3	22.9	6.5	5.9
9. _____					

2. THE PASTORAL MINISTRY TO YOUTH AND THE PASTORAL MINISTRY OF VOCATIONS IN THE CHURCH

1. District policy with regard to the pastoral ministry to youth: aims, structures, means, procedures...	44.0	39.9	7.9	1.7	6.5
2. Types of responses offered and to be devised in order to meet the pastoral needs of present-day youth.	35.9	45.2	10.0	1.4	7.5
3. Areas for consideration in preparation for an Institute "Guide to the pastoral ministry to youth".	29.7	44.6	14.8	3.3	7.6
4. The pastoral ministry in higher education establishments.	26.5	42.1	18.8	4.0	8.6
5. Commitment and forms of pastoral ministry of vocations today.	51.0	33.7	6.9	1.4	7.0
6. Inculturation of teachers in the ways of thinking of present-day youth.	39.2	41.0	9.7	2.3	7.8
7. _____					

3. COMMUNITY LIFE

1. Community life and the affective needs of Brothers.	59.2	30.5	5.0	1.1	4.2
2. Community programme and personal programme.	31.8	45.6	13.6	3.4	5.6
3. The Director of the community: choice, preparation, responsibilities, accompaniment, tasks...	50.2	35.0	8.9	2.2	3.7
4. The effect of present-day technology and culture on community life.	18.1	46.6	24.6	4.3	6.4
5. Visibility of the Brothers' community in its own locality: society, Church, youth, pupils' parents...	41.8	41.1	10.2	2.0	4.9
6. Elderly Brothers and community life.	32.3	45.1	15.3	2.7	4.6
7. Openness of communities: the welcome extended to outsiders, especially young people.	30.1	46.7	15.2	2.4	5.6
8. Young Brothers and community life.	54.6	31.8	6.1	1.2	6.3
9. Periodical personal interview with the Director.	21.0	43.9	23.1	6.3	5.7
10. Conditions that make a community viable.	33.9	42.4	12.6	3.1	8.0
11. _____					

4. LIFE OF PRAYER/ CONSECRATION

	%	%	%	%	%
1. Personal and community prayer in the Institute.	70.3	22.4	3.1	0.9	3.3
2. Daily participation in the Eucharist: possibility, difficulties.	46.5	35.9	10.1	2.7	4.8
3. Community prayers open to outsiders.	11.4	42.7	32.9	6.9	6.1
4. The identity of the Brother and the meaning of his consecration for the exercise of his mission.	50.9	35.4	7.0	1.5	5.2
5. The vows: how they are seen, the witness they bear in society, the Church, the Institute.	46.0	38.3	9.1	1.6	5.0
6. Participation of the Brothers in running prayer and liturgical services in the local Christian community.	14.8	43.4	29.4	7.2	5.2
7. Spiritual accompaniment of the Brothers.	36.4	44.2	10.0	2.2	7.2
8. _____					

5. FORMATION

1. Formation and accompaniment of Brothers with temporary vows.	58.9	30.0	4.2	0.9	6.0
2. Initial formation programmes for Brothers.	45.4	39.6	6.7	1.5	6.8
3. Continuing formation programmes for Brothers.	39.6	46.3	7.7	1.2	5.2
4. Specifically Lasallian formation programmes at Institute, Regional and District level.	32.2	47.8	11.5	1.8	6.7
5. Lasallian formation offered to lay people.	23.6	54.2	13.9	2.2	6.1
6. Formation of formators.	54.1	31.4	4.7	1.5	8.3
7. Impact and use of the Guide for Formation.	19.2	45.9	17.5	3.7	13.7
8. _____					

6. THE INSTITUTE: INTERDEPENDENCE, GOVERNMENT

1. Central Government and General Services of the Institute.	23.0	42.4	21.8	4.6	8.2
2. Visits of the Superior and Councillors to the Regions and Districts of the Institute.	23.1	43.9	22.5	4.7	5.8
3. Present-day situation with regard to interdependence.	19.9	48.7	18.3	2.9	10.2
4. Government and leadership in the Regions of the Institute.	25.6	48.0	15.5	3.0	7.9
5. Solidarity in the Institute: sharing resources and personnel.	39.8	45.5	7.8	1.1	5.8
6. Missionary commitment of the Institute: Options and policies.	40.1	45.2	7.2	1.2	6.3
7. _____					

You have just given some thought to your life as a Brother of the Christian Schools. After completing the questionnaire, perhaps the overall impression that you have of it does not correspond with what you would like it to be.

You have noticed that, since the last General Chapter, many changes have occurred in society, the Church, the Institute and young people. In your fellow human beings you see new needs, sufferings, misery, but also aspirations and desires to which, following the example of De La Salle, you would like to respond more fully, in union with your fellow Brothers.

When you consider our Holy Founder, you feel there is a discrepancy between the fabric of your daily life and the Lord's call which comes to you day after day.

In the face of so much uncertainty and so many different appeals, what solutions would you like to offer "in association" with your fellow Brothers? What sort of conversion can you or ought you bring about in your own life and in that of your community, so that the educational mission of the Institute may be more effectively carried out? What is needed to transform your prayer so that it will fire and galvanise your zeal for the establishment of God's Kingdom among young people, and the accomplishment of the salvation that Jesus came to bring to us all?

You may find that the answers you have given to this questionnaire seem unsatisfactory or incomplete. If this is the case, we invite you to use the form provided and, individually or collectively, write notes that you consider useful for the greater good of the Institute as a whole.

Please return the Questionnaire and send any notes before July 1, 1992.

PHASE ONE OF THE CHAPTER

4. WORDS OF WELCOME

Brother John Johnston, Superior General – 5th April 1993

On the face of the tabernacle in the General Council chapel (to which you are certainly always invited), there is a representation of Jesus and the two disciples of Emmaus. That representation has always been for me a striking reminder that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, that he invites us, members of the General Council community, into intimate communion with him and among ourselves, that he wants to transform us into his body by the power of his Spirit.

I never cease to be moved by this passage of *Lumen Gentium*:

Really sharing in the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic Bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another ... by communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation." (LG 7).

At 18.00 this evening, we shall celebrate the Eucharist - for the first time as the General Chapter community. We shall celebrate in union with Cardinal Eduardo Martinez-Somalo, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Institutes of Apostolic Life. That celebration will signify and nourish our fidelity and commitment to the Church and will remind us of a fundamental Lasallian characteristic, one that Brother Charles Henry recalled effectively in one of his pastoral letters: it is the Church we serve.

Brothers, God in his Providence has called us together as representatives of our Brothers in eighty-one nations of the world. A few of us are here by right of office or appointment, but most of us have been elected by the Brothers of our Districts, delegated by them to serve as Capitulants, as men who accept responsibility for making those decisions that we believe to be in the best interests of the entire Institute.

We go to the Eucharist tonight united in a profound spirit of interdependence and solidarity, that is to say, with a firm and persevering determination to commit ourselves to the common good (John Paul II). We go to the Lord confident that he will take us into communion with him and with one another and that he will send his Spirit upon us individually and corporately to enlighten our minds, to deepen our sense of community, and to strengthen our commitment to fulfill our responsibilities as Capitulants.



Brothers, as representative of all our Brothers throughout the world, and more specifically, of all of us here at the Casa Generalizia, I welcome you to 42nd General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

We begin the Chapter on Monday of Holy Week. That fact invites us to reflect on this important Institute event in the context of the liturgical season which will reach its climax later this week with the celebration of the precious gift of the Eucharist and of the passage of Jesus from death to life.

Reflecting on the words "communicating his Spirit", I have thought of Isaiah's description of that Spirit which he prophesied would rest upon the Messiah. I have recalled also our traditional "Prayer of the Teacher before Class", in which we ask the Lord to grant us the gifts of his Holy Spirit.

I don't want to place an exaggerated emphasis on the classic seven gifts of the Holy Spirit or to suggest a preoccupation with categorizing the work of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, I find it helpful to think about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the context of the seven gifts, gifts which enable us to be amenable to Divine inspiration and to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

We begin with the gift of **fear of the Lord**, because fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I think it is safe to say that most of us don't like to think of "fear of the Lord" today. We place our accent on God as loving Father. We shy away from anything that expresses a "servile" relationship with God. Personally I share these sentiments. Nevertheless, I think that we need to be reminded from time to time that we have to have a profound respect for God and an aversion to any thought, word, deed, or omission that is not consistent with that respect. Furthermore, as Capitulants, I think that the gift of fear of the Lord will help us appreciate the magnitude of our task and of the tremendous responsibility we have to our Brothers, to those associated with us, to those we serve, and to the Church in general . . . I think that we need to "tremble a bit" at the thought that in the course of six short weeks, we have to function as the supreme authority of the Institute and that the decisions we make - or the decisions we fail to make - are going to affect the life and mission of the Lasallian Family and of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools for years to come.

But the gift of **piety** helps us to remember that the Lord who has called us to exercise this awesome responsibility is the Lord who knows us, loves us, and will be always with us. Piety helps us to accept the Lord's loving invitation to enter into intimate communion, to enjoy a relationship with him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a relationship characterized by tenderness, trust, and confidence. It is this gift which will

enable us to embrace with joy and enthusiasm this responsibility he has given us, to accept this duty not as an overwhelming burden but as a magnificent privilege.

The gift of piety helps us also, it seems to me, to live in profound communion with one another as Brothers. The composition of this Chapter reflects the international character of the Institute. At this particular moment of history, we are witnessing with pain and disappointment a plethora of ethnic and religious tensions and violence. We Brothers of the Christian Schools recognize that it is our mission to promote - by who we are, what we do, and how we live - universal brotherhood and sisterhood. For this purpose we ourselves must be truly **BROTHERS**. Our differences of race, ethnic heritage, nationality, language are important but secondary. What is of primary importance is that we are all sons of the same God, that we are brothers of Jesus Christ, and that we are **Brothers** in religious life because we have the life of John Baptist de La Salle flowing through our blood streams. To live as Brothers and, specifically, to collaborate effectively as Capitulants, we need the gift of piety.

We pray for the gift of **knowledge** through which the Holy Spirit helps us to make good judgments. How essential this gift is for us, Capitulants of the 42nd General Chapter. We have at our disposal an immense quantity of information, opinions, and recommendations. We have to read and listen with an open mind. But eventually we shall be obliged to judge which ideas and which suggestions are most helpful in the process of authentic transformation of the Institute. We must be men who can think critically and make sound judgments. We pray, therefore, for the gift of knowledge.

We pray also for the gift of **fortitude**, for the courage to overcome obstacles and difficulties. I think that there is a close relationship between fortitude and hope. Men of hope have a vision of the future and a commitment to make that vision a reality. Men of hope must be courageous. They have to overcome the tendency to think that the obstacles they face are too great and that there is nothing that can be done to reverse their situation. Lack of fortitude is, of course, regrettable in any Brother, but it is totally unacceptable in a Capitu-



Chapter dais at the opening session.

The 42nd General Chapter begins work.



lant. On the contrary. We have to be open to the Holy Spirit who will enable us to confront directly the obstacles and difficulties that are blocking our progress as an Institute. Through the gift of fortitude, the Lord will help us to overcome the feelings of impatience, frustration, and fatigue that will inevitably develop during the course of our days together.

But if the Holy Spirit through the gift of knowledge helps us to evaluate and judge the relative merits of the various options that are before us, it is through the gift of **counsel** that he helps us to choose among those options. How critical it is that we be able to make clear decisions. As I said at the beginning, the decisions that we make - or fail to make - during these six weeks are going to have a profound influence on the future of our Institute and upon its life and mission throughout the world. Decisions are often difficult to make. Some of us prefer to defer decision-making to others. But no. We cannot evade our responsibility during this Chapter. As Capitulants we have to decide, to choose between alternatives and options. But we are not alone. The Lord is with us. It is through the gift of counsel that the Lord will help us to make good choices.

Through the gift of **understanding** the Holy Spirit helps us to penetrate the meaning of our life as Christians, as religious, as Brothers of the Christian Schools, as apostles of human and Christian education, as collaborators with the laity. How essential is that we understand who it is the Lord wants us to be, what it is he wants us to do, and how it is he wants us to do it. Let us pray that the Lord give us the understanding that our responsibilities as Capitulants require.

Finally we pray for the gift of **wisdom**. This gift enables us to "relish what is right and just". Through it the Holy Spirit helps us to grow in purity of heart, that capacity to "will one thing", namely, God's will. We begin to enjoy that profound freedom which results from wanting what God wants. As François Durrwell says, "No one is as free as a person who has the desire, and the strength, to do his duty."

The man who is truly wise has accepted and made his own all of the seven gifts. As a consequence, he is open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, ready to follow the Lord wherever he leads. He respects the Lord and takes his responsibilities seriously. He lives in communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and with his brothers and sisters. He evaluates and judges with the eyes of faith. He understands his consecrated life. He is courageous and decisive.

The wise man manifests in his observations, judgments, and actions that he belongs to the Lord and is striving to be faithful. At the same time, however, he is keenly aware of his intellectual limitations and moral imperfections. Knowing that he will never attain wisdom in its fullness, he does his best and leaves the rest to God. He is at peace with himself, with his brothers, with the Institute, and with the Lord.

To fulfill our responsibilities as God requires of us, we Capitulants need the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. For this purpose, Brothers, let us celebrate the Eucharist tonight and throughout the Chapter as our **Rule** suggests: "in communion with the death and resurrection of Christ", attentive to the Word of God, united as a community in the same Spirit and for the same mission.

The Eucharist brings us into contact sacramentally with that precious moment in which Christ passes from death to life. We "really share" in that moment when we go to the Eucharist with our arms outstretched, that it is to say, crucified with Jesus, disposed to say "YES" to what God requires of us and "YES" to all the pleasant as well as unpleasant events in our daily life.

For this reason, Brothers, confident that Christ will take us into communion with him and with one another, and that he will communicate to us his Spirit constituting us as his body, let us go to him lovingly with our arms outstretched: "We come to do your will, O God. Lord, what will you have us do?"

5.

**MEMBRES DU
42e CHAPITRE GÉNÉRAL**

**MEMBERS OF THE
42nd GENERAL CHAPTER**

**MIEMBROS DEL
42° CAPITULO GENERAL**



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DE DROIT**

**CAPITULANTS
BY RIGHT**

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F. HILAIRE RAHARILALAO
 Directeur du CELAF
 Antananarivo
 Né: 16-11-49



F. VITTORINO RATTI
 Visiteur auxiliaire
 Torino
 Né: 12-02-20



F. FRANCIS RICOUSSE
 Visiteur auxiliaire
 France
 Né: 27-05-46



Hno. ALVARO A. RODRIGUEZ ECHEVERRIA
 Antigo Visitador
 Centroamerica
 Nacido: 08-07-42



Br. LUKE RONEY
 Director
 New Orleans-Santa Fe
 Born: 16-05-17



F. TADEUSZ RUCINSKI
 Directeur, Pologne
 Né: 27-11-53



Br. LUKE SALM
 Archivist, New York
 Born: 26-04-21



Br. ROBERT SCHIELER
 Auxiliary Visitor
 Baltimore
 Born: 28-04-50



Br. MARTIN SPELLMAN
 President, Delegation
 of East Africa
 Born: 05-06-32



Br. JEROME SULLIVAN
 Visitor, New York
 Born: 25-12-36



Br. THOMAS SULLIVAN
 Visitor, St. Paul & Mpls.
 Born: 10-08-44



Br. RAYMUNDO SUPLIDO
 Visitor, Philippines
 Born: 13-05-47



F. OSVALDO TAFARO
 Visiteur, Roma
 Né: 24-09-39



Hno. LUIS TIMON GONZALEZ
 Visitador auxiliar
 Madrid
 Nacido: 20-08-52



F. MARIO TRIPPANERA
 Directeur, Roma
 Né: 05-11-34



Hno. RAUL VALADEZ GARCIA
 Director general
 México-Sur
 Nacido: 30-10-41



F. ANDRE VAUQUIER
 Visiteur, Belgique-Sud
 Né: 20-01-28



Br. TIMOTHY WENTWORTH
 Director of Novices
 New York
 Born: 21-01-36

6. HOMILY BY EDUARDO CARD. MARTINEZ SOMALO

(Monday of Holy Week, 5th April 1993)

TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE BROTHERS
OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

1. Dear Brothers of the Christian Schools, Members of the 42nd General Chapter,

As I see you all here together, the words of the Apostle Paul come to my mind, urging me to say with great feeling: *"To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"*. (Rom 1, 7).

With the Apostle, I can also add: *"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is pro-*

claimed in all the world". I say these things as I reflect that you come from every continent, that you represent the apostolic work of your Brothers in 80 countries. Yes, I give thanks to God for the way in which throughout the world you sow the seed of light and love, as I myself have come to realise and admire in the varied tasks which the Church has asked me to undertake. Moreover, I thank you all sincerely, especially your Superior General, Brother John Johnston, for inviting me to be with you today, in order to address you on this important occasion. What more can I add to the ideas in Brother John's Pastoral Letter **"Transformation"** of 1st January this year, ideas which are so necessary and so admirably expressed?

2. The Chapter, a witness to a life as Brothers

At this Eucharist, now close to Holy Thursday, a special strength, full of meaning for today, can be seen in the events of the Upper Room in Jerusalem, events born of love, directed towards love, addressed to and committing each of us: *"Christ Jesus loved us until the end ... he gave us a new commandment: that we should love one another; thus they will know that we are his disciples"* (cf. Jn 13).

It is in this spirit that your General Chapter begins; it is an exceptional opportunity to take part in an extraordinary experience of life as Brothers based on communion, thus giving to the world a witness which is one of the characteristic aspects the world most expects of religious: living as brothers according to the Gospel, in a life open to the needs of the world: *"that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me"*. (Jn 17, 21).

You also recall the words of the Pope, when he spoke in your chapter room, on his visit to you in November 1981: *"You are living in a world which is rediscovering a sense of community... I invite you with all my heart to live your life as brothers. ...Young people of our day are extremely sensitive to the witness of a community united in charity and in the gift of itself to others; it is there that they discover Christ; it is that kind of presence which attracts them..."*

This period of the Chapter is an excellent occasion to analyse the life of the Institute in the various situations in which its life is lived, to exchange experiences and opinions, to study together the problems which arise at the present time in the life and work of your religious family, to search together



Cardinal Martinez Somalo giving the homily.

for the best solutions, in order to face the actual circumstances of our day.

3. In a special year

The importance and urgency of the goals of your Chapter are emphasised by the fact that you have been called together in a year when preparations are being made for the **Synod on Consecrated Life, its mission in the Church and the World**. The invitation of the Pope on 2nd February 1992 was addressed, and later repeated in various ways, to all religious: *"On the threshold of the year 2000, the Synod will be considering your congregation, your particular manner of spreading the Gospel, its missionary work. Add your prayers to the work of preparation. Share actively in the consultations which will be*



Procession moving towards the Chapel for the opening Mass.

asked of you..." An assembly like yours can offer an important contribution to the serious examination, reflection and prayer by which the spiritual success of the Synod will profit both yourselves and the whole Church.

4. For your own identity as defined in the Rule

Identity is a fundamental matter to be deeply and frankly studied: **What in fact are we; why do we exist?**... A healthy review brings about a wealth of ideas and measures to direct our lives, as we face such a remarkable complexity of mentalities and variety of cultures.

What are you and why do you exist as a Congregation founded by God for the accomplishment of his plan of love in the world?... Your Rule, *the faithful expression of the charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle* (Decree of Approbation, 26.01.1987), defines it concisely and clearly: *"An Institute composed exclusively of lay religious ... living together to ensure the human and Christian education of the young, especially of the poor, according to the ministry which the Church has*

entrusted to it..." (chap 1). You are totally dedicated to **Christian education, understood as a ministry of the Church**, with all the depth of meaning which the Founder gave to that concept, which distinguishes your work for the service of all, especially of those most in need. The Holy Founder realised that the work to be accomplished in his day was *"of very great necessity"*. It is no less needed in our day, no matter what so many crises might lead us to believe.

A very recent document, produced at the 4th General Council of the Latin American Episcopate, held in Santo Domingo, states the following:

"Education is the methodology and means by which culture is evangelised (N 271). We therefore proclaim our adherence to a Christian education based on life, with life as its objective..., which will uphold the dignity of the human person and their true solidarity; an education of which a process of civil and social formation will be a part, inspired by the Gospel and by the social teaching of the Church. We are committed to an evangelising education".

"The charisms of Religious Orders and Congregations devoted to the service of Catholic education in the various Churches of our Continent, greatly help us to obey the order we received from Our Lord to go and teach all nations... We call on all religious men and women who have abandoned this field of work, to return to it once more; always remembering that the preferential option for the poor includes the preferential option for those means which will help people to escape from their wretchedness, and one of the most privileged of these means is Catholic education..." (N 275).

The African Bishops, who are at this moment preparing their Synod in the various

Churches, are equally explicit when they refer to **education, and Catholic schools**, as *"important aspects in the formation of youth and in their preparation to become convinced Christians. ...Catholic schools are expected to provide - says their "Instrumentum Laboris" - an education for life, a genuine formation in Christian consciousness... An educational policy is recommended which pays greater attention to the varied cultural, social, political and economic elements in the life of the people..."* When referring broadly to **inculturation**, the African Bishops rightly remind us that *"inculturation means, not only bringing about a transformation in individual and group mentality, but also in going out to meet cultures in a way that makes them genuinely fruitful"*. Where can we expect better interaction of faith and culture at grass roots level, than in the Christian School, whose essential function is precisely to bring about the mutual penetration of the values of our faith and of culture?

Brothers, you have a great educational mission, which is absolutely vital everywhere in today's world... May this Chapter produce a commitment on the part of your Brothers and your communities, directing them towards the *"apostolic min-*

istry of education", which your Rule highlights as the essential element in your vocation. Bring this about in such a way that all the difficulties, at times enormous, the shortage of manpower, the opposition from outside which can be stubborn and more or less open, will be incentives to boundless enthusiasm, rather than a discouragement in the community task which is of "very great necessity" today, as in the time of the Founder ... in fact, perhaps even more so. Today's social and political structures are in a state of crisis and disintegration, therefore, make this present time, as the Pope recently said to the Bishops of Lithuania, *"the hour to arise from sleep and to be filled with hope. It is the hour to form new generations, to educate consciences, so that the benefits of freedom, lived in the light of the Gospel truths, will mature and, in every aspect of society, give the fruit we expect of them"*.

5. With lay people

The magnitude and urgency of this evangelical challenge could lead you to a state of alarm, when you frankly analyse the disproportion between your resources and the immense tasks which require your commitment. Thank God, that for several decades now, you have been finding, with realistic humility, the perfect way to increase your apostolic potential. You are seeing with greater and greater clarity and with excellent results, that those persons who are working at your side can be, not only your cooperators in the work of education, but also partners in your mission and in the charismatic legacy of the Holy Patron of all Educators.

With you, other religious institutes are gradually recognising and acting on this. *"What will be the future of so many works of charity, of culture, of evangelisation?"* our Dicasterion asks in documents still to be published. To which the answer is: *"The future will be assured, if religious Congregations become sensibly open to lay people. It seems that in the West, there is an increase in groups of lay people who feel a hunger for spirituality and who want to make their own contribution to the cause of the Kingdom. In addition, there is a growing awareness in Institutes also, that lay people can share, according to their own state of life, in the spirituality and mission of the Institute"*.

It is therefore essential that we advance on this road of integration. The ecclesiology of communion, so clearly expressed in *Christifideles laici*, invites you to study how you can more and more promote, direct and strengthen this integration of lay collaborators in your mission, so that it will reach with greater efficacy and certainty the vast numbers of people needing the benefits of education.

I greet with affection the twenty lay persons whom you have invited to this Chapter. By means of your productive co-responsibility in the service of the Kingdom according to the Lasallian charism, you also are a sign of hope.

6. Spiritual life

The apostolate identifies you as educators and catechists by vocation: *"You are chosen by God to announce and make Jesus Christ known"* (Med 87, 1-2). This apostolate which makes you commit yourselves to the mission in the whole

world, must be nourished and constantly revitalised by the life of faith, asceticism, prayer and community. These are the indispensable elements which your Superior General mentioned in the letter referred to above, and which guarantee faithfulness to the spirit of your Holy Founder.

– You must live as obedient and faithful Brothers; you must live as builders and not destroyers of community; "this requires a maximum effort from each person forming the community".

– You must be nourished by prayer. The words written by your Superior General are so much to the point: *"The specific and numerous occasions when we remain with Our Lord are precious: God makes use of them to nourish our relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, a relationship rooted in faith, hope and love"*. These words evoke those which Jesus spoke in the Cenacle: *"He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit"* (Jn 15, 5).

– You must have the spirit of sacrifice: *"When we ourselves chose our state of life, these are your Holy Founder's words we decided to live unknown, just like the Son of God..."* (Med 86, 2). How well those words fit the setting of Holy Week! How well they correspond with *"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me!"* (Mat 16, 24). *"For me to live is Christ"* (Phil. 1, 21).

Your Superior General writes: *"I believe that in these passages, we find the key to authentic transformation and therefore to the future of the Institute"*. As St. John Baptist de La Salle stated: *"The change which should come about in us must be an interior change; we have to be transformed in every aspect by the light, the fullness of grace and the possession of the Spirit of God"* (Med 152, 2).

Go forward, Brothers; the Lord is our support; every day, in order to encourage and strengthen us, he repeats, especially at the Eucharist, the words he spoke in the Cenacle:

* *I am the way, and the truth and the life.* (Jn 14, 6)

* *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.* (Jn 15, 16)

* *Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.* (Jn 14, 27)

And I, with Our Lord and as his priest at this Altar, pray his own prayer for you, my very dear Brothers of the Christian Schools:

Father sanctify them in the truth... I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word. (Jn 17, 17-20)

Through the intercession of Our Blessed Lady, disciple of the Lord and Mother of the Church, Virgin of the Cenacle at Pentecost, with the help of your Holy Founder, who continues to inspire and sustain you: *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."* (Rom 15, 13)

7. MICHAEL AMALADOSS, S.J.

THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH OF TODAY AND TOMORROW: SETTING FOR OUR EDUCATIONAL AND EVANGELIZING MISSION

6th April 1993



FATHER MICHAEL AMALADOSS, s.j.

Our guest and speaker this morning is Father Michael Amaladoss, sj, a liturgist and theologian. He has been professor of theology at the Institute of Religious Studies, Delhi, India, and was editor of the journal *Vidajyoti*. At present he is Assistant to the Superior General of the Jesuits. He is Vice-President of the International Association of Mission Studies and serves on the editorial board of the journal *Spiritus*. Fr. Amaladoss is a past member of the Executive Commission of SEDOS (the Documentation and Research Centre of the Union of Superiors General, Rome). In this capacity, he addressed two memorable papers to SEDOS meetings: "*Questions from the Local Churches in Asia*" and "*The Challenges of Mission Today*". It is this line of thought that he has been invited to continue today under the title, "*The World and the Church of Today and Tomorrow: Setting for our Educational and Evangelizing Mission*".

Please welcome Father Michael Amaladoss.

Reading the signs of the times in view of discerning our priorities in mission is a complex task. We are living in a world that is moving fast, and there is an air of newness as we approach the end of the second millennium of the Church's history. On the one hand, people are speaking of a new world order facing the challenge of a North-South divide in place of an East-West one. On the other hand, there is a drive towards a new evangelization, new in ardor, methods and expression.

We are products of this world which we are looking at, very much part of its history. Yet we are looking at it in the light of what we want to make of the new world that we wish to build, in response to God's promise, in collaboration with all people of good will. I think that it is necessary to stay within this positive horizon. Otherwise we may tend to see the world as full of problems and not perceive them as challenges.

We are looking at the world not as historians or economists or political scientists, but as evangelizers. This means that we are not going to offer the world economic blueprints and political strategies for its development. All that we can offer is a vision of God active in the world that can call to conversion, motivate and energize people to create strategies for change and growth towards a new humanity. Such a perspective will necessarily determine what we see when we look at the world. In the years after the Second Vatican Council, evangelization has also acquired a new meaning and focus. This will also condition our point of view. It may be helpful, then, not only to look at the world, but also to become aware of the factors that guide our vision.

As we look at the world together this morning, rather than point to phenomena and problems which you from the field know better than myself, I shall try to provide an analytical framework with regard both to the world and to mission which will help us to focus and sharpen our perception in reading the signs of the times. In the context of this framework, I shall draw your attention to some of the challenges for our mission in the world today and tomorrow.



Three minutes to nine...Everyone is ready for the first session of the day.

What Are We Looking For?

When we look at the world, it is not difficult to make a list of problems. It is enough to look at a good newspaper. One could even group the issues under headings like political, economic, personal, social, cultural and religious. A complex problem would figure under more than one heading. But underlying these phenomena are various structures which are particular ways of organizing reality oriented to particular effects. Behind the structures are world views, attitudes and options that make them function. Let me illustrate this with an example. The poor are part of our **experience**. Their poverty has implications to many dimensions of their lives, like economic, political, personal, social, cultural and religious. Examining these, one can unveil the **structural** causes and effects of poverty. These could be a capitalist or socialist economic system, an authoritarian political system, etc. As the dynamic forces behind these structures are **ideologies** like liberal capitalism, individualism, etc. and concrete **options** motivated by individual and/or group interest or selfishness.

Though the task of evangelization has to embrace the whole of this human and social reality, I think that it has to focus particularly on ideologies and options. We are of course called to help the poor, even if it is more an act of charity than evangelization. Such help has also a witness value. The Gospel as such judges the various structures and calls for a change, but has no structure of its own to propose. But the Gospel does challenge people to change their world views and attitudes, motivations and options, and propose as alternatives the evangelical values of justice, love, freedom, etc. Thus a proper analysis of reality also helps us to sharpen the focus of evangelization.

As we do not have the time for an elaborate analysis of society, I shall focus this morning on the basic ideologies and options that are the contemporary challenges to evangelization. I shall also point to developments in the theology of evangelization that will help us to offer an adequate response to these challenges. I shall then conclude indicating briefly a few appropriate strategies that may guide the discernment of concrete apostolic options.

A Global Framework

Looking at the world we can easily make a list of problems. At the **economic** level, there are the poor, who are made poor by unjust economic and political structures leading to an unequal distribution of goods. The gap between the North and the South and the inequalities between the poor and the affluent in the South itself is widening. Unequal commercial and financial relationships like investment and debt seem to worsen the situation. At the **political** level, though totalitarian governments seem to be slowly disappearing, power is in the hands of the economic and bureaucratic elite, both nationally and internationally, and true freedom and participation for the people are lacking even in the so-called democracies. **Socially**, there are all sorts of inequalities with discriminations based on race, sex, caste, status or ethnic origin. Community and family structures are breaking down under the impact of a spirit of individualism and competition. At the human level, there is a constant search for meaning and happiness, though increasing frustrations lead to violence and drugs. **Culturally**, there is a crisis of values due to the growing autonomy of the secular world and to the spirit of consumerism. With regard to **religion**, while there is a growing secularization that denies transcendence, there are also fundamentalistic movements, which find easy certainties in an ambiguous world.

The Challenge of Modernity

The pursuit of power, wealth and pleasure is not a new problem in human history. What is new are the forms taken by this drive in modern times. In order to understand these forms, it is necessary to understand the impact of modernity on these various dimensions of human existence. The term modernity is not a simple reference to history, pointing to what is contemporary as opposed to the past. When one speaks of modernity in cultural discourse, one refers to certain approaches like the enlightenment insistence on rationality or elements like science, technology and communica-

tions that have revolutionized life in the world. One could also speak of a new age of global relationships in history that starts with the discovery of the new world and of new routes to the old and the type of commercial and economic, supported by political, contacts that these discoveries made possible. Let us look a little more closely at both these aspects of modernity.

In the age of the enlightenment, a new world view gave rise to a new praxis and a new way of life. This first aspect of modernity can be looked at, for purposes of analysis and brevity, through five of its elements: science, technology, industrialization, urbanization and the media of communication.

Modern **science** affirms the principles of rationality and immanence. Rationality demands that observable phenomena are explained in terms of causes that can be understood and verified by reason. Immanence supposes that the phenomena are looked at in themselves and extra-mundane causes are not evoked to explain them. In this manner science discovers the laws of nature, which facilitate prevision and control. Science demythologizes nature and purifies religion from magical tendencies. In the last century the social sciences too have developed on the model of the physical sciences. But rationality in the sciences can lead to rationalism that denies the reality of phenomena that cannot be measured or verified by observation and experiment and thus has no place for the Transcendent.

Technology develops the mechanical means that make possible control and production using the laws discovered by science. It can promote material development in various ways, tap resources, control disease, etc. But it can also be used to produce arms of mass destruction. As a matter of fact, defence production seems to have provoked most of the contemporary improvements in technology. Technological advancement can give people a feeling that they can control everything and lead to the manipulations of nature that cause ecological destruction or promote questionable biotechnologies.

Industrialization facilitates mass production, supported by the accumulation of capital. It can be used to satisfy the needs of the poor. It can also lead to the creation of needs through advertisements for commercial purposes. It promotes consumerism. Beyond the real needs of peoples, profit becomes the main motive for production and commerce.

Modern **Urbanization** is the offshoot of industrialization and commerce and the consequent de-valuation of agriculture and the movement of populations looking for more profitable employment in the cities. There is in this process of migration an element of social mobility and freedom from social control which people seem to find attractive. But the social fabric of relationships, particularly of the family, is affected and there is rising individualism and competition leading to egoism, mani-

festated both collectively and individually, and a speed of life that is self-destructive.

Finally, the **media** have improved communications with regard both to rapidity and extension. They can promote information, relationships and networking in a global village. But they can also aid consumerism and commercialism through advertisements, favour alienation and evasion through entertainment and facilitate control through propaganda and mis-information. Information and its transfer may play a more central role in the coming decades than industrial technology.

The Moral Dimension

While looking at the positive and negative aspects of the various elements of modernity, one must understand the moral dimension of **choice** and the possibility of abusing a good thing. People are ultimately responsible for being individually and collectively selfish, for giving in to the temptations of plenty and becoming consumeristic, for absolutizing the autonomy of political, especially commercial, structures, for cultivating an attitude of self-sufficiency that has no need and no time for the transcendent dimensions of the human and the divine. One sometimes speaks of secularization. I would like to point out that it has a double dimension. There is a world view that is immanent, rationalistic, self-sufficient that ignores both the Transcendent God and the transcendent aspects of the human. But it goes together with a moral choice that favours a selfish, consumeristic, individualist way of life. These two dimensions mutually support each other.

The second aspect of the modern world that I would like to evoke is the actual **global order** with its radical division between the rich North and the poor South. It had its origin five centuries ago. History is full of wars and movement of populations. But what started five hundred years ago as



Among the gifts at the Offertory Brother Superior presented the Report to the Chapter and Brother Paul Grass the work of the Preparatory Commission.

commercial development has led to a colonial system involving systematic exploitation of one part of the world by the other, supported by armed political domination. Today the visible political framework may have disappeared. But the economic and commercial system, in which the rich have become rich at the expense of the poor and in which the rich become richer while the poor become poorer, continues. Individuals and peoples may not be aware of this underlying system that supports their life-style. But the system is no less real. Once again, at its root, it is a moral issue. It is a system that is created and maintained through collective selfishness, supported by political and military power, manifested in the commercial exploitation of the other. One speaks of the military-industrial complex. People may be unaware of its moral dimension. But no one is unaware of its practical consequences since the gap between the rich and the poor is growing not only between the North and the South, but even within the North itself.

The Cultural Roots

Behind this moral dimension, however, there are cultural elements - a **worldview and a system of values and attitudes** - that contribute to the problematic situation. The insistence on technical reason has highly developed the rational aspect of the human person. But the emotional side of the human personality, expressed in symbol and nourished by the arts, remains underdeveloped. These remain marginal in human society, confined to a few specialists, who make it even more exotic than it need be. Among the young it may take counter-cultural forms. Or one may seek easy compensation in drugs or violence or fundamentalist movements.

The modern human attitude to nature is exploitative. It does not really respect the identity of nature, its rhythms, its need for regeneration, the global ecological cycle, etc. The relationship to nature is not one of harmony, but of domination and control. The ecological problem is not merely that a few are exploiting the resources of nature that are meant for all or that the present generation is destroying nature irreparably without any concern for future generations. The basic issue is that the human is a spirit-in-a-body. To respect the integrity of the human person is to respect the body and its relationship to nature. To harm nature is ultimately to harm the body and harm human life. It is to jeopardize the quality of life. Nature is the mediation of relationships with God and others. By exploiting and destroying it for their own selfish ends, people are harming their own integrity as persons in the world.

In a network of technical and commercial relationships **people become objects**, instruments to produce a certain quantity of work. They are not respected for their dignity as the images and children of God. There are in-groups and out-groups, citizens and strangers, discriminations according to caste, colour, race, etc. The problem of refugees and the growing population of immigrant labour highlight the fact of people being used as pawns in the economic and political game of the Elites.

In a highly competitive world the other is seen as the enemy or an instrument to be used for one's own advancement. Such **individualism** makes a mockery of human relationships. Families break up, children are neglected or abandoned. And yet, a human person can grow only in an atmosphere of love and acceptance. A breakdown in relationships, therefore, is not only detrimental to community, but to the individuals themselves in their human development.

The contemporary feminist movement has made us realize the contribution of the **masculine** and the **feminine** in the complex makeup of the human person. The man-woman difference is not merely biological. It has become also cultural. The culture of modernity has supported the growth of characteristics that would be considered masculine, like aggressivity, domination, enterprise, rationality, etc. The women feel rightly oppressed. It is not merely a question of liberating women and affirming an artificial and mechanical equality but of discovering the masculine and the feminine in each person and culture and promoting a balanced interaction, development and growth for the benefit of all.

The problems that I have been listing above are not so much moral problems as **cultural** ones that condition one's world view, value-system and attitudes. But they are detrimental to the balanced and integral growth of the human



View of the Generalate Chapel during the opening Mass of the General Chapter.

person in community. There is not only a crisis of meaning, but existential and emotional tensions. This is a fertile ground for fundamentalist movements that offer a quick and easy security. On the other hand, movements like the New Age feed and seek to thrive on all the dichotomies of the modern world with its stress on reason, immanence and self-sufficiency.

Unity and pluralism

Another important characteristic of the contemporary world is the tension between unity and pluralism. In this post-colonial time, almost all countries have become independent. Politically the era of the two super powers and the non-aligned nations is over. The United Nations is still a fragile entity. What form the domination of the remaining super power will take remains to be seen. But at the economic and commercial level the world is already one vast network, though it may have stronger and weaker poles, the richer economies controlling the poorer ones. The multi-nationals are one element in this network. Thanks to the rapidity and pervasiveness of the media of communications, there is a certain superficial unity characterized by popular consumer items like music, dress and food. Underlying this is the world view and the ethos that is promoted by science and technology: consumerism, individualism, competition, selfishness, a certain secularization leading to differentiation of social institutions, a feeling of self-sufficiency, a desire and an attempt to control even processes of nature, etc.

But by the side of this superficial process towards a unity, there are lots of **centrifugal movements**. Ethnic and racial rivalries are showing up everywhere where the political unity was not a natural, historical development, but the result of artificial colonial creations. Because of migrations such pluralist societies are becoming common everywhere. Apart from the obvious North-South divide, economic inequality is found also in affluent societies. Where there are such conflicts, religion is often used to support the search for economic and/or political power. Minority cultural groups that are threatened engage in self-defensive reaction in search of identity. This leads them to fundamentalism. On the other hand, the rising anomie characteristic of technological societies drives people to search for the basic meaning of life also in fundamental movements and sects of all kinds.

The challenge then is to evolve a **world community** where there will be **freedom, equality and participation**, accepting and respecting pluralism of all types and yet transcending them to create a community of purpose and action. One could think of this as the democratic ideal both at the local and at the global level.

Summarizing our reflection so far, I have pointed to three key challenges of the modern world to the mission of the Church: a complex of world view, attitudes and system of values characteristic of modernity; a series of moral choices between consumerism and sharing, individualism and solidarity; the tension between unity and pluralism. These have both positive and negative elements and possibilities. It is the

task of evangelization to support and promote the positive aspects while judging the negative ones. This can be seen as the prophetic call to conversion addressed to all peoples in the name of the Good News of Jesus.

The Mission of the Church

One of the problems in the proper discernment of the mission of the Church in the world is a certain confusion with regard to the self understanding of the Church and its mission. In a single number of its document on the Church in the Modern World (No. 40), the Second Vatican Council speaks of the Church as leaven and soul of the world, as a visible organization and spiritual community and as the heavenly city opposed to the earthly one. The Church and the world are involved in the same human history. Whatever be the formal differentiation between the Church as a visible organization and the world, the Church as people and as institution is as much affected by the deeper cultural and moral currents of the world as the world itself. Therefore the Church has to start **evangelizing itself** if it has to speak a credible word to the world.

The idea of mission has also been undergoing a development after the Council. This development is best realized if we can explore our own **images of mission**. These images need not be exclusive: there may be more than one that compositely guide our thinking. The images are typological. Each has a certain validity, but could be exaggerated. When we think of mission, what is the image that we have in our awareness?

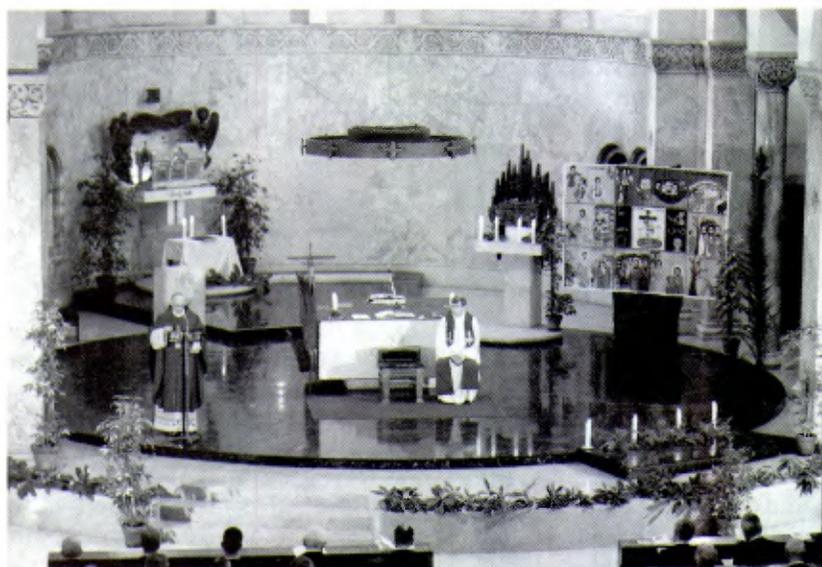
Mission as **crusade** looks at the world as divided between good and evil, true and false, saved and in need of salvation. There is an atmosphere of conquest, primarily spiritual, but often mixed up with the economic, political and cultural elements, at least in the colonial period. One thinks of the Church as an institution that needs to be planted - often transplanted - in ever new areas.

Mission as **teaching** focuses on faith as a creed or a body of truths that has to be communicated. One speaks of revelation as communication of knowledge. One develops the media - written, oral, electronic - to communicate the revealed truth. As will follow reason, conversion will follow knowledge. The Church is the Teacher.

Mission as **conversion** stresses the personal dimension. Each individual is called to a change of heart - to be born again - in response to a moral challenge. It is a charismatic experience. The Church is the Noah's ark of the saved in a wicked world.

Mission as **liberation** presents salvation as the transformation of life starting here and now, though it is not limited to the present, promoting healing, development and justice.

Mission as **witness** refers to Christian life as a silent but active presence in the midst of a hostile world. One builds up model communities of service and fellowship.



A moment during
Cardinal Martinez Somalo homily.

Mission as **inculturation** evokes the need of the missionary and of Christianity to become incarnate in a particular culture. One tends to think of it still as the translation in local cultural categories of an unchanging tradition: unity of meaning in a plurality of expressions.

Mission as **dialogue** recognizes the reality of other religions as positive elements in the salvific plan of God, the Church seeing itself in relation to them as an explicitation or fulfilment.

In contrast to these, I would like to propose three mutually complementary images: mission as **pilgrimage**, as **prophecy**, and as **peoples' movement**. These are best evoked as part of an emerging, integral view of mission in the period after the Second Vatican Council.

Mission Today

Our own Mission has its origin in the **mission of God**. As the Document on mission of the Second Vatican Council has said:

The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This plan flows from the fountain-like love, the love of God the Father. (Ad Genes, 2)

The mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit has a twofold aspect. While it is true that the Son becomes human in Jesus and the Spirit is sent by Jesus Christ at Pentecost, the Word of God is present at creation and enlightens every human person coming into the world (John 1:1-3, 9) and the Spirit of God is present and active too in the world from the beginning (Genesis 1:2). While proclaiming the Good News therefore we have to take account of the ongoing action of the Word and the Spirit in humanity and in history. We have to respect peoples' **cultural and religious traditions and**

consciences. Our mission therefore starts with the contemplation of the mystery of God in history (Eph. 1:3-10). Since God's action is mixed up with human imperfection and also sinfulness, our contemplation needs to be **discerning**. This effort to walk with God and with others in the fulfilment of God's plan for the universe makes our mission a **pilgrimage**.

The process of reflection after the Council has also made us aware of the multiple dimensions of mission. The Synod of Bishops in 1971 declared that the **promotion of justice** is an integral aspect of evangelization. This has been repeated by the various Social Encyclicals of Pope John Paul II (Cf. Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 41). The Synod of Bishops on Evangelization in 1974 highlighted the dialogue between Gospel and culture so that **inculturation** became a dimension of mission (Cf. Evangelii Nuntiandi). Declarations of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, as well as the Pope's gestures and statements in Assisi in 1986 and the recent encyclical Redemptoris Missio (RM. 55-57), show how **inter-religious dialogue** is an integral dimension of evangelization. Further reflection however shows us that inculturation, dialogue and liberation become evangelization when the Word of God becomes a prophetic presence that seeks to transform culture, to be critical of the easy legitimations of religion and to challenge the oppressive economico-political and socio-cultural structures. Mission then is **prophecy** that radicalizes the evangelizing dialogue of the Good News with human cultures, religions and oppressive structures.

The focus of mission is the **Kingdom of God**, which Jesus himself proclaimed (Mark 1:15), and the Church as its sacrament and servant. The Church is for the world and is called to animate a movement of peoples towards the realization of God's Kingdom which is both historical and eschatological. The way of the Church is the way of Jesus Christ himself. It is a way of love that gives itself even unto death (Phil. 2:6-11). It is an incarnational way that is oriented to the total transformation of the resurrection (Rev. 21, 1-5). It is a task of reconciliation and unification of all things (2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20). Mission therefore can be seen as a **movement of peoples** animated by the Church.

A Movement of Peoples

Because of a certain insistence on concepts like truth, revelation, dogma, magisterium, etc., we tend to see the Church as the teacher of spiritual and moral principles, exhorting people, particularly its followers, to apply them in life. I think we need a new image of the Church. But this new image of the Church has to be evolved, not looking at the Church in itself, but seeing it in mission in the world. God's plan of salvation is not merely to proclaim truths to be believed in, but to **transform** the world into a community of freedom, fellowship and love - in short, the Reign of God. Such transformation supposes a change, not merely of ideas, but of the structures that underlie and animate life in community. These structures are cultural and moral, economic and political, personal and social. These structures are not innate, but are created by the human community in its dialogue with God on the one hand and with earthly and human reality on the other. Only the community can eventually change them. The process of change involves an awareness of the inadequacy and injustice of the present structures, an elaboration of new and more just structures, a will to change and a concrete process of bringing about such change. At times such a process may be revolutionary. But it always involves leadership, organization, conflict, conversion and transformation of structures in the context of a peoples' movement for social change. If the Church sees its mission as the promotion of a new community of freedom, fellowship and love, then it can do this only insofar as it becomes an animator of a peoples' movement. Teaching, not merely as communication of knowledge, but as conscientization and training, is one element of animation. But animation also involves imagination of new possibilities, planning out strategies for change, organization and animation of projects with mediate and long-term goals, etc.

Such a task of animation becomes complex when it has to share it with other religions and ideologies in a pluralistic world, since the Church cannot claim a monopoly of religious and moral principle.

A Real-Symbol

Since the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all (Lumen Gentium, 1), it has to engage in this task of animation in a twofold manner. While being involved in actively transforming the world in the power of the Spirit, the Church has also to be a concrete realization as a real-symbol of the new world that it wishes to promote. It is not enough to decry the evil and injustice in the world and proclaim the moral principles that are relevant. The Church has to provide an alternate way of life and relationships based on an alternate vision of human community in the world. This is what we see in the primitive Church as reported in the Acts

of the Apostles: The community of believers was of one heart and mind and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. ... There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need (Acts 4:32, 34-35). This is not a blueprint of what we should do today, but an illustration of what another community dared to do in its own day and an invitation to think boldly and creatively here and now.

Conclusion: Evangelization and Education

I need not point out to you how the apostolate of education can embody the mission of the Church understood in this way. Its focus is the building up of the Kingdom and of the Church in its service. It offers a holistic vision of a new humanity. It makes present the Transcendent dimension in life and in the world. It facilitates the integration of new attitudes and system of values in the young people. It promotes the growth of people in mature and discerning freedom. It animates the formation of community.

We have looked at the world and the challenges that it poses to the evangelizing mission of the Church. We have also explored the new meanings of evangelization. I should leave to you now the task of discerning the call of Jesus and the Spirit in the world of today and tomorrow. I would, however, take the liberty of pointing out, by way of conclusion, a few strategies that can guide our missionary action through education. First of all, our own life as apostolic religious makes us a community in mission providing a prophetic presence of the Kingdom in the world challenging it through an alternate, counter-cultural way of life and animating a peoples' movement towards the realization of the Kingdom. Our life and work become symbols of the Transcendent in an increasingly secular world.

Secondly, the focus of our educational and evangelizing mission can be a transformation of cultures, their world views, attitudes and systems of values and through it a change of structures and of the world itself. At the same time we should also concentrate on the conversion and growth of the young towards freedom and maturity so that they can choose wisely and live in solidarity with others in an atmosphere of love and fellowship, in the context of a holistic vision of a new humanity.

Thirdly, our option for the poor should not limit itself to assisting them, but proceed further to make them the origin and center of a transforming new movement of peoples. We should be able to look at the world through the eyes of the poor. We should be able to awaken their liberative force. But we should also reach out to the non-poor, so that through a total and holistic transformation in harmony we can move towards a new humanity that embraces all God's people.

8. CONFERENCE BY Fr. JOSE CRISTO REY GARCIA PAREDES, C.M.F.

MISSION OF THE RELIGIOUS APOSTLE IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD OF TODAY LAY RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES FOR MEN

7th April 1993

(Spanish text translated by Brother James Connolly)



Introducing Father José Cristo Rey García Paredes.

It is a pleasure to introduce Father José Cristo Rey, who is a member of the Congregation of Claretian Missionaries. He was born in the town of Castellar de Santisteban, province of Jaén, Spain, in 1944, the eldest of nine brothers and sisters.

He was ordained priest in 1968.

He studied Fundamental Theology in Munich, Germany, completing the doctoral thesis "*Félicité Lamennais and Political Theology*". He also studied for five years in the Lateran University of Rome, where he obtained his Licentiate in Theology.

He has been teacher of Dogmatic Theology in the Claretian Theological Centre of Colmenar Viejo, Madrid; teacher in Studium Theologicum de Curitiba in Brazil; Professor at the Pontifical University of Salamanca and in the Institute for Religious Life in Madrid, where he is now Director.

His academic engagements have led him many times to the Philippines, where he has been visiting professor at summer schools. The same has been the case in Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Mexico.

The Union of Superiors General based here in Rome had the opportunity at their General Assembly of 1990 of profiting from an excellent presentation by Father José Cristo Rey on "*Lay persons and Religious in the New Evangelisation*".

In addition to his having been from 1986 to 1992 editor of the review "**Vida Religiosa**" (Religious Life), he has published numerous articles in specialist magazines and has been invited to give many talks.

Among his published works the following are of special note: "*The mission of Religious life; its theological basis*" (1983); "*The Psalms as community prayer*" (1983); "*Mary in the Community of the Kingdom, a theological synthesis*". (1988); and recently "*Fundamental Theology of the Sacraments*".

We are very grateful to Father José for accepting to be with us today; we also want to express our gratitude to his congregation for the valuable contribution that he is making in the Church of today towards the study of religious life.

Many thanks.



**Monday of Holy Week, April 5,
The Delegates and the Brothers
of the Generalate
walk in procession to the Chapel
for the opening Mass
for the Chapter.**

I am very grateful to you for kindly inviting me to give this talk and thus to have some part in your 42nd General Chapter. You have had more than 300 years of existence, you are nearly 8000 Brothers, and, having surmounted the difficult, troubled years, you have now left those years behind and have been born anew. I come before this Assembly, so important to the Church, with a feeling of veneration. I recognise and I thank God in you, for the greatness and intuition of your Founder, St. John Baptist de La Salle. I consider you as heirs to his charism, made tangible today in a multitude of institutions and apostolic undertakings throughout the world. It is not my wish that my contribution to this Chapter should in any way be a distraction from your work in it. I only pray the Holy Spirit that my reflections will help you in discernment and be an encouragement to you, as you face the important decisions of the Chapter.

The Mission of the Religious Apostle in the Church and the World of Today is the title which, more than a year ago, Brother Johnston gave me to discuss with you today. It has often been on my mind in the intervening time. It is not a new subject. Quite some time ago we were asking: *What is the mission of the religious apostle in the Church and the World today?* The contemporary Church, since the time of Vatican II, has defined its own role with great clarity, as has subsequently the magisterium. Recently also, Pope John Paul II sent us his encyclical *Redemptoris missio* or mission among those who are losing or distancing themselves from the Christian Faith. I believe that the Church of today has a clear idea of its mission, of the objectives of that mission and of the means of achieving it. You yourselves have expressed with lucidity how you understand your mission; this you did in your 39th General Chapter in the *Declaration on the Brother of the Christian Schools in the world today*.

However, I have a feeling that the present problem is less one of objectives than of procedure: how, do we share in this mission of the Church, given our charismatic way of procedure, our particular style? In his recent pastoral letter entitled *Transformation*, Brother John Johnston has the following to say:

"Many of us, while appreciating our individual contributions, are confused about the specific role we should exercise today as religious men and as communities and as Institute. We recognise that lay men and women can very effectively manage schools, teach, catechize and serve as pastoral ministers to the young. Some of us wonder if there is still need for our particular form of religious life." (1)

Brother Johnston here makes definite reference to uncertainty and indecision with regard to their role and function in the Church of many religious, judging by the study of religious institutes conducted in the United States. (2)

The mission of Religious Life has to be lived with charismatic enthusiasm, but there lies the problem: present-day consecrated life suffers from a collective lack of charism, even though probably never before have we had so much admiration nor given so much study to the person of our Founders. (3) I am not saying that there do not exist among us persons who are afire with the charismatic spirit; I am talking about our lack of charismatic ardour as a group, as communities, as institutions. We suffer from a lack of charism as heirs to the prophetic role of our founders and as a group of consecrated christifideles. Is there really anyone, thoroughly acquainted with the style of our communities as men of consecrated life, who can say that we live in a unique way, that we present a prophetic role, that as a community, we manifest a mystical element, or that we bring something special to the Church?

To my way of thinking, the problem of identity in the consecrated life within the charismatic and ministerial assembly of the Church, is facing us with fresh urgency. To be and to live as secular christifideles laici is all very well. But, is this why God chose us? Is this the only thing that the Church, which approved our religious institute, expects of us?

This is the reason why I intend broaching the subject which has been given me from the view point of its most basic principles. I shall attempt to answer the following question: What is the theological and spiritual identity of a congregation of consecrated Brothers in the life and the mission of the Church?

INTRODUCTION

1. The situation of lay congregations of men in the life and mission of the Church is neither easy nor comfortable; and for this there are several reasons:

a) because religious institutes of men suffer a certain charismatic and spiritual deficit; in other words, they are in fact going through a crisis of identity, even though in theory and in their documents this is not the case;

b) because, although they have been making serious efforts to shed light on the theological identity of lay religious life as such, it remains an open question; they keep bringing up the old answers, which fail to convince;

c) because, on account of the above, religious Brothers find it difficult to be chosen for the mission of the Church as charismatic groups, when they do not fulfil what traditionally is expected of them;

d) because, whilst the challenges which are now emerging in the world are requiring of us a drastic change in our method of evangelising, we ourselves do not feel we have the strength or generosity to make the changes in our institutions, or especially in our time-honoured style of evangelisation.

2. The redefinition of a determined role within the mission of the Church for lay Institutes must be founded on the theological identity of the lay consecrated life: you are laymen in relation to ordained ministers, and *consecrated religious* in relation to secular lay people. This correlation varies, depending on the understanding which each form of life has of itself.

a) In fact, the rediscovery of the greatness of the vocation of secular lay people involves a re-definition of consecrated life. If seculars are also objects of a specific call of God (specific vocation), if they receive a charismatic character to live that call (passive consecration), if they are sent into the world as witnesses of the Gospel and agents for the restoration of the Kingdom, it follows that consecrated life has to be redefined theologically; it has to learn how to share with others those theological categories of which it once had sole control. In this context the theological category itself of consecration, in use since Vatican II to define the theological identity of religious life, presents problems, and is insufficient. (4) To create a theology of consecrated life in close correlation with secular Christian life is a task still to be started.

b) At the same time, it is necessary to work out a theology of lay religious life in correlation with the ordained ministry. The conventional theology of the ordained ministry has been questioned, especially during the 70's (remember Schillebecckx and Boff); although it was forbidden to continue discussing the matter, that does not mean that the question has been answered; in fact the ordained ministry has never really abandoned a rather authoritarian attitude. Thus the theology of the laity, studied in correlation with the above,

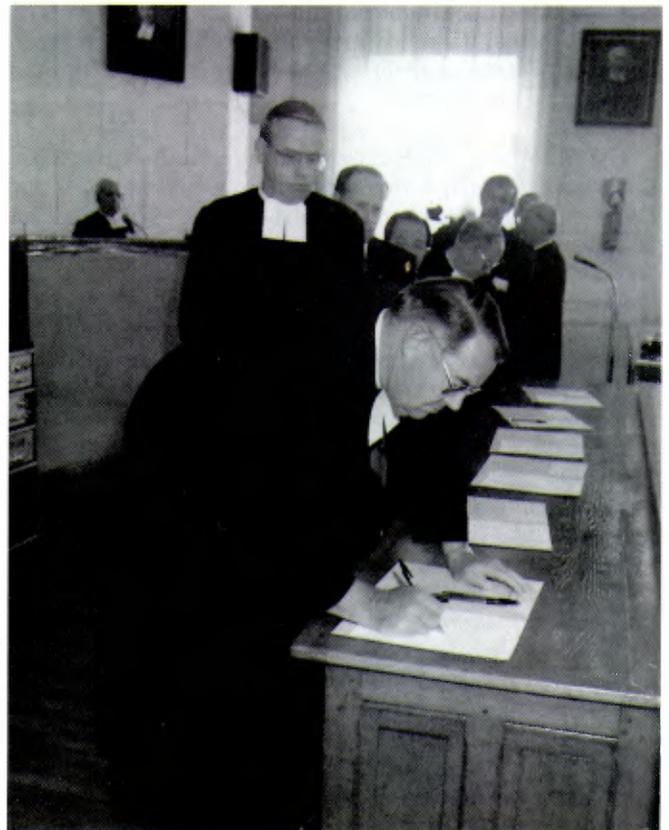
continues to be another unfinished item on the agenda.

c) Finally, it is necessary to study identity from the angle of the difference between religious life for men and that for women. This aspect has been left underdeveloped in the past, but it is becoming more and more necessary to stress it, both from the perspective of theological understanding, and from that of spirituality and praxis. The feminist movement is bringing to the fore a truth which it is important to integrate into ecclesial life. Not only is feminine identity in crisis, but so is masculine identity; and this affects one's life style as well as one's mission.

d) It is only by the correlation of the different forms of life in the Church that one can identify each separate one of those forms.

3. The lack of adequate comprehension of the lay religious life for men causes many mistakes within the single mission of the Church. For example, to what extent should the mission of Brothers be subordinated to the ministry of priests? What should be the limits to their charismatic autonomy? In which kind of setting should the ministry of religious Brothers be exercised, given the fact that they are religious? How should they differ from seculars? How can their mission be undertaken from the perspective of the sexual correlativity of the masculine and the feminine? How can machismo be avoided within the mission? What must be done to acquire a common understanding of what it means to be Brothers of the Christian Schools? (5) In which surroundings should the Brothers exercise their charismatic mission? How can we broach the

At the Chapter's first session,
Delegates signed the official register.



decrease in numbers with a transforming intuition?

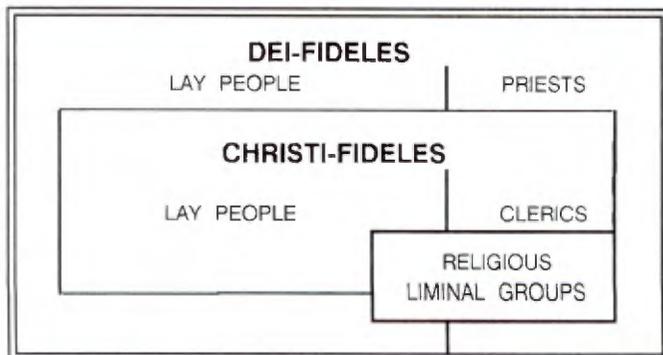
I shall attempt to answer these questions under two headings which seem to me decisive. The first is to define exactly what your identity is, in as much as you share the condition of *christifideles laici*; the second, which I hope I can also place within the context of your identity, is as *christifideles consecrati*.

AMONG THE CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI

The totality of the christifideles (*universitas fidelium*)

4. Since the Second Vatican Council and more especially since the Synod of 1987, it has been affirmed explicitly that the ecclesial difference in all forms of life (secular, religious, clerical) is sustained by a common element that of being *Christifidelis*. (6) The best way to express ourselves is to refer not to lay people and clerics, but to *Christifideles*, who are lay, clerics, religious or seculars. *Christifidelis* is a noun, whereas *laici*, *saeculares*, *clerici* are adjectives. The identity of the different forms of life plays a part at two levels: at that of the noun and at that of the adjective. At the noun level, all forms of life are defined from a common and fundamental element: being *christifideles*. At the adjectival level, distinctions appear: the specific ways in which the fundamental vocation of the faith are lived. But the meeting of both levels makes us understand that the explanation of the particular forms has to be made from the point of correlation between the two.

5. The different forms of life to which we refer, do not exist only in the Church. They are phenomena found in other religions as well. The phenomenon of a majority of the people and a minority of priests, or monks or marginal groups is quite common in the great religions. They all unite in the common condition of *Dei-Fideles*, although their vocation is specialised under different forms. This helps us to understand that the phenomenon of different forms of life in the church is a continuation of a common anthropomorphic phenomenon. This is none the less valid because of the fact that this phenomenon takes on very particular characteristics in Christianity. Here is a schema showing where the diverse forms of life in the Church stand in the context of the forms of life in other religions:



6. The common condition of faithful gives us our fundamental identity. That is the basic, primary, concomitant and decisive identity. It is the reason for the existence of particular identities. The common condition of *christifideles* defines our profoundest identity; what we can call our primary identity, consequent and subsequent to any other kind of distinction. When we get along together, the *universitas fidelium* is a communion in the faith, a priestly, charismatic and ministerial church, which is mistress and prophet.

a) (*Communion in the Faith*) We all form one community in following Jesus Christ, we are a community of the Spirit, the People of God, a royal people, a holy assembly, a priestly people. Only in communion do we share this common condition. By our baptism and confirmation we share in its Spirit, we are consecrated, anointed and sent forth.

b) (*The whole Church is priestly*) In this community of believers, priesthood is not a function of mediation reserved exclusively to a few as it is in certain other religions. The *universitas fidelium* is subject of the priesthood in the Church. (7) In its proper, fundamental meaning the priesthood of Christ has been inherited by all his community. All faithful Christians have been blessed in this manner with the common priesthood which we exercise in the various sacraments. All we faithful are subjects of the Eucharistic celebration, of the liturgical act. We all pray, offer and communicate. In dynamic communion with our unique High Priest, Jesus Christ, we form one Body.

c) (*The whole Church is charismatic and ministerial*) The *universitas fidelium* has received from Jesus Christ a mission of *Diakonia* in the world; we are a community chosen to give life. We are *Ecclesia Mater*. (8) All we faithful Christians are active, responsible members of the pastoral fruitfulness of the Church. We are all subjects of the ecclesial mission. For this purpose, each and everyone of us has been blessed with the various charisms of the Spirit, (9) which become ministries for service.

d) (*The whole Church is mistress and prophet*) The body of us faithful is the subject and actor in the unfolding of the doctrine of the Church and of its prophetic teaching. The body of the faithful, having been anointed by the Holy one, cannot err in faith; this special gift which it possesses, is shown by means of the supernatural understanding of the faith which belongs to the whole people, when they, from bishops and to the very last of the faithful, agree on matters of faith and customs (LG, 12). (10)

e) (*All the Church is the subject of government and pastoral action*). As part of *universitas christifidelium* we must cooperate in the government of the Church; (11) this cooperation was shown in the first centuries by the right and duty of the faithful to take part in elections of ministers of the Church; (12) however for many centuries there has hardly been chance to express this right and duty.

The great reform needed by the Church is to restore the practice of their rights and duties to the People of God. This will not be possible, if it does not radically change its indiscriminate manner of accepting new members into the Church, by means of a baptismal sacramentalism without discernment and without authentic processes of initiation.

Baptism without conversion, without an experience of God nor an authentic contact with the following of Christ, is a mere ritual, which results in a laity possessing so little evangelical and spiritual preparation, that it becomes ridiculous to observe, after all that we have just been saying. Therefore, if we do not return to a Church which is born from authentic processes of Christian initiation, and to a Church of penitential re-initiation, plenty of reasons will always be found to deprive the great people of God of their great rights.

Ordained and lay Ministers

7. Although we form a ministerial Church, although we have all received charisms of the Spirit and, with them, the ministry, it is legitimate for the Church to have a *foundation ministry*, which is the ordained ministry. Jesus, Our Lord, instituted this sacramental ministry for the Church, so that all the Church would be an Assembly of kings, prophets and priests. The ordained ministry has as its principal function to attend to the *internal or introvert ministry* of the Church, the ministry directed to itself: Feed my sheep. This means the dimension of the mission consisting, not in taking the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world, but in the evangelisation of its own ecclesial community, caring for it, forming it into a sacramental and priestly community. In the aspect of the ministry we are now discussing, the ordained ministers take precedence. Ordained ministers are not the only ones called to exercise this function; there are also other charisms and ministries in the Church which contribute to this ministry-to-itself through a multitude of services. But the ordained ministers act in the community as successors to the apostolic function, which is the function of communion, of directing the mission and of representing Our Lord in the midst of his community.

8. The ordained ministry gradually took on such importance, and began to set itself so much apart, that it forgot the ministry shared by all the People of God, and began to define the rest of the Church from the standpoint of itself. How could one then differentiate between ministers and those who were Christians without further title? It was at this juncture that the term *lay person* was thought up. In the Roman world the term *lay* was applied to ordinary people; in the Jewish world it meant non-religious, not consecrated. In Christianity it began to be used for non-ministers. From the 3rd Century, ordained ministers began to be called priests, especially in the North African Church, (Tertulian, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen). Lay person began to mean non-priest, a member of the people of God, as opposed to the hierarchy. The separation between priests and lay people then began to widen. There arose a Church of *societas inaequalis*: of superiors and subordinates. The fundamental unity in which diversity could be found, began to be forgotten.

9. The relationship of ordained as opposed to lay ministries, was understood in the context of *superior as opposed to inferior or subordinate*, with the result of a Church of *societas inaequalis*. Hence, ordained ministers were the ones who held the fundamental powers and charisms, whilst the lay people were reduced to mere subordinates, spectators or recipients of orders, liturgical acts and gifts. This understanding of the mutual relationship between ordained and lay ministers fails to recognise that there is in the Church a



The Generalate Chapel at the first Mass of the General Chapter.

mutual, charismatic and ministerial subordination, which has Christian fraternity as its background (LG,32). Thank God, that since Vatican II we have begun to realise that the basic apostolic charism does not invalidate nor absorb other charisms. It functions with them. Therefore, to speak of the laity, just like that, is a generalisation. Laity has many aspects, many charisms, many ministries. In the Church, every baptised, confirmed person has been blessed with his own charisms and corresponding ministries. There is between ordained and lay ministers a *mutua relatio*, according to which both are subjects of a charism and ministry, both have the same dignity, but have relationships based on the charismatic difference which forms the Church. All have the same dignity, nobody is above anybody else. All should have an attitude of mutual service, and complement one another. Clerics exist to help lay people, not to be over them (*pro laicis, non super laicos*). Clerics have been ordained as a means not as an end. Theirs is a vocation of service of others, not a vocation of dignity.

10. The laity with all their charisms and ministries are by vocation agents of the *external (extrovert) mission* of the Church. It is the nature of the laity to be the vanguard of the Church in transforming society and in the struggle against structures which favour injustice, sin and oppression. (13) It is the task of the laity to announce the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout the world, to make disciples for Jesus, to dialogue with life, to ensure that the Gospel message and atmosphere reach beyond the frontiers of the Church. They are the principal protagonists of the *missio ad gentes* and of the new evangelisation, understood as a mission to those who had been evangelised previously. That is why the *christifideles laici* have been blessed with various charisms of the Spirit, which they exercise in the many ministries required for the external mission of the Church.

11. The *christifideles laici* have, without hesitation, to occupy their own place within the ecclesial framework. They belong to a priestly, prophetic and royal people. It is somewhat like a person in the government of a nation who is conscious of his dignity, duties and rights. At the same time, this will cause problems with those ordained ministers who have not freed themselves of ecclesial clericalism; who think that it is they, and not the Holy Spirit, who govern the Church. The reinstatement of the rights of lay people, and at the same time the liberation of their charisms within the church, is work still to be done. This however is a hard task, because of the

secular tradition, which is opposed to it, and which has become accepted in the Church. This does not mean that we have to underestimate the value of the ordained ministry. The latter is absolutely necessary for the life and mission of the Church, so that the Holy Assembly can be that to which it is called.

12. Never must the ordained ministry usurp either the place of Jesus Christ nor of the Spirit nor of the Church. Between the ordained ministry and lay people there should be a *mutua relatio* or a balanced relationship based on the different gifts received. The Church is fundamentally lay. The *christifideles laici* are in the majority, and the ordained ministers are in the minority. The very reason for ministry is an evangelical, pastoral, priestly, magisterial service for the majority. Without the *christifideles*, the ordained ministry loses all meaning. But at the same time, the *christifideles laici* without the *christifideles*-ordained-ministers would lack essential elements for their constitution as the people of God or as the Church. For Jesus Christ wanted the apostolic ministry to be one of succession in the Church, and he instituted it as one of its basic columns. The balanced relationship between the ordained ministry and the laity depends on the stage of maturity, and past conditioning. At times the ordained ministry has to take on the function of powerful leadership; on other occasions it is possible for the People to take up this leadership. What is important is that both feel that they are the people of God, *christifideles*, and that they constitute a great brotherhood. They must acknowledge the gifts or charisms which each has received and allow one another to exercise their ministries.

Brothers as *christifideles laici*

13. You, as Brothers of the Christian Schools, are part of the laity in the Church. You are part of this priestly, prophetic and royal people of God, which has to be served by its ministers and has to be accompanied, with Christian liberty, in its vital and missionary initiatives. Not infrequently, you will have suffered the consequences of clericalism, and will have shared the situation of humiliating or limiting subordination which has been suffered by not a few believing brothers *laici* throughout the history of the Church. On the other hand, you will at times have felt cared for, helped, animated and encouraged by ordained ministers, who have been ready to give everything for the Church.

14. Here then is a first step in the search for identity: you Brothers, like the majority of the members of the Church, are *christifideles laici*. Whilst the great reason for the existence of the ordained ministry is internal, that is ecclesial ministry, ministry for the service of the People of God, the great meaning of the lay ministry is external, directed towards the world. Here lies a first responsibility: to be united with all those *christifideles laici* who in the Church are not heard, nor served and who are minors in age; you have to struggle for a fraternal, adult Church. At the same time, you are a permanent example of the creativity of the believing laity and of the possibilities which are theirs. Very few can understand better than you, the situation of the laity in the Church; you therefore carry a certain responsibility as liberators and educators of the secular laity, so that they too can bring to the life and mission of the Church all their charismatic abilities.

15. Communion and collaboration of religious Brothers with the *christifideles laici*, with the men and women who form the ecclesial laity, is not optional, but obligatory. With that communion, with those people and with the ordained ministers, you are a Holy Assembly, a priestly people, a prophetic community. The *christifideles laici* are your natural companions on the road, in the mission. That is why it is good to avoid any kind of false clericalism (precedence, superior airs and manipulation) in the mutual relationships with seculars. It belongs to you to exaggerate Christian fraternity. That is why you are called Brothers. *Brothers* must be at every moment the leaven for an adult Christianity.

16. With men and women, *christifideles laici*, you are the protagonists of the *exterior mission* of the Church sent to all nations and cultures till the end of time. With men and women, you must reach every desert, boundary and frontier of the world to make the Gospel of the Reign of God present there. Answering the call of the Church to the *missio ad gentes* and to the new evangelisation of countries of old Christianity, you can and must take up a bold and transforming attitude. You must ask yourselves where your missionary institutions are located: in the setting of the interior mission, or the exterior mission? Whilst the presence of the lay consecrated life is usually greatest in Christian countries, its presence in non-Christian countries is smallest. Do we not commit too many institutions and activities to the evangelisation of Catholic Christians? This prevents secular *christifideles laici*, either as individuals or together, from taking responsibility for the educational and evangelising mission which is theirs: they do their duty through us. Meanwhile, this situation prevents our looking after much more important matters in the vanguard of evangelisation, in places where as yet there are no secular Christians. A great reform still required in lay religious Institutes is that of changing all its works and institutions, in view of the priority of the *exterior mission*: the primary or the new evangelisation.

AMONG THE CHRISTIFIDELES CONSECRATI

The minority nature of consecrated life

17. Among the *christifideles laici* you are a very special part of the laity: a minority laity, a laity which has felt called to live its Christian vocation from a very special outlook; from a style of life canonically called consecrated life. You are *christifideles laici consecrati*. This is a new aspect of identity which must be emphasised.

18. We must get some sense of proportion in considering consecrated life. We are dealing with a minority style and state of life which is exceptional. In the Church we are talking of not more than 0.13% among the whole people of God. If this kind of life became universalised, the death of humanity would follow. Therefore, its identity must be explained in view of the place it occupies in the whole context of the kinds of life of the People of God.

19. This minority phenomenon of consecrated life is not however uniquely Christian, it has existed and continues to exist in other religions. (14) In the Church, there arose forms of consecrated life from the very beginning, which had different patterns, and had more or less impact on ecclesial life and on the number of those who took it up. These forms of life appeared as consecrated life for men or women, in the persons of the early wandering missionaries, ascetics, celibates, virgins, monks (whether hermits or cenobites), canons regular, mendicants, members of apostolic societies, societies of the common life without vows, and congregations of apostolic life or secular institutes. Today we still find all these categories, and new ones are emerging.

The reason for their existence: anthropological aspect

20. When we consider the identity of consecrated life in the Church from the above point of view, we can guess that, behind the various expressions of consecrated life - in different religions and in the Church -, there is a common fundamental inspiration and an inspiration which is shared by all ages and cultures. We must find out the reason for the existence of these minority groups within the lay majorities in various religions. What are the values, transcending cultures and history, which all these forms of life share and which in other cases are particular? Apparently every society creates, mostly unconsciously, its own minority, its marginal groups, which have a symbolic, critical and transforming function, a liminal function. (15) In human culture there is a tendency to embody, in a radical and profound manner, the values which it most deeply appreciates, especially if they are sacred values. These embodiments are composed of minority radical groups whose members join them at the cost of social marginalisation and separation. By these groups, society projects its most hidden hopes, dreams and aspirations.

21. Consecrated life in its various forms and in various religions, is one of the primary and most authentic expressions of the symbolic and transforming functions of minorities within majorities. Consecrated life - in both its Christian and

Another view of the procession moving towards the Chapter for the opening Mass of the 42nd General Chapter.



extra-Christian forms - attempts to be a tangible expression of the archetypes of the human spirit: a spiritual movement upwards, of profundity, of concentration; a cyclical outward and return journey. By means of this embodiment of archetypes, it establishes a special framework of relationships with the sacred, the cosmos, the earth and all human beings. In this way, consecrated life offers a scale of alternative values, it criticises the *status quo* and becomes an inspiring model for society.

Chari-matic origins

22. Institutes of consecrated life have arisen among the Christian faithful as movements of the Spirit and as a gift for the whole Church. They have appeared at various moments throughout history, through the action of charismatic men and women - founders and foundation communities. Both the latter knew how to recognise the great spiritual and missionary needs of the Church and of society at the time and in the place where they lived. They answered these needs through minority, significant projects in a life and work of service. In spite of their projects being relatively small, they felt the need to take their place within the social framework of the Church, to ask for its authorisation, because they felt themselves drawn by the Spirit to have influence on the entire ecclesial assembly. Because of this hierarchical authorisation, the various institutes belong publicly to the life and sanctity of the Church; they arose from the Church and are directed towards the Church and avoid any hint of sectarianism.

23. Following on the initial charismatic enthusiasm, there are usually periods of institutionalisation and universalisation, which allow expansion of the charism and its transfer to other times and places. Every institute has its vital curve, which, in the beginning is on the ascendant, and after reaching a climax or summit, starts going down. The ascendant period is carried forward by charismatic enthusiasm. The descent results from the onset of routine, then disenchantment, and finally, a multitude of doubts. To the extent that charismatic institutes, owing to necessary institutionalisation and predictability, distance themselves from their initial charism, they lose their identity and prophetic force. Returning to their origins with necessary adaptation to modern times, has allowed quite a number of institutes to be permanently renewed. Since Vatican II, this has been the criterion for adequate renewal. However, it is also possible for charismatic institutes to die after they have accomplished what they were founded for. This explains the various moments of history when institutes of consecrated life in the Church are to be seen.

24. Although we cannot say that consecrated life was founded by Jesus, we can affirm that the different forms of consecrated life find the origins of their vocation reflected in the small group of men and women who were the immediate followers of Jesus. In the public life of Jesus, we find two groups of persons who, in distinct ways, had relationships with Him. The first, numerically larger, were the people, the crowds who followed Him. Nearest to Him were his disciples, chosen from among the people: He called to Himself the disciples, and chose twelve of them, whom he called apostles (Lk 6,13) The larger group has in its relationships with Jesus an element which is the opposite of that of the minority group