

*During the final prayer ceremony with the lay partners present for the General Chapter, all the capitulants recited the following prayer with them:*

### **A Prayer of Dedication to the Shared Mission of the Institute**

We stand before you today, God our creator,  
who sent Jesus Christ to be our Savior  
and the Holy Spirit to be with us and  
to teach us all things.

We today renew our dedication to Your call  
to continue the work begun by Your Son,  
and to the mission of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.  
We will together seek to find ways  
of revitalizing our schools and other educational apostolates,  
with a particular attention to the service of the poor,  
to the promotion of justice, to pastoral action,  
and to an awareness of the many cultures to whom we minister.

We recognize and respect the diversity that exists  
within the Institute today  
and among those who share its mission.  
We represent different vocations,  
yet all of us are invited  
to further our commitment to the youth of the world.  
We pledge to move forward together into the future  
with a new way of thinking, and a common effort of imagination,  
to minister to those entrusted to our care.

We ask your continued help and blessing, Lord.  
May your Spirit dwell among us and teach us all things. Amen.



## THE THIRD PART OF THE CHAPTER

### Objectives and Commissions

#### Objectives and Activities

The major activities of this part of the Chapter were to reorganize the Commissions, vote the Commission reports, and elect the Superior General and the General Council.

The following are the reorganized Commissions:

- Commission A      The Identity of the Brother
- Commission B      Formation of the Brother
- Commission C      Urgent Needs in Education Today
- Commission D      Facing our Demographic Reality and Living  
The Association for the Educational Service of the Poor
- Commission E      Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor
- Commission F      Government and Management
- Commission G      Communication
- Commission H      The Rule

#### Activities and events for this third part:

- Generalate exposition of the painting of the Founder teaching class, an original work of Cesare Mariani, on loan from the Vatican Museum.
- Celebration of the Centenary of the canonization of the Founder, on 24<sup>th</sup> May. The Eucharistic celebration was presided by Monsignor Max Cloupet.
- A talk given by Brother Antonio Botana, invited by the General Chapter, on the outlook for religious teaching congregations.
- The election of the Brother Superior General and of the General Council.
- The audience with John Paul II for the members of the General Chapter.
- Closing ceremony of the General Chapter on 15<sup>th</sup> June.

## THE GENERAL CHAPTER STEP BY STEP

### • Presence of young Brothers

During the 9:00 AM session on Monday, May 22, Brother Maurice Lapointe explained to the Capitulants the reason for the presence of young Brothers. For a little over one hour almost all the young Brothers spoke. Each expressed his feelings and hopes concerning what he expected to achieve by attending the General Chapter.



Intense work in Commissions...



### • Evaluation and beginning the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase

The Brothers were invited to evaluate the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase. Many Brothers spoke. Often-repeated ideas were:

- The commission work was interesting, rich but too short.
- We had difficulty really integrating the lay people. Had they been adequately prepared to participate in this assembly?
- The pace was very rapid : we had to present texts without having time to look at them in-depth.

– There was overall satisfaction concerning the General Council's responses to the questions.

### • The nine commissions

There was a discussion concerning the proposals for the nine commissions. The Central Commission would need to do a yeoman's job to be able to return the following day with a definitive list of commissions.

### • General Assembly

On Tuesday, May 23, at the 9:00 AM session, the Coordinator commented on the list of commissions. There followed a discussion. In the end, the list of commissions proposed by the Central Commission was accepted.

- A. Identity of the Brother.
- B. Brother formation.
- C. Educational urgencies.
- D. The challenge of ageing and numbers.
- E. Integrating the work of the second phase and modifications to the *Rule*.
- G. Internal and external communications.

Then the Brothers gathered by Regions to see how to distribute themselves among the various commissions.

### • Beginning of commission work

At 3:00 PM the commissions got down to work. The first General Assemblies were planned for Friday at the earliest.

### • Wednesday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2000: The centenary of the canonization of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

At 4:00 PM, Brother Antonio Botana spoke on: "*The type of religious teaching community founded by St. John Baptist de La Salle and its perspectives today.*"

At 6:15 PM there was a Eucharistic Liturgy that was presided by Father Max Cloupet, who had been the Secretary General of Catholic Education in France and was currently the Rector of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome.

The papal bull concerning the canonization of the Founder was placed on the altar.

Father Max centered his homily around the educational work of the Brothers. As they were precursors in many fields and in many countries, they should remain faithful to this work.

After the Eucharist we gathered around a buffet-type supper in one of the corridors next to the dining rooms.



- ***Work in commission***

Thursday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, the entire day was spent in commission work.

At 3:00 PM there was an Assembly of the Whole to discuss the Central Government.

Commission work continued until Friday, May 26. The work was very pressing, as all commissions had to finish their texts by the afternoon.

- ***Reports from the previous commissions***

On Monday, May 29 there was a General Assembly to discuss the reports from the previous Commissions:

- Commission E: The text was re-read and modifications to the Rule were looked at again. The proposal concerning an international meeting with Partners and Associates was accepted.

- Commission 1: Associates. Proposals referring to the urgency to promote in a determined way the idea of Association with Partners and concerning the “need to establish Lasallian discussion groups for teachers and young people who belong to other religions.”

- Commission 5: Structures of animation and accompaniment. Proposition 1 instructs the Brother Visitor and his Council to involve themselves with a team of Brothers and Partners.

- Commission 2: Educational service of the poor. This commission’s proposition was approved by a substantial majority.

- Commission 3: Evangelization. Proposition 1 concerning the creation of pastoral ministry discussion commission was accepted.

- Commission 4: Formation of Brothers and Partners. One recommendation envisaged organizing two sessions for formators on the topic of Association for the educational service of the poor by the Center of the Institute; another concerned the collecting of funds for Partner formation in countries with limited resources; a third recommendation spoke of the necessary experience of insertion in the field of educational service of the poor during Lasallian formation.

- Commission 6: Government. Propositions: There was agreement concerning the establishment of a structure in which Brothers and

Associates would participate as equals; that the criteria for participating in this structure would be set by the Brother Visitor and his Council and this would be presented to the Brother Superior General and his Council; it was agreed to establish a permanent commission for the Lasallian Educational Mission; and that there would be an international assembly for the Lasallian Educational Mission.

- In the afternoon, the topic of Communications within the Institute was studied.

- ***Celebration of forgiveness***

At the beginning of the Chapter, Brother Superior suggested that the Institute ask for forgiveness for past wrongdoings. The idea took shape and the liturgy commission prepared a wonderful three-part ceremony:

- First part: by Regions. All were invited to share their experiences of being pardoned.

- Second part: by language groups. In their respective chapels, the language groups prayed over a passage from Isaiah 55 and Psalm 50. Dead leaves, in the center, symbolized our sins.

- Third part: all together in the big chapel. The chorus sang the Kyrie. A Brother from each of the Regions placed some incense in the censer; Brother Superior poured water over their hands, as a symbol of forgiveness; four Brothers sprinkled the assembly with holy water. Then we sang the Our Father and offered one another a sign of peace. We finished by singing “Jubilate Deo, omnis terra...”

This was without a doubt one of the significant experiences of the Chapter.

- ***Reports from the commissions***

On Tuesday, May 30, in General Assembly, the discussion on the reports from the nine commissions continued:

- Commission C: Urgent educational needs.

This report contained four parts: the rights of the child; educational renewal; the explicit proclamation of the faith; Lasallian presence in multi-religious societies.

- Commission F: Government of the Institute

The report was approved after prolonged discussion. They dealt with the reorganization of Districts, interdependence among Regions, the establishment of new Regions, specific relationships among Regions and sectors, and a study of the General Services.

- ***The Rules of Procedure***

In view of the elections for the Government of the Institute, the Assembly discussed and voted on each of the steps that should be followed.

- ***Straw vote for the election of Brother Superior***

This took place on Wednesday, May 31 in the General Assembly.

After the straw vote the commission reports continued:

- Commission D: Facing our demographic reality and living out the idea of association for the educational service of the poor.

The propositions made dealt with “the review of ministries serving the youngest for the educational service of the poor,” “apostolic commitment that could be proposed to Brothers of retirement age,” the request of the General Council to create lists of places where Brothers could make themselves available to serve the poor.

- At the end of the morning the results of the straw vote for the election of Brother Superior were announced.

- The afternoon was devoted to work in commissions.

- ***Second straw vote for the election of Brother Superior***

On Thursday, June 1, the General Assembly made a second straw vote and the results were announced at the end of the morning session.

- Commission work continued in the afternoon.

- At noon, the Coordinator asked the opinion of the Assembly as regards convening another Assembly of the Whole to define the role of the Vicar General. His proposal was suggested and this Assembly was convened that afternoon.

- ***Prayer vigil***

In preparation for the election of the Brother Superior, the Capitulants held a prayer vigil, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, which lasted throughout the night.

- ***Election of the Brother Superior General***

On Friday, June 2, at 9:30 AM, the ceremony of election began. Brother Álvaro Rodríguez was elected with 112 votes. Brother John Johnston, as President of the Chapter, asked Brother Álvaro in Spanish: “Do you accept the position of Superior General?” Brother Álvaro responded, again in Spanish: “I accept with your prayers and the grace of God.” Then Brother John Johnston turned over the seal of the Institute to him. Brother Álvaro became our 26<sup>th</sup> Superior General.

This was followed by the accolade of all the Chapter members and then there was a procession to the chapel while singing “Sancte Pater Johannes Baptista...” in alternating choirs as well as “Ubi caritas...” Once inside the chapel, the Brothers from the Central Community, the Sisters, and

house personnel came forward to embrace Brother Álvaro.

- ***General Assembly***

After the festivities, work was again taken up. Brother Superior Álvaro Rodríguez spoke in Spanish to tell us about some of his convictions.

- Afterwards, the Assembly had an exchange of ideas concerning the role of the Brother Vicar.

- At the end of the afternoon, with suggestions made by Regions, a list of five names was put forward for the election of the Brother Vicar.

- ***Election of the Brother Vicar***

On Monday, June 5, the General Assembly proceeded to the election of the Brother Vicar. The Brothers whose names were on the list were invited to speak if they so wished. Afterwards the vote was taken. A second vote was necessary since no one had received a majority on the first ballot. In the end, Brother William Mann was elected.

Then the process for the election of the Councillors was explained to the Capitulants. Brother Superior would draw up a list of “candidates” for the office of Councillor based on suggestions from Regions.

- ***Straw vote for the election of Brother Councillors***

Brother Superior gave some information as regards the list of names that had been turned in. There were on the list the names of 9 Brothers proposed by the same Region that the Brother belonged to, and 8 names of Brothers proposed by a Region to which he did not belong.

Then the straw vote went forward.



**Brother Antonio Botana spoke to the Capitulants on May 24, centenary of the canonization of the Founder.**

- **Commission reports**

The presentation of reports continued on Tuesday, June 6:

The propositions dealt with establishing a commission to discuss the identity of the Brother, the year of renewal whose major focus will be the spirituality of the Brother who is in association for the educational service of the poor, and that the year 2003 be devoted to the vow of association for the educational service of the poor.

- **Commission B: Formation:**

The propositions spoke about the role of accompaniment on the part of Brother Superior and the General Council in favor of Brother Visitors in isolated sectors, and of the experience of immersion in poor areas, the need that all Districts have to form formators, CIL, and of the



**Brother Maurice Lapointe**  
thanks Brother John Johnston.

establishment of a permanent Secretariat for the pastoral ministry of vocations.

- **The election of 5 Councillors**

The voting was done according to the established procedure and 5 Brothers were elected: Brothers Claude Reinhardt, Juan Pablo Martín, Yemanu Jehar, Marc Hofer, and Miguel Campos.

- **Tribute to Brother John Johnston and the outgoing General Council**

At 5:00 PM the General Chapter offered its thanks for 7 or 14 years of service to the Institute on the part of the General Council. Three Brothers from three different language areas of the Institute spoke: Brother Jacques d'Huitemau, Visitor of France, Brother José Manuel Agirrezabalaga, Regional Coordinator of ARLEP, and Brother Thomas Johnson, Visitor of the Midwest District

(USA).

Brother Maurice Lapointe summed up all that had been said and he presented a gift to Brother creation of the "Brother John Johnston Fund for the well-being and the protection of children." And he gave him a cheque in the amount of \$60,000.00, seed money for the Fund which had been collected during the Chapter.

Then Brother Claude Robbe offered a few words to the General Councillors, whom he thanked for the wonderful witness of unity that they had given over the years. He also recalled the memory of Brother Dominique Samné, who had passed away suddenly.

Brother Everardo Márquez, Director General of the Generalate, also gave thanks for the Council's wonderful display of generosity, religious life, and fraternity as well as for their help in administering the Generalate.

Brother John Johnston thanked all the members of the Chapter and the Brothers in the Central Community for their fraternal tribute and he was especially thankful for the new Fund that was established in favor of children.

The thanksgiving continued in the main chapel with a festive prayer service.

A buffet supper was served in the corridor next to the dining rooms.

- **General Assembly**

On Thursday, June 8, we reconsidered the propositions from various commissions:

- Commission E: fidelity to texts
- Commission D: Facing demographic realities
- Commission C: Educational urgencies

- **Post capitular pedagogy**

A special session was devoted to this topic. The Brothers ought to understand what was lived during this Chapter. Something should be done to encourage the Brothers to read the Chapter's texts.

- **Papal Audience**

Friday, June 9 was the day planned for the papal audience. Brother Superior Álvaro Rodríguez presented the General Chapter to the Pope and recalled the fidelity of Saint John Baptist de La Salle to the Church. He then spoke about the great theme of the General Chapter "Associated for the educational service of the poor" and its concrete applications in our life as teachers and in association with our lay colleagues.

The Pope spoke in French. At the end he prayed the Regina Coeli with all present and he gave his papal blessing just before joining us for a photo session.

- *Special commission for the educational service of the poor*

Some Brother had asked for a special commission to be able to listen to what had been done in the various Regions in favor of the educational service of the poor. This commission met on Friday, June 9, in the afternoon. One Brother from each Region gave a general idea about what had been done in this sense.

- *Commission reports*

On June 12, the discussion continued concerning the propositions from the commissions:

- Commission F: Management policies:

The propositions concerned the twinning funds, increasing the Lasallian fund for formation, interdependence and aid received from some Districts, increasing the stable endowment fund for the Institute during the next 7 years, and creating an organization for collecting funds.

- *Recommendations for the next General Chapter*

The Government Commission proposed three recommendations directed towards the Brother Superior and the General Council as regards the next Chapter:

1. Invite members of the Secretariat for the Lasallian Educational Mission to present to the Capitulants the work from their Assembly that will have already taken place just before the Chapter begins.
2. Put into place an interactive procedure whose purpose is to prepare for the next Chapter.
3. Study an alternative model that will foster interchanges during the Chapter.

- *Commission reports*

On Tuesday, June 13, reports from the

commissions continued:

- Commission A: The Identity of the Brother
- Commission B: Formation

A text was proposed concerning the pastoral ministry of vocations which was drawn up by the young Brothers. This text suggested a possible Lasallian Congress on the pastoral ministry of vocations. After discussion, the proposal was accepted with the term Meeting.

- Commission E: Modifications in the Rule:

Capitulants were invited to review some articles in the Rule that had been sent back to the Commission or that had been voted *juxta modum*.

- Commission F: Government.
- Commission G: Communications.

- *Signing of the Register for Elections*

At 3:45 PM the ceremony of signing the Register for Elections began.

- *Thursday, June 15, 2000, Closing ceremony of the Chapter*

The Coordinator read the act of closing the Chapter that was contained in the Calendar and the contents of said Chapter in a few sentences. The text concluded: "The present General Chapter declares its work to be completed and leaves in the hands of Brother Superior and the General Council the charge of making its documents known. Done in Rome on 15 June 2000."

All the Capitulants, beginning with Brother Superior, the Coordinator, the Moderators, and the Secretaries, then took their turn signing the register.

- *The Message of the Chapter*

Brother Superior read the message which had been drawn up by the Chapter.

At 11:45 AM Brother Superior invited us to give thanks to God before he made his short declaration: "Thank you for your participation. I declare closed the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter."

- *Closing Eucharistic Liturgy*

At noon the General Chapter's closing Mass was celebrated. It was presided by Monsignor Juan Segura Vicente, a former student of the Brothers in Valencia, Spain, now a Nuncio in the Vatican's Office of the Secretary of State.

After communion, each participant took a small candle back to his place, as a sign of the light we are to be for our Brothers.

**Brother Álvaro Rodríguez, Superior General, next to John Paul II during the audience of June 9 granted to the General Chapter.**



## Events during the General Chapter

### • **Painting by Maestro Cesare Mariani**

On May 24 the huge painting by the Maestro Cesare Mariani arrived at the Generale, by special arrangement with the Vatican Museum. The painting shows Saint John Baptist de La Salle seated in a chair teaching children, under the attentive watch of a Brother. This painting was given by the Institute to Pope Leo XIII after the beatification in 1888. The Generalate has a smaller copy of the painting done by his son twenty years later.

The painting remained in the Generalate until June 8.

### • **Concert in Paul VI Hall**

On June 1 there was an extraordinary concert in honor of immigrants and displaced persons in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall. A good number of Brothers attended. The concert began with a tribute to immigrants: Tannhäuser, Nabucco, Hymn to Joy were played as a type of pre-concert, since the awaited work was undoubtedly the famous Mass of Leonard Bernstein, composed in 1971.

### • **"Sacred Heart-Cathedral" chorus concert**

On Saturday, June 3, the members of the Sacred Heart-Cathedral Preparatory High School chorus, in formal attire, gave a concert to the General Chapter members in the Generalate's main chapel. Members from this Lasallian institution from the USA offered both classic and modern repertoire.

### • **Monday, June 5. Afternoon prayer service. International day for mistreated children.**

The Liturgy Commission and young Brothers prepared an original afternoon prayer service. Its theme was our commitment to the service of children in challenging situations. This was in keeping with the world day for mistreated children.

### • **A very much appreciated CD**

The Brother Capitulant received a CD that contained two special musical treats: "Apoteosis di San Giovanni Battista de La Salle" and "Cantata a Roma" by Giuseppe Zanaboni (1926-1996). The Apoteosis was composed in 1950 on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canonization of the Founder. Along with "Cantata" it was performed for the Jubilee Year on February 13, 2000, as part of the Jubilee Concert Program in Rome.

### • **Apoteosis di San Giovanni Battista de La Salle**

On Tuesday, June 6, at 7:00 PM in the Chapter Hall we saw and listened to the work of Giuseppe Zanaboni. The libretto of Ettore de Giovanni recalls the last moments of John Baptist de La Salle and his entrance into heaven.

### • **Supper in the "Las Estrellas" restaurant**

On Thursday, June 8, Brother Giuseppe Lazzaro, Regional Coordinator for Italy, invited all the Capitulants to the Atlante Hotel, which is located very near St. Peter's, and which was beautifully illuminated. There was a wonderful supper on the top floor, in the room called "Las Estrellas." This supper was offered by Scuola Nuova Travel, an agency which was charged with receiving groups during the Jubilee Year, especially for the World Youth Days.

In concert:  
Sacred Heart-Cathedral High School Chorus.



Positioning Mariani's painting, which is 3.9 meters high (almost 13 feet) by 2.8 meters wide (about 9 feet).



## SUMMARY OF THE THEMES DISCUSSED BY THE GENERAL CHAPTER

*Brother Claude Reinhardt*

### III

#### D. OUR MEANS TO IMPLEMENT THE GENERAL CHAPTER

The means at our disposal to implement the Chapter consist of persons and structures

Our capitulants elected the persons, but it is clear that the success of the Chapter depends on each individual Brother. It is possible for the texts to remain a dead letter and visits to be reduced to courtesy calls.

The Chapter adopted certain structures to facilitate our work and our mission. These structures have to do with:

- finances and solidarity...funds for formation (Prop. 34);
- the formation of Brothers which will have to include a period of time spent in the direct educational service of the poor (Prop. 24);

- committees to study and make decisions regarding the educational mission which involves the participation of many lay people. Formerly, all decisions regarding the mission were taken exclusively by the District Council. The massive and majority presence of lay staff in our schools calls for a much greater participation on their part in study and decision-making bodies.

The Chapter made the following decisions in this regard:

##### **Proposition 7**

**That Brother Superior General and his Council create a Standing Committee for the Lasallian Mission, including among its members: one or two General Councillors...a number (N) of persons responsible for the educational mission in Regions, Districts...and a secretary for the Lasallian Educational Mission, based principally in Rome, but available to visit Regions, Districts...**

##### **Proposition 8**

**That the Standing Committee convoke an International Assembly on the Lasallian Educational Mission. It will determine the criteria for participation and propose the objectives of the International Assembly. It will convoke this assembly at least once before the General Chapter.**

We should welcome and encourage these new participatory structures. This is something we can do because we have a long tradition of association. You will remember that the Founder did not have the Conduct of Schools printed till after many meetings and much consultation with the most experienced and most successful teachers. It is up to us to ask the most experienced and the most committed teachers to participate at a more important level in our discussions, and to ensure that Lasallian schools continue to have the influence they deserve to have. In the countries I know, Lasallian schools are more highly regarded by the general public than we sometimes think.

#### **CONDITIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHAPTER**

One last point, just to repeat that the implementation of the Chapter depends on us: it depends on our spirit, on our willingness and on our goodwill.

One of the first conditions is our fidelity to our vocation, and our courage to accomplish the work we have been given.

Next, we must have CONFIDENCE - something difficult for teachers who like to have control over what they say and over what happens in a group. There are four areas in which we must have confidence:

- confidence in the other Brothers: the Institute has existed for the last 320 years, and it has survived many a crisis. Let us be confident that, together and by the grace of God, we can continue to make it stay alive !

- confidence in the Brothers who were our Chapter delegates. Certain decisions made by previous Chapters may have astonished us, especially at times when the Church and the Institute were under pressure. Let us therefore take the time necessary to study the Chapter, trusting what the «Body of the Society» has discerned;

= confidence in the young Brothers. In your District, they are not numerous, nor are they in mine either. But in certain parts of the Institute there are young men who wish to join us and, on an Institute level, a great effort is being made to ensure that there are formators and funds to ensure that they have a high-quality formation. The young Brothers present at the Chapter gave proof of the quality of their conviction that our vocation is a fine one and useful. They wish to put into effect what our texts say; they deserve our confidence and our openness of mind, so that they can freely pursue, even in less usual ways, our Lasallian apostolate;

= confidence in lay people. Having confidence in them and giving them responsibilities, does not mean we no longer believe in our vocation. For my own part, I believe that our kind of presence, which is much more than the sum total of the work we do, is highlighted and enhanced. It is true, of course, that some lay persons, in countries where they have had responsibilities for many years, can sometimes be disappointing. But it is also true to say that the majority of those who share our mission because of their Christian convictions, give proof of an extraordinary commitment to education, catechesis and headmastership. Many lay people in our Lasallian world are exemplary. Our task is to provide them with formation and accompaniment, and to encourage the creation of new Lasallian associations (read propositions 1 to 4).

Another condition for the implementation of the Chapter is to pursue or develop the vocations ministry. This, of course, is closely bound up with the identity of the Brother and the quality of the way we exercise our mission. The Chapter, endorsing the views of the young Brothers in the commission on formation, adopted the following proposition:

**Proposition 26**

**That in the course of 2003, each Region of the**

**Institute...plan and hold a Lasallian workshop on the pastoral ministry of vocations for the purpose of giving fresh impetus to the vocations ministry in Districts...Among others, the principal participants there will be:**

- Brothers and Associates/Partners responsible for the vocations ministry;
- young Brothers;
- Associates and Partners interested in the vocations ministry;
- those who are preparing to work in this area.

You may think that only one proposition regarding the vocations ministry is not much. In practice, however, one single proposition, properly implemented, can change a lot of things...more than long texts gathering dust in some drawer. Also, as you very well know, everything we experience or do can have consequences for the vocations ministry.

All that remains for me is to conclude by recalling that what has been essential for us since the foundation of the Institute, what has characterised us and all the Chapters for more than three centuries, is UNION AMONG THE BROTHERS, mentioned by John Baptist de La Salle in Meditations 65 and 91, where he proposes a model for unity in a community.

What also is essential, is to have a lively and shining faith, unshakable goodwill and dedication which, taken together, is none other than the SPIRIT OF THIS INSTITUTE: A SPIRIT OF FAITH AND A SPIRIT OF ZEAL (Common Rules 1718).

May St John Baptist de La Salle help us and pray for us, so that, by our joyful service and fidelity to our commitments, we may build together this new stage in the life of our Institute.



Brother Álvaro Rodríguez expresses his gratitude to the General Chapter for its confidence immediately after his election as Superior General.

**Election of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Brother Superior General, 26<sup>th</sup>  
successor of Saint John Baptist de La Salle  
Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2000, 9:00 A.M.  
(From the Minutes of the General Chapter)**

During the election, all the Brothers involved in the General Chapter were present in the Chapter Hall, including the Brother Consultants, but only the Capitulants had the right to vote. On the rostrum were Brother Superior John Johnston, President of the Chapter, Brother Coordinator Maurice Lapointe, Brother Secretary General Ronald Gallagher, and the three Secretaries for the session.

After singing the *Veni Creator*, Brother John Johnston read from Luke 22:24-27, which is the portion of the Gospel that introduces the section on *Government of the Institute* in the *Rule*. An atmosphere of recollection was maintained throughout the voting session.

The four scrutineers received the ballots from the Brother Secretary General for the first vote.

Each ballot has the following formula imprinted on it: "For Superior General of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, I vote for Brother..."

Before voting, each language group, led by the Coordinator, read aloud in its own language, the formula of commitment: "I swear and I give as witness Jesus Christ, the eternal Wisdom, that I, Brother...elect and name as Superior General of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Brother whom I consider should be elected according to God." Each one of the Capitulants would fill out his ballot and fold it in half.

The translators left the translation booths and the voting began: the two scrutineers who were Capitulants deposited their own ballots in the ballot box that was decorated with the Chapter logo. Then the Capitulants up on the rostrum deposited their ballots, followed by the rest of the Capitulants in order by rows.

After photographing the first few Brothers as they voted, the photographers left the room. At 9:54 A.M. the voting ended. The scrutineers emptied the ballot box and counted out the 119 ballots which tallied with the number of Capitulants. A majority of 60 votes would be necessary for election. The count began. One scrutineer opened the ballot, another verified it and passed it along to the third scrutineer. This third scrutineer read aloud the name that had been written on the ballot and he gave it to the fourth scrutineer who verified it again. The three secretaries each kept a list and jotted down the votes. At 10:01 A.M. Brother Álvaro Rodríguez reached the 60 votes and the Assembly burst into applause but the counting continued. At 10:06 A.M. the counting finished and the three secretaries, after verifying the results, gave them to Brother Coordinator who announced the results:

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez: 112 votes.

Brother Jacques d'Huitemau: 5 votes.

Brother Antonio Botana: 1 vote.

Brother Claude Reinhardt: 1 vote.

Brother John Johnston approached him and asked in Spanish: "Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, do you accept the position of Superior General of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools?" "I accept, with the grace of God and the help of all the Brothers," responded Brother Álvaro. Brother John Johnston then gave him the seal of the Institute, embraced him and invited him to come forward to the rostrum while the Assembly applauded. Then the new Superior General took his place on the rostrum and addressed the Chapter briefly, promising to say more in the afternoon.

His first feeling was that of happiness for being a Brother - he felt this today more than ever. Fraternity is not an empty word - in communities, in whatever part of the world he has been, he has always been received as a Brother, he said. He noted that this is our greatest wealth. Above all - country, race, culture, ideology - we are Brothers, he said. We have spoken about community and about mission - our fraternal life is already a mission for a divided world. "Cher Freres, merci beaucoup", "I will need to improve my English, but I will do", "e grazie ai cari Fratelli dell'Italia."

There was sustained applause. The doors of the Chapter Hall were opened. At 10:11 A.M. the members of translators, and members of the Chapter secretariat staff who had returned to the Hall.

Then everyone went in procession to the Chapel of St. John Baptist de La Salle while singing "Sancte Pater Johannes Battista, ora pro nobis," and "Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est." The Brothers from the Central Community and the house personnel joined in the procession. Accompanied by the Brother Coordinator and the Brother Secretary General, the new Superior made his way to the prie-dieu that had been set up in the presbytery and where Brother John Johnston was waiting. After a moment of silence, the *Te Deum* was sung and then Brother Superior spent a few moments in prayer before the reliquary of the Founder. Then he went to the central nave to receive the accolade of the Brothers, priests and personnel of the Generalate. When this was finished the *Magnificat* was sung and Brother Superior was the first to depart the chapel. He proceeded to the front staircase where there was a photo session for the new Superior with various groups.

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On Monday, June 5, the election for the Brother Vicar General took place. On the first ballot, no one obtained an absolute majority. On the second ballot, Brother William Mann obtained 63 votes. At 10:28 A.M. Brother Superior General approached him and asked him in English if he accepted the position of Vicar General of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. "Yes", responded Brother William Mann.

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On Wednesday, June 7, the election for the other 5 Councillors was held. The ballots were to contain 5 names each. The vote was taken at 9:15 A.M. and the results were announced at 11:00 A.M. There was an immediate problem in that 6 Brothers had obtained an absolute majority to fill the 5 posts as Councillors. A second vote was taken and the results were announced at 12:15 P.M. This vote confirmed the previous vote but with 5 obtaining the needed absolute majority. Elected were Brothers Claude Reinhardt, Juan Pablo Martín, Yemanu Jehar, Marc Hofer, and Miguel Campos.

Brother Superior approached each of those elected who were present and asked in each one's language (except for Brother Marc Hofer, since he did not know how to say it in German!) if they accepted the position as General Councillor of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Each responded in the affirmative. There was applause. Brother Superior then noted that Brother Miguel Campos, who was not present, had given an affirmative response by telephone.



Brother Álvaro Rodríguez, enters the Sanctuary of St. John Baptist de La Salle as Superior General.

## THE BROTHER SUPERIOR GENERAL AND THE COUNCILLORS ELECTED BY THE GENERAL CHAPTER



Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría,  
Superior General,  
elected on June 2, 2000.

Brother Álvaro was born in San José, Costa Rica on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1942.  
He entered the Institute in 1959 and made his perpetual profession on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1968.

He did part of his formation in Bordighera, Italy.

In his District of Central America, he has served as teacher, Director,  
Auxiliary Visitor and Visitor.

He also served as Vice-president of the Region of Latin America (RELAL)



**Brother William Mann, Vicar General,**

elected June 5, 2000.

He was born in Brooklyn, New York, entered the Institute in 1965 and made his perpetual profession in 1973.

He has a master's degree in English literature from The Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C. and a doctorate in pastoral ministry from the Rochester Divinity School.

He belongs to the District of Long Island - New England. He previously served as novice master and international Secretary for Formation. He was the Superior's Delegate for India and has been the Visitor of his District since 1996.



**Brother Claude Reinhardt.**

He comes from the District of France.

Born in Mulhouse (Alsace) on September 3, 1952 he entered the novitiate in 1980.

He made his first profession in 1988. In addition to serving as teacher, he served as Director of the "Le Likès" School in Quimper and the Sainte Barbe Professional School in Saint Étienne.

He has served as Auxiliary Visitor of the Northeast Sector of France since 1998.

He holds master's degrees in English from the University of Reims and in theology from the Catholic Institute of Paris.

**Brother Juan Pablo Martín Dueñas.**

He comes from the District of Valladolid. He was born in Valladolid, Spain on March 20, 1954.

He did his formation in Bujedo and made his first profession in 1971.

He made his final profession on July 24, 1980.

He has served as Director of the La Salle School in Santiago de Compostela and has been Director of the Normal School Fray Luis de León in Valladolid since 1994.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Catechetics and a master's degree in Physical Science.



**Brother Yemanu Jehar.**

He was born in Keren, Eritrea and joined the District of Rome in 1961.

He made his perpetual profession in Asmara, Eritrea in 1969.

He has served as teacher and headmaster as well as community director, President of the Delegation of Eritrea/Ethiopia and Director of the Postulancy and the Novitiate.

He holds a master's degree in Human Development and Administration from Salve Regina University in Rhode Island, United States.

He is certified as a teacher of the Italian language, Rome University.



**Brother Marc Hofer.**

Born in Basilea, Switzerland, Brother Marc made his first vows in 1967 and final profession on April 27, 1978.

He has been a teacher, formator and Director in various schools. For several years he worked in India and Sri Lanka.

He was President of the Swiss Association of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Visitor of the District of Besançon and Auxiliary Visitor of the District of France.

He also served as the Superior's Delegate for Rwanda.

He has several professional degrees from universities in France, Austria and Switzerland.



**Brother Miguel Campos.**

Brother Miguel hails from Guantánamo, Cuba.

He holds the doctorate in theology from Rome's Lateran University.

In 1950 he joined the Baltimore District (USA) and he made his perpetual profession in 1966.

He has served as high school teacher, university professor, pastoral ministry coordinator and school headmaster.

Currently he is in charge of pastoral ministry for the Diocese of Santiago, Cuba.

He was elected to the General Council by "long distance" as he was not a member of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter.



## Address of Br. Alvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, Superior General to the Capitulants. June 2, 2000

### BROTHERS:

First of all I want to thank God for having looked upon my person with compassion. As I face the great responsibility that the Institute, through you, has entrusted to me this morning, there are three certainties that encourage me, just as they did our Founder: the certainty that the Lord is always close, the certainty that the Lord conducts and guides the history of men and women with wisdom and love, and the certainty that we are engaged in the work of God.

Brothers, I want to thank you for the enormous confidence that you have manifested in me. Only by counting on your support as the Body of the Institute and with the secure knowledge of a community and corresponding team of government do I dare to accept this ministry of animation.

I would like to share with you Brothers the experience that I am living at these very moments. I am not speaking as yet of a message of my program but I want to let my heart speak a bit. My first sentiment, as I expressed this morning, is that the principal thing for me, before and now, is to be a Brother and that to be Superior General is an adjective that is surely important but temporal and subordinate to the first. Brother is the noun and it is what I want to go on being: a Brother that listens, that respects, that understands, that encourages, that commends the ministry and the needs of the Brothers to God. I want to be a Brother who animates in the discernment of the signs of the times, the creative responses, the fidelity to the Gospel values, who is open to the cries of the poor and the needs of the young.

To paraphrase the well-known expression of St. Augustine cited in *Lumen Gentium*, I believe that I can say: If I am frightened by what I am for you, I am consoled by what I am with you; for you I may be the superior, with you I am Brother. That first name speaks of duty, the second, of a grace; the first of a danger, the second, of salvation. What is certain is that being Brothers is our secret, our strength, our greatest treasure.

This is so because, as a fact, one of the most beautiful and extraordinary experiences of this Chapter has been the fraternal atmosphere that

**Brother Superior General  
prays before the relics of  
St. John Baptist de La Salle.**

we have lived together. At these moments I find comfort in the unity, the friendship, the support of all of you. Would that it become the sign of what we want for our Institute-Brothers open to all, capable of renouncing self interests for the common good, uniting forces, carrying out projects in union with our associates, incarnating the Lasallian charism in the world of the poor, being spiritual masters for youth, youngsters who, today more than ever and in spite of some appearances, look for meaning for their lives and who have a thirst for God.

My sentiments are directed as well in these moments toward concrete persons although it is impossible to mention all of them. I think about my parents, now deceased, my brothers and sister... They were for me the first school of human and Christian values. They always supported my Lasallian vocation even though this meant leaving my country when I was but fifteen years old and have had to live in foreign lands ever since. But I have to express doubt about this too because in each country where I have lived—Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Spain and Italy—I have felt very much at home.

I am thinking about the Brothers whom I have encountered in the course of this journey, my formators and especially my Brothers of the young District of Central America with whom I have lived the adventure of forging new pathways in inculturation and the growth of the Institute there, together with the unconditional support of Brothers coming from outside the District.



I am thinking too of the discovery of the world of the indigenous people of Guatemala, with their great treasure of wisdom and their undeniable values of love and respect for the earth, their mother, of their contemplative worldview, of their intuitive and simple religiosity, of their profound family relationships, of their welcome to us, their solidarity, hospitality, primitive art and their ethic of quality relationships. The contact with the indigenous world changed many of my criteria and ways of looking at life. It brought me closer to the poor.

I think about Brother Santiago Miller, assassinated in 1982, and I remember that on the day of his murder, an elderly North American couple came to show me a letter from Brother Santiago. It made mention of a young man of the Indian Boarding-School of Huehuetenango, the place that today bears Santiago's name. The Brothers of the community had taken the decision to expel this young man because of his disorderly conduct. Brother Santiago told this couple, that was paying for his fees, that he had succeeded in convincing the Brothers not to expel the lad, that he would take the trouble to accompany him and call him in each night to counsel him. In that way he was sure that the lad was going to change. For that reason, when Santiago died, the sentence of our Founder that we most remembered was that one telling us to love our disciples so much that we will be disposed to give our life for them in our ministry. The reason he was killed, as we know, was simply because of his commitment to the promotion of those young Indian boys. It was also the reason for the deaths of more than thirty of the former students of the Santiago Indigenous Institute where I had worked, simply because they were rural school teachers striving to better the life of their people. That cannot be forgotten.

I am thinking, too, of so many Brothers of different Districts and Regions that have marked my life at its various stages. Symbolic of all of them, I would want to remember Brother Michel Sauvage who introduced me to the thrilling spiritual journey of the Founder. Also, Brother Noé Zevallos, spiritual master, who urged me set out along the paths of a more incarnated charism in the Latin American Continent and in the world of the poor...

When I was Visitor of the District of Central America, the letters that Brother John would send almost every four months were greatly encouraging for me. One that especially impressed me was the one of December, 1990, in which Brother John shared with us one or the other of the texts of the Founder. These texts, that speak of the relations of the Brothers with his students, we could apply as well to our relations with the Brothers that the Lord had confided to our ministry of animation. Brother John shared one of these with us and wrote that he kept a copy and frequently would meditate on it: "When you come up against difficulties in governing your disciples... have recourse to God without hesitation and beg Jesus Christ insistently to animate them with His Spirit, for He has chosen them to carry out His work... Turn your eyes to Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd... And, seeing that you are taking His place, implore from Him the graces you need to bring about the conversion of their hearts... (MTR

4.1). I believe that this confidence, more than many words, helps us to see the profound spiritual quality of Brother John, how dear we have all been to his heart during these recent years and the ardent zeal that has animated him.

I think that I do not have to convince anyone in affirming that the person, the example and the animation of the Institute that Brother John has accomplished, has had great transcendency and has profoundly marked the Institute over these past two decades. I would like to feel that I am the spokesman of all of you in thanking him, as I was at the moment of the inauguration of the oil portrait that today adorns our Casa Generalizia, for his energetic and pro-active spirit, his vision for the future, the quality of his witness and his reflections, his tenacious work, his rectitude, his profound love of, and interest in, each Brother and each one of the Regions of the Institute. We all have admired his extraordinary memory and ability to know the names and traits of thousands of Brothers. We have seen his concern for the defense of the Rights of Children, his up-to-the-minute attention to situations of injustice in the world, of wars, of catastrophes, of human problems... We have witnessed his restlessness to do something about them and to urge us, as Institute, to respond as well to these situations. And finally, we know of his openness to lay persons, the results of which we gathered as a harvest in this Chapter with the challenging theme of Association for the educational service of the poor. I believe that I have grasped, as well, the feeling of all of you that the Lasallian charism has truly been in very good hands.

Besides the participation of Brother John in the Union of Superiors General, his nine years as Vice-president and his participation in three Synods have opened up the Institute more to the dimensions of Church. We give thanks to God for this, and we are grateful to you, Brother John, with our whole heart asking God to continue to fill you with His blessings, secure in the knowledge that you will continue to make valuable new contributions to our Institute.

I also want to manifest my gratitude to the Brothers of the General Council: Pierre, Gerard, Martin, Marc and Raymundo, and naturally not forgetting Brother Dominique Samné, whose memory will always be fresh. With them I formed community during the last seven years. Their profound human and Lasallian qualities have made possible the community life that was fraternal, welcoming, respectful and enriching.

In his last pastoral letter Brother John invited us to live our foundational story and in these days we have many times spoken of the charism received from St. John Baptist de La Salle, that charism of which we feel ourselves to be the heirs and which today goes beyond the limits of the Institute. It certainly is a gift but it is a duty as well. I believe that our charism is an original synthesis in which the Founder's ardent love of God and his ardent love for the children of artisans and the poor found concrete translation in our association for their service through education.

Probably we ought to speak today of the charism built up by St. John Baptist de La Salle and those first Brothers in the light of faith, based on the encounter with the sons of artisans and the poor. Those children, those young people, were the providential means that gave rise to our charism. And for the Founder the presence of God in them was so evident that he asks us to make an act of adoration, the most profound act of the relationship that a creature can have with God, when we ourselves are with them. "Recognize Jesus Christ under the poor rags of the children that you instruct. Adore Him in them." (Med. 96, 3)

Shouldn't we be living our charism today for those same children and young people that continue to be the most fragile and vulnerable members of our societies? Besides the problems of lack of affection and abuse that we come across in families and broken homes, in many places the children are mired in no less degrading situations. Without pretending to take on all of them, we should think of child workers, of street kids, of children who are soldiers, or victims of war, children sold into slavery, undernourished children, children without schools... Shouldn't they be the ones to dynamize and re-vitalize our charism? Will it not be in them where God principally reveals Himself to us?

The love of a God who wants all men and women to be saved, but who has a special predilection for the littlest ones, such as the Gospel shows us and St. John Baptist de La Salle understood so well, urges us to be creative and efficacious. Our Institute was born on the frontier of a dehumanization: a world of youth far from salvation, without the possibilities of becoming fully Christian and human. To be faithful to our charism today means that we respond with creativity to the new forms of dehumanization, to the new forms of poverty, to the calls that the world of the excluded make to us in the new scenarios that today present themselves to us.

I believe that the spirit of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter is that we be converted to the future, open to the educational needs of the poor, attentive to the signs of life, disposed to continue in the generous dedication of which our elder Brothers have been so fine an example, animating us with their witness of fidelity. In this journey our young Brothers and our young men in formation urge us forward. Would that we can pass on to them the creative protagonism and the confidence that they deserve. And if we are faithful to our life we cannot forget the pastoral ministries of youth and vocation.

We speak of conversion to the future because when it is a matter of conversion we tend to think of the past. But conversion should mean looking to the future as a sign of

something qualitatively better. It has to do with making present the values of the Kingdom of sonship and brotherhood that should be our overall horizon. We cannot close ourselves in on the past and live turning our backs on the realities of today. If we want to speak of the Institute of the future we ought to do so in terms of creative imagination, of a courage capable of running risks, of boldness that is unafraid and which does not confuse fidelity with pure repetition of the past.

The needs of the poor are immense, the problems of our young people are more and more complex, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is every day more pressing, for that reason we need to grow in order to give life, to respond to the new forms of poverty and the problems of today. We need to share our charism with our Associates so that together we can better reach more of those who need us. A presence in solidarity should stimulate us to a fruitful creativity in our own initiatives and in cooperation with the initiatives of other agencies. The challenge is enormous but we know that the Lord does not abandon His work, that His renewed presence in prayer makes possible what might seem but a dream to us.

For that it is important also to fortify our mystique and today make visible an ever stronger "memory of Jesus Christ" and the "memory of the beginnings" that give meaning to our vocation and invite us to live it with creative imagination looking to the future. What the world expects of us is that, above all else, we be searchers for God and that we offer it pathways for its own search. Guides, humble and without pretensions, aware of our own incoherencies, but capable of accompanying the people of our times in their own journey of faith, assuming their weaknesses, their doubts and fragility. We must offer to the world of youth, starting with that of the poor, hearts disposed to listen to them, understand them, set them off once more on the road, communities willing to receive them and guide them, centers of education that place more worth in their persons than on programs or prestige.

Brothers, let us maintain alive the flame that was ours at the birth of the Institute. The 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter is tracing out actions that can achieve this and actualize our forces to begin once more. Let us make a reality what the Cuban poet and hero said when he wrote: *The best manner of speaking is doing*. May the "Yes" of Mary continue being for us a source of inspiration and may St. Joseph, under whose protection the Founder wished to put the Institute, help us to live with faith and confidence our ministry of Christian and human education.

**AUDIENCE OF H. H. JOHN PAUL II TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER**  
**Presentation of the Capitulants to the Holy Father.**  
**June 9, 2000**  
**Br. Alvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, Superior General**

**Holy Father:**

It is with profound joy and thanksgiving that I have the pleasure of presenting to Your Holiness the Capitulants, Consultants and members of the staff of our 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter. As I thank you for having found time for us in the midst of the Jubilee Year which is so filled with activities for you, I want to thank you also for your letter of encouragement on the occasion of the centenary of the canonization of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the 50th anniversary of his being proclaimed the Patron of Christian Educators.

Our holy Founder always encouraged us to have a profound love for the Church and in one of his meditations he tells us: "You must also show the Church what love you have for her and give her proof of your zeal, since it is for the Church (which is the body of Jesus Christ) that you work. You have become her ministers according to the order God has given you to dispense his word" (Meditation 201.2). Here before you, Holy Father, we want to renew this commitment of our origins.

Holy Father, the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter which opens the new millennium for us is also pointing out some lines of action for us which are not only clear but they are also challenging and creative.

First is the theme of association which opens up the Lasallian charism to the laity and those who want to participate in it. Clearly in recent years we have followed this path. The theme of shared mission with our lay partners in the ministry of Christian education has developed in an extraordinary way during these past 7 years. What is different about the current Chapter is the boost and the recognition of what has already been lived and the encouragement to strengthen present experiences or to open new ones. The Chapter has also specified the traits common to Lasallian association which will allow different groups to be recognized as such. Lasallian mission and spirituality lived out based on different

identities are called to gather strength so that together we Brothers and Associates can respond to the challenges of the 21st century from the point of view of the world of Christian education based on our educational service to the poor. This is precisely the central theme of our Chapter.

The second line of action is, in fact, the educational service of the poor. The Chapter is inviting us to make a serious review in this sense so that what gave birth to our fourth vow of association for the educational service of the poor continues to be the center of our interest and programs. From our vantage point of working with the poor, we are open to all, but they, the poor, must be the point of departure. And if in the time of the Founder they were the means by which our charism was born, the poor, young people of today must rekindle this charism and give new enthusiasm and meaning to our mission.

The third strong line of action of the Chapter is our own identity as persons consecrated to God in community for the educational service of the poor and, based on them, we are open to the world of young people. We are called to live an alternative and prophetic lifestyle based on a community mystique. This has always been our greatest strength and richness. At the same time, as consecrated laymen we feel able to understand the laity in the Church and to share our charism with them for the building up of the Kingdom by means of Christian education. In this sense the Chapter proposes that we strengthen Institute commitment in four areas that are especially urgent: The rights of the child, educational renewal, the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ and our presence in multi-religious societies.

Holy Father, as our Chapter draws to a close we are encouraged by great hope - a hope that springs forth from faith and from the certainty of the gratuitous love of God who is always close and who guides the history of humankind with wisdom and love and to whose work we are committed. We are sure that your words will be a source of inspiration and blessings for us, for our Chapter, for our Institute and for our Associates. Know that you may count on our affection and on our prayers.

## The Holy Father's address to the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter June 9, 2000

Dear Brothers, Dear Friends,

I am happy to meet you on the occasion of your 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter, and at a time when your religious family is celebrating the centenary of the canonisation of St John Baptist de La Salle, and the 50th anniversary of his proclamation by Pope Pius XII as special patron of all educators of children and young people.

These different events are a particularly favourable opportunity for you to give a new impetus to the various aspects of your mission to educate and evangelise according to the charism of your Founder, despite the decrease in your numbers. I rejoice in particular at the willingness of your Institute to respond, in close communion with the local Churches, to the new needs of children and young people, especially of the most poor who, all over the world, need to receive a human, moral, catechetical and school education, in order to become men and women who will assume their share of responsibility in the Christian community and in the society of tomorrow. This willingness is reflected in the theme of your Chapter: "Associated for the educational service of the poor, as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21st century". The Church is called upon to offer tirelessly this gift of education to young people, demonstrating its attention to present-day reality and to the expectations of people who need help in their efforts to improve the quality of their lives.

Your Brothers have an incomparable role. By their consecrated life, they are for the world witnesses to the absolute nature of God and of the happiness to be found in the service of the Lord, by serving men, and in particular children, who are God's favourites. By their community

life, they manifest that Christ is a very powerful fraternal bond among persons who are open to living together and working together in harmony and mutual forgiveness. They are also close to everyone, with the daily solidarity of the educator, who leads young people along the road to maturity and true freedom, with patience and sensitivity.

In recent Chapters, you have given thought to the participation of other religious congregations and lay people wishing to be associated with you in your mission, and to live, each in his own way, in accordance with the Lasallian charism. I am particularly interested in this form of collaboration, which makes it possible to unite forces to ensure greater missionary efficacy. The presence of lay persons at your side reflects in an appreciable manner the ever increasingly important place they are called to occupy in the life of the Church. This is something I should like to encourage strongly, as I have already in the past, in the post-synodal Apostolic Declaration *Vita Consecrata* (cf. N° 56). It is your responsibility to give lay people who wish to be associated members, the necessary formation for their spiritual life and apostolic service. This will enable them, with the inspiration of the teaching and spirituality of St John Baptist de La Salle, each according to his state, and with all due respect for the respective identities involved, and the special nature of the consecrated life, to find ways of developing their spiritual life, so as to put it into practice in the educational service that will be entrusted to them, as they strive all the while to become model Christian teachers.

As our meeting comes to an end, I ask the Virgin Mary and St John Baptist de La Salle to sustain you in your efforts and enable your General Chapter to bear fruit. I give you most gladly my affectionate apostolic blessing.



# MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL CHAPTER

*Dear Brothers,  
Dear Friends, partners and associates in Lasallian mission,*

“Holy Spirit...draw down upon us the wind and fire of a Pentecost for our times.” Like many of you, we prayed over the past few months these words of the prayer of the Institute for the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter. We dared to hope, in the weeks and months before our gathering in Rome, that the Spirit of God might once again light a new fire in us, re-energize and re-enflame the Institute and the Lasallian family, and so better enable us to be one with God’s mysterious and providential action to renew and transform the societies in which we live, the Church to which we belong, and the world of the young and the poor.

However, we never imagined, as the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter opened, that we would have lived such a significant experience here. And, as we write this letter, we cannot help but wonder if our experience is anything like that of the twelve on that first Pentecost morning when, filled with the Holy Spirit and a certain trepidation, they prepared to leave the Upper Room and to share with the world the experience that they had lived together.

Like the other capitulants, the vast majority of whom had never participated in a General Chapter, we arrived in Rome with our own rather personal perceptions of the Institute and of the international Lasallian mission. Our understanding and appreciation of the diversity and complexity of the Institute’s lived reality was enriched as we listened to each other. We acknowledge to you today that in reflecting on the central theme of the General Chapter, “associated for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” our lives have been changed and renewed. We express to you our joy, and that of all those gathered here in Rome, as we came to know in a more clear and personal way the great progress of the past seven years. So many bold and decisive actions on behalf of the educational service of the poor have begun and so many inspiring and creative initiatives which give expression to new forms of association have been realized.

We are encouraged by the fraternal communion, animated by the Spirit, which we lived during these weeks in Rome. Young and old, Brother and Partner, north and south...we came together...we renewed friendships...we forged new bonds. We prayed. We listened...we shared...we formed community...we overcame differences...we celebrated our life together. At the same time, we were often painfully aware of the many Brothers and members of our Lasallian family who, even during these very days, find themselves in sectors of our world which are being ravaged by conflict and war. Their suffering touched us and allowed us to appreciate, in a more profound way, the goodness of God who blessed us with this experience of peaceful communion.

The Lasallian Partners, who were such a significant part of this experience, permitted us to realize how far we have already come over the past seven years in sharing the Lasallian mission and in strengthening the bonds of association so necessary for its future. The admirable commitment, often at great personal and family sacrifice, of numerous men and women in this immensely challenging work on behalf of the young and the poor in the fields of education, evangelization, and child care work inspires us. The presence of a mother and her child “in our midst” was a graced reminder of the many parents and guardians all around the world who have also forged with us a partnership on behalf of the education and formation of their children. To all of you who desire to identify yourselves more closely with Lasallian mission or spirituality – Christians who seek to give concrete expression to your own baptismal consecration in the ministry of education, and members of other religions and persons of good will who share in the Lasallian mission – we commit ourselves to take seriously your every effort at association.

We are happy to report that the capitulants of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter have been audacious in the key decisions which they made. New situations ask for new structures. The formation of a "Standing Committee of Brothers and Partners for the Lasallian Mission," the convocation of an "International General Assembly" of Brothers and Associates – each having voice and vote – prior to the 44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, the promotion of new forms of collaboration and association among Brothers and Partners, the evaluation of all existing Lasallian works and the creation of new initiatives, and the clear and strong re-commitment of the Institute and Lasallian mission on behalf of "the most fragile and vulnerable members of our societies" are only a few of the bold initiatives which will sustain the momentum which helps the Lasallian family be an even more effective instrument of God and of the Church today.

To achieve this, we are counting on you, the Lasallian Youth. We know that the reason for our vocation, in the words of our Founder, is "to touch hearts" and at the same time we feel that our hearts are touched by all of you. We are certain that with your creativity, drive and enthusiasm and by your commitment to the different youth movements and to the Volunteer program, you will help us reach the goals that the Chapter has proposed to us.

Who would ever have imagined what a profound impact the presence and integral participation of the thirteen young Brothers named as delegates and consultants and another twelve elected by their Districts would have had on the tone and deliberations of the General Chapter and the quality of its community life! From the bottom of our hearts, we want to thank these young Brothers for the great hope in our future that they have inspired in us and desire to communicate to all of you, Brothers and Partners alike, how great is the confidence we have in our future and in the remarkable young Brothers with whom God continues to bless our Lasallian family.

Our thoughts at this time also turn to those Brothers of the middle years who, in many sectors of the Institute, continue in an heroic manner to shoulder the work of the functioning of Districts (Sub-Districts and Delegations), the vitality of consecrated community living, the care and accompaniment of both young and old Brothers, and the direction of many large and complex educational establishments. Thank you, brothers, for the good work you do and for the witness of selfless service you offer the whole of the Lasallian family.

Before we conclude these remarks, we want to address, in a very special way, the senior Brothers of the Institute. Know, dear brothers, that you are a gift to our Institute. We

wish to acknowledge all that you have done to bring us to this present moment in the history of the Lasallian family and to thank you for all that many of you continue to do even in your senior years. We thank you for your prayer for us during the General Chapter and for the extraordinary witness of fidelity to consecrated life you have lived during five decades of tremendous change and upheaval. Thank you for the excellent work that you have accomplished, often at great personal sacrifice, with generations of youngsters in our schools and child care agencies. Thank you for being our brothers. Please keep us and the whole of the Institute and its works in your prayers.

Finally, our hope and prayer today is that the reception of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter, in the weeks and months ahead, might be for each of us and for the whole of our Lasallian family a "Pentecost" kind of experience...giving us a renewed hope in our future and the courage and zeal needed to face together and by association the great challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There can be no doubt that the Reign of God, the proclamation of the Good News, the service of the poor, the defense of the rights of children, and ongoing renewal of our Lasallian educational mission will call for continual conversion. And, yet, what each of us might fear to attempt alone is possible, by God's grace, when we commit ourselves in faith to do it together.

We have, also, found ourselves particularly mindful this week of the experience lived by St. John Baptist de La Salle and the twelve Brothers gathered with him in prayer and discernment between Pentecost Sunday and Trinity Sunday in 1694. We suspect that, even more than we are, they were anxious about the future of their association and wondered how the news of what they had accomplished together would be received by others in the weeks following this most important moment in the history of the Institute.

Consequently, we unite ourselves with them, with you, and with the twelve in the Upper Room as we once again place our lives, our Institute, and our association on behalf of the Lasallian mission into the hands of divine Providence and, trusting in the compassion and mercy of God, recommit ourselves to "procure the glory of God as far as we might be able and as God will require of us."

Faternally in St. John Baptist de La Salle,

*Brother Alvaro Rodríguez Echeverría and the members of the General Council: Brother William Mann, Brother Miguel Campos, Brother Marc Hofer, Brother Yemanu Jehar, Brother Juan Pablo Martín and Brother Claude Reinhardt.*

## **Closing Prayer of the General Chapter June 15, 2000**

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
We, the Delegates of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter, joined together in Your presence,  
bless your Holy Name because we have discovered once again  
that You are with us, that You call us, consecrate us and send us.

We give thanks to You for the wonderful experience of brotherhood, of mutual understanding  
and hope for the future that we have lived during this time of grace,  
both for us and for the entire Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.  
We praise You for the marvels that You work each day in our communities,  
educational establishments and other places of mission.

In the Jubilee Year of the Redemption, we implore Your pardon  
for all those things which, in the past, could have disfigured the image of the Institute  
and made the proclamation of the Good News more difficult.

Recalling the experience lived by our Founder and the first Brothers,  
we bless You for the foundational charism  
that You brought forth in them and that You now confide to us.

Help us to live our association more fully,  
fraternally and creatively.  
We commit ourselves, as persons and as Institute, to respect for human life,  
to the defense of the Rights of Children  
and to making the school accessible to those who are most needy and "far from salvation".

We want our choice for the educational service of the poor  
to be a priority throughout the Institute.  
We will be attentive to the urgent educational concerns of our world  
in order to give a response to the needs of the children and youth that You confide to us.  
We praise You because You have brought to birth in the hearts of our Partners  
the desire to grow in the faith and to dedicate their lives to the human and Christian education of youth.  
We pledge ourselves to accompany with joy those persons  
who express the wish to associate themselves more closely to the mission and the Lasallian spirituality.

We earnestly implore You to continue sending workers into Your harvest  
—young persons disposed to leave all in order to follow You and to be sowers  
of Your word in the furrows of the school.

Faithful to the trust placed in us,  
we pledge ourselves to inform our Brothers, Partners and Associates  
about the content of the orientations and decisions taken in this Chapter  
so that these may be in the coming years  
the source of our personal and community plan of action.

We are convinced, O Lord, that You have journeyed with us  
during these days of the Chapter  
and that now You send us to communicate joyfully  
what we have seen and what we have lived.

***SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE, PRAY FOR US!***

***LIVE, JESUS, IN OUR HEARTS. FOREVER!***

## Closing Session of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter

Begun in this Chapter Hall on May 1, 2000, the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter concluded on Thursday, June 15, 2000.

During these seven weeks of work, the Chapter had been inspired in the theme: "Associated for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

Given that it has fulfilled the tasks confided to it by the Circular of convocation, as well as the tasks which it has given itself, the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter declares that the present session is concluded and it entrusts to the Brother Superior and the General Council which it has elected, the task of communicating to the entire Institute the Documents of this Chapter; know that you can count on the Chapter's fraternal attention in carrying it out.



The members of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter with Pope John Paul II.

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## FRONT AND BACK COVERS

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### FRONT COVER

Dawn...

Some swallows fly around, announcing the new daybreak...

The Founder, from on high, looks at the coming of the light, tearing at the semi-darkness of difficult times.

And so as the swallows announce springtime, to the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter, held in the year 2000, promises a new spiritual springtime full of vitality for the Institute, at the dawn of the third millennium.

### BACK COVER

The work of John Baptist de La Salle, which he learned to carry out in fidelity to the mission which the Lord entrusted to him, today is in the hands of his children.

We are De La Salle today.

It is up to us to know how to respond responsibly and faithfully to God's plan today, to the calls of the signs of the times, to the demands of the world's new needs.

The Institute would have died along with John Baptist de La Salle, if the first Brothers had not committed themselves to God's work with total commitment.

Each of the Brothers and Lasallian partners has the mission to sustain the mission of the Institute with their efforts.

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The author of these illustrations, front and back, is Brother Michel Phan of the District of Saigon, Vietnam. Brother was born in 1949 in Saigon.

He entered the Brothers' Aspirancy program in 1963. He made his first vows in 1967 and his perpetual profession in 1975. His teaching ministry is carried out in the Aspirancy program.

After many years in prison, he had to leave Vietnam and he sought refuge in Australia.

Gifted with exceptional artistic talent, many of his illustrations have been published.

We are indebted to Brother Michel for these illustrations that form the backdrop of the Bulletin of the Institute which brings together the celebration of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter.

