

**BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

**CIRCULAR 415**

**1 October 1981**

# **PERSPECTIVES FOR 1986**

**INTERCAPITULAR MEETING OF 1981**

**GENERAL COUNCIL**

**Via Aurelia, 476 - 00100 Roma**

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## **PRESENTATION OF CIRCULAR 415**

*As indicated in the Book of Government, articles 21 and 22, the Intercapitular Meeting which is to be held midway between two General Chapters took place at the Generalate in Rome from May 4 to June 6, 1981.*

*The 125 members present included the Superior General and his Councilors, the four Brothers in charge of the General Services, the Visitors, Auxiliary Visitors and Presidents of Delegations, and the Director of CIL.*

*The members of the meeting examined the way in which the Chapter of 1976 had been applied as well as the measures to be taken during the next five years, that is until the General Chapter of 1986.*

*It was an occasion to gather a number of facts, to determine our positions, and make a number of orientations to be given to the General Council, the Regions, the Districts, the Communities, and the Brothers.*

*At the end of the meeting, the members presented the General Council with a list of these facts, positions, and orientations which are to be made known to the Brothers along with the reactions of the Council itself.*

*Circular 415 is, therefore, a presentation of this work and a bringing together of the contributions of the meeting and the ideas of the General Council. Its principal parts are the following:*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Re-Affirmation of our Communion and Fidelity**

Last spring, “the Brothers in charge of Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations » (Cf. Book of Government, 21) met in Rome in response to the request made by Brother Superior General in his letter of 15 May 1980.

In the context of the measures set for the direction and the government of the Institute, this Intercapitular Meeting has an obvious importance. Its purpose and its workings are described in chapter two of the Book of Government, immediately after the section dealing with the General Chapter, and even before the ones dealing with the nature and the functions of the central government.

An analysis of our organizational structures makes it very clear that they assign this meeting a privileged place for the better guidance of the Institute and for making its leadership more effective. The functions which are assigned to it are a suitable evaluation of the progress of the Institute, a seeking out of those elements which have shown themselves to be the most positive or the more dangerous, and an analysis and a harmonization of our criteria and our methods, without forgetting to give a respectful attention to the different situations and circumstances.

Certainly, the different ways which the Superior and his Councilors have used to keep in contact with the Regions and the Districts have shown themselves to be excellent means of achieving the objectives. But the Intercapitular Meeting, given the number of those in responsible positions which it brings together and the contributions they can make and the experiences on which they can draw, succeeds better than

any other initiative in being an outstanding expression “of the communion which exists among all the Brothers. It perpetuates among them the living fidelity to the special charism of the Institute.” (Cf. Book of Government, 1) It resembles a General Chapter, even though it cannot be compared to it nor exercise its supreme authority.

### **A message which interests all the Brothers**

The Brothers, therefore, have every right to know the concrete results of this assembly. The General Council is already acquainted with the reports of the Brothers Visitors who have given their views on this meeting. Some of them have even published in their districts the documents composed during the sessions.

But it is the task of the General Council to present the conclusions reached during the meeting more authoritatively and even more widely. And this from two points of view: to *stress* the more significant points and to *include* its own reflections and thus recommend their effective application to every one's attention and practice. They will thus provide all the Brothers with precise information, a powerful stimulus and common objectives.

### **The fruit of work undertaken “in spirit and truth”**

According to the opinions expressed by participants or observers, this meeting seems to have attained the objectives laid down in our Constitutions. Every one expressed his satisfaction.

The 125 participants who were responsible for this success are the first to be congratulated. Thanks, first of all, to the methodical preparation of the preceding months. And then, because of their ability to communicate their experiences and criteria in an excellent spirit and perfect sincerity. And finally, because they managed to establish an “exceptional experience of community life” as we proposed in the above mentioned letter of 15 May, 1980, page 13.

The proceedings took place in a prayerful atmosphere, excellently initiated by a few days retreat, preached by Father Tutas, Superior General of the Marianists. This atmosphere was increased during the five weeks of common life marked by Masses and community prayer of the highest quality.

The direct tangible results of these discussions and assessments, undertaken with the utmost loyalty, are the papers and reports handed to the General Council. The latter has devoted a number of meetings to analyzing their content and extracting from them the criteria and the most noteworthy and opportune practical orientations for the years leading up to the next General Chapter. These observations and recommendations stem from the observation of our lives and are directed back to our lives. The summary which follows has no other aim than that of bringing greater clarity into our lives, of giving them tone, of bringing them into more authentic conformity with the ideals and aspirations which urge us to live in association.

### **Old subject matter, new expression**

An initial and superficial perusal of the texts issued from this meeting could lead one to think that, in many ways, they repeat old recipes to satiety. This opinion, however, will not stand up to more careful scrutiny.

It is evident that the authors of these texts have taken the main points of the last General Chapter into account. They have likewise been careful to pay due attention to those still more venerable texts which, from the very foundation of the Institute, have expressed our fundamental values and served as continuing models for our common inspiration. Yet again, and to an even greater degree, heed for these essential points has been enriched and specified by the suggestions deriving from the changing innovations of our times. These two aspects may appear at first sight to be contradictory, but they are in fact the two aspects of the same healthy realism, that which really takes into account the course of

history, in which we are immersed with all that the past bequeaths us, and the present with its uncertainties.

What is of greatest interest in the long list of findings, attitudes and recommendations which the meeting produced, is the *new emphasis and significant insistence* whose pressures form the undercurrent of the texts and resolutions and are an echo of particularly urgent and actual events.

And what is the cause of this new emphasis? The problems and challenges arising from the evolution of society, the changes in family and community life and organization, and also the entirely new psychological phenomena presented by young people and adults. Add to this the explanations of modern theology and the recent juridical concepts developing in the Church as well as the specific tendencies and problems looming up in the Institute as a result of its world wide development and its active presence in so many different cultures.

The old and the new do not make such a bad mixture after all! The conclusions of the meeting here presented recommend both that we faithfully carry on the best of our traditions and adapt ourselves flexibly to the new rhythms.

### **Points more especially stressed**

The following recommendations of the intercapitular meeting seem to us to be more especially urgent.

1. *In our mission, continue* to search for the more fundamental values, avoid the risk of reducing our work to the pure and simple transmission of knowledge and skills. Advance beyond a too timid and superficial approach to the real problems of the young and of the poor, which fails to consider them in the aggregate and in their entire existence and avoids the fundamental questions which arise in their minds and with which they are preoccupied.

● Consequently, *open* our missions to possible new activities and initiatives which are called for by the redemption of man today, principally through education.

...Make our *work more pastoral*, be more responsible in the attention paid to each person and his own life story, to his specific and essential problems, rather than confining ourselves to purely academic preoccupations.

...Take a greater share in *joint pastoral work* which draws up a plan and coordinates initiatives and activity within the local Church, and thus give more significance, continuity and efficacy to the Church whose servants we are, as St. John Baptist de La Salle reminds us.

...Modify our activities with respect and more marked esteem for *each culture*. The man we serve, indeed, is immersed in a social milieu where he lives and acts.

2. Be more seriously and honestly attentive to all that the *liberation of the poor* and promotion of *increased justice* calls for, and let our commitment thereto be more coherent and more complete.

...Cultivate a clearer and more exact consciousness of the causes leading to or maintaining unjust situations in the world.

...Overcome every inertia and every inconsistency in the priority we give to the service of the poor.

...Seek, therefore, to be more truly bound up with the needs and difficulties of the poor, in expressing just claims and defending their rights.

...Fulfil this programme in the light and under the inspiration of the Gospel, the requests of the Pope and of the whole Church, while trying to create a more realistic brotherhood among all men.

3. Be more open to the *lay teachers* working among us with a desire for their greater integration. As the report points out, "we integrate them in our work, less in our mission and still less in our spirituality."

...As a logical consequence, be more associated with them and give them leadership within the framework of our common mission and responsibility.

...Train ourselves adequately to be capable of such a mission of leadership. It requires a more deeply rooted and a more communicative spirituality.

...Better understand what is meant by the *educative community* and strengthen it till it becomes a *faith community*. Encourage certain of its members to join one of the associations developing among us, such as the *SIGNUM FIDEL*.

4. *Become more truly brothers*. Associate with one another to be more fraternally united, in truth and in the depths of our hearts, striving with more sustained effort to create a more authentic community of prayer. Lead a more dynamic life directed by a sincere community project, one which we continually strive to understand better, to share better, so that our life finds therein strength and meaning.

5. Realize that we are *sons of the same father*, true continuations of St. John Baptist de La Salle. Make a deeper study of his spirituality individually and in community, with our neighbours such as associates, teachers, pupils, former pupils. The tercentenary has led many of us to see that there is a force in the Founder's name and spirit which still creates and unites. These have led to the establishment of a movement in which there are already a considerable number of lay people. Without pretending to any exclusiveness, fanaticism, or closed shop, our vocation becomes more comprehensible and efficacious when we lead a more intense Lasallian life.

6. The effort to *improve continuing formation* must be put into operation and intensified at all levels. The basis is the responsibility of each Brother towards himself and a fundamental service for each one of us. It is also a "sine qua non" for understanding and achieving our plans for renewal and rejuvenation.

## **An Institute seeking rejuvenation**

Our intercapitular meeting felt the urgent need for assuring and promoting the rejuvenation of the Institute. It is a pressing task and perfectly within our capabilities in an Institute which was founded, exists and works for the young. These latter cannot but be impressed and won over by the strength of our witness, provided that it corresponds in fact to what we profess in the spoken and written word. If this is done, *work for vocations*, based on reality and accompanied by intelligible explanations of the motives and strength which enable us to lead our lives, will not fail to bring to light a certain number of these young people who feel themselves drawn to share in the same mission, the same life and join us in the same vocation.

## **PART 1**

# **EMPHASIS IN OUR MINISTRY**

## **PASTORAL ATTITUDE**

The members of the intercapitular meeting did not make a systematic study of the school or of education. They shared their daily successes and setbacks in their apostolic ministry with young people. They paid great attention to the repercussions on the Brothers or other teachers. There resulted a number of insistant requests.

### **Above and beyond mere professionalism**

“It can happen that Brothers confine themselves too exclusively to their professional duties and refrain from taking part in pastoral activities ». This fact mentioned in one of the reports of the meeting was repeated time and again. This is a fairly wide-spread and dangerous curtailment though it occurs in varying degrees. It could explain why spiritual influence over the young is somewhat weak. The Brother cannot limit himself to being a qualified teacher, an efficient leader or a talented organizer. He is above all the purveyor of the Good News.

St. John Baptist de La Salle’s original intuition that “the Brother is the minister of God and the dispenser of his mysteries” (Cf. Meditations for Sundays and Feastdays 3, 2-166,3 and Meditations for the Time of the Retreat 193,1-205,1...) still holds true. The Brother is called by God to cooperate

with Him in the salvation of the young. If he has left all to follow Jesus, it is in order to preach the Gospel.

Hence it is that the Intercapitular Meeting insisted many times over that the Brother's most important duties are pastoral activities. These will not hinder him from obtaining the qualifications required by the teaching profession. But he will do this in view of his ultimate aim: pastoral work among the young. The members of the meeting produced evidence to prove that this is the kind of education young people are looking for.

It is a sign of the times and it must not go unheeded. "Contemporary man is more willing to take note of witnesses than to listen to teachers. And if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." (Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 41).

### **To Educate in a Christian Manner Today**

"The end of this Institute is to give a Christian Education to children and it is for this reason that we run schools, so that since the children are under the guidance of the teachers from morn to night, the said teachers can teach them how to lead a good life..." (1718 Rules, Chap. 1). This is St. John Baptist de La Salle's plan to which the Brothers have faithfully adhered for 300 years.

But the educational world has been subjected to many different kinds of development in the last fifteen years. One aspect is evidently the evolution of the young in their affective life, their understanding of the faith, their relations with adults, their initiation into a working life. Another aspect is the constant attacks made on the school in general and on the Christian school in particular.

The participants at the intercapitular meeting are of the opinion that those Brothers and communities have best faced up to the new situations who have followed the directives of the Declaration of the 1966 Chapter. These directives have been translated into a new way of understanding the objectives and methods of education. Numerous examples were

mentioned in this field. They are mainly concerned with establishments, though at times a whole district or a whole region is involved. In places where the Brothers cannot work in establishments depending on the Congregation, they have set up educational centres apart from the school. The young people can meet there to pursue their leisure activities and have faith experiences which are unobtainable in the state school.

The intercapitular meeting recognizes that "there are obstacles which prevent or retard this movement of school renewal; strict administrative regulations, shortage of cash, various forms of pluralism, the decrease and aging of the Brothers ».

However, the participants re-affirm their faith in the value of the school in training the society of the future and in the role of the Catholic school as a privileged place for promoting culture and experiencing the faith.

### **Starting point: youth culture**

No education, still less evangelization, can take place in a vacuum. The Brother who wishes to provide a Christian response to the needs of youth can succeed only on one condition, a major effort to share their life and a sympathetic understanding of their way of life and culture. If the Brother wants to preach Jesus Christ and evangelize them, it is absolutely necessary for him to steep himself in the culture, not only of the country and the milieu in which he is working, but also in the mentality and culture of the young as far as it is possible for an adult to do so. (1)

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1) According to Circular 408, p. 88, inculturation means that faith and Christian life act as a seed within a given culture and succeed in expressing themselves in terms of that culture. Brought to the fore because of the needs of the Young Churches, this notion is absolutely necessary for an Institute which exercises most of its mission through the school. This is the place par excellence where faith and culture meet.

The intercapitular meeting notes that if, on the one hand, there are Brothers who pay more attention to relationships and are able to listen to the young and live with them, there are, on the other, a considerable number of others who cannot make up their minds and do not prepare themselves to treat with young people on their own terms. They do not adopt suitable attitudes or means, and thus they call in question their evangelizing ministry. It is easy to compare this code of conduct with the above-mentioned insistence on the need to be above and beyond mere professionalism.

The assembly also recalled the importance in our days of being aware of and of putting to good use the means of social communication whose influence on mentality and behaviour is constantly on the increase.

### **The Educational Project**

The need to express our own views on education, its Christian character and the commitment of the educational community, has led many establishments to put forward their own ideas on what is termed the educational project.

The intercapitular meeting greatly appreciated this initiative and would like to see it extended if possible to all educational establishments. This would be conducive to clarifying our objectives, to say what kind of person we want to help train and for what kind of society. Truly Christian education is based on the person of Jesus and this must appear unambiguously in the educational project. In non-Christian countries, this plan must refer to the human understanding of brotherhood and dialogue. It will stress the aspects of local culture and religion which coincide with those of the Gospel.

In one sense, we could say that in our days the educational project is a further expression of "working together and by association". The latter of course refers primarily to the Brothers' community commitment, but its application can be extended to the commitment of all the members of the educational community.

## Continual renewal

When gathering examples of how the overall directives have been put into practice, the intercapitular meeting realized that the majority of our establishments have chosen methods which encourage creativity, a critical mind, responsibility, brotherhood and service. This movement does not, however, reject the traditional importance of education as the means of acquiring fundamental habits and knowledge.

Educational communities and their committed members do actually exist in many places. More particularly, parents are active cooperators in many of our establishments. Christian education can therefore be extended to out-of-school activities and even to the family itself. One can thus come across a goodly number of bible centres, prayer groups, vocation clubs, etc...

*The overall picture leads to some practical conclusions.*

— Plan our work, see what kind of apostolate ours should be, taking the numbers of Brothers and their age into account.

— Intensify the training of Brothers in their role as leaders and not limit ourselves to academic training.

— Help the school and its staff to conform to local culture.

— Give lay teachers and parents an ever increasing share in school life.

— Establish a team in the district or the region to give lay teachers the leadership they need.

— Share our spirituality with lay teachers and parents.

— Perfect programmes and find resources for communicating the Lasallian spirit to groups to be formed in the school.

## **End product: a faith community**

The intercapitular meeting asks the Brothers over the coming years to concentrate their efforts on transforming the educational community into a faith community.

The meeting regretted that a large proportion of the lay staff in certain regions take up teaching posts for the sole purpose of gaining a living and with no reference to Christianity. School legislation sometimes inhibites our employing the kind of staff we would like. This only serves to reinforce the need to establish a faith community within the educational community. The latter is based to a certain extent on affective consensus. In order to have a community which bears witness to its faith, we must do more. We must have a group of baptized persons who assert themselves, are able to share their ideas with others, to express themselves and to practice the same faith, thus becoming a sign and a presence of God.

It is within a Community that faith comes into being and increases. When we consider the evangelizing role of the school, the presence of the Brothers forms the basis of this community, as if it were its germ and life-giving kernel. The next stage is not merely actual catechesis but the creation of groups for Christian living where the young, who are faced with the materialistic influence of their surroundings, can in some way experience their faith, with the opportunity for intense prayer, for a more profound life of faith and better commitment as a Church.

While they are thus helping the lay staff to compose this faith Community, the Brothers will at the same time have great care to encourage parents and former pupils in their educational role at home. They could organize meetings so as to provide suitable programmes and resources.

This endeavour to create faith Communities will be made in the name of the local Church and in conjunction with its ministers according to the directives of "Mutuae Relationis", a document concerning the relations between bishops and religious, published by the Holy See in 1980.

## THE APPEAL OF THE POOR

Historically, the Institute came into being as St. John Baptist de La Salle's response to the appeal of the poor. The intercapitular meeting, therefore wishes to stress the implications of propositions 13 to 15 of the last General Chapter. (Cf. Circ. 403, pp. 78-79). This was a call to the Brothers to find initiatives to help the poor, a call for volunteers for this service, a call to consider this to be a fundamental element of renewal. Also, it was a call to Districts for this service to be the rule rather than the exception, for the Brothers to be trained to face up to this evolution.

The meeting also recognized that the directives of the last two General Chapters have been the basis on which the Brothers have planned their apostolate and created new works. Circular 412, on Service to the Poor and the Promotion of Justice, is beginning to have a similar influence.

### Make further Progress

The participants at the intercapitular meeting want to maintain the effort of returning to the original charism of the Institute, stressing service to the poor and the promotion of justice. They recall the 1976 General Chapter propositions 13 to 15 (Circ. 403, pp. 78-79), and the recent Circular 412 of 15 Sept. 1980. They do not consider it necessary to formulate new considerations or give further directives. But they *make the following suggestions* for accelerating the practices of those contained in the above mentioned circular.

- Make further advances by developing programmes to put the directives of the Institute regarding such service into practice.

- Encourage and sustain present experiments, especially in the schools. And promote new ones, to be incorporated in the ones mentioned above.

- Encourage the Brothers working in the schools and

those working outside to understand one another's points of view.

- Develop means of assessing our work based on the criteria of service of the poor and the promotion of justice.
- When tyrannical organizations hinder our service, start talking at District level and with the local Church.

Continuing its discussions, the intercapitular meeting noted that this progressive transformation will often lead us to create a new kind of school, a new type of education. For it is not sufficient that the school is open to the poor for it to be, ipso facto, useful or a place where they can meet Christ. Evangelization is a response to real needs and it is to this response that organization, programmes and type of school must be adapted.

We must, moreover, accept the limitations of the school. Those which result from the very nature of its activities and which lead to undertaking other forms of service of the poor and the promotion of justice. But we must also be aware of the limitations and hindrances from national or international legislation based very often more on the criteria of efficiency (keeping the labour market supplied) than on the Christian and human understanding of justice.

### **Pastoral Activities for making Further Progress**

In order that this does not remain a pious wish, the intercapitular meeting lays down precise rules and makes the following suggestions, repeating and clarifying the suggestions in the preceding paragraph.

- Each Region and each District will draw up suitable *programmes* for the progressive accomplishment of this evolution towards service of the poor and the promotion of justice. It will suffice to refer to pp. 114 to 119 of Circular 412.
- Each District will appoint a team responsible for leadership and the coordination of these activities.

● Brother Visitor and his Council will *continually evaluate* the work and activity to see how far it meets the proposed criteria. Special care will be taken to see whether such work is not in fact contradictory to the Gospel, whether it does not, unknowingly, perpetuate oppressive and egotistical situations and accumulate wealth. To see whether education is sufficiently critical of the unrestrained race for consumer goods and the abuse of power.

● An urgent need. Interest the Brothers, laymasters and pupils by organizing various kinds of meetings where local, national and world *causes* of poverty and justice are *analysed*.

● The same care must be shown in the *initial training* of the Brothers. This is the only way of creating a different mentality and encouraging new commitments.

● The *spiritual facet* of this education must be apparent in the Brother's life and in what he undertakes. Hence the importance of discussions and prayer, either in community or with other teachers.

● Finally, the participants wish the Institute to *publish descriptions* of a number of *achievements* which illustrate objectively how some of our former work has been given a new slant and where new work has been created to meet these directives.

## **OPENNESS TO LAY PEOPLE**

The increasing number of lay people working with us in schools is a sign of the times which the Brothers must be able to interpret. It would be interesting, without going back too far, to read our capitular texts and see the evolution of those concerning our relations with lay people. However that may be, after the 1976 Chapter had blessed the various ways in which lay people could be associated with our apostolate, community life and spirituality, the Intercapitular Meeting devoted considerable attention to the subject either in a report dealing expressly with it, or in various reports on the

school, catechesis, and even in relations with the Young Churches.

### **Why take an interest in lay people**

At last the Church recognizes that lay people have a part to play and a share in its mission. We are a cell in the Church and we must include this care among our responsibilities. Statistics show that we are in contact with many thousands of laymen, teachers of course, but also members of the administrative and domestic staff, not to mention former pupils, parents and sympathizers. The very nature of our work makes us one of the groups in the Church which has most to do with laymen and that in anything but a superficial way, since we have to form an educational community and even, given the right conditions, a faith community. We must realize the extent of this phenomenon, the responsibilities it entails and seize the occasion it offers.

We therefore make an extremely important contribution to the Church within the educational community itself as it brings together Brothers and lay people. We are called upon to fulfil a new role, that of sharing our spirituality with lay people whom we look on as our equals.

There has, therefore, been a considerable evolution from the not too distant past when we had to employ lay people because of the difficulties of the times and considered them simply as auxiliaries.

### **Interest and train the Brothers**

The first directive of the meeting is addressed to the Brothers. In many countries, indeed, where the socialization of education is making progress, Brothers and lay people find themselves on the same footing when it comes to applying for a post. Even in more traditional situations the presence of numerous laymen calls into question the "Brothers' School". It leads the Brothers to start asking them-

selves what it is that distinguishes them from laymen. The intercapitular meeting, therefore, recommends that more extensive discussions or studies be undertaken at various levels, community, district, General Council, to see what Brothers and laymen have in common and what distinguishes them, and also the precise point of our presence as Brothers in a school where laymen predominate. The directives suggest that we must make certain contributions to the educative community which relate to our consecrated life, such as the idea of gratuity, availability, brotherhood, care for the life of faith in the educational community.

A special recommendation deals with the eventual membership of Brothers in trade unions. This a question which arises in a number of places. But on discussion, it was apparent that the term "trade union" has a different connotation in different countries, sometimes quite the opposite from one country to the next. And so, to avoid confusion, it is recommended that the matter be studied with the local Church according to local circumstances.

### **Interest and train the Lay Staff**

The meeting on no occasion adopted the attitude in which the "well trained" Brother came to the help of the "backward" layman. It realized a fact confirmed in the discussions: lay staff, more or less everywhere, and to varying degrees, are interested in the Brothers' spirituality and methods. For them they are a source of inspiration. It means that the Brother is for the layman a leader or teacher and shares with him the legacy inherited from St. John Baptist de La Salle and the present daily practices of Lasallian spirituality.

As the introduction states, this is *a further step* the meeting suggests should be taken. For if we associate the layman in our profession, and a little less in our mission, we tend to treat our spirituality as our special preserve.

With all the facilities offered by the large number of laymen working with us, the meeting esteems it an urgent duty to get them to share in this mission and this spirituality.

An urgent duty because it is a debt the Church owes the layman. And our negligence now becomes apparent in the difficulties we encounter when we see many lay teachers "doing nothing". Whoever has helped them do anything?

The discussions revealed that for the most part Districts and Regions have accomplished a great variety of initiatives such as meetings, retreats, graduated courses, periods of common life, publications, visits of inquiry, too numerous to mention here. The participants suggest that the Institute publish the most significant of them.

### **Give the Laymen Posts of Responsibility**

Situations vary from country to country. The members treated the subject with an open mind and with slight differences of opinion. The fact of being a Brother does not necessarily qualify him for a post of responsibility. The participants, however, stressed the need to have a sufficient number of Brothers in these posts to assure the Lasallian character of our schools or of those institutions for which we are responsible, such as pedagogical and catechetical centres, management, Catholic teaching, etc.

A great deal of time was spent discussing the trade unions in our establishments. This often leads to tension. The meeting insisted that all feelings of fear and resentment be set aside. And that, once we have recognized the correctness of our point of view, we maintain it with calm and patience and try to reach a just solution. This will be achieved more often than not by negotiation and understanding rather than by confrontation between the two parties.

It is within this framework that the meeting sees numerous posts of responsibility freely open to laymen and, as far as possible, to laymen who share our views and spirituality.

### **Lasallian Associations**

If the meeting did not devote as much time to Lasallian Associations as to lay staff, it was through shortage of time

rather than lack of interest. It was indeed evident from the discussions that the associations are experiencing the spirit of renewal in many areas. It is affecting former pupils, parents and sympathizers and is evidenced not so much by campaigns for a numerous membership as by an increased interest in the Founder and in the Brothers and by increased generosity in sharing our mission. It is more especially groups of young Lasallians who are making their presence felt in a number of regions and with a pronounced inclination to prayer, brotherhood and the cause of justice.

To speak of a Lasallian spring would perhaps be an exaggeration or too rhetorical. But it is true that "something" is taking place under our very eyes. The discussions enabled the representatives of areas where such movements are occurring to inform those where they are not of the apostolic interest aroused and to show them that it is possible everywhere provided that one takes the local circumstances into account.

## **OPENNESS TO THE YOUNG CHURCHES**

### **An evolution in tendencies**

During the intercapitular meeting, an evolution in tendencies was definitely noted in regard to what concerns the Young Churches.

It was very obvious during the 1976 Chapter that the representatives from the Young Churches found it necessary to hold meetings among themselves to examine the problems of the implantation of the Institute in their regions as well as how they should conceive of such things as mission, Christian education, consecration, or community life. The result was a very valuable contribution on "*inculturation*" (Cf. Circular 408, *Our Mission*, pp. 91-96). This was of the greatest interest not only for the Young Churches but also for the whole Institute.

During the last intercapitular meeting the centre of interest had changed and this was manifested in two ways. On

the one hand, the representatives of the Young Churches took part in all the discussions instead of holding too many meetings on their own. One has only to consider what they had to say on the practice of poverty and on justice, to mention only two subjects, to realize that they made a most valuable contribution. On the other hand, the other districts realized that a missionary institute must have a joint responsibility in the Young Churches, take an interest in them and organize assistance in personnel or resources.

The result is the report on the Young Churches was drawn up by Brothers mainly — though not exclusively — from other countries, and who were facing up to their responsibilities to the Young Churches. This evaluation must be kept in mind in order to understand what follows.

### Some Findings

The intercapitular meeting examined the way we have answered this invitation to be open to other Churches, to the Young Churches in particular. The Institute's response has included *many positive elements*. It concerns, above all, what has been done to *interest the Brothers*, thanks particularly to cooperation between missionary secretariates, Brothers Visitors and District Councils, and through inspirational sessions and discussions. Also, it has included the coordination of efforts to organize practical aid programmes such as Lentan campaigns, personal invitations to the Brothers, specific appeals for certain services in the Thrid World, and continuing formation designed to prepare Brothers to return to the Young Churches.

It was also seen that such organizations and initiatives are not only, nor mainly, a means of sharing personnel or financial resources, but are even more an excellent way of opening the Brothers' eyes to the meaning of "international", to other peoples, other religions and to the Church "in the four quarters of the globe".

Brother Superior is constantly being asked to open new establishments. And in many regions of Africa or Asia this

must be done immediately for tomorrow it may be impossible. The need is of the utmost urgency. The Church has not been introduced into many parts of Africa, Asia and elsewhere, or if it has, only to a small extent.

SECOLI's work was unanimously appreciated, especially as regards its close cooperation with the Regions and Districts of the Institute.

On the other hand, *certain negative* aspects were mentioned.

The Institute as a whole does not seem to be bold enough in meeting the urgent missionary challenge. Districts which could provide personnel do not do so under the pretext of diminishing vocations, whereas it is the Young Churches who suffer most from a shortage of Brothers.

Missionary secretariats are unknown in many districts or are reduced to performing services of a minimal or marginal nature. Thus the dialogue between the Young Churches and the countries which assist them hardly exists, due to a lack of structures for such communication. And the awareness of the Brothers and their preparation to go to the Young Churches are sadly deficient.

For their part, the Brothers hesitate to offer their services for the Young Churches because of the urgent needs at home which they fail to compare with those of Africa or Asia. Sometimes also they are afraid of being accused of colonialism, or else they feel they are unable to make the sacrifice of adapting themselves to a new culture.

### **Awaken consciousness**

Most of the findings centre on the awareness or lack of awareness of the Brothers. It is not surprising, therefore, that the directives are aimed principally at making the Brothers aware of the situations in the Third World and the Young Churches.

This mission is primarily that of SECOLI and the District or Regional secretariates, and they are asked to extend their activities. It is obvious, however, that they cannot act with-

out the cooperation of the Brother Visitor and his Council and then only in so far as the means are provided.

Their interest will be aroused by information on the countries concerned and also by longer sessions and, indeed, by systematic and prolonged training.

The exchange of experiences during the meeting showed that there is a close connection between arousing the interest of the Brothers in service of the poor and the promotion of justice in their own country and a profound understanding of conditions in the countries of the Third World. In particular, because of large numbers of immigrants, the Third World is already well represented in western countries.

This awareness is a process of continuing formation which demonstrates a Brother's openness to the problems of the Third World and his effective commitment, whether he goes out to the Young Churches or whether he remains in his own country.

One of the resulting directives was that, after initial training or one of the longer periods of formation, the Brothers could be invited to make a short stay, such as a term or a summer holiday, or make a "Fidei donum" commitment, in a missionary community to gain more intimate knowledge of the situation in the Third World.

It is even suggested that Brothers Visitors write a personal letter to their Brothers to increase their awareness and to let it be known that the District will not try to hold them back if they wish to volunteer for the Young Churches. Suitable discrimination will be exercised, of course.

Finally, the meeting insisted time and again, that the missionary aspect be included when recruiting. Ours is a missionary Institute, and it must be honestly introduced in all its aspects to young people seeking what to do with their lives. This will be a powerful source of strength, an openness to international reality. The young are particularly sensitive to it. Why throw away this very valuable card we hold in our hands?

## Establish a coordinated policy

One report notes that awareness is all the greater if we can encourage the Brothers by offering a policy in which undeniable priorities can clearly to be seen.

One of the priorities referred to is that there are regions here the future of the Church is a stake, especially because of the large numbers of poor young people and also because of the increase in national pride which tomorrow could refuse entry to all foreigners.

Another priority, closely linked to the above, is the fact that in Asia and above all in Africa, our presence is often unstable and widely scattered. The indigenous Brothers are not yet capable of assuming full responsibility for their sector.

It is also indispensable that apostolic priorities be made known the Brothers. One does not go to the Young Churches to do any work whatever. The following priorities are quoted: teacher training, education for general progress, human and Christian training of laymen who remain involved with their people, service in our houses of formation, assuming specific posts in teaching or education offered by local superiors of our Institute.

To establish priorities in the field and make the Brothers aware are not the only objectives of this policy. The meeting asks the Brothers Visitors to appoint a coordinator, a member of the missionary secretariate, to interest our pupils, students, former pupils and lay teachers. For the first time, it would seem, it is requested that this policy include a serious investigation into the possibility of establishing a programme for *lay volunteers*. SECOLI seems to be the most apt for making this study.

The policy of assisting with manpower evidently aims at helping the sectors in the Young Churches to take complete charge of the local work. Hence any support we can give them in recruiting, or initial and continued training is particularly appropriate and is most urgent. "Tomorrow will be too late".

At the same time the meeting appealed to the Districts

in the Young Churches to eschew any passive attitude and to intensify recruiting and initial training. Also, they should consider making their own contribution to other sectors of the Institute, why not us? Such a contribution, especially in personnel, will allow new foundations or the reinforcement of our work in areas which have an identical or similar culture. This apostolic solicitude is indispensable for any District which collectively faces up to its mission.

### **Who should establish this policy?**

In the first place, the meeting addresses itself to the General Council, requesting that it specify the options mentioned above, and pass on the information to the Districts so that they can effectively commit themselves to sharing their resources in personnel.

During a meeting after the assembly, the General Council willingly accepted this request. At the same time, however, it was conscious of already having done this frequently and at length, by circulating such information and making such appeals over a considerable length of time.

It will all remain a dead letter unless the Regions and Districts make a serious study of their own "missionary policy". Are they really trying to awaken the interest of their Brothers? Do they accept rather than evade requests to go out to the Young Churches if they are seriously meant? This was indeed the feeling of the meeting when it voted the following directive.

"During the coming year, let each District inform the General Council as to what increase it intends to make, prior to the General Chapter of 1986, in the percentage of its Brothers assigned to work in the Young Churches."

This last measure will evidently lead to important debates when the District discusses its missionary responsibility together. This is the soul of any policy which is not to remain a matter of words.

## PART 2

### THE BROTHERS' COMMUNITY LIFE

Part I has synthesized the thinking of the intercapitular meeting on the specific thrust of our mission during the next five years. As we have seen, the intercapitular meeting expressed its conviction that God calls the Brother to be a minister of the Gospel, an evangelizer. His call includes but transcends the vocation of instructor or teacher. The implication for our communities is clear; they must be both communities of evangelizers and evangelizing communities.

This renewed call to evangelization is a call to each of us to dedicate ourselves more *directly* and more *effectively* to helping our young people grow in the Christian spirit. When the young confided to our care are not Christians, our mission is to be the "presence of a Church humble and at the service of all". (Bk. Govt. 281,2)

The intercapitular meeting reminds us that we must intensify our efforts to share our Lasallian spirituality "of faith and zeal" with all those associated with us in our mission: teachers, parents, former students, and even the young people themselves. We must contribute, as individuals and as communities, to the growth of the educative community as a community of faith. We must strengthen our relationship with the local Church and participate far more actively than before in the total pastoral effort of the Church.

It is clear, therefore, that the Brother is called to be a special kind of person. This call is a grace, a special gift from God: it is the gift to be, according to our Founder, "ministers, ambassadors, co-workers of Jesus Christ." De La Salle insists that the Brothers "act as representing Jesus

Christ himself" (MTR 3). It is Christ himself "who gives the power, the quality and the energy that is needed" (MTR 3). De La Salle exhorts the Brothers, therefore, "to give themselves to the Spirit of our Lord to act only under his influence and not through any self-seeking" (MTR 3). "Earnestly ask Jesus Christ to make his Spirit come alive in you *since he has chosen you to do his work*" (MTR 4).

The intercapitular meeting did not study in depth all the elements that constitute our identity. The agenda was limited to specific questions. In part II we shall consider the following areas of our life as Brothers:

1. The Community Annual Program.
2. The Director Today.
3. Prayer.
4. Simplicity, Sharing, Accountability.
5. Living together as Brothers: Our Affective Life.
6. Evangelizing Communities.

## **THE COMMUNITY ANNUAL PROGRAM**

Since the promulgation of Proposition 53 of the 40th General Chapter, the community annual program has been the focus of considerable interest in nearly every District of the Institute. It is not surprising, therefore, that the participants of the intercapitular meeting devoted much time to a sharing of experiences, analysis of successes and failures, and formulation of guidelines for the future.

The Intercapitular Meeting Conclusions indicate that most Districts have given high priority to helping our Communities become the communities described in proposition 51: groups of consecrated persons, co-responsible for the life of the community; seeking the guidance of the Spirit; apostolic, warm and fraternal. Most Districts and Visitors have recognized the importance of the community annual program in fostering the process of growth. They

have provided guidelines and suggested formats and procedures. Most Visitors receive and approve the programs of each community and make them the instrument of evaluation during the canonical visit. The intercapitular meeting declares that some communities have found the process of arriving at the community annual program to be most helpful in achieving the goals of community life.

On the other hand, the intercapitular meeting found that "most communities have had difficulties understanding the concept of integrating the various elements of our life (apostolic, spiritual, communal) and articulating the experience of this integration". Furthermore, most communities have had problems in creating structures which foster this integration. Some Brothers do not understand the purpose and value of the community annual program; others are impatient with the process or find it unnecessary and distasteful. The question of accountability for decisions is an issue in some areas. In many Districts the evaluation by the District administration has not been effective.

At first glance the use of the adjectives "some" and "many" is disturbing, suggesting that our failures outweigh our successes. Upon reflection, however, we realize that such a judgment is inaccurate. On the contrary, there is reason to be encouraged by the significant progress that has been made in many Districts and many Communities throughout the Institute, progress in greater responsibility for the vitality of community life, a progress stimulated and promoted by a creative use of the community annual program.

The Visitors themselves conclude that "the total process of the community annual program (devising, implementing and evaluating) is one of the best means (among others) of community renewal. In its contact with the Brothers (visits, chapters, retreats, renewal programs, etc.) the General Council has been somewhat surprised but pleased at the evident interest of the Brothers in the community annual program and at the serious efforts undertaken to make it realize its purpose.

Nevertheless, the negative findings of the intercapitular

meeting are significant. Some reflections on certain deficiencies are in order.

### **Aim and Usefulness of the Community Annual Program**

“Certain communities have had great difficulty in understanding the aim and the usefulness of the Community Annual Program.”

It is important to consider the community annual program in a context. That context was presented, briefly, in the introduction to part II. We refer to the description of identity. The important thing, of course, is not to be able to describe the Brother of the Christian Schools but to be the Brother of the Christian Schools. The Brother becomes a Brother, lives as a Brother, and grows as a Brother IN COMMUNITY.

In examining the vitality of our Communities, we must ask ourselves whether the structures and activities of the Community are effectively helping the members to grow, that is to say, internalize with ever-increasing depth the various elements that constitute our identity.

It is true, of course, that our Rule and Constitutions clearly explain these constitutive elements. But application of the principles must be made on the local level. We know, for example, that our Communities must be houses of prayer, but it is the Community itself that must determine its particular program of prayer. We know that every Community must be an animating influence in the educative community, but it is the local community which must determine what this commitment means in the concrete circumstances of a particular community.

There are Brothers who would prefer a more detailed Rule or more precise directives from the Institute. But the principle of co-responsibility has been vigorously affirmed by the 39th General Chapter and re-affirmed by the 40th General Chapter. Our Rule tells us that “the ordinary way in which the Spirit reveals himself is through a community working together to discover the divine will in the needs of the world

and of the Church. Each member of the community ought to be heard, since the Spirit speaks and acts in every Brother. Differences of age, of view-point, and of formation provide a rich source from which to form policies and come to decisions. It is the responsibility of the Brother Director to make the final judgment concerning them." (Rule 7, b).

### **Individual Responsibility**

"Many Communities have not found ways to ask the Brothers to be accountable for their role in implementing the community annual program".

It is in the light of our "association" — and the co-responsibility which is its essence — that we approach the question of accountability. Our obligation to be faithful to the decisions of the community, particularly after they have been approved by the Visitor springs from the obligation we have towards one another. The Brothers have a right to expect the Institute to help them grow as Brothers — and WE are the Institute. The mature and truly alive community is not one in which "regularity" is "enforced" by the Director, but one in which the Brothers really exercise responsibility towards one another: "By their active presence and enthusiastic participation in the community activities, and by their thoughtfulness for one another, the Brothers assure the solidarity of the community". (Rule 3,3).

### **Conflicts**

"In some cases there are conflicts between the demands of the apostolic life and the demands of community life".

The General Council thinks that the Intercapitular Meeting was optimistic when saying "in some cases," because conflicts of this type are quite frequent. We hear it said: "We do not have time for life in community." There can be a number of explanations for this attitude.

One is a faulty understanding of our identity. Community

life, in all its dimensions, is of the essence of the Brother's vocation. Far from being merely a "refueling stop" for our apostolic activities, community is a life to be lived. "The community is for the Brothers their home". (Rule 3 e).

On the other hand we must be careful not to oppose our apostolic life and community life. To dichotomize in this manner is to impoverish both our apostolic life and community life and to betray the profoundly integrated understanding of our life left to us our Founder.

We can, however, and must, distinguish clearly between specific *activities* of the apostolate and specific *activities* of the community. The key to living our life fruitfully is balance. The Founder and early Brothers undoubtedly laboured many years to create a Rule which provided proper balance in the life of the early Brothers. It is not surprising to see the emphasis the Founder places on regularity. It was through exact observance of the Rule that the Brother maintained the proper balance among all the various demands made upon him. Today our Rule is less detailed. It is the community, and, of course, the individual Brother, who most structure the days and weeks responsibly.

A second reason some of us "do not find time for community" is lack of personal discipline. Despite good intentions, we sometimes lack the organization and strength to order our day in such a way as to be able to satisfy the requirements both of our community life and of our apostolic responsibilities. In effect, we have too great a facility for rationalization, thus justifying our absences from community activities.

We are not arguing here for rigidity. We are simply insisting that we must give *high* priority (which is not the same as absolute priority) to creative presence in the community. Liberty of spirit and good judgment must prevail. If we have the spirit of co-responsibility we spoke of earlier, if we really want to give support to our Brothers, we shall want to be with the Brothers and will not absent ourselves without good reason.

## **Finality of the Community Annual Program**

There was discussion among some of the participants at the Intercapitular Meeting as to the primary purpose of the community annual program: is its value the final product, the document indicating clearly the goals, objectives and programs of the community? or is its value in the process, itself, through which the members, actively participating, form themselves? It seems useless to oppose the two. The exercise in co-responsibility through the active participation of all the members is absolutely necessary. For a community to be content with merely ratifying in a perfunctory manner a polished document written by the Director or someone else is to make a travesty of the project. But to have a written record is extremely useful. It is this document which the Visitor studies and approves. It is this document which the community itself uses as a basis for periodic evaluations and which the Visitor uses during the annual visit.

### **In Summary**

In summary, then, we can say that the community annual program has been taken seriously by most districts and that significant and encouraging results are visible. The deficiencies the Intercapitular Meeting mentions and upon which we have reflected, are real, but not so critical as to cause discouragement. Besides, *the intercapitular meeting made several helpful recommendations* to the Visitors:

1. Provide specific training for the director or some other member of the community in the process of drawing up such a Community Program.

The suggestion is sound. Nevertheless the General Council believes there is a tendency to exaggerate the challenge involved in preparing the community annual program. We are trained educators, and have at least the minimum of training required to create the community annual program.

2. Urge communities lacking sufficient expertise to call

upon a Brother in another community or some other person trained in facilitating.

3. Provide guidelines for both the content and the process.

This orientation is in fact being implemented already in numerous districts. The General Council strongly recommends it to all. Furthermore, the Council recommends that the Visitors of each Region share their experiences in this regard with one another.

To conclude and to cap off these recommendations, the Council suggests to all the Brothers that they reread Circular 410: *Our Community Life*. It goes into great detail regarding the Community Annual Program, situates it in an historical perspective, and gives several models.

## **THE DIRECTOR TODAY**

Discussions on the director centred on five areas: formation, role, appointment, separation of the exercise of the roles of director and chief administrator, and the personal interview.

### **Formation of directors**

Intercapitular meeting participants found that a number of regions and districts have had special workshops, seminars, retreats, etc., specifically intended for the formation of directors of communities. On the other hand, participants found that in general districts do not have *systematic programs* for this purpose but depend rather on irregularly scheduled activities.

Nevertheless, most districts have meetings of directors which give the directors opportunity to share experiences and study common problems together. In general, these sessions are sources of mutual support and encouragement. Other districts report difficulties in arranging such meetings

because of the size of the district. Still other districts find that some Brothers are suspicious of directors' meetings, viewing them as "control groups" in the district.

The General Council recommends that every district organize meetings of directors, at least annually. These groups should not, of course, be "control groups". There is no place in our Institute authority structure for a "council of directors". The purpose of these meetings is not to "control" the district. It is rather to provide the opportunity for directors of communities to learn from their mutual experiences. Such gatherings can be a source of enlightenment, mutual support and encouragement.

### **Role of the Director**

It was not surprising when the Intercapitular Meeting said that: "The role of the Director has taken a new form in our days. It is more a role of coordination and leadership than one of command". But they also added: "This new style of leadership among the Directors is not well understood by the Directors themselves nor by the Brothers of the community".

This second finding is not more surprising than the first. It is clear that there is confusion concerning the role of the director, and that some directors themselves have a lack of confidence. It was common to hear a few years ago that because today everybody is responsible for the life of the community there is no longer any need for directors. Experience has taught us, however, that there is still a need for directors; that there is a role to exercise, a role that is, however, different from that exercised in the past.

This role is essentially one of animation, that is, of encouragement: "The Brother Director is at the service of his Brothers to help them realize their personal and community vocation". (Book of Government, 140). "His influence comes more from his attitude of service than from domination and power". (Rule 7c)

It is not our intention to elaborate on what is already sufficiently developed in the Rule (Chapters 3 and 7) and Book of Government (articles 138-143). But these articles must be studied carefully by the District Chapter, which “must determine the special responsibilities attached to the office of director”. (Book of Government, 139). But the community itself must apply the principles and implement the directives. This elaboration of the role of the director is an important dimension of the Community Annual Program. Without such a study on the community level, common expectations of the director’s role cannot be realized. And without common expectations, misunderstanding and frustration are almost inevitable.

### **Appointment of Directors**

The Intercapitular Meeting reports a variety of approaches to appointing directors. In some districts the local community is directly involved in the selection of the director; in others, the director is selected in a more traditional manner. Generally, however, in both cases the Brothers are consulted and the appointment is made by the Visitor in accord with procedures established by the District Chapter. (Bk. Govt. 138).

One rather widespread difficulty is that some qualified men are reluctant to assume the position of director. They cite their lack of training, confusion concerning the role, difficulties in its exercise, other obligations, etc.. It seems very necessary, therefore, that districts take a positive stance towards the position of director: affirming its value and importance as an apostolate of service, implementing articles 138 and 139 of the Book of Government — cited above — in what regards the manner of naming the Director, describing his role, and organizing suitable training programs for Directors. And they must encourage the Brothers to accept this responsibility in a positive way.

## **Separation of Roles**

In a number of districts of the Institute, there has been a separation of the exercise of the role of chief administrator of the institution (scholastic or other) from that of the role of director of the community. Districts have found a number of advantages: since the skills needed to manage an institution are not the same as those required to animate a community, it is often easier and more satisfactory to designate two separate Brothers. The director of the community has more time to dedicate to the Brothers (presuming he is not assigned too many other duties); one man is not overburdened personally by the dual responsibility.

In many Districts, however, dividing the roles is not common practice. Some want to make this change, but others find great difficulty in distinguishing the two roles in a satisfactory manner. Elsewhere they deplore the lack of collaboration between those holding the two positions. Finally, some think that this change detracts from the position of the Director of the community, either in the eyes of the Brothers or even among outsiders with whom he has to deal.

The intercapitular meeting takes the position that it is good policy to separate the roles. Our General Chapters have taken no firm position for or against the separation. It is the judgment of the General Council that it is best to avoid a general approach. The stance of the participants of the intercapitular meeting, based, of course, on considerable practical experience, should be taken seriously. On the other hand, there will undoubtedly be situations where the separation is neither feasible nor desirable.

## **The Personal Interview**

According to the intercapitular meeting, there are growing numbers of district programs designed to help directors grow in confidence and skill in meeting the Brothers individually on a regular basis. It seems that the use of the

personal interview has been most successful with younger Brothers and with those who take the initiative to avail themselves of its use. It has been generally effective in those districts which have clearly defined the role of the director and have specified the interview as an integral part of the role.

Unfortunately, however, there is no clear indication in the findings as to how widespread the practice of the personal interview actually is. It would seem that the practice is honored and effective in a number of districts, but that in many other areas, the practice, discontinued perhaps some years ago, has not been reinstated.

The position of the General Chapter is clear: "The personal interview of the Brother with the Brother Director is one of the best means to promote communication within the community". (Prop. 56). This "conversation" of the Brothers with the director, who in a sense represents all the members of the community, can "touch on matters referring to his person, his life in community, or his professional duties". (Rule 7,5) The word "conversation" as used in this passage from the Constitutions is instructive. For the interview is essentially a conversation, one that provides the Brother with the opportunity to speak his mind freely. There is no question here of the personal interview replacing communication among all the Brothers at community meetings. It is a question of both-and, not either-or.

There are directors who fear the personal interview because they believe they are not capable of giving spiritual direction or because they lack training in counselling. Formal training may indeed be helpful, but the most fundamental thing is that the interview be a human contact, one in which the director manifests his concern (and that of the community) for the Brother as a unique human person. The personal interview is a privileged occasion for encouraging the Brothers.

Consequently, the General Council calls attention to the clear directives concerning the personal interview: "The responsibility for arranging the personal interview belongs both to the Brother concerned and the Brother Director of

the community. This is one of the details to be determined in the community annual program. Each Brother arranges with the Brother Director the times and the style of the meetings between them". (Book of Government, 142, 143).

## PRAYER

The 40th General Chapter made a frank reference to "a general weakening of the prayer life in the communities", tempered somewhat by its recognition of a "searching after spiritual renewal, noticed in certain communities". (Prop. 57). It is therefore interesting to study the findings of the intercapitular meeting participants and to ask: Where are we five years after the Chapter?

*On the positive side* the intercapitular meeting remarks that a number of Brothers, in fidelity to their Lasallian tradition, are trying to make prayer the support and foundation of their apostolic ministry. Prayer life in the communities is more regular. Fidelity to community prayer has improved considerably. There seems to be greater openness to new forms of prayer and Brothers are more willing to accept responsibility for preparing community prayers. There is evidence of a healthy dissatisfaction with the level of personal and community prayer attained, a dissatisfaction that is leading many Brothers to take advantage of special retreats, prayer workshops, and "desert days". Some Brothers are actively involved in prayer groups outside the community from which the community also benefits. Furthermore a number of communities are inviting their young people, teachers and parents to share their prayer life from time to time. All these experiences have had an enriching effect on the quality of community prayer.

These trends are indeed encouraging. Nevertheless, there are *other findings* which indicate clearly that there has been *insufficient* renewal of prayer life. Participants admitted, for example, that prayer is often the victim of routine. This problem suggests the possibility that for some of us prayer

is perceived more as a duty to be fulfilled than as a vital expression of relationship with God. The absence of spiritual reading was remarked, as well as the failure to maintain up-to-date spiritual reading libraries in every community. Overwork, or perhaps activism, a multiplicity of diversions, the failure to deepen one's knowledge of scripture — all are mentioned as contributing to an impoverishment of prayer life.

The intercapitular meeting comments on the *reduction of time* given to prayer in the communities, in particular mental prayer. Specific reference is made to the sparsity of prayer on week-ends and holidays. In some communities, Brothers are careless about their daily participation in the Eucharist, either in the communities or in the local churches. Reference is made also to a theological and pastoral confusion that leads to a putting aside of the sacrament of reconciliation. Finally it is observed that few Brothers seek spiritual direction.

## **Proposals**

The participants of the intercapitular meeting analysed their findings thoroughly. Their proposals for action are realistic and are addressed to the Brothers generally, the communities, the districts, and the General Council.

### **TO THE BROTHERS**

1. The Bible should be the first source of inspiration of their prayers. With this in view, they should read the Scriptures daily and make regular and serious spiritual reading.

2. They should apply themselves seriously to different type of prayer: common prayer, mental prayer, and prayer in groups. They should be faithful to their prayer schedule.

3. They should make use of the time available to them during the holidays and on week-ends — particularly on Sundays — to devote longer periods to prayer.

4. They should be faithful to daily participation in the Eucharist, which the 40th General Chapter calls an essential source of our spiritual and apostolic life.

5. They should seek the services of a spiritual director.

#### TO THE COMMUNITIES

1. Every Community Annual Program should see that the life-style of the community favours the life of prayer. It should see also that the planning of community prayer leaves room for personal preference and for new forms of prayer. Finally, the Community Annual Program should provide for periodic assessments of both personal and community prayer.

2. Communities should emphasize our tradition of mental prayer. The community annual program should “ensure that each Brother has sufficient time and suitable conditions for personal reflection and prayer” (Rule, 10,3). While each Brother has the primary responsibility for his own personal prayer” (Rule 10,1), a number of communities have decided to provide specific time for mental prayer together, finding the presence of others a source of support and encouragement.

3. Communities are encouraged to reflect on the theological and pastoral aspects of the sacrament of reconciliation.

#### TO THE DISTRICTS

In every district some commission — a special one or an already existing one — should be responsible for promoting the personal and community prayer of the district. This commission should ensure that the young Brothers are given a solid foundation in the practice of personal prayer; it should strive to prepare Brothers to be spiritual animators of the communities; it should consider the desirability and feasibility of a district house of prayer or a Lasallian Spirituality Centre.

## TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

1. Within the next five years there should be a session of CIL devoted to prayer. In all CIL sessions special attention should be given to formation in prayer.

2. The General Council should consider publishing a study of the Founder's *Method of Mental Prayer* that would be helpful to the Brothers today. (1)

### **SIMPLICITY, SHARING, ACCOUNTABILITY**

As we have mentioned several times already, the agenda of the intercapitular meeting was not comprehensive. It was limited to specific questions and problems presented by the Visitors. For this reason there was no in depth study of the meaning of evangelical poverty in our lives. There was, however, consideration of several important matters concerning simplicity, sharing and accountability.

Our Book of Government states that, "Concerned to put into practice the demands of an evangelical life of detachment and sharing, those responsible at the regional or district level shall regulate for the communities under their charge a certain number of practical measures to ensure a *modest and relatively uniform style of life.*" (article 187)

According to our Constitutions, "district councils should ensure that all communities have a suitable standard of living and encourage those that are better off to share with those that have less. Communities extend their help beyond the district to the missions and to people in the developing countries". (Rule 6,8)

According to the *findings* of the intercapitular meeting, many of the communities of the Institute are sharing more than before with the district, with the Institute, and with

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(1) Brothers Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos are preparing a new edition of the *Method* with an introduction and notes. Publication is expected in 1983.

the Young Churches. Some communities (directly or through the district) render support to Secoli and to the Sharing Fund. In certain districts there is a serious effort made to share resources equally among all the communities so as to bring the standard of living to the same level.

On the contrary, in other Districts the findings indicate "a lack of uniformity in the life style of the Communities that leads to comparisons which create frustrations among the Brothers." Certain Communities are little disposed to share their wealth with others, and some accumulate large sums which they place in saving accounts in various banks.

It appears therefore that some communities are acting with *excessive independence* and with insufficient accountability. "By our vow of poverty", article 6,1 of the Rule states, "the Brothers forego the independent disposal of goods or objects having a monetary value". This article applies not only to individual Brothers, but to communities as well. Every community is obliged to manifest dependence upon the district and abide by the guidelines and directives from the Visitor, District Chapter or District Council: "Those responsible at the district level shall regulate for the communities under their charge a certain number of practical measures to ensure a modest and relatively uniform style of life". (Art. 187)

The intercapitular meeting recommended that the Visitors and District Councils establish appropriate policies in view of a more equitable sharing of resources. The General Council urges all the Brothers to review carefully Chapter 6 of the Rule and Constitutions and articles 181-190 of the Book of Government.

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Another *positive finding* is that significant progress has been made throughout the Institute in separating community budgets and accounts from school budgets and accounts (Art. 184). Furthermore, it seems that Brothers in most areas are participating actively in establishing and overseeing their community budgets and accounts. (Rule 6,4)

All the same, there are *negative aspects* as regards accountability. Some Brothers have independent sources of income, as in the many countries where the Brothers receive salaries from the state or various educational agencies, and they use this money without authorization and without rendering an account of it. There are also irregularities regarding gifts and patrimony funds.

Given the extraordinary changes that have taken place in our general style of living in the last fifteen years, it is not too surprising that these difficulties with regards to the use of money have arisen. It is important, however, to reaffirm the *basic principles* that continue to govern us in these areas, and to which we freely subscribed on the day of our profession:

“1. Whatever a Brother earns through his work as well as what he receives as a salary or a pension belongs to the Institute.”

“2. Donations, legacies, or inheritances given to a Brother as an individual, and not on account of the services he renders as a member of the Institute, constitute his patrimonial goods.”

“3. When there is a question of ordinary presents, the Director or the Visitor, according to the importance of the case, shall decide on their use, keeping in mind the requirements of Community poverty.” (Book of Government, 189, 1,2,3) And again, the Brothers “... retain only the radical ownership of their patrimony and hand over to someone else its administration and revenue. If God so inspires them, they may, with the consent of their superiors, give up their patrimony completely.” (Rule, 6,1)

It is clear, therefore, that we have committed ourselves to dependence on the community. We receive money for our needs from the community and use it for the purpose indicated. If we receive a modest sum for personal pocket expenses, the details of which are left to our own discretion, we are, nevertheless, accountable to the community for appropriate use of the money. (Rule, 6, 5; Book of Government, 187)

The intercapitular meeting recommends also that both district and community budgets allow for a generous contribution each year for works of charity and for the Young Churches. They urge that intitial and continuing formation programs emphasize a spirit of sharing and a sense of responsibility in regard to world economic situations and to those suffering as a result of these situations. They also challenge all of us to be accountable for the use of our time, our talents and for the money placed at our disposal.

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It is quite likely that much of the above sounds dry and legalistic, somewhat removed from that spirit of poverty the Rule calls us to live. Nevertheless, if subjectivity and vagueness in our understanding of our commitment are to be avoided, attention must be paid to "law". The function of law is to define, give directions to, and protect. It is the teacher which leads us to the spirit: St. Paul even says "to Jesus Christ." If we are not clear regarding our obligations, we cannot attain common expectations. The result is confusion and misunderstanding, and possibly serious abuse and scandal.

But, obviously, we must transcend the legal directives. As our Rule tells us, we consecrate ourselves totally to follow Christ, choosing to be poor because he was poor, (Rule 6a), committing ourselves to share all that we are and all that we have — with one another and with the poor.

### **LIVING AS BROTHERS: OUR AFFECTIVE LIFE**

"Those in charge of the life of the community as well as those in charge of the district should take all the necessary means to create and to maintain a climate in each community where each Brother can feel free to express his ideas, where he can enjoy his leisure, and where he can find some self satisfying and worthwhile activity.

"Each Brother should pay special attention to maintaining harmony in his affective life by a high degree of communication with his Brothers, by his personal integration

into the life of the community, and by his personal enthusiasm for his daily work.

“It is the duty of the Brother Director, the Brother Visitor, and the entire community to pay fraternal attention to a Brother who is worried, disturbed, or living on the fringes of the community”.

Proposition 54, 40th General Chapter.

In their examination of the experiences of the Institute in the light of this proposition, the intercapitular meeting found that there are indications of a growing sensitivity to appreciation of “each Brother in the totality of his person and not simply in terms of the apostolic work he does” (Declaration, 27). They found also that relationships between Brothers and their students, the lay teachers, and the families of their students, are more personal than before.

In assigning Brothers to communities, Visitors have been more attentive to the affective life and to relationships among the Brothers. In many communities today Brothers are less preoccupied with themselves and are more open to others, thus creating an atmosphere that is helpful to all, particularly to those having difficulties. Experience indicates that there is a high level of satisfaction among the Brothers when the community is well organized, when there is active participation in community activities, and when the director is truly sensitive to the Brothers and knows how to encourage them.

The intercapitular meeting findings mention several factors having a negative effect on vital community life: frequent changes in membership; widely divergent apostolic activities; insufficient emphasis on providing time for leisure.

In reaction to these findings *a certain number of orientations* were drawn up: In assigning Brothers to Communities, more attention should be given to the total personality of the Brother than to his usefulness in the work. The Brothers adopt a healthy attitude of friendship toward their confreres or with their lay co-workers in view of strengthening their affective life.

A particular emphasis be placed on the role of the personal meeting of each Brother with his Director as an efficacious

means of strengthening community life as well as of giving special — but not exclusive — help to those Brothers who might be experiencing some difficulties. Finally, the participants insisted “that when preparing the Community Program, special emphasis be placed on organizing programs for community and individual leisure time activities.”

This last point should not be taken lightly, rather great attention must be given to leisure time and to the social dimension of community life. It is, of course, important that certain recreational activities be organized on a regular basis. But what is just as important is that a fraternal atmosphere be fostered, an atmosphere that encourages Brothers to be present to one another, to spend time in conversation together, to enjoy being with one another.

Someone said that a good community is one in which the Brothers pray together, work together, play together, and laugh together — the laughter a sign that the community is truly a community. This is an oversimplification, perhaps, but worth thinking about.

## EVANGELIZING COMMUNITIES

In our discussion of the community annual program. (Cf., p. 34 above), we stressed the evangelical nature of the Brothers' community. We are convinced that God calls our communities to be *evangelizing* communities. But, in order to fulfil this mission, they must be true *communities*. To grasp more profoundly this fundamental thought, it is helpful to reflect on two significant passages of the Declaration, considered in juxtaposition:

“Community life is more firmly established and more effectively renewed to the extent that the Brothers work together for the achievement of a common objective. The communion of minds becomes more intimate, the spirit of prayer and life of faith is deepened, when the members are more aware of their apostolic mission. Fidelity in the common search to serve the will of God through the needs of man builds day by day a community capable of responding to that will. At the same time this common effort to respond

strengthens the community and enables it to see more clearly the signs of God present in the world. The reference of everything to the common mission makes it possible for a community to avoid the risk of becoming enclosed within itself, ... (Declaration 25, 4).

“The community of Brothers is the animating force of the school to which it gives life and direction according to its mission. It follows that the community not identify itself with the institution to the point of becoming its prisoner. If the Brother is going to educate the student for life, it is necessary that the school itself not be the limit of his horizons, nor that it constitute the entirety of his existence.”

(Declaration 48.6)

It is clear, therefore, that the F.S.C. Community is not merely a “task force” or “work team”, but neither is our living together an end-in-itself. The community of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is an evangelizing community, a community with a mission.

In reference to the evangelizing dimension of community life, the findings indicate that the increasing numbers of lay teachers in our schools is an *opportunity* for the Brothers to discover and explore new dimensions in our ministry as educators. On the other hand, however, the findings call attention to the danger of our Brothers becoming absorbed exclusively in their professional occupations and withdrawn from sharing in pastoral activities. The danger is that the Brothers, both personally and communally, lose their visibility and not be perceived as evangelizers. A further danger is that the apostolic service of the Brothers may become merely an individual affair and that the community as community may limit its focus to internal matters.

In response to these findings the intercapitular meeting formulated *the following recommendations*:

1. The prospectus of each school should clearly indicate the presence of the Brothers' community within the total educative community. (If local circumstances prevent the literal implementation of this recommendation, the Brothers should do as much as they can to have a community impact

on the life of the school, particularly its religious dimension).

2. When the Brothers draw up their Community Program, they should specify the *involvement* of each of the Brothers in the scholastic activities of the school.

3. Generally speaking, but especially where laymen have positions of responsibility, the Brothers should be present in key posts of pastoral, educational, and pedagogical influence where they can give clear recognition to their specific Lasallian identity. Occasionally they may have to become active in professional associations in order to bring a Christian influence to bear on the aims and activities of these associations. (It is inspiring to see the impact that small communities of Brothers in large institutions are already having in some places. This visible impact has not happened accidently. It is the result of careful planning on the part of the communities involved).

4. When Brothers are appointed to positions of leadership in the schools, care should be taken to consider their influence in the school and in the community as much as their professional competence.

5. Rising above competitiveness and personal interests, the Brothers should work more closely in harmony with the pastoral plan of the local Church in an ecclesial spirit and inspired by the decree *Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church*, (Mutuate Relationis), published by the Holy See in 1978.

The essential idea that the participants in the Inter-capital Meeting want to communicate to you is that we are in the process of discovering *a new mode of being present* in the institutions in which we find ourselves. The time is past when we conducted our schools with a minimum of assistance from lay teachers. But, take note, the alternative to this mode of a predominant presence is not becoming anonymous or serving on an individual basis. The Community must assume a precise role of evangelization and must carry this out with ardor.

### PART 3

## FOR A GREATER VITALITY

### The Pastoral of Vocations Formation

“The vitality and growth of the Institute depends primarily on the mystery and power of divine grace. By the gift of freedom, however, the Lord places the destiny of people in their own hands. Consequently the Brothers are collectively and individually responsible for the development of the Institute”. (Rule 11, a, b)

It is thus that, in so far as we individually and as a community constrain ourselves to live our life and mission as Brothers, the Spirit of God is able through us to enliven the work he established in the Church through St. John Baptist de La Salle.

A still more practical means of co-operating in this vitality consists in *instigating* young men chosen by God to join our ranks and to *welcome* and *train* them. Hence the indissoluble link is established: the Institute's vitality depends on our own vitality, on the courage and fidelity with which we draw our inspiration from the “Spirit which is peculiar to it”, on the degree to which we are “living members”. We attain this latter objective through *continuing formation*.

Recruiting, initial and continuing formation, conceived in faith, are the origin and expression of our essential rejuvenation. They are the very heart of our existence, for living beings cannot fail to seek more life. God confides to us a mission and calls us to fulfil it in the Church. At the

same time he calls on us to work so that it will develop and live.

It is within this framework that we approach what the Intercapitular Meeting produced on recruiting, initial formation and continuing formation.

### **TO BEGIN WITH THE FACTS**

Compared to previous years, there is greater sensitivity towards these preoccupations as is shown by the experiments and successful achievements. The evidence shows renewed efforts in recruiting and formation and a will to succeed.

But consistency is still lacking; we are still feeling our way, objectives frequently lack clarity, programmes are incomplete and suitable organization is not provided. Training staff and adequately trained leaders are in short supply, and, where they do exist, they often do not find the conditions needed for their work to be profitable.

In his letter of 8 Dec. 1980, Brother Superior gave statistics which are appropriate to this section of the report. They show that the perseverance of perpetually professed Brothers has returned to normal. This cannot be said, however, of new entrants. On examining the last 15 years, we note the following statistics for the number of novices in the Institute:

In 1965	963 novices or 5.72% of the total of 16324 Brothers
1970	264                      1.85                      14233
1975	179                      1.55                      11568
1978	130                      1.23                      10540
1980	174                      1.73                      10065

At this date, Sept. 1981, there are 196 novices.

Here we must quote a finding of the meeting. "The young men who come to the novitiate today are often older and more mature. They have more experience of life and more concern for the poor and unfortunate". This, no doubt,

explains why 80% of them make their religious profession at the end of the novitiate.

It is also to be noted that in the course of the last few years the situation has *tended to stabilize itself and even to reverse itself*. We are, of course, quite justified in insisting on quality in recruiting, but we must also avoid the utopia of wanting quality without an equivalent effort to increase the number of labourers!

An analysis of our internal statistics shows that the relatively low numbers must be associated with weakness in training procedures brought to light by the Visitors and to which we have referred. Another explanation is the state of crisis which still persists for a large number of Brothers. This throws light on the findings of the participants that alongside of those who undertake recruiting with enthusiastic faith there are those also who remain blase or passive.

What is missing to at least a small extent everywhere is the *import of the present moment*, the need to understand and cater for the needs of the world today, the challenge made to us, especially the needs and appeals of youth. These historical facts must be incorporated in our plans for vocations and training.

That is indeed a serious appeal and an invitation for us, at a time of crisis, to overcome our first superficial reactions and to make up our minds to enter into a new courageous, constructive and reliable phase as regards recruiting and formation.

This challenge is addressed to everyone. It is in each Brother, each community, each district, that the overflowing vitality of the Institute must appear today and in the future. Each one, at the various levels, also has the responsibility to prepare for it and make it succeed as we shall see in the following pages.

## **THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH BROTHER**

The Institute's vitality today and tomorrow, therefore, resides in us, on one condition, that we ourselves are very much alive. Each one of us has a share of the responsibility

which can neither be replaced nor transmitted. It is manifested by fidelity to our own vocation, and by our solicitude in finding new vocations, by the trouble we take over our own formation and the assistance we give those doing formation work.

Once again during the course of the meeting, the members realized better that the first condition for achieving a renovation which will affect our lives is that each Brother applies it to himself and involves himself in the future of our religious family. Hence we make a pressing and fraternal appeal to each and everyone. "Shoulder your responsibilities in this area!"

### **Take one's own Continuing Formation in Hand**

The participants at the meeting affirmed that "the continued formation of *each* Brother is the means for the *whole* Institute to adapt itself to the evolution of the world by providing himself with the ability to respond to the new needs of the world as they arise."

What is the practical attitude of the Brother in this respect? Again, according to the meeting, "more and more numerous are the Brothers who show that they are very much in favour of continuing formation and very desirous of pursuing it". This sometimes consists "in a new commitment leading to the sharing in the life of different kinds of groups, prayer groups, apostolic groups, etc. This brings to light new sets of values."

On the other hand, there are Brothers who are not convinced of the need for additional formation. Many there are who are prisoners of their apostolic commitments and do not find the time required for such formation.

Another fact is beginning to assume considerable proportions. "The increasing number of aging Brothers calls for new requirements in formation and for preparing the Brothers fairly well in advance to enter the third age." Many Brothers on arriving there are ill prepared to use their retirement creatively. Furthermore, many look on this as

the end of their useful life. Many even demobilize themselves and do not agree to take up work adapted to their new situation.

This is the justification for the appeal addressed by the intercapitular meeting to each Brother, asking him to take his personal formation in hand in two ways.

1. Habitually, by a definite commitment to the service of the community and to his own continuing formation.

2. By profiting from the means as they arise outside community life, such as taking part in sessions of spirituality, specialized retreats, courses, etc. All in line with the community program and district directives.

### **Active Cooperation in Promoting Vocations**

As regards the promotion of vocations, the members of the Intercapitular Meeting recalled a fundamental principle. "The Brothers' vocation, by its very nature, brings the 'Good News' of God's call to young men and helps them to understand it through prayer and religious education and by following them up when they respond", and again, "To make the call effective, God needs men".

*A fourfold appeal is therefore made to the Brothers.*

1. *Pray and have prayers said* for the needs of the Church as regards vocations. It was Christ himself who first made this appeal. And since we affirm that we are men of prayer, this is the time to prove it.

2. *Explain* what their vocation is, stressing their commitment. And this through personal contact with young people to whom they extend an invitation to meet a Brothers' community. The participants have noted that large numbers of Brothers regain confidence in themselves and in their commitment as Brothers with a consequent increased willingness to work at recruiting. There are, of course, a certain number who are affected by the crisis and its manifestations

and are reluctant to show young people what our vocation is and how it is lived. It is to these latter that the call is addressed.

3. *Invite* priests, other religious and laymen to give their witness to the young people under their care. This ecclesial dimension for promoting vocations calls for authenticity when testimony to one's own vocation eloquently bears out what is said of it. Moreover, the meeting is favourably impressed by the fact that many recruiters work in close cooperation with the diocese and other congregations.

4. *Realize* that their vocation will only attract the young in so far as they themselves prove that their vocation is worth devoting one's life for, a life of faith, prayer, charity, service of justice and to the poor, a life of great simplicity.

This appeal is obviously aimed at each one of us. But it is more pressing for "those few Brothers and communities which do not radiate happiness in their vocation. Some are indifferent or passive as regards recruiting, sometimes because they are not at ease in their life of faith". May this finding of the participants be counterbalanced by the joyful testimony of the majority and lead them to bring all together in the same faith and the same constructive hope.

As regards *initial formation* the participants note that "many of the reservations about present formation have abated and that more Brothers devote themselves to one or other of the stages of formation". An unfavourable comment refers to "excessive preoccupation with the professional side of our life, found not only among our Brothers, but also among postulants and young men in formation".

Since most of the recommendations on initial formation are addressed to those responsible for its various stages, there is but an implicit invitation to each Brother to take an interest in initial formation and be prepared to co-operate if his services are called upon.

## **THE COMMUNITY AS THE PRIVILEGED PLACE FOR RECRUITING AND FORMATION**

The Brothers' community, as also the educative community, is the place par excellence for progressing in our vocation and exerting influence in finding new ones. It is, or should be, the place of most importance.

The community, by its very nature, plays a formative role of the highest value for the young man when it welcomes him as he comes to his first experience of Lasallian life with a view to choosing a way of life, when it welcomes the young Brother, helping him in the closing stages of his initial formation, and towards maturity in view of his consecration by perpetual profession.

Our communities will radiate this active force in promoting vocations if they are true communities animated by the spirit of faith, zeal and brotherhood.

On the other hand, one must carefully avoid perfectionism which induces a large number of Brothers to abstain from all recruiting on the pretext that their community is not sufficiently prepared to welcome the young, or because the formation structures are not what those Brothers think they should be. One should remember that the young man trying to find his way in life is not so naive as to demand perfection. He has to enter a real Institute not an imaginary one. Moreover, there is nothing so stimulating for the community as the admission of one of these "candidates."

This is, therefore, an additional appeal to communities to persevere in renewing themselves creatively. *Hence the following recommendations:*

- Create in the communities an atmosphere which is caring, fraternal and welcoming for the young men seeking their way in life. Let them share in prayer, discussion and the apostolate, in meals and leisure activities of the community, (as they feel inclined).

- Give a particularly warm welcome to young Brothers, helping and encouraging them while they adapt to community activities.

- Lead the educative community to resolute and sustained action in encouraging vocations, with prayer and discussions in which teachers, pupils, parents and other interested individuals can take part.

- Not limit ourselves to our pupils. The spirit breathes where he wills, on our lay staff and other young men.

- Have contact with the surrounding neighbourhood and interest ourselves as a community in the service of the poor and the promotion of justice with the twofold aim of renewing our religious life and interesting young people seeking their way in life.

- Besides such initiatives motivated by the solicitude for vocations, let the community in its program provide for occasions and specific times when it will participate collectively in continuing formation activities. "The community is indeed the best place for preparing, planning and assessing the further training of each Brother in accordance with the community program."

### **AN IRREPLACEABLE FUNCTION: COORDINATION AT DISTRICT LEVEL**

The members of the Intercapitular Meeting realized the great diversity in the Institute, whether it be from the religious, cultural, social, or historical point of view. Such diversity calls for a plurality of methods and directives in recruiting and formation.

It is the District's responsibility to assure suitable adaptations of general directives and of the Lasallian spirit and to put them into practice. It is not possible at the central level to go into practical details.

That being said, whatever the local circumstances may be, it is indispensable that those responsible in the District stir up and sustain individual and community effort. It is the task of the District to see that various levels of activity

are brought into harmony with each other. Thus the inter-capitular meeting recommends the following:

1. SPECIFY THE OBJECTIVES AND BASIC CRITERIA for recruiting and formation:

- The kind of Brother we should train, one faithful to Jesus Christ, to De La Salle, to the directives of the Church, and one well adapted to our mission in the field.

This question requires an unambiguous answer in order to direct every stage of recruiting and formation.

The aims of continuing formation must also be defined. E.g. religious and spiritual renewal, comprehension of the Founder's theology and spirituality as related to today's needs, apprenticeship in interpersonal relations.

- The quality and requirements of training must also be made clear, with, among other things, attention be given:

- that training be progressive, incarnated, ecclesial, La-sallian, and a help in laying the foundation of our professional and spiritual life.

- that initial training is adequate at each of its stages, and continuing formation carries on throughout life. That they be not curtailed on any account for other urgent needs.

The members of the meeting also insisted on *two further points*.

- It must be clear that in every District, initial formation continues up to perpetual profession.

- Each District must define a policy, a formation programme for the third age, taking into account the needs it must satisfy, and the follow-up it imposes.

2. TOP PRIORITY FOR A POLICY for training staff and leaders for initial and continuing formation and for recruiting.

Here are a few recommendations on this subject.

- The districts and regions will draw up a plan for training their formation staff during the next five years.

- There will be a session of CIL consecrated to initial formation before the next General Chapter.

- The Brothers Visitors will take the necessary steps to see that capable Brothers are able to act as competent leaders for continuing formation in the districts.

- Brothers Visitors will provide for the training of competent people to see to the needs of the aged Brothers.

There are two reasons for this insistence. "It is found that in many places there is no overall plan for formation and that there is a lack of competent and trained personnel to provide continuing formation."

### 3. COMMITTEES USEFUL TO THE DISTRICT

The formation committee is provided for by article 208 of the Book of Government. In most districts, this provision is in force. The inquiry preparatory to the meeting shows that a majority of districts have a committee or people responsible for vocations and initial formation. This is not so for continued formation. In view of the importance of these committees and to mitigate the still existing lacunae, the members of the meeting stress the absolute necessity of this once again.

For example for vocations:

The Visitors or the Brothers must encourage the vocation teams or committees whose objectives are to

- motivate the Brothers in their initiatives and the communities in vocation campaigns;

- work with the parish or diocesan vocational organizations;

- organize meetings for young people interested in vocations;

- furnish the religious education departments of the schools with information and material on vocations.

They insist that, for initial formation, "those responsible for the various stages form a team to coordinate the overall formation process".

As to continuing formation we have already mentioned, "that capable Brothers act as leaders in this service in the district."

#### 4. COMPLETE AND SUITABLE PROGRAMMES AND ORGANIZATION

This is an initiative for improving or completing what is already being done.

*Recruiting* .A lack of organization is noted in a fair number of districts. One does not know to whom one should refer interested young people, nor what to say to them. Hence the need for all to cooperate and to coordinate initiatives according to policies defined or to be defined.

*Initial formation:* Over the last ten years a large number of districts have organized a postulancy. A similar, if not superior (!) effort should now be undertaken for the *young Brother's training* from novitiate to perpetual profession. There is a vacuum in this area.

Past experience and new requirements lead to recommending three periods which merit special programmes.

1. The period immediately following the novitiate when the young Brother is better prepared for his mission, with special emphasis on the training aspect (Cf. the scolasticate).

2. The first years in an active community where the follow-up programme devolves on the community as well as on the young Brother, thus providing the community which receives him guidelines for giving him suitable assistance.

3. Preparation for perpetual profession, which, moreover, should also be the goal of the two periods just described.

*Continuing formation*, again basing ourselves on facts brought out at the meeting. There are a lot of initiatives, but almost never an overall plan at the district or regional level which caters to all the Brothers in the various age groups.

As for the Brothers who have reached retirement age, the programme should aim at developing in the Brothers concerned, "a mentality consonant with the apostolic mission of the religious life while providing them with the means adapted to their capabilities, so that they can successfully

devote themselves to a second or third apostolate according to their new situation (age, health, etc.)”.

#### 5. OVERALL PASTORAL WORK - INTER-DISTRICT COOPERATION

This is a necessity and an enrichment for recruiting and formation. We have already emphasized how very pleased the members of the meeting were with the many examples of cooperation in this field which came to their attention. Similarly, we see the extension of inter-district cooperation in formation through novitiates shared with other districts or with other congregations.

This policy should be continued and extended.

#### 6. EVALUATION, FOLLOW-UP, PRESENCE

Brother Visitor and his Council must make this assessment, or see that it is made, so that the committee or responsible people will avoid merely making a declaration of intent, or, on the contrary, acting without due forethought. This will make it possible to guarantee that plans and programmes for formation and recruiting are realistic and efficacious.

Brother Visitor will likewise be especially attentive to the needs of his Brothers in the domain of continued formation. He will follow each one up individually and see that he has the time at the opportune moment to devote himself to his continuing formation.

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As a “spiritual nosegay” to these recommendations, it might be a good idea to quote this statement of principle.

“Formation is a continuous and progressive process which, having begun with the first steps taken on entering religious life, prepares the Brothers to continue the effort beyond perpetual profession. The Brothers could take as point of reference the life, work and actions of our holy Founder who repeats insistently that we depend on Providence through the movements of the Spirit and the signs of the times. We are thus continually called to the ways in which God wishes us to serve his people among whom we life”.

## PART 4

### STRENGTHENING THE LEADERSHIP ORGANISMS

The preceding accounts show the significance of the subjects discussed by the intercapitular meeting and the principal orientations agreed upon at the end of this study. These themes were grouped under three headings.

A fourth subject proposed was examination of the GOVERNMENT of the Institute. However, the above title under which the report is presented underlines the fact that the study was carried out from a practical point of view. The meeting was not a General Chapter, and it had no authority to make innovations. But it did have a role to play in evaluating the way in which the various levels of government, General Council, Regions, Districts and Communities, are giving effective support to the Brothers in their daily lives and how this service might be improved.

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The following paragraphs are *the reflections of the General Council* to whom the participants at the Intercapitular Meeting confided their findings on this subject so that they could be put to good pastoral use. There was a threefold basis for these reflections.

First of all there were the results of the discussions following a *report* prepared by the General Council and presented by Brother Superior. This report described the experiences of the Central Government over the last five years, its achievements, its failings and its plans for the future.

Then there were the *recommendations*, which followed all the subjects discussed as they are presented above. We

have regrouped them, however, according to the level of government, General Council, Regions, Districts and Communities. This picture describes the kind of service the participants would like to see these bodies render so as to provide more effective assistance to the Brothers.

Finally there are the notes taken by the General Council during the *meetings* they had with each of the eleven regions of the Institute during the course of the Intercapitular Meeting, when each of them gave its own interpretation of the problems and its view of policies to be adopted for the future.

These pages can serve as an inspiration not only for the General Council, but also for the Regions, the Districts, the Communities and the Brothers. All the tasks which fall to our lot are not described. But the choices made, as well as the insistence and the manner of presenting the orientations clearly show the anxieties, hopes and challenges the participants wished to communicate to their Brothers.

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## THE GENERAL COUNCIL

There is no need to dwell at length on the importance of the changes wrought in the General Council by the 1976 General Chapter when it put an end to territorial Assistants and established a collegiate body responsible to the whole Institute. (Cf. Book of Government, chapter 3). That the results of such a change should be examined with the greatest attention was taken for granted. The findings and propositions resulting from this examination can be summarized under three headings.

- A new kind of leadership is being established.
- Progress is assured
- Priority tasks for the General Council

## **1. A new kind of leadership is being established**

The participants at the intercapitular meeting provided a multiplicity of testimony to show that a new kind of leadership is being established. The elements of this really unanimous finding are as follows.

**DIRECT AND MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE** is being established between the Council and the Brothers Visitors as well as between the Council and a large number of Brothers and Communities. During such meetings, the General Council is seen as a community, doing its best to integrate complementary views. This gives an impression of soundness and the guarantee of harmonious pluralism.

**THE CHAIN OF CONTACTS** foreseen between the Council and the Districts has been effectively established. This comprises Councillors' visits to the Districts, during retreats, Chapters or assemblies, or special visits to help a District with an urgent or serious problem. The contacts between the Council and the Brothers Visitors include regional meetings which took place in 1978 and 1979, the 1981 intercapitular meeting and further regional meetings set for 1982 and 1983. To these must be added the Council reactions in reply to the Visitors' annual reports and to chapter and district council reports, not to mention letters and circulars. The whole constitutes a strong chain of varied relationships in which direct presence plays a major role, though the effect of the written word is not to be despised.

**THE IMPETUS** given by Brother Superior and the Council is not only accepted, but requested. Trivial or too artificial responses are rejected as are general considerations. Any case where the Council has thrown out a challenge to the Brothers has been welcomed. From this point of view the circular on the Promotion of Justice was highly appreciated.

## **2. Progress to be assured**

If the conclusions of the participants were eminently favourable, it was on condition that the General Council

does not stop by the wayside but rather strengthens or corrects certain points.

CONTINUITY appears henceforth to be essential to the services provided by the General Council. All that precedes represents an initial contact of a positive nature, even if at times it could have been more orderly. Each Region and each District from now on wants to be known, acknowledged and dealt with by the General Council according to its own special characteristics. This poses problems for the General Council in organizing its work. We shall mention some of them later on.

MORE EFFICIENCY in collegial Council visits seems possible and desirable. The most frequent complaint is the speed with which the visits are made, and the fact that in meetings with the Brothers it is not always the most important matters that are dealt with. However, to be realistic, it is recognized that the Council has no more time to dispose of. Moreover, it is not the object of the visits to deal with individual cases, unless exceptionally (1). *The orientations are twofold.* The Council will take into account all the information on hand when preparing the visit. But it asks the Districts to make a careful preparation for these visits whose aim is to facilitate an assessment of the principal problems of the District and the policies adopted to resolve them. Hence the need for preliminary meetings so that the team representing the General Council can be informed and have a better idea of the situation. As to the subject matter of the meetings, its value depends on the preparation, and it is better for the Brothers invited to the meeting to reach agreement on the essential points to be dealt with.

*Other kinds of contact* are possible and already practiced. Besides the attendance of Councillors at retreats, other

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(1) It remains an established fact that during these visits each Brother who so wishes may have a personal interview with Brother Superior or one of the Councillors.

closer contacts are mentioned with special groups such as the formation staff, Directors, Brothers responsible for various levels of catechetical work, or those directing retreats, to mention just a few examples.

### **3. Priority Tasks Proposed to the General Council**

A grouping together of the recommendations made to the General Council brings out two of its main functions: to see that the decisions of the General Chapter are applied, and to facilitate communication between the various sectors of the Institute. Hence the following recommendations have been made to it.

#### **DEVELOP CERTAIN ACTIVITIES WHICH HAVE PRIORITY**

The vocabulary used in describing the Council's work is significant. It stresses such terms as "help", "facilitate", "develop", "listen" and "assess". The Council is seen as a Community at the service of the districts and the Brothers in their mission. Four main areas emerge.

A. *Help for Regions and Districts* experiencing exceptional difficulties: shortage of manpower and a lack of the means of providing formation for the Brothers, crises in recruiting leading to fears for the future, situations which have reached an impasse, etc. The Council is asked to make use of its knowledge of Regions and Districts to intervene as circumstances warrant and not to leave those sectors which are sorely tried or under threat in a vacuum (as is expressed in one report).

B. *Define a missionary policy and make it known.* "Define" means selecting the place where priority should be given to founding a new community or strengthening an existing one. This is to be done in agreement with the District and in contact with the local Church. It is hoped that such a policy will be well publicized so that Brothers may become aware of and challenged by such a choice. The

same recommendation asks the Council to get the Young Churches themselves to become missionaries.

C. *Develop activities to encourage formation and recruiting*, as one recommendation in particular suggests, so that by 1984, each District will be able to provide a recruiting program together with an assessment of it. It asks the Council to multiply initiatives to help the Brothers perfect means for awakening vocations. One would also like them to give a stimulating evaluation of training plans and programmes.

D. *Sustain or initiate pedagogical research* consistent with the character of the Lasallian school or Lasallian participation in school life, as defined more particularly in the document on the Promotion of Justice (Cf. Circular 412). There are teams in existence. Their work should be encouraged and publicized. And the Districts must be encouraged to create more of them.

#### CIRCULATE INFORMATION

Information reaching the Council should not be hoarded in the Generalate, it should be circulated among the Regions and Districts. The recommendations formulate explicit suggestions concerning.

- achievements in favour of Service of the Poor and the Promotion of Justice as suggested in circular 412;
- plans drawn up by the Regions and Districts for the direction of our lay teachers;
- examples of effective community programmes;
- experiences illustrating the resumption of the personal interview;
- training programmes for Brothers Directors;
- abridged programmes for initial formation with articles on the same subject;
- Lasallian publications on a popular level directed to Lasallian Associations of parents, teachers, friends, as well as Brothers in training.

General Council consideration of these suggestions led the Councillors to formulate *two remarks*.

1. *An appeal to Regions, Districts and Communities* to make a point of sending the General Council all their publications, books, studies, articles, reviews, circulars, etc. referring to the above subject matter and more generally to our apostolate and consecrated life.

2. *A study on the efficiency* of the means of communication at our disposal, *Intercom, the Bulletin, Secoli*, etc. and those we could create, such as a kind of "white paper" containing examples of achievements in one or the other area of our mission or our family life.

#### UNDERTAKE A CERTAIN NUMBER OF STUDIES

Make a number of studies, or have them made, since the General Council cannot of course be expected to be "experts in all branches". The following topics are suggested:

Either *continue the subject matter dealt with* in the Circulars, but from different view points, for example, Consecrated life, in the context of the solidarity and complementarity we should establish with lay people - poverty according to the economic development of the country - the training of Brother Director - simplicity in relation to Service of the Poor.

Or again, on subjects suggested by the *appearance of certain anxieties*, e.g. prayer, the Brother's ministry as a "good shepherd" of the young, or, again, those Brothers reaching retirement age.

Or *Lasallian research* regarding which a twofold desire is expressed.

Encourage the edition of popular works publicizing the Lasallian message for young men in formation, lay teachers, members of Lasallian associations.

Find researchers, individuals or teams, ready to take over in a few years time from the "first generation" to whom we are indebted for the present progress in Lasallian studies.

## DEPENDENCE ON THE SERVICES IN THE GENERALATE

A. *The Services.* Far from being overmanned, the *Services* in the Generalate, of those working most closely with the Council, function with a minimum of Brothers. Their work was unanimously appreciated by the participants. A number of these services have been in existence for a long time, the General Secretariat, the Procurator to the Holy See, the Bursar General, the Postulator General. Others have been established more recently, such as SECOLI. There are still others in the process of being set up or whose work is less precisely defined, such as the Education Office or the Formation Secretariat.

B. *Committees.* The meeting examined the functioning of various *international committees* such as the Finance Committee, the Mixed Committee of Brothers and Lasallian Associations, the Education Committee, the Formation and the Catechetical Committee. One fact was established. It is the General Council which benefits most from the work of these committees and most appreciates it. The Districts and Regions, on the other hand, see little of the results of the various committee meetings.

The fact is that to have all the Districts, even all the Regions, represented on these committees would make them too large, unwieldy and too expensive. The Meeting then stated its conclusions: With the exception of the Finance Committee and the Mixed Committee, whose composition depends on the objectives assigned to them, it would be better not to have permanent committees, but *work groups* to deal with specific subjects or matters regarding particular Regions. The recent Symposium on Prayer is a good example of what could be achieved by such groups.

C. *C.I.L. (International Lasallian Centre).* This deserves special mention. It is unanimously appreciated. Moreover, since 1976, every Region and nearly all Districts have sent Brothers to the sessions. Hence suggestions for themes were put forward such as prayer and the promotion of justice, among others.

D. After the Meeting, having considered its various findings, Brother Superior and his Council *have decided the following*:

1. *To increase* the participation of existing services in the work of the General Council by means of regular dialogue, exchange of information and periods of work together.

2. *To study during* the coming months, the re-arrangement of the two secretariates already projected by the existing services:

- a secretariate for Pastoral Work (Education - Catechesis);

- a secretariate for Formation.

It would not require a very large increase in personnel to set them up. They would have a fourfold role.

- Collect and circulate information in areas of their concern.

- Encourage the setting up of work groups or research teams.

- Represent the Institute in international organizations related to their work.

- Give an assessment of District or Regional programmes sent to the General Council.

## THE REGION

**A new reality.** After the suppression of the "Assistancies" in 1976, the new Book of Government invited the Districts or Delegations to form free associations for mutual support (Cf. Book of Government, chapter 9). "The region is not a pre-established structure. It should arise from experience and a felt need to facilitate and preserve by this means the unity of the entire body of the Institute." (art. 70, 1) It is intended in fact to be an organization to benefit Brothers Visitors and Districts by providing common services which

a District by itself has no way of organizing without wasting its manpower or gaining but slight advantage from its efforts.

**A subject dealt with at length.** The Intercapitular Meeting dealt with this matter from various angles, especially during the meetings each Region had with the General Council. The overall picture is one of evolution. The Regions, started five years ago, are still in the process of being organized. In some cases, the final form seems to have been agreed upon. In others, it is still being worked out. So we must continue to work along the lines indicated in the Book of Government so that the General Chapter of 1986 will be able to make an assessment based on fact.

**Various kinds of Regions.** These notable differences between Regions are in no way due to lack of good will, or even much less because of opposition on the part of the Districts, but to objective difficulties and different starting points. Objective difficulties are at once apparent. Some Regions coincide with a single nation and it is easy to set up communal services. Others are composed of a number of nations which belong to an area with a common culture, like Latin America. But elsewhere they comprise divers languages and cultures. In two cases, Asia and Africa, the Regions cover immense continents. The differences in starting points are obvious. While some Regions took the place of Assistancies which, at least since 1966, had organized common services, others, like Africa, started from scratch in 1976.

### **This allowed the intercapitular meeting**

TO REACH A CONSENSUS. The Region is not meant to establish an intermediary between Brother Superior and the Districts. The Brothers Visitors appreciate the advantages of having close links with the centre of the Institute. The role of the person responsible for the Region (President, Regional Superior, Coordinator, etc.) is no less necessary for communication between Districts and Sectors composing

the Region. He is also required to put the general problems of the Region before the Council.

**TO EXPRESS AN ANXIETY.** We have already mentioned the remark found in the report, "There are Districts which are in a vacuum". Brother Superior and the Councillors recognize this kind of difficulty which exists in varying degrees and have expressed their anxiety in the name of their mission. Districts of the same Region must be able to help the one in difficulty.

However, it is quite obvious that sectors in difficulty or which find it difficult to organize services of leadership are often precisely those in Regions which are the most difficult to organize because of geographical or cultural conditions. The General Council cannot do everything. The Region must do its share and help one another.

**To insist.** These facts have induced Brother Superior and the Councillors to insist that the Regions establish forms of mutual assistance. We are traversing a period of creation during which we must move in three directions.

— *complementarity*: Districts must pool their manpower. The wisdom of this policy is self evident.

— *efficiency*: and not « power ». No body has the right to teach others or give orders. It is a question of re-deploying forces to create good quality communal service.

— *mutual help*: Human groups, such as the Districts, pass through moments of crisis at times. It is the normal thing for the others to provide the necessary help at such a time.

**An Appeal** from certain Regions which are experiencing the most difficulty in organizing their services. An appeal addressed to the others, but especially to Brother Superior and his Councillors, that during the period of organization he temporarily delegate a Brother from another sector to help provide the indispensable forms of aid for everyone's benefit, or, again, to help a District during a difficulty phase.

## **What are these communal services?**

During the discussions, the forms of reciprocal aid most often mentioned, because they are already being provided here or there, were the following:

- Mutual support for Brothers Visitors belonging to the same conference.
- Meetings between District Councils for the enrichment and assessment of leadership.
- Relations to be established with other Regions, especially with the Young Churches.
- Assistance to a sector in difficulty.
- Presence at a Chapter or Council of a “facilitator” who is a member of another District.
- Initial formation: programmes or houses of formation in common, meetings of training staff.
- Continuing formation: Programmes, Regional Lasallian Centre, specialized sessions or retreats.
- Training of lay masters and their encouragement.
- Adaptation of the Lasallian message to the cultural context of the region through studies, translations, publicity etc.
- Economic aid: be it through the support of sectors in difficulty — the concerted training of district bursars, — or the examination of district financial reports and their admissibility.
- Pedagogical and catechetical research and vitality.
- Meetings of Brothers fulfilling the same office, missionary secretariates, recruiting, etc.
- Relations with episcopal conferences of areas in which the Region is situated.

It was noted many times during the discussions that a District must not simply enjoy the “use of communal services”. It is still responsible for the services mentioned, such

as training, recruiting, finance, education. Regional services do not replace those of the District. They help it to fulfil the functions within its sphere.

## **BROTHER VISITOR AND THE DISTRICT**

Two preliminary remarks will be useful before presenting the summary of the recommendations to Brothers Visitors and their District Councils.

### **1. HONESTY**

On grouping the recommendations, it appears that the most important section is addressed to Brothers Visitors and their Councils. This is easily explained. The intercapitular meeting was composed almost exclusively of those responsible for Districts or Delegations. They did not feel like imposing fresh burdens on their Brothers, so imposed them on themselves. At times, also, some of them are addressed to the District seen as an aggregate whose means of action should be put at the service of the communities and Brothers.

### **2. VISION AND INSPIRATION**

The following paragraphs do not try to give an analytical summary of the recommendations addressed to the Brothers Visitors and the Districts. It would be fastidious and largely repetitive since these recommendations are given in the first three parts of this circular.

On the contrary, it is interesting to bring out the philosophy of this collection of texts, *the inspiration* which underlies them and *the future outlook* which then becomes clear.

### **Brother Visitor's Personal Life**

There is little which concerns Brother Visitor's personal life for this subject came up by chance. However, the

General Council thinks it would be useful to mention it to the Brothers. In fact, when one of us is appointed Visitor his confrères tend to think he has entered a sphere where the conditions for leading a human existence and normal religious life are changed. Nothing of the sort. When the occasion arose, the Brothers Visitors emphasized the need they feel for a rich community life, relationships which are not restricted to their function and the cooperation of their Brothers. The Visitor is not the lone combatant while the others look on as spectators. He would much prefer to get all his Brothers to share in the District tasks.

Although brief, these lines could, therefore, usefully furnish food for thought so that the members of the District will regard him whom they have chosen as their leader more as a Brother.

### **Construct the truth**

For fifteen years, the Chapters have echoed the evolution of the contemporary Church and have traced out policies which it does not seem opportune to multiply today. Thus, the inquiry preparatory to the intercapitular meeting produced evidence to show that the Brothers accept the guidelines, in particular, of the Declaration, the Rule and Constitutions and the recent circulars.

However, the same inquiry largely confirmed by the discussions shows that, although accepted in principle, the overall content is in fact only in the process of being assimilated. A general attitude exists, therefore, which leads to a reflection on the situation in the Institute: there is not so much a need to understand the language of the ideal, which we all know fairly well, as to reconcile the language of reality and that of commitment.

### **The language of reality**

The participants at the meeting often manifested their mistrust in declarations of principle whose generosity dis-

guises the actual situation in the communities, the institutions, and among individuals. And so they recommend:

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTUAL SITUATION.** This applies especially to the community programme, the evaluation of which could be the basis for the canonical visitation. It also applies to service of the poor and justice, catechesis and educational establishments.

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT.** There is more insistence on this in the case of establishments, especially schools whose operations include a number of complex factors: educational community, programmes, educational atmosphere, socio-cultural milieu, joint pastoral work, finances, etc.

In these cases a more detailed analysis may be needed in order to perceive the conditions which have a bearing on our educational activities and the kind of education we actually impart.

It is up to the District to see that each establishment is ready to undertake such an analysis and has the means of doing so.

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE FUNCTIONING AND RESULTS** of organisms for district leadership and the means they use, committees, group meetings, councils plans, programmes. Are the objectives well defined? Are they effective and have they the necessary facilities? What results have these plans produced?

## **Commitment**

For efficiency, the Intercapitular Meeting suggests that Brothers Visitors

**DEFINE CLEAR POLICIES.** They must give guidelines based on Institute directives and service as directed by local conditions. They must be simple and easily explained and thus be acceptable to the Brothers. "Blow by blow" descriptions must be avoided so that a clear and inspiring vision is apparent.

**PLAN.** An active policy, by definition, requires planning. The participants in the meeting often mentioned that planning was necessary and mentioned a number of points.

- Plans for recruiting.
- Plans for initial formation.
- Plans for continuing formation.
- Plans for the evolution of schools and other works towards the promotion of justice.
- Plans for training lay staff in the Lasallian spirit.
- Plans for cooperation with the Young Churches.

### **Individual concern for people**

However, without gainsaying what precedes, the Inter-capitular Meeting insisted that one of the Visitor's essential tasks is individual concern for each Brother. Especially so that each one's personal life is taken into consideration and that, with mutual trust, the Visitor can propose to him progressive and consistent tasks as well as the means required for his continued formation.

### **Working with the communities**

Plans succeed when accepted by individuals and communities. Thus having recalled concern for people, the Inter-capitular Meeting insists on co-operation between the Visitor and the community.

The first aspect is the composition of the community, the number of Brothers and their qualifications, training and the process of appointing the director.

The second is the adaptation of the community to the local circumstances and to the pastoral work of the Church, but also to the knowledge of existing social and cultural surroundings, and to cooperation with other educators.

All this should be more or less considered and summarized in the community programme. This, of course, is essentially a community matter, but the meeting stressed that

it form the basis for dialogue with the Brother Visitor and that he assists the community in making progress according to what it has considered in this programme.

### **Insistance on formation**

If there is one thing which has been frequently reiterated, it is the advice to Visitors and their Councils to provide formation. It is a consequence of the axiom which prohibits imposing a burden without at the same time providing the means of bearing it. One of the dominant traits of the Visitor in the texts produced by the meeting is that of "formator". Not indeed that he has to do everything himself but to see that the necessary training is within the reach of the Brothers. This refers in particular to the following spheres:

- Critical knowledge of our times and the great evolution they manifest, especially as regards youth and the promotion of justice.

- Spiritual formation. Formation for an integrated life, for prayer (Cf. the suggestion to establish a spiritual centre in each District).

- Recruiting. Each Brother to take it upon himself according to his means and responsibilities.

- Initial and continued formation for the Brothers, naturally, but without forgetting the "Lasallian family". Brother Director and those reaching retirement age are especially mentioned.

## **THE COMMUNITY**

The community plays a central role in what refers to the governing of the Institute. Pages 33 to 56 above present the essentials. They refer to work directly concerned with the community theme. There is no need to repeat it.

But it is clear on regrouping the recommendations, that

the intercapitular meeting made appeals to and proposed directives for the communities in matters referring to the school, catechesis, consecrated life, recruiting and formation.

### **School and community renewal**

The report on school renewal is concerned that very often the community programme takes no account of the role the community must continue to play in the school with which it is involved. The religious community realizes, of course, that it is not the only nor the principal promotor of education as it once was. It often forgets to include the apostolate in its programme. The members of the Intercapitular Meeting, on the contrary, ask that it define each Brother's job in the school, that it be made known that there is a religious community working in the establishment, which encourages among the other teachers educational views and practices consistent with the Lasallian ideal.

### **Catechesis and Community**

The report on catechesis returns to the same ideas:

- that the community programme specify each Brother's participation in catechesis;
- that the *religious* community be a promotor of the faith community in the school through its improved relationship with all the teachers which will enable everyone to bear witness according to his state, be he religious or layman.

### **Consecrated life and Community**

The report on Community Life has to a large extent given directives on this, whether for life as a whole, or for the life of prayer. What is important to note is that, to facilitate observance of the vows, the Intercapitular Meeting relies on the community. It is the community which must help the Brother to live simply and share resources, to live a rich and well balanced life and to give dynamism to his obedience through solidarity in his apostolic work. Finally

the community is called to be a house and school of prayer. The Intercapitular Meeting has no hesitation in representing the efforts to lead a richer consecrated life as a community effort, whereas this effort very often depends on the good will of the individual religious.

### **Recruiting and Community**

The report on recruiting attached a major role to the community in areas such as:

- inviting young people to share our prayer, fraternal living and commitment;
- co-operating with the local Church in recruiting;
- helping the families themselves to have a share in recruiting. It is very often through the community that the young man finds his vocation as a Brother, and it is the sincerity of this witness which proves the value of this vocation.

### **Formation and Community**

The report on formation stresses that “the Community is the most important place where each Brother’s continuing formation should be prepared, planned and assessed”, and that “with reference to the community programme”.

The community is thus invited to draw up a programme of continuing formation. But the report goes further and comments favorably on what has been done in many Districts where the whole community goes into “a specific period of continuing formation”. This consists in calling on experts from outside for a training programme adapted to the situation of the community: deeper knowledge of the neighbourhood, a systematic analysis of its functions and reflection on prayer, all complemented with individual programmes.

All the reports reflect a dynamic and realistic community. It is this in particular which the Intercapitular Meeting recommends in its discussions on the Brother’s perseverance. It recognizes that there is frequently a well re-

cognized link between perseverance and the quality of community life. It therefore calls on those responsible to provide communities with the means of leading a worthwhile human and spiritual life, and it calls on the members of the community for a similar effort, as we shall stress in the conclusion to this summary report.

## THE BROTHER

There is relatively little in the recommendations made by the Intercapitular Meeting which is addressed to the individual Brother. But what is most important is awakening his sense of responsibility. For example:

- Concerning their *desire for formation*. A personal programme of continued formation established in dialogue with their community and Brother Visitor, so as not simply to be “consumers” nor even frankly reticent.

- As regards their *prayer life*. The community may facilitate it, but it can be assured only by the individual’s decision, desire and will.

- Regarding their *presence in school* or other establishments. They can act as individuals and reveal nothing of their consecrated life and nothing of the community. There again it is only a personal decision which can alter the significance of their presence.

Except for these explicit appeals, the Intercapitular Meeting, in most cases, addresses the Brother only *implicitly*. The expressions used very often indicate it: “the community and the Brothers” are asked to take such a step. So true is it that a collectivity has an existence and a life only in terms of the person who is a member of it. Even a religious community only attains its specific dimension, its “ultra-personal reality”, when those who compose it are visibly united “in the name of Jesus Christ”.

That is perhaps one of the major conclusions to be drawn at the end of this summary. Each Brother who learns

about this mass of practical means at his disposal knows pertinently that no one is on his own and that everything depends on how he, the "individual" Brother, responds to the call made to him. Everything, that is not only the quality of his personal life, but also the atmosphere in which the lives of his confreres will blossom out, not only his apostolate, but the joint contribution "together and by association" which the community can offer young people in the service of God.

## **CONCLUSION**

The preceding pages have given a summary of the work of the Intercapitular Meeting of May 1981 along with the comments of the General Council. They therefore contain the thinking of the most qualified members of the Institute as regards our present situation, our call and our future. There was an extraordinary abundance of information to help us analyze the situation and we have dealt with it with complete frankness.

### **The Reality of our Present Situation**

Our present situation shows light and shade, progress and stagnation. It is rich enough to fill us with hope in spite of the pessimists who base themselves on incomplete data or subjective fears. Yet it is imperfect enough for us to avoid any complacency which would be contradicted by the facts.

During the Intercapitular Meeting we sought the truth in order to draw from it the necessary conclusions. It is now everyone's property. Let us take it as the starting point for further progress.

### **The Reality of our Call**

One fact stands out in analyzing our situation. It is the enduring value of our call to fulfil our mission and commitment together as Brothers. This is so, provided that we open our eyes and see how to respond to the challenge, even

the “clamour (!)”, of the times in which we live: the cry of the poor, the appeal of youth with its uncertainties and opportunities, the appeal of the Church that we know how validly to guide and rouse these young people and the poor.

It is in the thought of our Founder, and still more in the lessons of his life that we have sought these answers, because we do not want to fall into illusions and fail all those who expect from us a convincing and a creative ministry.

### **The Reality of our Future**

What is there that could menace our future except the fear of looking truth in the face, the tendency to deceive ourselves in what we are doing, by refusing to make certain that our deeds correspond to our words?

During the Intercapitular Meeting we realized once again that we cannot hope to attract the numerous people who should join us to continue the work of the Gospel except in so far as they see the living incarnation of what we say, of what the Founder and history have made of us. The best of these young men will go on repeating that they are ready to join the Brothers whom they see practicing the content of our Declaration and programmes.

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What comes out in the findings and directives of the Intercapitular Meeting IS THE IMAGE OF HOW WE SHOULD APPEAR TODAY to the people to whom we are sent. The participants were relieved at having been able to define this image thanks to their joint efforts to find the truth and reflect on it. But it is not only a feeling of satisfaction, it is also a challenge. For the image of what we should be reveals how different we are from this, and this difference is a challenge to all. Let us set to work at once.

*The General Councillors* were the first to understand this straight away. Immediately after the meeting they took

in hand the material left to them by the participants, an inspiring list of desiderata which the Visitors want to see realized in the months and years ahead. They were pleased, naturally, with the satisfaction expressed for the achievements of the past years. But they perceived even more the urgent need to get on with the work which lies ahead.

THE BROTHERS VISITORS also understood it well, for in the three months which have passed between the end of the meeting and the appearance of this Circular, we have heard of a multiplicity of initiatives inspired by what they heard during the meeting.

It is for this reason that we are confident that the *communities and the Brothers* will also take the report of the Intercapitular Meeting seriously. Each community, and each Brother in the community, according to their own talents, will undertake to translate these directives into their daily lives, into their customary work in the place where they live. For it is at this level that life is really seen, and increases or decreases, to the degree in which the means of vitality provided are efficiently used.

The facts, programmes and orientations resumed in these pages are a sign of life and an urgent appeal. But they will remain a dead letter if that which concerns each one is not put into practice and does not become part of one's personal life story.

From the facts presented and their discussions, the Brothers who were present at the meeting discovered what was inadequate in their life and activities, or not well integrated into them, or missing from this life and these activities. At the same time, they were able to see, in comparing their experiences with those of others, what constituted success, hope, promise for the future. *They want to see the Brothers make this same discovery.* These pages set the life of the Institute before you, the thousand facets of an Institute spread over the four quarters of the globe. The picture of this life represents today's image of the inspiration of St. John Baptist de La Salle some three hundred years after the Foundation of the Institute. These pages are *the TODAY of the Institute* challenging everyone, the ever

living inspiration of him who is not only an historical figure for us, but a *founder who continues to found*, to inspire and to sustain. That is the best of what you can find in these pages.

We hope therefore that what happened at the meeting, what made it a success, will become generalized in the Institute: *information* which circulates and whose truth and precision are the beginning of a morrow full of hope for all. Also there is a *collective reflection* on the realities which the information makes known and a *united prayer* nourished by this reality. That is what the Intercapitular Meeting succeeded in doing, that is the model we put before the communities and the Brothers.

We have, of course, not to become an elitist society, but must take time to cast an honest glance and to reflect sincerely about ourselves so as to discover God's will for us, and to be able to cooperate more validly with the Church in the service of youth and the poor.

This Intercapitular Meeting coincided with the culminating point of the tercentenary. It starts by opening *up the road to follow in the fourth centenary* of our existence. It does so realistically, with exigence and concern for adaptation. It does so with the elan and inspiration you will have sensed along with us when reading these pages. It is a breath of youth, for the spirit does not age, nor fade away.

May the spiritual dynamism infused by Him who calls us to minister his salvation to the young, reach each and every one of us. And may each and everyone of us help each other to live by it. To sum up, it is indeed the renewal of our personal and community prayer and our combined seeking for the correct response to the challenges of our times which will guarantee that we discover and live God's will for us.

This is what we wish for each other and what we ask for in our common prayers.

*Brother Superior General and General Council*