



05-D-07

SIGNUM FIDEI (1)

INTRODUCTION

Signum Fidei is a movement inspired by the spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle. It responds to an interior desire for evangelical perfection which involves the whole life of the person who accepts the call of the Lord. As this call is heard in a Lasallian context, the commitment, because it is Lasallian, will be to an educative and, more particularly, to an evangelizing apostolate.

SIGNUM FIDEI asks from the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools its support and, in return, offers its help, as a priority, to the Institute's "apostolic projects".

A short historic outline

During the 1970's, Brother Charles Henry, Superior General and Brother José Pablo, Vicar General, in the course of their visits to different sectors of the Institute throughout the world, became aware of the desire of some lay people for closer ties with the Institute in its work and in its spirit. The repeated expression of this wish and the fact that it came from such diverse sources strongly impressed the Superiors who asked Brother Paulus Adams, then Assistant, to undertake a study of this movement which was still uncertain of itself.

Helped by Brother Manuel Olivé, he began work on the project and soon results began to show. A small group of Lasallians accepted the idea with enthusiasm and, together with the two Brothers, set about constructing the framework and establishing the basic principles of a movement of Lasallian spirituality for lay people.

In November 1975, a group of five laymen and two Brothers drew up directives for the "Life Style" and "Consecration" and chose a name for the new fraternity which had come into being. It would be called Signum Fidei.

On 5th June 1976, during the General Chapter in Rome, and following the Perpetual Profession of six Brothers, eleven members of Signum Fidei pronounced their Act of Consecration in the presence of the capitulants who were deeply impressed and who, at the close of the ceremony, gave a cordial accolade to the newly professed Brothers and to the Signum Fidei members without distinction.

With God's help the new Signum Fidei fraternity has continued to develop. By the time the next General Chapter assembles in 1986, 400 Signum Fidei members will have made the Act of Consecration, dedicating themselves to the service of God, of the Church and of the Institute, in favour of the poor and especially of the young.

Consecration

This is the starting point of the new fraternity. The person who wishes to join Signum Fidei wishes to give himself to God. It is a true consecration of his whole being and his whole life to the greater glory of God and for the benefit of those in most need.

Constitutions of Signum Fidei

These are contained in the "Life Style" and in the "Consecration". We would like to underline the three main characteristics of the fraternity: Realizing that everything is a Grace, in accordance with the teaching of St. John Baptist de La Salle who says, "Make no distinction between the duties of your state and what concerns your sanctification"; Joy which is a gift of the Holy Spirit; the Presence of God which gives meaning to our life and to our work.

Interior life

Christ calls us to a greater intimacy with himself. This is of the highest importance and requires great care on our part. The apostolate is but the outward expression of this divine life. The means proposed by Signum Fidei for sharing the divine life are:

Daily prayer at a fixed time; attention to the presence of God throughout the day — a truly Lasallian practice and a means of bringing God into every activity of our day and of our life — Sacramental life in order to live the Christian life in all its fulness and with all the sacrifices it entails.

Apostolate and evangelization

Signum Fidei, the sign of the faith, is for others. It cannot be confined to the pursuit of personal sanctification. It gives itself to others, to all who suffer and especially the young.

The Signum Fidei member will adopt an "apostolic project" which will demand time and perhaps money but, above all, love. Teachers and the school; parents and their families; the Association and its animators, all will be the object of his love. He will be "a sign of faith" to all with whom he comes in contact. But it is especially the children and poor youths who will be the object of the zeal of the Signum Fidei member who will give himself to them without counting the cost and with the utmost generosity.

How to become a member of Signum Fidei

A period of preparation is required before making the Act of Consecration. During this time the candidate will study the "Life Style" and the formula of consecration. He will be initiated into the duties of his new state and of the apostolate which, according to his means, he will adopt as his "apostolic project". He will find a member or a Brother who will direct him in his new commitment to the Lasallian way of life of the Signum Fidei. He will join with other members in prayer and work and, if possible, in the same "apostolic project".

Two years are usually sufficient for this preparation but the period may be prolonged or curtailed by agreement with the Brother or Signum Fidei member who "accompanies" him.

Finally, when the time is ripe, the candidate will arrange with the fraternity and with the local Brothers' Community the date when, at the Offertory of the Community Mass, he will make a public Act of Consecration by reading the accepted formula.

It is desirable that the Act of Consecration be made with a certain degree of solemnity and in the presence of Signum Fidei members and Brothers who wish to participate in the ceremony.

A natural sympathy will unite the new member with the Brothers and with the other Signum Fidei members with whom he shares the Eucharistic liturgy, prayer, fraternal discussions and finally the family meal.

Signum Fidei Prayer

"Heavenly Father, in your divine Providence, you have also chosen me to be a sign of faith in the midst of a world filled with confusion and doubt.

Awaken in me and in all the members of Signum Fidei a deep spirit of faith and zeal for an apostolic commitment which, after the example of St. John Baptist de La Salle, will inspire others to consecrate their lives to Christian education.

Bless the work of our brothers and sisters throughout the world. May we all, supported and animated by the Spirit of Love, become more and more "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world", especially for the poor and those farthest from salvation.

Receive, o Lord, into your glory, our brothers and sisters who have gone before us with the sign of faith and who sleep the sleep of peace. We ask this through Our Lord Jesus Christ your well beloved Son. AMEN."

Bro. Manuel Olivé
Via Aurelia 476
00100 ROMA
(Italia)

Bro. Paulus Adams
rue des Tanneurs 161
1000 Bruxelles
(Belgium)