



06-D-13

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE LASALLIAN WORLD CONFEDERATION

Dear Lasallian friends, I thank you for your confidence and I put myself at the services of the Lasallian Mission in taking over the presidency of the world Confederation. I did not want the responsibility, and those who suggested me for the position have been aware of this for some time past. But they knew also that when the day came that I had to choose between the right to refuse and the duty to accept, my choice would be to conform to what I believed to be the will of God.

I shall fulfil my duties with my good qualities as well as with my faults; I shall do my best, with the help of you all but especially with the help of the Holy Spirit, of St. J.B. de La Salle, and of Our Blessed Lady, and, since my appointment took place in Mexico, I would like to place my tenure of the presidency under the special protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe whom we visited this morning.

Presidents come and go but the Confederation remains, and it is in the light of this continuity that we should envisage the future and that each one, in his own way, should commit himself to the action which will make effective the conclusions of the Congress in his own milieu.

Before addressing a message to you on this subject, I would like to pay special homage to the man who, for the past four years, was head of the Confederation. He wished to travel in order to get to know the Lasallians of all countries and, thanks to him, the new President has today a clear vision of what the Lasallian movement is throughout the world. I would like to add a personal word of thanks to Dr. Claudio Andreoli who has always shown me a degree of kindness which will contribute, as we both wish, to perfect continuity in the conduct of the Confederation.

It would not be right if I did not say a word of thanks to the man who has for years past been the soul of the Confederation and without whom many things would have remained undone, Brother Manuel Olivé!

I shall try to be brief because you have already listened to several speakers and I do not want to abuse your patience. I shall confine myself to outlining a programme of work for the years ahead and to making five appeals to those who are to be the principal agents in the Lasallian renewal.

We should be conscious of the fact that we are at the end of an era and that it is up to us to establish a new balance which takes into account the responsibilities of lay people according to the directives of the Second Vatican Council. We have witnessed for several years past the growth of different groups drawing their inspiration from Saint John Baptist de La Salle: attentive to the signs of the times we have let these groups grow up and develop considering that we must not usurp the place of the Holy Spirit. We have taken care to create a climate and soil favourable to the development of these groups and we knew that that would take time. First of all because in the things that concern God one cannot be sparing of time and also because the world knows that time does not respect what is done in a hurry.

These groups are today many and varied: lay teachers, young people, parents, Signum Fidei, former students and other groups claim a link with St. John Baptist de La Salle. The time has come to co-ordinate these groups whose objective is the same: to educate and serve the young, especially "the most deprived and those farthest from salvation".

We are going to turn resolutely towards all these Lasallians to give a new force to the development of this movement in our respective countries and taking particular care to:

- create, develop and support groups of young people,
- create, develop and ensure the evolution of former student associations,
- Urge and help the lay teachers to join national Lasallian organizations.

These organizations and regroupings will be impregnated with the Lasallian spirit which unites us and will, quite naturally, result from our Congress to which they will explicitly refer. This will be our way of putting into practice our reflections on Faith, Fraternity and Service.

The other part of our programme will be to turn towards the Brothers and to do our share in the preparation of

the General Chapter of 1986 and afterwards to share in putting into practice its directives within the Lasallian movement.

To carry out this programme, which I realise is ambitious, we need the collaboration of all, and for that reason I wish to close the Congress with five appeals:

My first appeal will be made to all of you who have participated in this Eighth Lasallian World Congress: young and old, lay people and religious, Signum Fidei and postulants, we have lived through extraordinary days in the study of the theme: Faith, Fraternity, Service, and we have arrived at some decisions.

Beneficiaries of these wonderful days, we must, when we get home, become missionaries and the leaven of the mass, but we must not forget that to be effective "the leaven must remain leaven" as Pope John Paul recently said, hence the need for each one of us to nourish himself regularly from Lasallian sources.

It is you who will be the effective instruments for putting into practice the directives of the Congress in your respective countries. The Confederation counts on you.

My second appeal is to the young. You have the enthusiasm, the dynamism and the generosity of youth. Put these qualities at the service of the Lasallian movement by committing yourselves to the movement in the fullest sense of the term. It is you who will ensure the renewal of the Lasallian movement, and your commitment will allow the Brothers of St. J.B. de La Salle to continue their work in the service of the young and of the deprived.

You represent for us the changing of the guard. You will, in a few years be, in your turn, guarantors of the continuity and of the spirit of the Lasallian movement; you should prepare yourselves to take responsibility in the future. Those in charge today count on you. St. J.B. de La Salle counts on you.

My third appeal is to the Lasallians in the school: teachers, collaborators with the Brothers and lay headmasters you are, more than all the others, guarantors of the Lasallian spirit in the schools where you have chosen to serve youth. It is you, in effect, who ensure, not only the concept, but above all, the putting into practice of the educative project. You are the actors and you have the role of perpetuating Lasallian values.

Your privileged position among the young makes particularly effective the integration of the conclusions of the Congress in your daily actions. We appeal to you to widen the scope of your activities and to share actively in the development of the Lasallian movement. You have your place there, we expect you there, and we know that we can count on you.

My fourth appeal is addressed to Lasallians outside the school, i.e. essentially to former students. A profound evolution has taken place among you in recent years. Whatever some people may say, we are no longer in the days when the words of a contemporary French philosopher could be applied to you.

"For them, heaven is too high, the earth too low, only the table is at their level". Witnesses to what you have received, guarantors of a spirit whose perpetuity you ensure by your steadfastness, you must never forget that to try to do as well today as was done formerly one must often do differently.

You ensure for the schools from which you came both outside help and openness to the world the students will find on leaving school. You are at the meeting point of school and life.

Leaders of the Lasallian movement and its main support you must not deceive the young. You must re-define the mission of your associations so that they may become authentic Lasallian Associations. We know that you can open wide the doors of your associations.

My fifth and last appeal is addressed to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Sons of St. J.B. de La Salle and heirs to his patrimony and to his spirit your influence spreads, whether you wish it or not, to the Lasallians of all ages and you are the spiritual driving force, the soul of the Lasallian movement. You are not only heirs to a moral authority but also to a power which is decisive to the extent that nothing can come to life and develop without the active support of a Brother. I must stress here the irreplaceable role of the Brothers Visitors and the Brothers Assessors.

The Lasallians that you have formed or those who work with you are not demanding; they simply consider that, as they are near to you, they should put themselves at your disposal to serve the young in a spirit of faith and fraternity by giving the best of themselves.

Just as once the Brothers asked their Founder to resume the government of the Institute so we ask you today to take in hand the Lasallian movement, born of our dedication and of your fidelity to St. J.B. de La Salle.

Dear friends, we are all heirs and, like all heirs, we are depositories of a patrimony, the Lasallian patrimony, established by St. J.B. de La Salle and enriched by 300 years of work in the service of youth and especially in the service of the disinherited.

We, lay people, must transmit what we have received but we can do so only within the framework of the mission of the Institute. It is for you, my dear Brothers, to show us the way.

We are ready to go along with you. Help us to help you.

M. Alain DE MONTECLER
PARIS