

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

IN MEMORIAM

***Br. Genaro Jesús
Sáenz de Ugarte e Iriarte, F.S.C.***



General Council
Rome

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**Brother Genaro Jesús
Sáenz de Ugarte e Iriarte, F.S.C.**



Called to live the march of time: In its intensity
and in its superficiality, in its sense and in its mystery

1933 – 2018

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General Council

Rome, Italy



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Introduction

The Gospel recounts for us the parable of the Good Samaritan. Throughout his life, just like the teacher of the law, Brother Genaro asked Jesus the following question: *Teacher, who is my neighbour?* (cf. Luke 10:29).

Whose neighbour was Genaro? We can affirm that he was close to his students of mathematics, physics and chemistry. As a catechist, he was close to all those whom he helped to discover the presence of God in the wonders of creation, in the difficult situations of the poor and in the ups and downs of everyday life.

As Vicar General, Brother Genaro also treated the Brothers of the Institute with interest and fraternal care. As Director, he faithfully accompanied the participants in CIL. And in the exercise of his service as Visitor, he related to the Brothers of his District with compassion and kindness. In many ways, he was a Good Samaritan among us. The best tribute we can give to Brother Genaro is for us to *go and do the same* (cf. Luke 10:37).

As we bid farewell to Brother Genaro, I join the whole Institute in saying: *Very well, good and faithful servant. May your star shine for all eternity* (cf. Mt 25:21; Dn 12:3).

I would like to especially thank Brother Santiago Rodríguez Mancini and those who, by sharing their experiences with Genaro, have contributed to the writing of this Circular.

Brother Robert Schieler, F.S.C.
Superior General

Preface

*Sole Lord of time,
Jesus, only you guide us.
We will follow your paths
Seeking your divine countenance.*

*Foreigners, pilgrims,
Ready to set out,
We turn our gaze
Towards your hour and your day.*

*We walk in your footprints:
You welcome us.
In the act of faith,
the Invisible is gleaned.*

Joseph Gelineau (1920 - 2008)

(Genaro loved this poem. He kept numerous copies in missals and other books for his personal use).

1. Initiation time

Genaro Jesús Sáenz de Ugarte e Iriarte was born in Santa Cruz de Campezo, Álava, Spain, on 15th December 1933, as recorded on his birth certificate. This is a beautiful village in the Basque Country near the border with Navarre, on the banks of the Ega River, which became important from the 12th century. It was a significant crossroad and stronghold town that was alternately passed between the kingdoms of Navarre and Castile until, in the sixteenth century, it ended up as part of the estate of the Counts of Orgaz. This is the reason why surnames combine Basque with Spanish as in Genaro's own name. From 1923, his parents, Benigno Sáenz de Ugarte (1891-1967), a labourer, who was fondly referred to as Nino, and Macaria Iriarte (1901-1992), brought up a family of six children.

Genaro describes his origins in his own words:

“...I was born in a poor family where I learned to live a dignified, constructive life which overcame poverty through humanity. Later, I discovered other forms of poverty. Both in my family and in the Houses of Formation there was talk of a dignified poverty, of being poor but honourable. For many years these references were within me; they did not prevent my growth in the understanding of cultural worlds nor my affinity towards them. Thinking about the educational and evangelizing experience from a situation of poverty has its demands. We have always had these, since the poor will always be with us... but we have not always understood and accepted them. The poor have always been with us, but we

have not known how to, or wanted to, or been able, to allow our heads and hearts to assimilate that reality that accompanied us. In addition, poverty and, more particularly, the poor, viewed in their true situation, without descriptive manipulation and statistics, live in a very changing context..."

Father José Antonio Badiola, Genaro's nephew, who knew him well, shares his memories throughout this story. About the first years of his life, he tells us:

"...The house of our grandparents, our house until 1997, had a narrow facade which was typical of the Rioja Alta villages, and it had four stories. The ground floor was always where the animals were kept: cows, pigs, chickens, rabbits, sometimes turkeys, and also the wood for the winter. The first floor had a large kitchen, bathroom, pantry, a small living room and five bedrooms. At the end of the corridor there was a beautiful terrace which overlooked the garden, where we had everything: two fig trees, a pear tree, hazel trees, and all kinds of vegetables... and flowers! Grandma Macaria loved flowers and all the edges around the garden were full of them: dahlias, gladioli, carnations, roses... and many more. The second floor was a wonderful open space, with beds, closets, memories of great-grandparents; a wonderful storage room where we played a lot when cousins came from Vitoria. The top floor, which we always called the "last stop", was intended for hanging tobacco plants, storing wheat and barley, hanging the produce from slaughtering the pigs, and storage..."

Genaro always liked to think about the processes of Christian initiation because he had lived them in his home, in his village, as a natural course of events. It was precisely there, within a very Christian family in a very Christian village, at the time of late Christianity, besieged and resistant, that he wanted to be a missionary and follow in

the footsteps of his sister Maritxu who was a missionary in Mozambique. There were also two other aunts, his mother's sisters, who were also Religious missionaries.

Shortly before turning 13, like other children from his village, on 1st November 1946, Genaro left to attend the Formation House of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Irún. His friend, Lino Romero Lamo had left a year earlier. Genaro decided to follow in the footsteps of Lino whose uncle was a Brother and lived in Argentina. Or rather, Genaro decided to make his own path which coincided with that of his friend. From the age of twelve, he was convinced that he wanted to be an educator.

Thinking about his childhood, Genaro would later write that his youth was marked by *"a religious and cultural context centred on Jesus and the freedom he brought to people of faith: mom and dad, older brothers, friends of my parents... 'Mom's theology' and 'dad's freedom' shaped me without my noticing. They prepared my way of thinking within the changing boundaries of language, culture and horizons."* Contrasting his family education with that of the Aspirancy in Irún, he comments: *"My identity was developed by my personal choices and by my loyalty to the group I chose. This is a key to reading my years of initial formation"* (2011 Retirement Notes). Genaro attributed his youthful insecurity and shyness to the cultural environment in which he had grown up. It was a culture of submission to a cruel dictatorship that forbade one's native language and levied fines for blasphemy. This was how he described it and he felt that moving into a more open and international environment enabled him to grow in a different direction.

In 1946, just after the 37th General Chapter, the "first year of the nuclear age", as Brother Michel Sauvage liked to describe

it, the Institute presented itself homogeneously, anchored in a world and a time which no longer existed. However, in the Formation Houses which Genaro would soon attend, he would experience something else – the air of the future Council which was already appearing.

2. Time of formation time with a missionary focus (1949-1953)

Genaro's deep desire to become a missionary took him to the missionary Aspirancy in Saint Maurice l'Exil, in the French Alps. He had barely three months in which to learn to speak French and thus discover that *"everything was possible because everything was good"*.¹

Some years later, he was sent to the Missionary Novitiate of Our Lady of the Apostles, at Bordighera, in Italy. He took the Habit on 14th December 1951. It was the year of the Lasallian Tercentenary. Two years later, on 15th August 1953, he took his First Vows. Brother Adalberto Aranda met up with Genaro in Bordighera when he finished his Novitiate, and he recalls:

"...We heard impressive comments from the Formators about the excellent impression that Genaro made in the Houses of Formation, the appreciation with which they mentioned him, the confidence he had inspired because of his generosity, his industriousness, his piety, and his youthful enthusiasm. For that reason, we considered him in particular, and some of the companions of his class, as an example to follow. But also, because of his natural leadership qualities and his stature, I remember that he stood out positively among his classmates..."

¹ This was expressed in an interview in which he tells us about this and other later experiences of his life. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqanIErGOvY>

These were decisive years in a time of change within the Church. Genaro had the opportunity to be formed in an open and international environment which stayed with him forever. Looking back in 2005, he pointed out that in Bordighera everything was centred on the Mystery of Christ. In 1952, he recalls that they lived the reformed Easter liturgy. It was also there that he enjoyed the first fruits of the more scientific studies of Lasallian doctrine which presented the Founder as a disciple of Jesus on a journey rooted in the gospel.

3. Time for becoming an Argentinian (1953-1959)

He arrived in Argentina the same year he took his First Vows. At 20 years of age, he brought new ideas for education and formation structures that desperately needed renewal. Early on, he collaborated in the formation of young Brothers and teachers in Florida, in the diocese of San Isidro. There he managed to acquire his qualification as a French teacher and began teaching at San José School in Florida. That same year, in 1954, his childhood friend, Brother Lino Romero Lamo arrived in Argentina and they lived together in community. Meanwhile, between 1955 and 1957, he studied to be a teacher of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry at the Institute of the Superior Council of Catholic Education. According to the legislation of that time, he had to renounce his Spanish citizenship to obtain these qualifications. Also on the teaching staff was Javier Ferrera, who had been his Novitiate companion and with whom he would later work on a number of occasions.

Genaro used to think that, having no strong roots in Basque or Spanish culture, it was easy for him to become rooted in Argentina, to feel like an Argentinian. It was here that he found the sense of belonging that he lacked. There is a curious anecdote about this. Much later, when living with the Postulants in Malvinas Argentinas, some of them, being young and cheeky, in the middle of some discussion on how to interpret cultures and times, accused him of being a foreigner. Genaro answered very calmly: *"I have been*

Argentinian for longer than you have". [Translator's note: here Genaro uses the Argentinian form of address, "vos", rather than the Spanish "tú".]

In 1957, Genaro qualified to teach arts (drawing and music). In addition, he passed the basic cycle of the Institute's Formation examinations in 1958. Once he had become a secondary teacher, he spent a year as a teacher at the middle level of De La Salle College and, in 1959, another year in the Florida Aspirancy. In 1964 he qualified to teach Philosophy and Pedagogy.

As he had experienced in his own formation in Bordighera and Saint Maurice, Genaro understood that the liturgy was an important element in formation and that the various reforms which were being implemented, thanks to the Liturgical Movement, should help the Christian initiation of these young men. That is why they were implemented progressively and, above all, in a meaningful way.

Among other innovations, Genaro organized an annual pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Luján with the Aspirants of Florida together with the Formation team. On one of these pilgrimages, maybe in 1961, the long poem *Presentation of the Pampa*, written by Brother Fermin Gainza, was read. It imitated the *Présentation de la Beauce de Péguy* created by Brother Bruno Alpago who was a young teacher in the Aspirancy. These pilgrimages were strongly influenced by French scouting. Brothers Genaro and Javier Ferrera prepared a sheet for reflective work during the pilgrimage and this was refined over the years. Subsequently, the text of Brother Fermín's poem began to be used during the pilgrimage itself, along with two other poems which are part of the pamphlet published by the Editorial Stella: *Terracota and A nuestra Señora de Luján*.

4. Time of the Council (1960-1967)

In 1960, at the initiative of the Visitor, Brother Serafín Lattanzi, a scholarship was offered to the District to study Catechetics at the *Institut Catholique* in Paris, and Genaro was chosen. Brother Israel Nery tells us one of the reasons which led to this selection: *"his work in the Aspirancy had led Genaro to the conviction of the need to improve Christian initiation in order to have a deeper impact on formation for Religious Life. It was a conviction which would accompany him throughout his life, not only in relation to the vocation of the Brothers, but in relation to all vocations"*. The annual evaluations highlight his apostolic zeal and his leadership among students, particularly Latin Americans. If we were to interpret his books of that time, which he kept until his transfer to the Residencia de los Hermanos Mayores, as a reflection of his main concerns when he was a student, we would point to at least three areas: The New Testament, the Theology of Revelation, and the multidisciplinary understanding of poverty.

During this time, he also took the opportunity to make contact with groups involved with youth at different levels – secondary, university and young workers – all of which was a movement converging towards what became the Second Vatican Council. He also collaborated in pastoral liturgy in parishes, accompanying Joseph Gelineau (1920-2008), a Jesuit and his teacher who, as well as being a musician and composer, was part of the Jerusalem Bible Translation

Committee. It was at this time that Genaro read Michel Sauvage's doctoral thesis, *Catechesis and Laity* (1962), as well as his other writings. They kindled a latent desire in him with regard to the place of the gospel in the school.

He returned to Argentina in 1963, to the Aspirancy, where he was named Director the following year and implemented many changes. A very good team was formed there which integrated Brothers who had completed higher studies in Argentina and Europe. Among them were: Carlos Olivera Lahore, Javier Ferrera, Juan Veronesi, Arturo Gareis, Fermin Gainza, Miguel Pagola and others. They continued and deepened the programme established by Brother Serafin Lattanzi while he was director. Among other things, Genaro made a considerable contribution to running the magazine *To you...dear fathers*, for which the Aspirants themselves wrote the articles. This was a very fruitful and happy community. There they worked hard to understand and communicate the conciliar news and that which came from the General Chapter of 1966-1967. Among all the texts produced during these times, Genaro spoke with a special affection for the one that referred to the lay character of the Institute. In it he found a source of inspiration for a task he always considered his own, the promotion of an adult laity. There, in Florida, an old French Brother, Brother Ludovico (Jean Pierre Dulong, 1882-1966), former Director of the Teacher Training College, was passionate about the same thing. As a young man he had been a great promoter of the lay apostolate, along with social, and even political, involvement of the students. He was excited about the creation of an *Argentinian Lasallian Educators* movement (Educadores Lasallanos de Argentina, or ELA). In the same movement was a dear friend of Genaro, Brother Luis

Francisco Combes. They all came together in that seed-bed for great Lasallian educators that was the Teacher Training College of Florida.

Also around this time, Genaro and other Brothers connected with Msgr. Miguel Raspanti, Bishop of Morón, and his team, Father Francisquito van der Bosch and Father Franz de Vos. Thus began his relationship with the national catechesis team. He also made contact with the grassroots communities which were established and with the Diocesan Institutes of Catechesis. In this way, Genaro became involved with the Episcopal Conference which sponsored the *Pastoral Institute for Adolescents* (Instituto Pastoral de la Adolescencia, or IPA).

5. Time of the IPA (1968-1973)

The creation of the IPA has its origins in the Florida Aspirancy where some Brothers were involved in catechetical activities and reflection. Among them, Carlos Olivera Lahore stood out. At that time, he was involved in the creation of the *Higher Institute of Educational Management*. On the initiative of this group, a number of books were published which traced a new direction for catechesis in Argentina. Brother Ramón Martínez Negrete, also a former student of the *Institut Catholique*, was very enthusiastic about this renewal. He had been appointed Visitor in 1968 and he decided to create the IPA.

Genaro was the first Director of the IPA which became a very fertile place for formation and reflection on Argentine catechesis for decades. He sought to respond to these "changed times," as he liked to say, changes that he was already experiencing. It was not simply a time of change but a change of an era and something new had to be done. With regard to this, Genaro was a great reader of the conferences of the Brother Superior General, Charles Henry, following the first programme of the *Lasallian International Centre* (CIL). They were later published as *Communication aux Frères* and caused a great commotion.

That same year he participated in the International Week of Catechesis in Medellín. There, he met up again with several teachers and colleagues from Paris. Among them was Jacques Audinet who, through a wonderful presentation,

formulated a definition of catechesis which would impact on Genaro forever: *the action by which a group analyses, discerns and assumes what makes one a believer in the light of the Gospel.*

The IPA was the starting point for the European catechetical renewal in Argentina. Canon Boulard, who introduced Religious sociology and applied his methods in the Northeast Argentine Region, taught some courses there. The IPA was a Lasallian work but developed among several congregations. The IPA included Sister Angélica Naveillán (1939-1992), Brothers Mauricio Bovo (1925-1993), Ricardo Wasinger (1930-2010) and Luis Combes (1920-2009). It was a group of friends and a fraternal community including Religious, lay people and Priests. It was an ecclesial, fraternal community based on tradition and focused on the future. As Genaro reflected years later, this inter-congregational experience meant that, for him, the Lasallian charisma became clearer and more rooted in the Gospel and focused on faith.

But Genaro's commitment to the Catechetical movement in Argentina was not limited to the IPA. He was also a teacher at the *María Reina Catechetical Seminary* and at the *Higher Institute of Argentinian Catechesis* (Instituto Superior de Catequesis Argentino, ISCA). There, he made good friends and was well-regarded by researchers, formators and students who considered him "*a sentinel looking at the horizon to see God arrive in the questions of adolescents.*"

This was an economically, socially and politically violent time in Argentina. It was the time of the dictatorships of Onganía (1966-1970) and Lanusse (1971-1973). Genaro, like other Brothers, was the victim of persecution, especially due to the publication of derogatory pamphlets. However, he had freedom of movement and was part of the team of the

Lasallian Spirituality Centre (Centro de Espiritualidad Lasallista, CEL) and of the *Lasallian Region of Latin America* (Región Lasallista de América Latina, RELAL), between 1969 and 1973. Genaro was invited by Brother Víctor Bertrand, the Director of the CEL, to animate the synthesis week around catechesis. His reference was the '*Catechetical Letter to the Brothers of Latin America*', approved by the Brothers Visitors of RELAL, and which had been prepared by Genaro himself, together with Brother Israel Nery and a small group of Brothers from the Region.

In 1973, Genaro went to reside in the community of the San José de Flores School, a parish work directed by the Brothers which belonged to a group of women. There, he once again met with Brother Luis Combes and, together with a group of ex-alumni from the Teacher Training College of Florida, began to prepare the process for the Brothers' community to withdraw. This was the first experience of an Argentinian Lasallian work conducted by lay people. The Director of the Primary Section, Mr. Víctor Zacarías, was appointed first and, then, the Director of the Secondary Section, Sister Néstor Ribet. This process continued over a number of years before the community withdrew from the work and left it completely in the hands of the lay people.

6. Roman times (1974-1982)

In 1971, Genaro was appointed delegate of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools for the *International Catechetical Congress* organized by the Lateran University in Rome. On that occasion he met Brother Gerard Rummery, with whom he established a long friendship. Together, they were part of the *International Catechetical Commission of the Institute*, of which he was President until 1976. They also shared some years together in CIL. Gerard tells us that it was there that he witnessed Genaro's "*calm and sensitive leadership*". At that time, Brother Miguel Campos was working on his doctoral thesis under the supervision of Brother Michel Sauvage. A friendship was born between the two which was very productive and admirable.

As Genaro came and went between Rome and Buenos Aires, a fruitful dialogue was established between CIL and the District. The visits to Argentina by Brothers Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos led the District to opt for a reading of the Founder's experience from a historical point of view but focusing more on the embodiment of his spirituality rather than on an archaeological perspective. And, above all, the emphasis from the start was to continue reading this experience in collaboration with the laity.

For almost ten years, Genaro worked in CIL forming hundreds of Brothers. Everyone remembers this experience, not only because of the quality of what he offered but, above all, because of the warmth and nature of his fraternal

relations. Leading CIL was an opportunity for a person like Genaro to establish multiple contacts, relationships and friendships among which we can highlight that with Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Those post-conciliar years were favourable times to explore another form of consecration and association. Regarding his participation in CIL, Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, Superior General (2000-2014), tells us: *"Going through my notes of the CIL experience of 1979, I can see how, for Genaro, the Word of God and fidelity to the Founder were the focal points for the life of every Brother."*

7. Time of Governance (1982-2000)

Genaro was appointed Visitor of the District in 1982. He had already been Auxiliary Visitor in the previous period when Brother Jorge Chappuis was Visitor. He was accompanied by Brothers Remigio Rohr and Fermin Gainza as Auxiliary Visitors.

During this period, a very important transformation of the District was carried out under the title of "*District Reorganization*". An initial Assembly of Brothers was held in 1985 to help the District become aware of the limitations of the organisation actually in place. Only one of the Director Generals in the Schools was a lay person, and the lack of a large and well-formed intermediate generation of lay people endangered the continuity of the progress made since the 1977 District Chapter. As a result of this Assembly it was decided to close some communities and entrust several educational works to groups of lay people formed in Lasallian spirituality and mission during the previous years.

Years later, remembering this time, Genaro wrote that he:

"... was named Visitor when the District was reaching maturity with regard to a series of processes initiated some 25 years earlier in areas such as: the formation of lay people; the understanding of 'being a Brother' in a country which had rapidly and progressively been impoverished; the option for an ecclesiology of communion when the official Church showed signs of wanting to become more and more clericalized; the effective option for the poor, first with regard to those who

lived in marginal areas of the country and then with those who migrated to the suburbs of the provincial capitals; the option for a simple, fraternal and spiritual community life centred on the Word and on community discernment based on faith..."

In 1986 he left for the 41st General Chapter as delegate of the District. There, he was elected General Councillor together with Brother Gerard Rummery, his old friend and collaborator in the Catechetical Commission and in the team responsible for CIL. It was as a member of the Council, in accordance with the custom of that time, that he was elected Vicar General.

From this position he encouraged and collaborated in the writing of the *Letter to the Lasallian Family*. According to Brother Adalberto Aranda, "...it is indisputable that Genaro was a key driver in the clarification of the Lasallian basis of what was developing at that time under his impulse with the name of 'Lasallian Family', and which later would lead to 'Association'". This Letter to the Lasallian Family was written in a period characterized by a great complexity of situations, thoughts and sensitivities throughout the Institute which were reflected in the General Council and in the Generalate. In his memoirs, written at the age of 80, Genaro looked back on his experience like this:

"...I have had the good fortune of experiencing various stages of this journey such as 'Lasallian family', 'shared mission', 'association'. I also felt and experienced that not all Districts understood this association process in the same way. Above all, I understood that not all Districts can experience it. On the one hand, they do not quite believe in lay people. On the other hand, it does not seem that these Districts are able to discover and live the spirituality of the Founder in a

sufficiently open, accessible, and incarnate manner. Nor have they had the courage, or the means, to transform District structures so as to make it possible for this long process to lead naturally to the association between Brothers and lay people for the service of educating the poor...”

Brothers Adalberto Aranda from Mexico, Joseph Hendron from Ireland-Great Britain-Malta, and Jacques D'Huitemau from France knew Genaro as Vicar General. They shared the following memories,

“...Genaro demonstrated his fraternal friendship to me through his wise guidance and his interventions, always respectful but effective, in the delicate situations of governance in the District... 'You have my support in the decision you make with the Council and, if it is necessary to intervene, do not hesitate to tell me', he wrote to me during a particularly complex situation...” (Brother Adalberto Aranda).

“...As Vicar General, he worked hard to become familiar with the international aspects of the Institute: languages, cultures, diverse educational systems. In all this, he showed a special interest in the educational service of the poor which was his favourite field of apostolate, although he could easily direct himself to the staff and boys from better social and educational conditions. He respected all the people he met, or with whom he had to deal, and was appreciated for his kindness and the interest he took in their lives and work...”

Genaro led a simple lifestyle, gave a warm welcome to guests, particularly to the Brothers... He took part in the organisation of prayers, in the preparation of the liturgy, in organizing celebrations... He always thanked and expressed appreciation for any help or collaboration he received, as well as for the work and the help of all members of the community...” (Brother Joseph Hendron).

“...I remember a warm person, someone who knew how to make his listeners feel comfortable. He held important responsibilities in the Institute, took initiatives which, I believe were not always understood because, undoubtedly, they were ahead of their time. I think he was very successful in working in popular media, with young people and adults, and he knew how to show confidence in the laity because he understood that sharing the mission was what God expected from the Brothers in the current times...” (Brother Jacques D’Huiteau).

In 1993, after 7 years as Vicar General, the experience of the 42nd General Chapter was not easy for Genaro, as Brother Adalberto Aranda recounts:

“...The Latin American presence in the Lasallian world had been strengthened, thanks in large part to Genaro's action as Vicar General. Would it not be time to propose a Latin American as a candidate for Superior General? This was the word behind the scenes in a large group of delegates, especially those from RELAL. Even before becoming Vicar General, Genaro was already known throughout the Institute from his responsibilities as Director of CIL. He was a very good choice. I know that for Genaro it was a 'calvary' to endure these discussions, to be the subject of consultations and the confrontations of opinions and interests of different groups. I am very aware of the intense exchanges between linguistic groups regarding the election of the Superior General. The quality of his person, his religious spirit, allowed him to remain on the side-lines, to stay calm despite the inconvenience of his situation and avoid any insinuation, much less any hint of 'politics', waiting for the orders and will of God to manifest itself in the Assembly. As he was not elected Superior General and, having been Vicar General, he knew that, normally, he would no longer be elected to the new

General Council. Proof of this was his calm and active participation in the continuation of the Chapter, including his intervention on the 'Letter to the Lasallian Family', which was received and approved with enthusiasm and hope. In any case, surely these experiences and circumstances were a time of purification for him...".

On this matter, in a recent letter addressed to the Brother Visitor of Argentina after the death of Genaro, Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría wrote: "I would not want to overlook how much your District and the Institute owe to Brother Genaro in the field of the association for the educational service of the poor and in shared mission. He opened pathways, suffered misunderstandings, maintained unswerving faith and moved us forward. May God reward him...".

8. Time to return to Argentina (1993-...)

Back in Argentina after the 1993 Chapter, he became Director of the *Lasallian Formation Centre* (Centro Lasallano de Formación, CLF), a new institution which attempted to bring together works with separate histories: the Higher Institute of Educational Conduct, the Pastoral Institute for Adolescence and the Educational Communication Institute, 'La Crujía'.

In 1998, he was appointed Visitor once again. The vote was very close. Genaro was not the Brother who had the most votes, but the young age of the other candidate forced the Superior General to choose the former Vicar. In his letter communicating the decision to Brother Telmo, who was the Visitor at the time, Brother John Johnston said that "everyone in Rome was perplexed" at what had occurred. Genaro was very aware of this situation and applied himself to give space to the young Brother and to create the conditions for the new life that was emerging such as the new Argentine Educational Association, the new La Salle Foundation, the pedagogical-pastoral perspective, the new orientations for youth ministry, new didactic approaches, and popular education. Brother Carlos Albornoz was appointed as Auxiliary Visitor, a position that he had held with the previous District Administration.

All this took place in the context of developing a key document for the District's renewal process, the so-called *Matrix*. This was Genaro's own expression - the new District

of Argentina-Paraguay needed to be born again. For this purpose, two important study groups were formed which included a large majority of lay people in each one: one relating to pedagogy and the other focusing on pastoral policies. The final draft was submitted in August 1999. It was a reading of the *District Horizon* drawn up by the Chapter of 1998, a text of convergence between Brothers and lay people, Paraguayans and Argentinians, which signposted directions for District practices for the following years from the key perspective of God's incarnation.

In the draft copy of the *Matrix* designed by Genaro, which is now in the District files, there are several handwritten notes. Some are his own personal reflections, others were taken during the course of conversations or explanations of the document received from the editors. In referring to the meaning of this new District Matrix, Genaro noted: *"to understand man in order to approach God. From man to God. Familiarizing God with man. Human activity as an activity of God. For this, the key of the Incarnation: revealed fact, a fact that entered history. We approach all human situations to discover the presence/absence of God in the world."*

Genaro opted for the formation of lay people and gave much impulse to the SEDELS. SEDEL is the acronym for *Semana de Espiritualidad Lasallana* (Lasallian Spirituality Week). These programmes were created in 1980 and consisted of a week-long formation session for Brothers and lay people on Lasallian spirituality and mission themes. Many of the Lasallian educators who followed these formation sessions have supported the processes of transformation of the District.

For the General Chapter of 2000, Genaro was again elected Delegate of the District. In this regard, Brother Adalberto Aranda commented:

“...I remember very well the witness that Genaro gave us all, of his integrity and his commitment to the Institute following an unexpected and painful health situation which forced him to undergo surgery and subsequent convalescence. In those circumstances, because of the trust and friendship which had inspired me for a long time, I decided to consult him on the discernment processes for the Chapter. His physical and spiritual strength bolstered me, as did the clarity of his thinking based on his experience and his knowledge of the people and the Institute...”.

9. Time for friendship - always

"In my story, the first thing is to listen. The word came later", Genaro wrote in one of his diaries. The man who learned to listen had an enormous capacity to let the words of so many people resonate in him. And he dedicated hours each day to reading and listening to voices which came from far away, first in letters, then in emails. He took the time to answer, each and every one, without forgetting what he heard.

Man of friends, family man:

He always maintained his strong ties with his parents, brothers and nephews. This is what his nephew, Fr. José Antonio Badiola, tells us: *"At home, we called Brother. Genaro by his first name, Jesús. Uncle Jesús was, in my early childhood, synonymous with celebration and excitement. Every time he showed up at home, it filled with people and, as everyone knows, for a child to have many people in their home is important and also fun."*

Man of friends, man of fraternal community:

When talking about the IPA, we have already mentioned the great friendship between the Directors and Administrators of the programmes, both Religious and lay. It was a true fraternal community. The number of letters between them, and the special care which Genaro took in preserving them, are testimony to this bond of affection.

He also experienced this community friendship as Vicar General. Brother Joseph Hendron shares with us that: *"...His*

warm personality was a positive presence in the community of the General Council and in the broader community of the Generalate. Genaro valued community life..."

Man of friendships, man of shared experience of God:

Genaro maintained correspondence and direct contact with parents and alumni who vouch for the spiritual experience of a friendship in which internalizing and sharing the word of God was commonplace. Sarita Deluca, Luis Najún, Patricia Carman and the Quintana family, among others, have shared their memories which confirm Genaro's charismatic relationships. Ada Quintana puts it this way: *"God has blessed my family with many beautiful things. One of them was the presence of Brother Genaro who accompanied us with his advice, affection, tenderness and, sometimes, reprimands. We had over forty years of friendship."* His son, Mario Quintana, became an important businessman. There was a strong friendship between him and Genaro which sometimes happens between former students and their teachers once the students grow up and become adults.

Another beautiful story of friendship is the one he had with Marcel Légaut (1900-1990). Genaro was a regular reader of this French believer. Some of the most well-thumbed books in Genaro's personal library are his. He had started reading him in 1971 and it was not until April 1978, after several years of sustained correspondence, that they managed to meet. Légaut was invited to CIL where he made a presentation. Légaut had been a disciple of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Like Genaro, Légaut was a mathematics' person. He had broken with the Academy and had placed himself in a rural environment looking to create and promote communities of faith open to modernity, maturity and

freedom. Genaro and Légaut had much in common. Genaro described Légaut's books as "itinerary books" because they are not limited to pointing out objectives and exposing doctrine but they communicate a lived experience, a journey of faith. Genaro used this same expression to refer to his own book "*Contame*".

The friendship with Mons. Eduardo Pironio from his time in Rome was very intense, yet restrained at the same time. Sister Hilda Hergenreder, secretary to the Cardinal in the Congregation of the Religious, recounts that one day she went to his home and found him in a meeting with Brother Genaro. Monsignor said to her: "*Sister, I present to you Brother Genaro, a man of God.*" And she herself confirmed how she appreciated this in the written and spoken word of Genaro.

Another of his friendships was with the Jesuit Marià Corbi with whom he corresponded as a result of the admiration which his writings awakened. Speaking of his friendship with Genaro he tells us:

"...His deep religiosity has been a fearless search for the open sky that the inner way demands. He does not protect himself against the truth; he accepts it, although it is a lot rawer than he expected. Without renouncing his deeply Christian sense of life, I would even dare to call it traditional, he is able to face the total mental and emotional detachment which following Jesus demands. I have not met any man like him who is both traditionally devoted and faithful in his way of feeling and living Christianity, and who protects himself less against true seekers. Being able to unite these two attitudes makes evident the depth of his spirituality. I repeat, I have not met anyone who performs this difficult balance as well as Brother Genaro because, surely, there are few who have an inner life as

dedicated, sincere and profound as his..." (Letter of Father Corbì on the occasion of Genaro's 80th birthday).

Genaro's shared experience of God made him bring before Him every one of those whom he met during the day. In his reflection during his daily prayer, these are the questions which he asked himself:

How have I started the day?

What people have I met? How have I related to them?

How have I discovered the presence of God in them?

How have I welcomed the Lord in them?

How have I prayed to/in the Spirit?

What facts have been presented to me?

What emotions have I felt? How have I welcomed and followed them?

What decisions have I made? Have I discerned them beforehand? How?

How have I entered into communion with Mary, La Salle, Joseph, Angelica?

Bless you, Lord!

Yes, Father, Amen!

In effect, Genaro was a man capable of seeing beyond what simply appears in people. Brother Santiago Rodríguez Mancini recalls:

"...one time, in a District retreat which he was animating, he took the names of some people who were somewhat uncomfortable with community life, or were perplexed by other matters. And he invited us more or less like this: "... What do you think about So-and-so? An insular and sullen man... and what would you say if I told you that he is the man of the Rosary, with a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin?"

What do you see in Mengano? "A rebellious and complicated young man..." and what would you say if I tell you that where he goes, the Bible goes, that he is a man of the Word of God?..."

Man of friendship, man of close bonds:

There is much to say about the friendship between Genaro and Brother Fermin Gainza. The letters between them demonstrate the close bonds that were established from the first day Genaro arrived in Argentina. Fermín was a member of the community that received him. For the occasion, he made a beautiful drawing of the pampa with the silhouette of the Basilica of Luján. Genaro asked him for many poetic translations and drawings. Perhaps the one that he liked the most, because he kept numerous copies stuck in missals and other books, was the Gelineau hymn which appears in the preface of this Circular.

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, Vicar General after Genaro, recounts that, in taking over from him, *"...the most important things were not documents or ideas, but concrete friends with whom he had lived the Roman experience in a very open and very human way..."*.

Brother Miguel Campos considered him *"a tender and compassionate friend: I imagine that everyone recognises, in the same way as I do, this affective and effective affinity, without fears, in a relationship that each one believes to be 'special'"*.

Man of friends, always:

It is always unfair to make a list, but let's name other friends who appear in logbooks, notebooks, and multiple registers: Serafín Lattanzi, Juan Antonio Buere, Carlos Díaz; the people of the Catechetical Movement: Francisco van der

Bosch, Víctor Acha, Franz de Vos, Luis Benavides, the PP. Gallinger, Barbudo, Madueño and Casalá; Brothers Israel Nery and Enrique García Ahumada, among others. He knew how to be close to everyone, especially when they were having difficulties, and he encouraged them to grow. As Virginia Grasso says: *"during a very tough time of my private life, he trusted me and helped me a lot spiritually. I always received from him appropriate words which opened my mind and my heart"*.

This was Genaro: a man of people, bonds, and relationships. "Life", he would have said.

10. Time of insertion (2001-2014)

In the last years of his life, from 2001 to 2014, he preferred to live in insertion communities among people. There, he devoted himself as much to reading the Bible with groups of educators and neighbours as to the organization of solidarity, either in microcredit banks or in broad networks which fought against the violation of rights. At that time he lived between Jujuy (2001 and 2009-2013) and Malvinas Argentinas, in Córdoba, (2002-2008 and 2014). In Jujuy, he was Director General of the educational work for the last time.

At the same time that he was part of the local neighbourhoods, he prepared himself professionally so he could provide a better service. At the end of 2001, he took a diploma in *Human Resources Management* at Lasallista University Corporation, Caldas, Antioquia, Colombia. In 2002, he took a formation course for the creation of projects, organized by the Institute for Culture, Innovation and Development within the programme for improving the quality of management within NGOs.

Brother Patricio Bolton, who lived very close to him throughout this time, tells us:

“...Genaro was always concerned about the 'time of the educators': about the time they lived and of the need to return to create a new experience of God based on new times and their challenges. He was concerned with presenting processes that the educators should live: the experience of an

educational community that meets the God of history in the world of the poor. From these key points, he organized prayers, starting from a passage of the Gospel, or from La Salle's Meditations for the Time of Retreat, or from the Psalms, or from the Letters of the Founder. He was a catechist. He knew that there had to be orderly processes adapted to the development of a systematic faith. This is how he taught us to live in the educational community, and he knew how to do this for the women of the neighbourhood for whom he established a Biblical School.

These were times of hunger as the social and economic crisis of 2001 was still felt. Much misery was experienced in everyday life. Genaro knew this and suffered it. He was now over 70 years of age, and he sought to create answers which were communal, organic, meaningful, and procedural, and which responded to the present time and its challenges. So he created a food bank and a solidarity fund, both initiatives of fundamental importance for the life and improvement of those families. Making contact with families and friends in function of solidarity and through support from companies and governments, he got resources and organized ways to reach the families who needed help most.

He created 'The School of Life', a space where the most vulnerable families were invited. Along with bags of food, they were given a space for formation and reflection on different topics: for example – health, family finances, inter-family relationships, childcare, community organization, and, of course, a moment of community prayer. Genaro's outlook was holistic, with well-articulated responses. His tenacity, willpower, perseverance and ability to assemble teams had great impact on this, and other, initiatives in terms of duration and significance.

He dedicated a lot of time to the 'Housing Fund'. He sought to accompany families who lived in overcrowded conditions, in insecure housing, who were vulnerable with regard to their rights, and together with his 'group of women from the Housing Fund', helped them to a new level of dignity and humanity. He also created a very important pastoral biblical service. Every Monday he sent the Gospel of the following Sunday to more than 2000 people, with comments from several theologians. These postings were an invitation to fully live the Word of God in the present time.

One of the toughest events he experienced in Malvinas Argentinas, Córdoba, was an assault which occurred in April 2002. In trying to protect a Postulant and a Brother who lived with him, he intervened and went to their assistance with the result that he suffered injuries to the head and ribs. He was hospitalized and his recovery took a long time. Despite this experience, he did not want to leave Malvinas but, on the contrary, it strengthened his conviction that this was his place and time. He had the courage to approach the man who had beaten him and forgave him. He knew how to dialogue and create a close relationship to help this person. He never held a grudge against him...”.

It was a time of tremendous spiritual growth. Summarizing this experience, Genaro wrote:

“...The work is dense and intense. The days are very fruitful. The Lord gives me physical and mental health. Above all, He gives me a serene and simple spiritual attitude which allows me to be close to the lives of people. It is not difficult for me to 'touch the hearts' of these people, as La Salle said and did in his time. All these contacts enrich me and I feel that I also enrich many of them. Since there is no parish or stable Priestly presence in the Barrio, many adults take me as a 'spiritual

reference'. Everyone knows me. Everyone appreciates me and they love me. Many open their hearts and their stories to me. Very often I have to reconstruct painful situations in which wounds and personal or family tragedies persist. Thanks to this educational experience of incarnation, I am focusing more and more on the Mystery and the Experience of Jesus: His roots in the Father 'who wills that none of these little ones should perish' (Mt 18:14), his close and supportive lifestyle, his choices for those who live alone and abandoned. This experience leads me to pray more and to pray differently. As a community, we participate in this style of prayer. The Postulants are impressed by the Lord's action in the hearts of these people. We can see how, in these situations, 'the goodness of the heart' coexists with 'the evil of socio-cultural structures'. We discover that the Father dwells in hearts and works, soothes and fortifies them, as the case may be. We also discover that the Father sends us to strengthen broken hearts and to try to correct the evil structures of sin which surround and condition these types of societies which have been left to fend for themselves...".

But this life experience was not exempt from difficult moments of trial. On a piece of paper which he kept in his New Testament, he notes the following:

Physical health: fatigue, hernia, varicose veins in the legs, lack of kilos.

Mental/spiritual health: tendency to confinement in myself, lack of inner joy, certain blockage of freedom, tendency to judge and condemn, intellectual and emotional rejection, doubts and distrust.

Tasks: house administration; solidarity fund: money laundering, reorganization; community without focus, without spirit: meetings, courses in Jujuy (conclusion),

Córdoba CEC and seminar: wealth, horizons; pastoral school: alone; legal representative: greater distance.

Keep my heart whole in the fear of your name. Unify my heart so that it fears your name.

Ease my oppressed heart. Anxiety grows in my heart. Take me out of my oppression.

The Father wanted to engender us by his Word of Truth so that we are like the first fruits of his creation. From his own initiative... so that we were, in some way, his primary creatures (James 1:18).

In 2009, Genaro was in Italy and Spain for the last time. In Rome, he attended the defence of the doctoral thesis in Sacred Scripture of his nephew, José Antonio, at the Biblical Institute at the Gregorian University.

He kept a diary and wrote a summary to enable him to recount what had happened. He took the opportunity to contact people who interested him, to attend spirituality days with Lasallians from the Basque country, and to buy books.

When he returned, he wrote: "...I have returned from Europe and I have immersed myself fully into the situation in Argentina. From Jujuy: a 'deranged' country, outside a just legal structure. In the neighbourhoods, survival is increasingly fragile and deteriorating..."

11. Time of illness (2015-2018)

In 2015, feeling tired, he asked for a year at the *Residencia de los Hermanos Mayores* to recover. The following year he went to the De La Salle school in Buenos Aires. At the school, he began to develop several activities, among which a series of reflections with teachers was highly valued. It seemed that he was fine but the wet winter forced him to go into a sanatorium for attention to his lungs. Back in the community, Genaro tried to continue with all his commitments at the school.

Genaro had the habit of reflecting through writing, whether in the form of stories, prayers or in a diary. His diaries give a careful account of his experiences up to a few weeks before his death. Beyond the ailments which seemed to overwhelm him, and help him to become aware of his personal time, his love for the Word of God, his love for friends, his zeal for evangelization and affection for the District and the Institute shine through.

He wrote in his diary:

“...Finishing November... an intense month for me, both personally and in the mission. Also in my limitations, particularly in my health. I feel fragile, weak, limited... This does me good. I also feel pressured, needed... This does not do me any good. I do not own time. Yes, I feel I am led to analyse the march of time, its intensity and its superficiality, its meaning and, above all, its Mystery. The love of the Father has entered into time, in Jesus his son, so that the new

dimension which he wants humanity to live at this stage of its development finds meaning. And the meaning is in love and not in fear..."

He was unable to finish the year in the community. Brother Visitor sent him to the *Amor Esperanza* Residence so that he could receive better care. In 2017, his lung problems and anaemia became more complicated.

He knew that these last years were a time to write and time to read. The changed cultural time was a constant concern of Genaro, almost an obsession. His awareness of the mismatch between evangelization and culture made him notice that much that was on offer was nothing more than empty experiences. The People of God, especially the poor, but also educators, lived in abandonment, in pastoral destitution.

The new constitution of the *Asociación Educacionista* Argentina filled him with hope because it was a sign of the maturity of an important group of lay people. These were favourable times to open, close, pass, wait, mature, stay silent, express... Those are the verbs he often repeats in his personal writings.

His 2018 diary is impressive. In his last months, he wrote up to a week before he died about his feelings – dizziness, fatigue, being worn out...lower back pain and broken bones. He also notes who visited him and the sentences that caught his attention in his readings: Teilhard de Chardin, Jean Guilton, Marcela Serrano, La Salle... and of course, the Bible. He also recorded what happened to others and events in the District and the world. In the cover which he created, with photos and phrases, some texts stand out in this diary. Among them are: *Fait la mort amie* (Make a friend of death). *Mine, the one of the falling structure, which is exhausted, which has to die to be reborn!* (Cf. Jn 12:24)

With regard to this call to “become friends with death”, Genaro’s nephew José Antonio tells us:

“...Uncle Jesús always had a serene and strong attitude towards death. With admirable faith, with enormous temperance and with powerful hope, he faced the death of many dear people, here and there, and he did not allow himself to be defeated by it...”

I spoke with him on the phone on 3rd October. His voice was already very weak but he firmly conveyed the inner peace that he experienced in his physical deterioration. Then, when they informed us of his death on the 8th of October, I imagined that his last moments would have been surrounded by all the values which had surrounded him in his intense and passionate journey through life. And I thanked God profoundly for giving me this uncle Jesús. In the hands of the Father we will meet and, together, we will sing the glory of being his children. It is the epitaph on the tomb of uncle Jesús’ mother and also the spiritual epitaph engraved in my heart when I remember him. Thanks, uncle!..”

12. A time for synthesis

"The time for sleep has passed because time never sleeps, but passes, like the wind... In order to reconstruct everything, it is first necessary to destroy the old, to destroy it to its very foundations" (Catherine of Siena to Pope Gregory XI, 1375. Text copied in his 2018 diary).

As Brother Bruno Alpago said on Genaro's 80th birthday: "He has always been an authentic Religious, an authentic Brother... coherent in his life with the public declaration of his total surrender to Jesus Christ in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. With calm coherence."

A very beautiful biographical note, woven with his own words, was created by Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría:

"...There are many things to admire in Genaro. But, above all, I am left with a wonderful dimension of his life: his ardent zeal. For that reason it seems to me that we can apply the expression of Brother John Johnston: 'Being a Brother today means living the present moment authentically and without reservation; living it with dynamism, creativity, enthusiasm, joy, pride, with unfailing love'. I think this is a faithful portrait of Brother Genaro..."

At the end of his life, he was interested in the Lasallian future: secularism, multiculturalism, the centrality of Jesus, communities for the mission, honest hope. An old question which arose in the post-conciliar years made him uneasy again: *Will the Brothers of the Christian Schools continue to be a*

congregation, or will they become a secular movement? And he answered: I identify with this journey of the Institute: more communitarian forms of spirituality and mission, greater lay responsibility, an option for the poor in the centre of the association in the mission, in spirituality, and in the community.

In his last prayers, he addressed God in this way:

"...Lord Jesus, beloved Son of the Father, Firstborn Son of the Father, Light and Splendour of the Father, present in every man/woman, the way of life in every human project. Thank you for being and continuing to be... renewing your presence and renewing life. Here I am, Lord, existing and being... seeking to be in you and be with you... To be where you are... being what you are already... for the Glory of the Father, which is reflected in all life that seeks to be more... a manifestation of the light and splendour of the Father... (Prayer of 2018).

...There, where it is, as it is... with the certainty that you are and you wait, you are and you encourage, you are and you reveal yourself... because you love what you find, you arouse hope in the humanity to which you give yourself and which you assume. Lord of Life in Life. Lord of Life in Death. In everything - 'Tu lumen et splendor Patris' (Prayer found in his missal).

Published books

1. Dios es mi Padre. (1966) Buenos Aires. Editorial Stella.
2. Señor soy tu testigo. (1966) Buenos Aires. Editorial Stella.
3. La Iglesia, nuestra Madre. (1966) Buenos Aires. Editorial Stella.
4. Catequesis para nuestro tiempo. (1970) Buenos Aires. Editorial Stella.
5. Catequesis Evangelizadora de adultos. (1972) Buenos Aires. Editorial Guadalupe
6. Libros de catequesis escolar para los siete cursos de primaria. (1972) Buenos Aires. Editorial Stella.
7. Libros de catequesis escolar para los cinco cursos de secundaria. (1972) Buenos Aires. Editorial Stella.
8. Camina en mi presencia. Espiritualidad del catequista. (1994) Buenos Aires. Editorial Stella.
9. Te busco desde el alba: espiritualidad del catequista (1994) Buenos Aires. Editorial Stella.
10. Tengan sus lámparas encendidas: escuela de oración (1994) Buenos Aires. Editorial Stella.
11. Iglesia en camino (1998) Rosario. Ediciones Didascalía. En coautoría con Beatriz Casiello.
12. ¡Abriendo caminos! Palabra de vida. (2015) Buenos Aires. Sendero Ediciones.

13. ¡Contame! Iniciación a la lectura del Evangelio (2016)
Buenos Aires. Sendero Ediciones.

Death surprised Genaro in the middle of his book writing. One of these books, *Comer la Palabra*, became a digital edition. Another, *Lectura Catequística*, was almost finished. The District of Argentina-Paraguay is preparing a third from a brief selection of his abundant personal writings.

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