

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

CIRCULAR 435
June 24th 1993

42nd
GENERAL CHAPTER

(April 5th - May 15th 1993)



GENERAL COUNCIL
Via Aurelia, 476
Rome, Italy

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Dear Brothers,

It is a pleasure for us to send you by means of this circular both our best wishes, and, with great hope for the future, the official texts of our 42nd General Chapter. In so doing, we are obeying the instructions of the Chapter, which are as follows: "The General Chapter entrusts to Brother Superior and the General Council the task of promulgating the various documents produced by the Chapter" (Minutes N° 41).

The recent General Chapter, as the ultimate expression of the Body of the Institute, proved to be once more an experience of Brothers living united together, as well as a renewed invitation to conversion and readiness for service.

Brothers, we should like you to have the same experience as we Capitulants have recently had, and, just as you shared actively in the preparation of the Chapter by your notes, your answers to the questionnaire and your prayers, we hope that you will now faithfully and generously put into practice what the Chapter has decided. It was frequently pointed out during the Chapter that we do not need a great number of new, long documents; what we need is to live, as genuine Brothers, in our Communities, Districts, Regions and the whole of our Institute, in the manner described in our Rule, using the Personal, Community and District Programmes to help us in our endeavours.

We want the 42nd General Chapter, with its messages and proposals, to give each of us inspiration, strength and renewed determination to be filled with the charism of our Founder during the coming seven years, as, with its hopes and uncertainties, our present century moves towards the year 2000.

Two **messages** were a significant result of the Chapter.

The first message is addressed to all the **Brothers**, presenting us with an outline of the main subjects studied during the Chapter. The study had as its foundation the inspiration of St.

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John Baptist de La Salle; the message makes an appeal to all of us Brothers, no matter what our age and whatever our actual circumstances might be, to put the Chapter into effect, for it is now that the Chapter really begins.

The second message, **about the Shared Mission to the worldwide Lasallian Family**, is an invitation daily to live this mission under the inspiration of the Gospel, by undertaking as a priority work for the poor, especially among youth.

There were two main stages in the Chapter, the first of which centred on the **Shared Mission**, at which were present, for the first time ever, twenty Consultants, whose witness was enriching and which enlightened us on how to respond to the educational needs of society. The discussions of this part of the Chapter took place in six mixed commissions of Consultants and Brothers.

From our position as lay men consecrated to Religious Life, we consider it an inspiration of the Holy Spirit that allows us to share our mission and spirituality with secular persons and other members of the Lasallian Family. The Shared Mission is to be one of our priorities in the coming years.

During the second stage of the Chapter we studied other subjects of equal importance, never forgetting as the starting point our experiences as actually lived and the requirements of our Rule; in this way our commitments would be meaningful.

* We reflected at length on **Mission**, reaffirming that our Institute is a **Community of Brothers associated together for the educational service of the poor in a changing world and Church**. We were able to note the immense needs of the poor and how complex are the needs of youth. Such issues as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, illiteracy, education in values and the world of the underprivileged confront us and demand of us bold, creative responses. The appeal to have one hundred Brothers and a certain number of Lasallian colleagues answer the most pressing needs of the mission is a symbol of our availability for service in any part of the world.

* The **community** as the structure which is our greatest help in following Jesus Christ is a **symbol of hope and a source of life**, an opportunity and a grace. In this matter also the issues are complex:

How can we integrate the constitutive elements of our life: our consecration, our mission and our community?

How can we nurture the Brothers' full growth as persons and their affective life?

How can we genuinely live our life of faith and prayer?

How can we live a simple way of life?

How can the Brother Director better kindle the life of the community?

* **Awakening and accompanying the vocation of the Brother today** is a basic task, if we wish to make any response to the world's needs. We must grow if we want to give life. Encouraging vocations within the context of youth ministry requires of us these days more than usual effort. We must also support and guide our young Brothers to ensure our future.

* **As our Brothers advance in age** and continue along the road God is pointing out to them, we know that they are receiving a gift and a grace. Their affirmation of faithfulness encourages us and persuades us to show them constant consideration and respect.

* The Chapter also dealt with matters concerning the **Government of the Institute**, both at the level of the Services of the Centre as well as beyond it. It also tackled problems connected with **policies and procedures of financial management**.

We have to point out that the proposed changes in the constitutions of our Rule will come into operation only after

approval by the Roman congregation that deals with religious institutes (CIVCSVA).

Returning to the matters discussed at the Chapter, we should distinguish two groups: firstly, the **Propositions** approved one after the other by a substantial majority; secondly, the **basic texts and recommendations**, approved in a more general manner. Please note also that the use of three different languages and the varied approaches in the different commissions have resulted in a variety of styles and arrangement within the documents. We are of course aware of this; nevertheless, we wanted to be faithful to the reports as actually approved by the Assembly, publishing them in their entirety and without introducing any significant changes. After more mature reflection and when we publish the circulars which have been recommended, we shall doubtless be able to improve on the style and presentation.

The present circular also includes the closing speech of Brother Superior General.

Finally, allow us to offer you, as a suggestion in an appendix, a typical prayer that you might like to use and a suggested programme for a day of reflection on the Chapter.

Brothers, let us answer the call of the Chapter, receptive of the Holy Spirit, never forgetting the words of article 145 of our Rule: *“Each Brother, regardless of his age, has his role to play in the vitality of the Institute”*.

Brother John Johnston, Superior General.
Brother Alvaro Rodriguez, Vicar General.
Brothers Martin Corral, Marc Hofer, Pierre Josse,
Gerard Rummery, Dominique Samne,
Raymundo Suplido, General Councillors.

MESSAGE OF THE 42nd GENERAL CHAPTER TO THE BROTHERS

Dear Brothers,

As this 42nd General Chapter comes to a close, we address a word of thanks to you. You did not leave the work of the Chapter to us alone. You were present with us in your prayers, in your many notes, in the questionnaires you filled out, and in the careful work of the Preparatory Committee.

Early into the work of the Chapter we experienced the extraordinary blessing of belonging to an international Institute. Our time together has made us realise what a significant presence of the Church we are in our numerous and diversified educational apostolates throughout the world. We are also aware of the many urgent and unanswered calls for our presence in so many places.

Our Founder “*deeply moved*”

We are convinced that if John Baptist de La Salle, canon of Rheims, stood on the steps of the cathedral today and gazed upon our society, he would be as “*deeply moved*” today as he was over three hundred years ago (R 11). He would also see in the hearts of many a searching for the meaning of life and a hunger for justice and solidarity with one another. He would be touched by their yearning to experience the love of a God who wants all to be saved. But he would also see the dignity and rights of so many people, young and adults alike, abused on an interpersonal, national and international level. He would see many poor and abandoned people, left to themselves with little chance of a better life. He would say what he said then, “*God has had the goodness to remedy so great a misfortune by the establishment of the Christian Schools...*” (MTR, 2:1).

Today, in 1993, we are persuaded that John Baptist de La Salle would again resign his canonry and form a group of teachers with whom he would live in community, and they would call themselves “*Brothers*”, Brothers living a contagious brotherhood among themselves, for their students and with others who wish to be associated with them in their work.

Framework for deliberations

We were assisted in our work at the very beginning of the Chapter by two inspiring presentations from experts in sociology and the theology of religious life. They urged us to read the signs of the times and to understand our role as consecrated laymen in religious life in a changing world and Church.

A “Shared Mission”

Shortly after the opening of the Chapter, new faces appeared in our midst. Twenty Consultants, men and women from all over the world, came to join us in our work. We were living a historic moment. For the first time in the history of our General Chapters, persons other than Capitulants took an active part in a Chapter.

In the face of the increasing challenge to the Institute in its educational mission of evangelising and being evangelised, our Lasallian partners were telling us that we were not alone. A deep feeling caught hold of the Chapter that sharing the mission is an unmistakable sign of the times. The modest sub-title—“A Shared Mission”—in article 17 of the Rule is now seen as the bold title of a new chapter in the history of the Institute.

The discreet reminder in our Rule that the charism and spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle go beyond the confines of the Institute and are a gift and inspiration to others as well (146) began to take on tangible and dramatic meaning. This new life we see in our shared mission means that a way of looking upon ourselves as the only authorised agents of the Institute’s mission

is obsolete. In our unified commitment to mission there is diversity of vocations.

Because of the importance of shared mission in the life of the Institute today, this Chapter addresses a message “To The Worldwide Lasallian Family,” Brothers and Lasallian partners alike. We are convinced that God is calling us to encourage this collaboration in a common mission.

Consecrated laymen in religious life

In this larger perspective, we tried to gain a better understanding of our role in the movement of lay participation in the life and mission of the Church. We also tried to appreciate the key role we as Brothers have as primary witnesses of the spirit and charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle for all who share the mission of the Institute.

Recognising the indispensable necessity of our Lasallian partners in the mission of the Institute, we reflected upon our life as lay religious. We reaffirmed the importance of integrating all dimensions of our lives—our consecration, our apostolic work, our community life, our prayer life—around our faith in Jesus Christ as disciples united in brotherhood. We reflected on the crucial importance of attracting young men to join us as Brothers in “*association for the service of the poor through education*” (R 39). Our Consultants made it clear to us that they see this fostering of the Brothers’ vocation as part of their responsibility as well.

The vision of the Rule

In the early stages of the Chapter we also felt a renewed commitment to walk forward in the light shed by our Rule on our life and mission given us in our Rule. The Chapter is encouraged by the many Brothers throughout the Institute who are making generous efforts to appreciate and live our Rule.

Available for mission

As we reflected on our Rule, our conviction grew stronger that in fidelity to our Founder's charism, we, with our Lasallian partners, must articulate a missionary policy in keeping with the spirit of the "new evangelisation" effort in the Church, in both developed and developing countries of all faiths. This policy must capitalise on the dynamic principle in the Institute of interdependence, both in personnel and in finances.

This means that we must be ready to go where the educational needs are urgent, and in a special way to the poor and abandoned. One of the most emotional sessions in the General Assembly centred on consideration of a proposition calling for a **task force** of 100 Brothers and a number of Lasallian partners who would be trained for such service within the next four years. They would be sent to create new educational apostolates, to renew and strengthen existing ones and to train Brothers and Lasallian partners, especially in developing sectors of the Institute. One could sense in the reflections on the proposition that a true Lasallian chord had been touched in the hearts of the Capitulants.

Three moving occasions

As this 42nd General Chapter draws to a close, three particularly moving occasions will remain in our memories.

First, at their final meeting with us, the Consultants addressed a vibrant message of gratitude, encouragement and support to the Capitulants, and through us to every one of you. We realise more than ever that shared mission is a way of life for us in the Institute. Secondly, the arrival at a Chapter for the first time in 25 years of Brothers from Vietnam brought home to us the true meaning of "Brother," of our solidarity among ourselves in a special form of brotherhood. Thirdly, the election of the Brother Superior General and the General Council reminded us that authority in the Institute is at the service of the life and work of the Institute throughout the world.

"They will flourish in old age" (Ps 91:15)

Brothers, you among us who are in or who are approaching retirement, each of you has "*a role to play in the vitality of the Institute*" (R 145). Your identity and value as Brothers are not at all diminished because of advanced years and declining energy. You are a living example of the reminder in our Rule that "*the first apostolate of the Brothers consists in the witness of their consecrated life*" (R 24). Many of you can take and have taken on new commitments beneficial for others and fulfilling for you. We count on you to transmit our spiritual and educational patrimony to new generations of Lasallians. We count on you to show young people that to live as a Brother can be a fulfilling and happy life. This can be a powerful call to young men to join us. The large number of elder Brothers in our Institute is indeed a grace, for which we all thank God, and a witness to the Church and the world to the possibility and value of faithful service in the religious life.

"The day's burden and the heat" (Mt 20:12)

Brothers, those among you who are fully active, you also know that the gifts and talents you put at the service of your students, of your Brothers, of your Lasallian partners come to you from the Lord. Thank you for sharing those gifts and talents so generously, in your responsibilities of teaching, administration, formation, support work and many other forms of educational service. You are examples of zeal and dedication to all of us. Invite young people to join us in vowed brotherhood so that they too can share their talents with others in a special way. To ask someone to become a Brother is to show great confidence in him and to give testimony to the esteem we have for our vocation.

"I trusted in You since I was young" (Ps 71:5)

Brothers, those who are the younger among us, you should remember that John Baptist de La Salle was 29 years old when

he became involved with a handful of school teachers. That involvement would later result in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. And as he did, live your life, accompanied by your mentors, in a dynamic itinerary, urged on by the critical educational needs of our day. In you we find the creative forces and vitality in the Institute which will help us overcome the tendency to keep unchanged the existing structures, even when they become obsolete. We have taken measures that will make it possible for more of you to be present at the next General Chapter, to be held in the year 2000, so that you can help chart the future of our Institute.

A Chapter ends; a new chapter begins

Coming here we felt, as many of you did, that at this critical time in our history the Chapter had to provide us with a focus and a clear direction. At the same time we wondered how the Chapter would be able to do that, or indeed, if it could. Even during the Chapter, at times, differences of culture, language, experiences, hopes and points of view created perplexity and tensions.

Now that we look back over our experience of these past weeks, we rejoice that the Chapter has succeeded in bringing us together in our love for our Institute and its mission. We achieved a remarkable union of minds and hearts on substantial matters. This Chapter suggests that the Institute, in its international richness and diversity, is a living parable of the possibility of transforming a world that *“still retains the hope of being set free”* (Rom 8:20).

The prayer we said throughout the Institute for the intention of the Chapter asks the *“Lord, God of freedom, to make us docile to the Holy Spirit and to the will of God in our regard”*. We made a sincere effort to respond to the movement of the Spirit during this Chapter. Our hope now is that all of us throughout the Institute continue to pray and work, animated by a spirit of faith and zeal, as was our Founder.

Rome, May 15th 1993

A MESSAGE ABOUT THE SHARED MISSION TO THE WORLDWIDE LASALLIAN FAMILY FROM THE 42ND GENERAL CHAPTER

To all of you, men and women who are related in some way to a Lasallian enterprise, and above all to you who day to day share our work and mission in the spirit of St. John Baptist de La Salle, we send this message of invitation and encouragement. We Brothers are Capitulants from 80 countries, assembled to determine the major directions of the Institute for the next seven years, and we invite you to welcome this message from the Chapter of 1993. We, ourselves, have experienced this Chapter as an historic event, as an *“irresistible and irreversible stage in our history,”* to quote the words of one of the Consultants.

And so, for the first time, there were invited to the Chapter twenty Consultants, men and women from around the world chosen from those who were among the most committed in sharing the mission of the Institute. Some of these Consultants are perhaps known to you. They helped us to become aware of the great diversity of situations from which they come. Their example touched us deeply and encouraged us to write to you.

A time of grace for us all

In our lives, there are special, powerful moments when the past takes on a new meaning, the events of the present have a stronger impact and the future is faced with renewed determination. We would like to share with you a conviction we reached as a result of our interaction, namely, that God is calling each one according to his or her own vocation, to accomplish together the mission confided to St. John Baptist de La Salle and to the Institute he founded.

In the light of the experience of the last twenty years, the Chapter re-affirms the irreplaceable role of those men and women (lay persons, priests and religious) who carry out this mission. The Institute brings them together to work in association "*to procure a human and Christian education for young people and especially the poor*".

United for children and young people

Aware of the dignity of each person, we rejoice in the rich diversity of our respective vocations and the responsibilities these imply. What unites us is our common reference to St. John Baptist de La Salle and a continuous striving to enter more fully into his spirit. Belonging to the Lasallian Family commits us to work together to respond to the educational needs of the young.

Shared mission is a response to the real needs of young people today. We know the difficulties they face, as well as the values they support. They need educators who are inspired by St. John Baptist de La Salle, Patron of Christian educators. Because of our professional skills, our spirit of openness, our educational vision, our commitment as men and women in the school, in society and in the Church, young people can discover elements to incorporate into their maturing personality. To engage in a mission such as this, we are called to form integrated teams of educators and to develop our skills and our personal and spiritual growth.

In order to take on the challenges of the world of education, we need to develop and deepen our mutual understanding, to respect our differences and to trust in one another. When Christians or persons of other religions live together in harmony, love and the service of others, they reveal those human and spiritual values typical of the Lasallian spirit: values such as the interior life, respect for the family, the dignity of women, the rights of children and concern for the poor. Whether we are Christians, members of another religion or humanists, we are called to take our place in the mission that the Institute receives

from God, whose Spirit is at work in every culture and in every religious tradition.

Brothers throughout the world

As Brothers in Chapter, we have something special to say to our Brothers throughout the world. Let us consider as a sign of the times the call to share the mission of the Institute and the way this call enriches its living tradition. As Brothers, let us be, in a manner of speaking, the heart, the memory and the guarantors of the Lasallian charism.

Today, the shared mission asks us as Brothers to make visible the call to live the gospel in depth. We should be readily available for priority projects for the educational service of the poor where others either cannot or will not go. Our vow of "*association for the educational service of the poor*" is an indispensable sign of fidelity for all those engaged in the distinctive mission of the Institute.

Formation for mission

Today, more than ever, Lasallians from every country, we must discover together new directions for mission. Our diversity gives this a deeper significance. The mission of the Institute would suffer greatly if each of us tried to work without reference to the others. It would be unproductive if everything were to be forced into one single model. In order to coordinate the response of all of us to the needs of the young, Brothers and Consultants at the Chapter recognised the need for a programme of formation in the Lasallian spirit at District or local level. We encourage each person to take up as much formation for himself or herself as possible. This requires a study to identify the needs of our world and a discernment together of the means needed to respond to them.

Brothers and colleagues, united in St. John Baptist de La Salle for the temporal and eternal well-being of the young, let us

become involved together in the evangelisation of our local culture. Let us welcome and support the different vocations of lay people, Sisters, Brothers and priests.

Our communities of faith, our religious communities and our families can become sources of stimulation for this broad movement which is spreading, not only throughout the whole Church, but which involves men and women of other religious traditions. All this provides a wider context for shared mission as a growing reality in the Church today, thanks to the promotion of the laity, the ecumenical movement and the appeal of Pope John Paul II for a new evangelisation for the year 2000.

A priority

The sharing of mission will be a priority at all levels in the Institute during the next seven years. We are convinced that it is day by day and together that we must live out and evolve the shared mission where we are. Our experience together in Rome has been so rich that we encourage each Lasallian to live this experience at the local level. Let us take the steps required to be involved in dialogue and plan for action.

Today, more than ever, young people need to be accompanied by teams of adults. These teams need to be made up of adults who are readily available, open to human, spiritual and gospel values and close to the young.

Rome, May 15th 1993

THE INSTITUTE, A COMMUNITY OF BROTHERS ASSOCIATED FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF THE POOR IN A CHANGING WORLD AND CHURCH

"Nations everywhere, open your doors to Christ" (Redemptoris Missio)

1. PREAMBLE

1.1 The 42nd General Chapter is part of a continuing process, an Institute movement, which has gradually developed since the 1950s.

After the shock of the Second World War and the great political and cultural changes it brought about, we entered a period of destabilisation, of the breaking up of old systems (social, political, geographical, religious...) that were fossilised and monolithic. There exists now a whole mosaic of cultures and differences. These upset our over-simplified plans and our deepest convictions. They upset the Church, too, and the Institute with it.

However, in spite of all the blows, uncertainties, hesitations and losses, the Institute re-wrote its beliefs over a period of 30 years: it rediscovered the Founder, faced up to the changes in society and young people, clarified its identity and the nature of its mission, made room for new partners, became open to other cultures and religions. It produced a series of powerful documents (Declaration, the 1966 and 1976 General Chapters, Circulars, the 1987 Rule, Pastoral Letters...) which form a coherent body of teaching, which are a source of inspiration and commitment for us and which invite us to face the world of today and tomorrow with confidence.

This we can do because our faith persuades us:

- that God is already there and that he wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (R 19);
- that our Institute, together with other organisations, must continue to help promote the development of societies and young people. As it does this, it should also offer, as part of its vocation in the Church, the means of achieving spiritual freedom while respecting different cultures and individuals (R 18).

1.2 We ourselves are evangelised by the Church and Vatican Council II, by the many young people and adults we meet day after day, and we assert our commitment to this constantly changing world (R 15).

Together with other men and women, we too are:

- **captivated by and accomplices** with its glitter, its science, its discoveries, its technology, its progress, its madness, its pursuit of power,
but we side with informed men and women who use science and technology in the pursuit of the common good;
- **exasperated** by its complexity, its morbid hunger, its depravity,
but we side with enlightened men and women who teach and recall the paramount importance of the individual;
- **angered** by its contempt for people, its brutal hatred, its duplicity,
but we side with institutions which tirelessly fight so that differences may remain and that the plurality of cultures may enrich the common heritage;

- **powerless** before its injustices, its fratricidal wars, its selfish jealousies, its means of communication appropriated by money and private interests,
but we side with those institutions that, step by step, try not to overlook differences and the plurality of cultures and try to enrich our common patrimony (R 17d).

1.3 The Church sends us as consecrated lay people in religious life to work for the “new evangelisation” of young people and adults who live in this world in all settings, in all cultures, in all religious faiths (R 19):

- We go to those who are already with us, Christians or not, in school, in training centres for young people and adults, in pastoral centres, in Church groups and in a variety of organisations.
- We go to those who do not have the means to learn and be trained enough to take their place in society (because of famine, war, ignorance, oppression, destruction of homes...)
- We go to those who are victims of economic and political turmoil and who suffer the brunt of the spasms of a disturbed world (unemployment, substance abuse, AIDS, suicide...).
- We go to those who are looking for values, for a word of encouragement, of faith, who wish to slake their thirst with the Word of God.

All are waiting for us to share with them the charism we have. As professionally competent educators, we consider our work as a ministry and we come to them as Brothers, full of respect and open up for them a way to God (R 13, 20, 21).

And because of the Gospel, our presence in their midst must be positive, critical, prophetic and creative (R 18).

1.4 As members of the Institute of St. John Baptist de La Salle, we strongly re-affirm our option for the human and Christian education of young people and adults, and in particular for the poor.

We re-affirm it with joy and hope. Why?

- In spite of doubts, the Brothers have never abandoned the work of education. On the contrary, they involve themselves in it even more than before, with the conviction, shared by many other people, that it is there that the future of humanity lies.
- Many Brothers work with courage and success in schools which become increasingly places where the aspirations as well as the perplexities of youth seeking educational guideposts are expressed. These Brothers are the proof that a school of high quality, one that is respectful of all and whose mission is rooted in the Gospel, renders an inestimable service.
- Many Brothers of all ages throughout the world have made strenuous efforts to become trained and to adapt to all kinds of social situations so that, aware of new needs, they can work with young people and adults in their own context.
- Every Brother has the charism of brotherhood. Thanks to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, he has the ability to relate to young people and adults and to discover with them the means of achieving human and spiritual development (R 20).
- In many parts of the world, and especially in the third-world continents, Brothers have made a strong commitment to help the most deprived young people and adults, convinced that God calls us to renew our Institute by this deliberate return to those who are most affected by collective injustice (R 32).

- Brothers on the threshold of retirement from their profession continue their mission as educators as members of various organisations. There they discover other forms of hidden poverty and help young people and adults who have been marginalised by the complexity and hardness of society. Often these Brothers rediscover the specific nature of their call, a call which had become dormant as a result of a necessarily highly organised professional life, overly dependent on administrative regulations.

Brothers, we are associated by vow for the educational service of the poor. We are committed, as communities, to run schools or Christian educational centres which are accessible to them (R 39). The obligation which we have accepted willingly commits us to be witnesses in the world:

- active witnesses to the dignity of all people (R 11);
- active witnesses to their rights and especially to their rights to human, religious and Christian education if they desire it (R 12);
- active witnesses to basic human values (solidarity, justice, tolerance...) which make true brotherhood possible between peoples and nations (R 9);
- active witnesses to the need for adapted educational structures (R 3, 13);
- active witnesses to the urgent need for national and international programmes which include specific cultural measures regarding the poor (R 13b);
- active witnesses to God's solicitude for people who are marginalised by great poverty and other modern forms of misery (R 41);
- active witnesses to the mission of the Redeeming Christ which must reach all nations and all ages (R 19).

1.5 In this way, we collectively repeat today the commitment of our Founder who “was deeply moved by the way in which the children of the artisans and the poor were abandoned and left to themselves” and discovered in faith the mission of his Institute, as a concrete response to his contemplation of God’s plan of salvation.

“In order to respond to this divine plan and also to situations of distress similar to those that the Founder knew, the Institute desires to be present to the world today as part of the Church’s work in spreading the Gospel. The Institute is concerned above all for the educational needs of the poor as they strive to become aware of their dignity and to live and to be recognised as human beings and children of God. The Institute establishes, renews and diversifies its work according to what the Kingdom of God requires” (R. 11).

2. OBSERVATIONS

The Brothers of the Chapter, enriched by their personal experience but also invested with the hopes and concerns of the Brothers of their Districts who work steadfastly to meet the needs of youth, are aware that the Brothers are called upon to respond to major challenges:

- migratory movements, racism, urban violence, terrorism, drug addiction, loss of basic human values, crises of faith, refusal of religious education, the attraction of sects, unemployment, AIDS, hunger, illiteracy, street children, homelessness, contempt of life, broken families, school dropouts....

This list is unfortunately not exhaustive. However, in their own way, the Brothers and communities try to come up with

appropriate responses. While acknowledging what has been accomplished up to now, the Chapter has focused its attention on four points:

2.1 THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The Convention of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations on November 20, 1989; it became international law in 1990.

In most nations the rights of the child are ignored; this convention is extremely helpful, especially for poor children who find in it a protection and safeguard against exploitation and abuse.

2.2 ILLITERACY

Illiteracy is an increasing phenomenon, not only in third-world countries but also in the developed world. In addition, it affects not only the written word but also new languages (images, sound...) that the poor use almost exclusively.

Illiteracy is at the root of many situations of poverty and hardship because it is a drawback to development and hinders social integration and all critical thinking. It affects directly the dignity of millions of children, adolescents and adults, condemning them to hopelessness which can trigger outbreaks of sudden violence and can deteriorate to degrading passivity.

2.3 VALUES EDUCATION

The human community is more and more imbued with a sense of planetary consciousness: together we are responsible because we are more and more dependent on each other:

- for the quality of life which we pass on to younger generations;

- for the environment and the resources which we leave behind.

As educators, we are required to examine our educational programmes and methods. People of good will will co-operate if education fosters justice, respect, solidarity, tolerance, recollection, peace and respect for life (from conception to death).

As educators, we are also duty-bound to respect our world and its environment, human and physical; the human race is responsible for the management of the earth and its resources.

2.4 SPECIFIC ACCOMPANIMENT OF THE YOUNG

In several regions of the world, many societies have been destabilised by the economic crisis, migratory movements, overcrowding in the cities. Many young people are the first victims of this upheaval, slipping into petty crime and delinquency: aimless drifting, unemployment, drugs, AIDS, prison, prostitution, violence.

These young people, excluded and feeling rejected, quite often need a specific type of accompaniment over a long period to help them rediscover the ordinary rhythm of social integration through formation, work and, sometimes, therapy.

In these four particular areas, the Chapter encourages whatever initiatives may be taken, no matter their importance, in order to strengthen our solidarity with those associations and organisations who work for the rights of children, youth and adults. But it is clear that the profound and unconditional respect we should have for persons in suffering obliges us to bring them, at the right moment, the best gift for which we have been consecrated ministers of the word. In order to realise their full humanity, they should be touched by the Gospel and by Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. *“The best service that we can render our brothers and sisters is the evangelisation that helps them to live and act as children of God, that eliminates*

injustices and helps in the total development of the person” (Puebla).

It is the entire Institute which must be on the alert and commit itself in a significant way to formation, to human and Christian education, especially in those situations where we can become earnestly involved in fidelity to the charism of our Institute and our vow of association.

The mission is everywhere. It requires today a new, imaginative approach, mobility and volunteers who are willing, determined and prepared.

Well thought out and well defined, the missionary service continues to mobilise Brothers, lay collaborators and young people. All are waiting for the call from our Institute.

This explains the meaning of the following recommendations and propositions which aim at reducing the gap which exists between our texts and our ways of doing things, between the declared priority of the service of the poor through education (R 39) and the maintenance of those situations which are in contradiction with this priority (Declaration 28-34; R 40-41).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The District Chapters will encourage, as much as possible, projects of insertion in the world of the poor (R 40a). All such projects must be supported by a community and submitted to the District Council for discernment and endorsement.

3.2 The Brothers Visitors invite the Brothers on sabbatical or other similar programmes of renewal to include in their programme some involvement with the less fortunate.

3.3 Future District Chapters will evaluate programmes and works in those areas concerned with the promotion of justice, and especially in the areas of literacy, the rights of the child,

values education and specific forms of advocacy (struggle against social outcasts). This evaluation concerns both the educational centres and the communities.

3.4 The General Chapter invites Lasallian universities and institutions of higher learning, according to their competencies, to foster:

- scientific research into the causes of poverty and social injustice and into the elimination of these causes;
- preparation of technicians and professional experts in the conservation of our ecosystems, in collaboration with national and international organisations.

3.5 Districts should encourage the Brothers and our Lasallian partners to become competent in the domain of social communication and to adapt their educational methods to the forms of expression used by youth today.

4. PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 1

To promote more effectively interdependence and solidarity in the Institute and to take another step forward in the educational service of the poor, the General Chapter asks Brother Superior General and his Council, between 1993 and 1997, to pursue, in dialogue with the Regions and Districts, **reflection on the missionary policy of the Institute and to make that policy known to the Brothers and their Lasallian partners, and**

TO MAKE AN APPEAL TO THE REGIONS AND THE DISTRICTS TO MAKE AVAILABLE 100 BROTHERS AND A CERTAIN NUMBER OF LAS-

ALLIAN PARTNERS WHO WILL RECEIVE SPECIAL TRAINING AND WILL BE SENT IN MISSION IN VIEW OF RESPONDING TO THE FOLLOWING NEEDS:

- **to create** new apostolates for the poor in places where the Institute is already present or in new places;
- **to renew** or strengthen existing educational apostolates for the poor;
- **to train** (initial or continuing formation programmes) Brothers and Lasallian partners, especially in the small and developing sectors of the Institute.

These Brothers and Lasallian partners will be over and above those that would be available for such service according to existing District policy.

The plan to implement this Proposition (places for training, program, finances...) will be elaborated by the Brother Superior and his Council.

All of the above will always be done in accord with the policies of the welcoming Region and District, and in the spirit of the Rule (Articles 14, 15, 15a, 15c, 39, 39a, 19a, 40, 40a, 40c, 41).

Proposition 2

The General Chapter asks the Brother Superior and his Council to name a group of experts in the field of education who will serve as observers of the broad educational concerns throughout the world to enable the Centre of the Institute to develop a public policy.

Clarifications to Proposition 2

- "experts": Brothers, Lasallian partners or other people who share our educational vision.
- How many experts? Seven or eight interdisciplinary experts in various fields: pedagogy, psychology, catechetics, social communication, sociology, philosophy....
- These experts will be observers where they live and will be especially attentive to:
 - * major lines of thought,
 - * real-life situations,
 - * appropriate responses.
- The General Council will consult the group on precise matters:
 - * rights of the child,
 - * lack of funding for education in the third world,
 - * freedom in teaching,
 - * right to religious education,
 - * affective education,
 - * defence of the family,
 - * formation programmes based on the experience of learning from the poor.
- The Institute could develop, if necessary, a public policy directed to:
 - * the Lasallian world,
 - * the media,
 - * international organisations.
- The costs of travel will be covered in the budget of the Secretariat for the Educational Mission; the costs of documentation will be borne by the experts themselves.

SHARED MISSION

1. GENERAL REFLECTIONS

The subject of shared mission was studied in depth by both Delegates and Consultants during the second and third weeks of the Chapter. Four major themes, found in the Commission Reports, the Notes to the Chapter, the Conferences, documents of the Institute and the Church and the reflections with the Consultants, seem appropriate areas on which to concentrate the focus of shared mission.

These themes, illustrated from various sources, are as follows:

- the signs of the times and the shared mission,
- a grace and a movement for today,
- the challenges of this new situation,
- the demands of formation for the shared mission.

1.1 The signs of the times and the shared mission

The needs of young people and the poor

Young people are more than others affected by the inequalities of North and South, situations of poverty, the consumer society and the de-Christianisation of society. The breakdown of the family structure aggravates their situation. New forms of poverty and marginalisation are present in our society, for example, in what we call the Fourth World; these call us, Brothers and Lasallian partners, to creative action in keeping with our tradition which favours the poorest and the most deprived. The immediate and profound needs of the Third World and of the Young Churches also reveal invitations from the Lord

to respond as a practical commitment to justice and peace, solidarity and interdependence.

The young are, however, more tolerant of others and they seem increasingly committed to service and the promotion of justice, to concern for ecology and conservation.

The needs of the Church and the Institute

The importance given to the Kingdom leads to a special emphasis on dialogue with other religions, development programmes, solidarity and the promotion of justice and peace. These values constitute an integral element of shared mission. They include respect for regional languages and minority cultures, religious pluralism and the care of immigrant populations.

There is also a gap between the cultural world of the young and the actual situation of the Institute and the Church. Our charism suggests this is our special field.

In order to develop fully the response to a new evangelisation, the Church, in such documents as *Christifideles Laici*, is inviting more and more lay people to take on their rightful role in ministry in the proclamation of the Gospel among those with whom they live.

The Institute, in its desire to support and welcome this promotion of lay people, offers to those men and women who wish to be involved in the partnership the opportunity to commit themselves more closely and deeply to the spirit and charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle, who saw educators as Ministers of the Gospel. The Institute also recognises its own need of partnership in the changing realities of the world of education and the new evangelisation and takes on its responsibilities in the promotion of the lay people in the Church. This new partnership is especially attentive to the needs of the young and especially the poor in the new evangelisation. *"God has chosen you to make him known to others."*

1.2 Shared mission: a grace and a movement for today

The considerable interest of some of our colleagues in shared mission and their evident commitment to it show that this movement is truly a *"grace"* (R 146). The new spirit of association, the fresh understanding of ministry and our own need for committed partners for shared mission support what is already a lived reality in a number of sectors in the Institute.

We recognise and welcome the fact that the Church and the Institute, with committed lay people, are writing together a new chapter in their history of shared mission.

The Institute is living this moment as a call from God, and the experience of shared mission shows that it can be lived as a grace. Our partners, eager to be more fully involved and to respond to their call from God, have helped to bring us onto the path of a conversion that has changed the nature and style of the partnership. This is a movement which is for the benefit of all and brings its own challenges.

1.3 The challenges of this new situation

One challenge which arises from the needs of our time is to continue to seek ways to revitalise the schools and other educational enterprises, with particular attention to the service of the poor, to the promotion of justice, to pastoral action and to inculturation in the environment in which the mission occurs.

A second challenge is to recognise and respect the diversity that exists in the Institute and among those who share its mission. There are also different levels of commitment. The development of the partnership in which the Brothers participate is something quite new; fresh ground is being broken. It requires of us all a new mentality and a common effort of imagination and creation which must propel us forward together. Those of other religions with whom we work share in the promotion of the spiritual and human values of the Lasallian mission.

Deeper levels of commitment that are offered maintain vitality and promote growth; each person should be invited to develop further his or her commitment, according to the successive calls which might be received.

At the same time, it is important to recognise clearly the identity of each and to be aware of the demands of the many different vocations involved in the shared mission. Since the mission of the Institute is the educational service of the young, with preference for the poor, formation programmes must respond to that reality and the new demands of shared mission.

Given the great diversity that exists in the Institute, the Chapter should establish key principles for formation in the area of shared mission.

1.4 The demands of formation for the shared mission

Shared mission is realised in the totality of our works in favour of the human and Christian education of youth, especially the poor. Association, in fulfilling this mission, expresses a dynamic force and a spirit of partnership (a spirit of association) which are embodied in relevant structures. Accordingly, at local, District and Regional levels, a formation which is appropriate to and in keeping with the developing nature of the partnership for shared mission is organised. These structures are flexible to be able to respond to the human, educational and spiritual needs of youth, especially the disadvantaged.

The present experience of shared mission is new. It is important that the strategies and programmes allow for a wide participation. The new reality recognises complementarity and is without paternalism.

Some of these programmes offer information and “pre”-formation, for example, about works, objectives and methods of the Institute for those who have a professional relationship with the Institute; others will be more specific, offering stimulating information and an appropriate formation for people who are

committed. For those who want to share in the mission to the point of forming Lasallian communities and communities of faith, a deeper formation is needed. “*They provide, for those who so desire, the means to learn about the Founder and to live according to his spirit*” (R 17). Those young people who wish to commit themselves to the service of the poor and the promotion of justice are offered the opportunity to experience this first hand.

The initial and continuing formation of the Brothers takes into account the shared mission. The development of an up-to-date theology of lay people and the life of consecration enables all to understand shared mission, to recognise their contribution to it and thus take on real responsibility directly related to their specific identities in the partnership.

2. SHARED MISSION AND THE HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE

2.1 At the beginning

2.11 The companions of St. John Baptist de La Salle, as well as he himself, would never have foreseen at the beginning where their commitment to the Christian and gratuitous schools would lead them. The teachers came for various reasons: to earn a living, to help children get a good start in life, to place themselves under the direction of the Founder as their spiritual and pedagogical guide. Some of them found the going difficult and left. Many of them, as they developed into communities, discovered one aspect of the mission of the Church, a ministry which gradually led them to the threshold of the religious life (R 81).

2.12 Once the community of the Christian schools discovered that its community character and its mission limited its presence to the cities only (cf. *Memoir on the Habit*), St. John Baptist de La Salle agreed to open a seminary for country schoolteachers. This shows that the dynamics of the community’s foundation

could be applied to teachers who did not share the state of life of the Brothers.

The vow of association of 1691 and of 1694 established the Society of the Christian Schools with a solid nucleus comprising the Founder and two, then twelve Brothers. The association was so powerful as to lead John Baptist de La Salle, although he was a priest, to live as the Brothers did while retaining his own state in life.

St. John Baptist de La Salle did not establish categories but he offered options for training and commitment suited to each one. Some made vows, some did not. Then there were the “principal Brothers” to guarantee that the Society be faithful to its mission. The fraternal atmosphere allowed each one to find his place in the common mission. And all were nourished by the Meditations, where no distinction is made between those who made vows and the others.

The title of the Meditations for the Time of Retreat is especially meaningful: “*For the use of all those persons engaged in the education of the young, and especially for use during the retreat that the Brothers make*”. To all of these, the Founder speaks of their ministry.

2.2. The 19th century

2.21 It was in the course of the **19th century that lay teachers began to work in the Brothers’ schools on a continual basis**. In Madagascar some lay persons served as translators or replaced Brothers who were sick (Rigault, VI, 561). Some of these discerned a call to become Brothers (Rigault, VI, 443).

In the St. Luke schools in Belgium (in Ghent in 1863) or St. Nicholas in Paris (from April 18, 1859: Rigault, V, 412) there were monitors or specialists in manual skills such as saddle making, woodworking, silversmiths, etc. At Le Likes (Quimper) in France (Rigault, V, 256) the courses in agriculture were taught for many years by a lay person. Progressively the lay teachers were engaged in the same educational functions as the Brothers.

It is known that Brother Exuperien, around 1880, was having second thoughts about this integration. The position taken by Brother Irlide led him to rethink his position. As a result he undertook to train and to support lay teachers for the schools in the Paris area, going so far as to create a teachers’ union to promote their profession. In Belgium there was a kind of Third Order called the “Society of Christian Teachers” established by the student teachers in the teacher training school at Carlsbourg. The plan was submitted to the Chapter of 1884, but this society disappeared during the upheavals of the 20th century (Rigault, VIII, 99).

Other regions might have examples of the Lasallian influence on the teaching profession, especially among the colleagues of the Brothers.

2.22 **Some questions raised in missionary countries were never made public**. In 1890 in Palestine the Patriarch wanted to exclude Catholics from the Brothers’ schools because they were open to “the heterodox and the infidels” (it was not an age of ecumenism). Recourse had to be made to Rome in order for the Brothers to be authorised to receive and “*to have the Catholic teachers give instruction not only to children and young Catholics, but also to the heterodox and the infidels*” (Rigault, VIII, 457).

That raises the question of the role of a non-Catholic teacher in a Brothers’ school.

2.3. The present moment in our history

2.31 At this moment in history, we cannot find in this historical survey the answer to all our questions. The diversity of situations in which we find ourselves leads us to be open to new pathways. And that sometimes requires us to re-evaluate certain things that happened in the past.

The movement toward shared mission has not been uniform: there has been teeth-gnashing and backsliding, under-

standable enough at that time. In this light, it is understandable that some Brothers today are known for having these attitudes and these hesitations.

Thus, the Chapter of 1946 took a very negative attitude towards hiring lay professors in the Brothers' schools (Note of Commission 5). The Chapter wanted "to suppress as quickly as possible the hiring of women" and to reduce the lay male element, as it was said, a necessary evil. It is striking to note that only five years later St. John Baptist de La Salle was named by Pope Pius XII "Heavenly Patron of teachers of both sexes" ("*Omnium magistrorum utriusque sexus caelestem apud Deum Patronum*").

Vatican II asked institutes to return to their sources: not to what their Founders did, but to their intentions. Thanks to the programme of Lasallian Studies, launched in 1956, the Chapter of 1967 was able to write the Declaration on a solid historical basis and to re-write the Rule in a new, inspirational tone.

2.32 During the years following the Chapter of 1976 it became apparent that there were two movements, which today are coming together. Many teachers, in a desire to commit themselves more deeply as they work with the Brothers, are learning about the Lasallian spirit and so discover that they are participating in a shared mission. Many lay persons, attracted by the person of John Baptist de La Salle, have enrolled in Lasallian organisations.

The Chapter of 1986 adopted the expression, the "Lasallian Family". Now the 42nd General Chapter adopts the language of the shared mission. We have entered a new era that requires a new understanding of the relationships within the mission that is expressed by the word "partnership".

Within the Lasallian Family we distinguish:

- Men and women who have made a total commitment by vows in an Institute of Consecrated Life (Brothers, Sisters, Catechists of Jesus Crucified, etc.);
- Men and women who have made a commitment in some form of lay association, such as the Signum Fidei, Third Order;
- Men and women who are committed by reason of their profession or ministry, such as teachers and other educators;
- Men and women who are committed only for a limited period, such as Lasallian volunteers, Young Lasallians, etc.

There are among our students, their parents, our former students and our former Brothers quite a few who also desire and are able to participate in different ways in Lasallian spirituality and a commitment in the Lasallian spirit.

Considerations of faith can show us that our recognition of the place of the laity in the mission of the Institute is not due primarily to the decreasing number of Brothers, but rather and more profoundly to the grace of their baptism.

2.33 **We take stock of the distance** that separates our present situation from that of St. John Baptist de La Salle, but also how important it is for us to relate to him: "*John Baptist de La Salle was deeply moved by the way in which the children of the artisans and the poor were left to themselves. As a practical response to his prayerful consideration of this fact in relation to God's plan of salvation, he came to discern in faith what God wanted the mission of the Institute to be*" (R 11).

In his day in a Christian society, the purpose of the school was "*to give a Christian education to the children of the artisans and the poor.*" Today, in the light of a variety of pluralistic

situations, we make a distinction: “to give a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor” (R 3).

“True to its founding spirit, the Institute also makes its presence felt above all in those areas where, humanly speaking, there is little or no possibility for it to develop. The work of the Brothers in such places becomes, especially for non-Christians, a witness to the charity of Christ and a center of dialogue and collaboration” (R 19b). In the midst of the educative community non-Christian young people, parents and teachers can participate in their own way in this visibility of the Church.

2.4. An incarnational approach

By sharing in the situation of the first teachers, Canon De La Salle was able to recognise with them the needs of his time. He “gave a new meaning to the school by making it accessible to the poor and offering it to all as a sign of the Kingdom and as a means of salvation” (R 3).

It is in this same incarnational approach that the Institute today can **recognise the signs of our times**. The 42nd General Chapter has done this to some extent by working for two weeks on the theme of the shared mission in collaboration with Consultants coming from all sectors of the Institute. With them, the Capitulants have tried to become more aware of situations and the calls for help that arise therefrom, in order to move towards a process of discernment together.

3. THEOLOGY OF THE SHARED MISSION

3.1. God’s universal plan of salvation, or “God wills that all people be saved”

The point of departure for a reflection on the theology of shared mission is the design of God that all people be saved. To bring this about, God sent his Son who became man in a context

of poverty: “*only that can be saved that has been assumed*” (St. Irenaeus). The salvation of humans occurs through the humanity of Christ.

The saving action of God in Jesus Christ continues in the Church which is the sacrament of salvation. The members of the Church are sent to be the bearers of the Good News of salvation, becoming the salt of the earth, a light to the world, an experience of God. Thus the Church is at the service of the Kingdom of God to which all people are called by God.

In every culture and every religion there can be found the **seeds of the Word of God and the power of the Spirit of God**. This implies a respectful stance toward cultures and religions.

The Gospel ought to help a culture flourish by advancing God’s plan of salvation in human history. In this way salvation becomes a reality in every culture, even outside the limits of the visible Church.

3.2. The mission of the Church: evangelisation

3.21 “*The Institute is particularly conscious of the great design of God who wills that all people should come to the knowledge of the truth. Thus the Institute participates in the missionary activity of the Church whose essential task is to announce the Gospel to everyone and to all cultures*” (R 19).

The Gospel is good news for all of God’s people, that is to say, for all human beings, as the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. The Lord says with us: “*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*”.

The evangelisation of cultures is understood today as the mission of the Church and, consequently, of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. This mission is directed to the promotion of the Kingdom of God, rather than exclusively to the conversion of individuals.

This implies that differences be accepted and respected. “I should not begin with myself in order to meet the other, but begin from the point of view of the other”. This implies an openness to

new perspectives, new concerns, new currents in philosophy and theology, etc. This attitude would be reflected in vocation ministry, initial and continuing formation, apostolic engagements and the government of the Institute.

Today the Church speaks insistently about the **new evangelisation**. The Gospel ought to be a response to the profound questions of the world today. *“The new evangelisation ought to be new in its methods, new in its vision and new in its expression”* (John Paul II).

3.22 From the beginning of the Church, the mission of evangelisation was a mission for all Christians, founded on baptism and the commission given by the risen Christ (Matt 28:19). After the martyrdom of Stephen *“all were dispersed with the exception of the Apostles.... Those who had been scattered went from place to place announcing the word of the Good News”* (Acts 8:1, 4). The Apostles and deacons were not the only evangelisers, and it can be seen that Apollos both preached and taught *“exactly what concerned Jesus even though he knew only the baptism of John”* (Acts 18:25).

Several times, **in difficult moments in the history of the Church**, lay people have been the source of renewal for the Church, as for example in the origins of monasticism and Catholic Action movements; for its determination and resolve to be committed to the service of the poor and to justice, as in the rise of the mendicant orders, lay movements for social justice and liberation, or the work of Dorothy Day; and to the evangelisation of their native land, as in the case of Pierre Kula in Upper Volta, for example.

Likewise today, there is a rediscovery of the idea that baptism demands **the participation of all the faithful** in the mission of the Church. It is in this context that one can speak of the promotion of the laity. We experience in the Institute the same need in promotion of the shared mission.

3.3. The mission of the Institute

“The Spirit of God has given to the Church, in the person of St. John Baptist de La Salle, a charism which even today inspires the Brothers and a great number of other educators” (R 20).

From the beginning, the Institute is incarnated in a concrete context. Its missionary dynamism has led the Institute in the long course of its history to be inculturated in more than 80 countries.

To accomplish the mission of the Institute, *“the Brothers participate in the Church’s mission by consecrating their lives to God in order to bring the Gospel to the educational world”* (R 12).

“Consecrated to God as religious laymen, the Brothers are called to procure a human and Christian education of the young, especially the poor, according to the ministry which the Church confides to them” (Decree approving the Rule, January 26, 1987).

“The Institute is concerned above all for the educational needs of the poor as they strive to become aware of their dignity and to live and to be recognised as human beings and children of God. The Institute establishes, renews and diversifies its works according to what the Kingdom of God requires” (R 11).

In the light of the charism of the Institute and of the Rule, those who participate in the mission of the Institute—whether they be Brothers or not—feel that they are challenged by the poor and the distressful situations that they know exist among young people today (cf. D 11). These urgent needs of the young demand that the Institute discern and take a clear option to create, renew and diversify its educational works (cf. R 11) so that the *“service of the poor”* becomes its *“effective priority”* (R 40a).

3.4. Shared mission

From its origins, **the Brothers made the vow of association** to keep together and by association schools for the educa-

tional service of the poor and they continue to do so. It is essential to the Institute.

What has changed is the ever-increasing role played by the laity in the mission of the Institute, hence the expression "shared mission". In the face of the difficulties in today's world in the schools and other educational enterprises, it is no longer conceivable that the Brothers can guarantee by themselves the continuation and the vitality of the Lasallian mission.

The spirit of the Institute, which is the spirit of faith, invites us to see in these circumstances something more than the decrease in numbers of the Brothers. Rather we should see it as **a call from God to maintain our place as consecrated lay persons** in the religious life, alongside our colleagues in a common mission that is shared.

As the Rule affirms, "*The spiritual gifts which the Church has received in St. John Baptist de La Salle extend beyond the confines of the Institute that he founded*" (R 146).

It is the Spirit that has led some of the laity to participate for many years now in the mission of the Institute. The Brothers acknowledge the action of the Spirit in the promotion of the laity and find its significance in a renewed reflection on their vow of association.

The Lord sends workers for the harvest from various states of life. By the grace of the vocation proper to each, the Institute becomes better able to incarnate itself in cultures where it is not yet present.

3.5. Inculturation

The shared mission requires that we affirm what the Rule says about inculturation: "*Every culture needs to be evangelised. The Brothers make every effort to get to know, to respect and to assimilate the positive values of the cultural heritage of the people where they are located and whom they are called to serve. With joy and hope the Brothers discover there the signs of the presence of the Spirit. They ensure that the ferment of the gospel renews and enriches their cultural heritage*" (R 18).

Inculturation is an ongoing process. For the shared mission, **formation to inculturation** is necessary for both Brothers and lay persons. This formation includes a study of the language of the country, insertion into the life situation of the population, getting to know the young people, etc. To discover a culture requires patience and humility, with the realisation that it will always remain a mystery for a foreigner.

In order to evangelise, it is necessary to enter into contact with the local culture (cf. R 15). **We evangelise by the witness of our lives.** The questions which arise by reason of who we are and the way we live open up the possibility of dialogue. Thus, we can help to promote the gospel values which become apparent when persons of different religions live together in harmony, service and love.

Among the Brothers, other Christians and those of other religions, some sharing of mission is possible to the extent that the educational enterprise refers in a Lasallian way to human and spiritual values that are universally recognised, such as meditation, service of the poor, family, human rights, rights of children, etc.

3.6 Identity: specific but complementary roles

3.61 Guided by the Spirit, the Church has entered "the age of the laity" and of a new evangelisation. In this new perspective we see our shared mission as a sign of the times. Far from being a regrettable situation, it constitutes an integral part of our vocation as religious lay persons. The Spirit invites us to a deeper and richer understanding of who we are and what we are called to do.

The mission which the Church confides to the Institute and that is accomplished by Brothers and other Christians derives from their baptism and confirmation. Those who are not Brothers are committed as "*Christifideles laici seculares*"; the Brothers, as "*Christifideles laici consecrati*", while making apparent in the lay vocation the radicality of the Gospel and the transcendent dimension of the Kingdom.

Even if, in association for the shared mission, the Brothers are the heart, the memory, the guarantors of the Lasallian charism and “*the ferment of an adult Christianity*” (Padre Cristo Rey), the lay people who are associated in different ways, along with priests and religious men and women, provide today **a necessary and rich contribution to the living tradition of the Institute.**

The mission is likewise shared with members of other religions who share an awareness of human rights and spiritual values. This can be interpreted as a mission inspired by the Spirit active in their religious traditions.

3.62 “*As religious vowed to the ministry of Christian education, the first apostolate of the Brothers consists in the witness of their consecrated life*” (R 24). We witness by our community life and the vow of stability, our availability to take on urgent tasks when others are unable or unwilling to do so and our unselfish dedication to the advancement of the laity. The Brothers’ vow of association for the educational service of the poor is an indispensable sign for everyone of fidelity to a mission received from God.

Religious men and women, priests and lay persons in great number can all bring to the shared mission the specific contribution that comes from their state in life and their individual talents. The Brothers **welcome with thanks** the diversity of these contributions and they establish, especially at the District level, the structures that will facilitate both autonomy and communion among these different Lasallian movements (R 146).

3.63 The relationship among the partners in the shared mission ought to be characterised by respect, understanding, justice and mutual trust. Collaboration implies that both rights and duties be recognised by everyone in what concerns regulations, work contracts and job descriptions. Collaboration ought to guarantee an effective coresponsibility, common understanding of guidelines and priorities and shared power in preparing, making and carrying out decisions.

4. THE LASALLIAN FAMILY

4.1 During the 42nd General Chapter the shared mission had a privileged place. The 41st General Chapter had already been marked by the force and the novelty of the “Lasallian Family”. The Rule, and subsequently the “Letter to the Lasallian Family”, recognised “*the existence of the various Lasallian movements as a grace from God renewing its own vitality*” (R 146).

4.2 We must recognise that the inspirational richness of these texts has facilitated the development of these experiences. From now on, all the Lasallians together:

- consider St. La Salle to be their common Father and point of reference;
- consider the District to be the ambit (framework) of the Lasallian Family;
- organise Lasallian formation in its educational, spiritual and community aspects;
- strengthen the close relationship between the “Lasallian Family” and the “Mission of the Institute”.

4.3 We must recognise that not all Districts have assimilated the message of the Chapter in the same way. This explains, in part, the great diversity of experience from one Region to another in the Institute. However, we see that the movement has been launched and that it will develop even more to the extent that the Districts link the Lasallian Family and the shared mission more closely.

4.4 The Rule “*sees the existence of the various Lasallian movements as a grace from God renewing its own vitality*” (R 146). The General Chapter presents the following recommendations and propositions.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

On the local level

5.1 **The educational planning** of every apostolic work will be elaborated and evaluated by all the members of the educational community based on the District Plan and in co-operation with District organisations. This planning will deal with matters of a pedagogical nature and will be particularly attentive to the following:

- to respond concretely to situations of poverty;
- to become integrated into the culture and local situations;
- to plan the organisation of Pastoral Ministry;
- to form members, respecting the personal journey of each one.

In the apostolates where people of other religions are present, the inherent human and spiritual values should be respected.

5.2 **The Community Programme** of the Brothers will indicate specifically the means of living the shared mission. It provides concrete means for the community to be open and welcoming to young people, to members of educational teams and to all persons or group of persons willing to share. It sees to it that the Community is able to offer all those who have links with it the means of human, educational and spiritual formation.

5.3 The General Chapter invites the Brothers to include in their **Personal Programme** the specific way they will commit themselves to the shared mission.

At District Level

5.4 The District will make **the Lasallian formation** of teachers and educators **a fundamental priority**. To achieve this aim, Brothers and Laity together:

- a) will intensify the activities of Centers of formation, suitable courses and programs;
- b) develop Lasallian research, information and communication;
- c) name one (or more) persons to coordinate, animate and supervise this formation.

5.5 The District will take the necessary means to ensure **that every Lasallian work, when that is possible, favours the birth of a community of faith**, a reference group capable of welcoming various persons (Brothers, priests, religious, laity, young people...) who wish to deepen their faith and whose concern it is to proclaim in an explicit way Jesus Christ and to commit themselves to the service of the poor.

5.6 The District **will strengthen the structures** (people, places) **with a view to animating and coordinating the shared mission**, after having been the object of discernment between the Brothers and Laity. These structures will respect the various levels of commitment in the mission of the Lasallian network.

5.7 In the light of Article 17 of the Rule, the District will strive more and more to integrate the Lasallian Family and the shared mission. It will take into account the requisite changes which sharing necessitates:

- recognition of the rights and duties of everybody (position, work contract, family expenses...);
- mutual recognition and confidence;
- sharing of responsibilities.

5.8 The “Signum Fidei” groups constitute for the Districts a form of spirituality well suited to the laity—especially educators—which finds its source of inspiration in St. John Baptist de La Salle.

5.9 The District will contribute to the renewal of Alumni Associations according to the spirit of the “Charter of the World Federation of Former Lasallian Students”.

5.10 The District is concerned about the formation of animators (assessors), either Brothers or lay people, for the various Lasallian groups, in order to favour their own identity and autonomy, but avoiding every form of paternalism and clericalism.

5.11 The Brother Visitor will make the shared mission one of the most important themes of his visits. Together with his council, he will plan to invite the laity to retreats, chapters and other meetings of the Brothers.

To the Brother Superior General and his Council

5.12 The General Council will make propositions for the **formation of formators** responsible for programmes dealing with the shared mission. It will give some general guidelines which will be common reference points for the Districts and Regions.

5.13 It will be a concern of the General Council to organise meetings of Brothers and Laity—at the Center of the Institute or in the Regions or Districts—to **evaluate the setting up of the shared mission**.

In order to prepare these meetings, Brother Superior will request that one of the annual reports of each District deals with the theme of the shared mission.

5.14 Aware of the intensity with which the theme of the shared mission inspired the Chapter, we believe it would be worthwhile to compile the reflections of the first six Commissions, as well as those made right throughout the Chapter.

Furthermore, we should like this study not simply to be kept in the archives or in the minds of the Capitulants, but to be communicated to all, after mature reflection and in a definitive version.

The General Chapter strongly recommends to Brother Superior and his Council the drawing up and publication of a study (circular) on the shared mission which contains coherent teaching, guidelines and pastoral orientations.

6. PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 3

The expression “LASALLIAN FAMILY” designates all those who participate in the Lasallian educational enterprise, especially those who are moving toward a sharing of the spirit and the mission of St. John Baptist de La Salle. For that reason, by a process of initiation, formation and accompaniment, the Districts will stimulate groups among the Lasallian partners that will make possible a greater commitment.

Proposition 4

The Institute, at all levels, will make the shared mission one of its priorities during the next seven years.

Proposition 5

Inspired by Chapter 2 of the Rule, every District will draw up a plan for the shared mission, concerning the educational works:

- a) This plan will make quite clear how the articles of the Rule will be implemented, taking into account local conditions. It will give priority to:
 - The promotion of the educational service of the poor and the promotion of justice (R 40, 40b, 40c);
 - evangelisation and catechesis (R 13 and 15);
 - the formation of Lasallian educators (R 17c).

COMMUNITY: SIGN OF HOPE AND SOURCE OF LIFE

1. PREAMBLE

Brothers: men with young people, men for the poor

1.1 **Our world today is the arena of many life-giving movements:** the defense of human rights, the desire for solidarity with others, the struggle for justice, efforts to establish peace....

Our world today is challenged by the cultural values of the Third World: the importance of the family, hospitality, respect for the dead, sensitivity to the religious and spiritual dimension of life.

More and more of our young, influenced by the witness of persons driven to be radical, are committing themselves communally to bring about a more human and fraternal world.

1.2 **But our world is also confronted with other challenges:**

Many young people today, surrounded by a technical and impersonal world, feel a strong need for warm, convivial, and fraternal relationships.

Many young people, especially in the Third World, anxious about an uncertain future, are in need of educators present to them who help them professionally and socially to find their place in the world.

Many people today, obsessed with the attraction of money and profit, are looking for witnesses to generosity and benevolence.

Many people today who run the risk of suffocation because of individualism need to be transformed, renewed, reborn by being listened to by the word and the presence of others.

Many people today, adults and youth alike, pursue entertainment in an environment dominated by sound and image and lack a healthy appreciation of seeing and hearing, of silence and of presence to one's self.

Many people today, adults and youth alike, dominated by the pursuit of sexual pleasure yearn for a new civilisation of love in which the person would be respected and life made to be welcome, risked, given.

Many people today, adults and youth alike, caught up in a fast-moving world of fleeting time and events, desperately seek roots, continuity and a new fidelity.

Many people today, adults and youth alike, live in a vast spiritual desert; they are in a secret search for meaning in life, for the absolute and the mystical.

1.3 **Brothers, at the heart of this world,** we have often been tempted in our style of community life and of our personal lives by the forces of darkness; but **THE COMMUNITY TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED** can take up the challenge: **it is an opportunity and a grace.**

Men among men, in the midst of the fabric of our society and of our history, our vocation as Brothers in community **is a sign of hope and a source of life.**

The community response we wish to give to this reality leads us to express our convictions.

2. CONVICTIONS

2.1 We believe that the contemplative attitude of the Founder, who was always attentive to the concrete situations of his own history and open to God's plan made manifest in his Word, invites us to live a unified Lasallian spirituality, knowing that it is the same Spirit who consecrates the Brothers and converts the hearts of young people. (R 1, 11, 90; Med. 195, 2)

2.2 We believe that religious consecration lived in community of the Church gives meaning to the commitments the Brothers make, thus giving unity to every moment of their lives. Each Brother should make efforts to integrate in his person the constitutive elements of his vocation. (R 10, 22, 23)

2.3 We believe that the spirit of this Institute, without which the Brothers are "*dead members*", is a spirit of faith and zeal which animates the life of one who gives himself entirely to Jesus Christ for the salvation of young people. (R 20, 21; R 1718, Ch. II)

2.4 We believe in the person of the Brother as a unique and irreplaceable being whom we should love, whose sufferings and joy we share, to whom we give of ourselves, someone we need, someone we should serve with self-renunciation in order to build up the community. (R 54)

2.5 We believe that our relationship with the God of Jesus Christ cannot be programmed, that our histories and spiritual journeys are varied and that our conversion and spiritual progress depend on the mystery between God and each one of us. We also believe that the community is the principal support for our spiritual journey. (R 58b, 81)

2.6 We believe that "*chastity rooted in the Gospel and lived in celibacy is an expression of love totally vowed to God. It is a gift of the Spirit.*" But the Brother is convinced that the grace of God will be more active in him the more he lives united to his Brothers

and is available to respond to the calls that come from God to serve others and to open himself to them in friendship. (R 27; Mt 19; 1 Cor 7)

2.7 We believe that the life of prayer, which nourishes intimacy with Christ, is a witness to the vitality and authenticity of community life, that it fortifies the community and is a call to greater fidelity. (R 70, 71, 73)

2.8 We believe that mental prayer should be considered by the Brothers "*as the first and principal of their daily exercises, and the one most capable of drawing down God's blessing on all the others*". (R 69; Med 193 and 196)

2.9 We believe that the community exists for the Kingdom, which it should make present through signs of faith, fraternity, simple life style and openness and availability to others. (R 32, 36, 48, 53, 57)

2.10 We believe that, since our origins, we are linked specifically and by vow to association for the educational service of the poor and that each Brother and the Institute itself are invited to a progressive conversion to the poor and a preferential option in their favour. (R 25, 40b, 41...) The Brother Director should help the community make progress in this conversion.

2.11 We believe that the Brother Director, as the one who has the principal responsibility for the community and its unity, is at the service of his Brothers, offering them his advice and support. He encourages his Brothers by being for them presence and witness, and helps them to grow spiritually and to accomplish their mission "*together and by association.*" (R 61-64).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Unified life

In developing their annual programmes, every Brother, community and District will plan specific actions to maintain an

integration among the constitutive elements of our life: consecration, mission and community.

Each community will celebrate with appropriate rituals the significant moments of its life together, in particular, the Community Annual Programme, the appointment of the Director, renewal of vows, and Institute and Church feasts.

3.2 Affective life

The total development of the Brother as a person calls for the following:

- a) The personal and community annual programmes are to place first priority on the quality of interpersonal relationships and of fraternal life together, and in a special way, that of support for and accompaniment of the young and senior Brothers.
- b) The Community Annual Programme is to provide for opportunities for sharing personal experiences of the faith journey of each Brother.
- c) Districts are to develop programmes, workshops and experiences on the affective life of the Brother to assist him in his personal growth as a balanced and psycho-sexually mature person.

3.3 Life of prayer

In view of the widespread concern about our prayer life as expressed in the notes sent to the Chapter, we re-affirm that *“ordinarily the Brothers give to God at least two hours of each day in meditation, the Eucharist, community vocal prayer, spiritual reading and personal prayer.”* (R 73)

3.4 Life style of the community

- a) Each community, as part of its annual programme, is to evaluate its life style and determine in what areas it has lost

sight of the promise to share all things in common and to live a life which witnesses the values of the Gospel.

The annual programme of the community is to include specific initiatives to challenge the Brothers to live more simply (for example, in examining the community budget, personal expenditures, the residence of the community, etc.) (R 32-35, 55, 60, 60a), with particular attention to those community dynamics that the Rule points out and that are developed in the Guide for Formation (201, 304).

- b) *“By their active presence and by their sensitivity to one another, the Brothers assure the solidarity of the community.”* (R 54)

Each community is to live in such a way that exemplifies the availability of Brother to Brother and to those we serve. Personal possessions and attitudes of behaviour which prohibit the availability of one Brother to another and to those we serve, and which contribute to a sense of loneliness and isolation of Brothers in community, must be dealt with by the community if we are to live truly *“together and by association”*.

- c) The General Chapter encourages initiatives approved by Districts for the establishment of communities inserted in working class areas, who witness by their evangelical life a presence of the Church among the poor.

3.5 Role of Brother Director

The Chapter re-affirms the importance of the role of the Brother Director in the life of the community as an animator and a guide. In particular, the Chapter re-affirms the importance of the personal interview and regular community meetings as significant means to help insure the integration of the three constitutive elements of consecration, mission and community in our life as Brothers.

4. PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 6

In view of our call to live together in charity in community and to love, affirm and support one another spiritually, psychologically and socially, the General Chapter mandates that each community consist of no fewer than three Brothers.

Proposition 7

The General Chapter designates 1995 as a year devoted specifically to the prayer life of the Brother. Formation programmes at the Centre of the Institute, Regional centres, Districts, communities and retreat centres operated by the Brothers will include programmes for the renewal of our prayer life, especially mental prayer. Personal annual programmes and community annual programmes will give priority to the theme of prayer during the year.

Proposition 8

To aid Brother Directors in fulfilling their important role in the community, the Chapter proposes:

- a) that the Centre of the Institute prepare a Guide for Brother Directors, in coordination with Regions and Districts, to offer recommendations for effective leadership of the community;
- b) that in the next seven years, Districts and Regions plan periodic training programmes for Brother Directors. These programmes will treat such topics as ministry of community leadership, communication skills, assistance in accompanying the young and elderly Brothers, the personal interview and the guidance of the Brothers toward shared responsibility for the life of the community.

AWAKENING AND ACCOMPANYING THE VOCATION OF THE BROTHER TODAY

1. PREAMBLE

Introduction

The Rule and the Guide for Formation contain principles, experiences and suggestions with regard to the pastoral ministry of vocations and accompanying the Brothers in initial and continuing formation. It is not the intention of the General Chapter to write another treatise on these matters. Aware, however, of the gap that exists between the proposed ideal and the lived reality of the Institute, the General Chapter therefore wants to emphasise only a few fundamental principles and observations, recommend some suggestions and finally offer some propositions for implementation in the work of awakening and accompanying the vocation of the Brother today.

Awakening the vocation of the Brother

Every vocation is a gift. God, in His goodness and Providence, continues to call young people to make a radical commitment to follow Jesus. We believe that God still calls some people to dedicate themselves entirely to the human and Christian education of youth, and especially the poor, as Brothers of the Christian Schools. John Baptist de La Salle continues to be an inspiration and guide for these young people.

The Brothers have the primary role to play in the awakening of these vocations. However, every member of the Lasallian Family is called to join in the pastoral ministry of vocations (R 83).

In spite of their limitations, the Brothers fulfill this role to the extent that they attempt to live authentically their personal, apostolic and community life. The community therefore:

- puts its trust in God and prays “*that workers may be sent to the harvest*”;
- holds the primary responsibility for the awakening and encouraging of vocations;
- offers a challenge, in vocational terms, to the extent that it gives witness to the values of brotherhood, a deep spiritual life, dedication to evangelization and the educational service of the poor, gratuity, a welcoming and open spirit, incarnation within the local culture, the joy of living together as Brothers.

The community needs to enter into direct contact with young people and share with them both human and spiritual values and the Brother’s vocation.

The young Brothers, being among those who have a closer affinity to youth, are favored agents in the evangelisation of youth and in the pastoral ministry of vocations. Therefore, we urge them to remain involved as much as possible in youth and vocational ministry.

Accompanying Brothers in temporary vows

Each Brother is primarily responsible for his own formation (R 96a, 101a). However, the community is responsible for providing the ambiance which is formative of all the Brothers, but especially those with temporary vows, in its prayer life, community relationships, life-style, social interaction with others.... This needs to be integrated into the community’s annual plan.

The community Director plays an important role in assuring that the community is attentive to the professional, affective and spiritual needs of the Brothers in temporary vows.

The Brother in temporary vows needs a regular, personal, dialogical relationship with a Brother who helps him to integrate his experiences of consecration, community and mission, guard against over-activity and recognise God’s presence in his ministry.

At the same time, the dangers of paternalism and infantilism are to be avoided. The Brothers in temporary vows should be encouraged to face the social, economic and personal challenges that are a part of all normal young adulthood.

The vow chapter is a pastoral and formative opportunity for the renewal of the life of the community itself and for the participation of the Brother in temporary vows in that life.

2. AWAKENING THE VOCATION OF THE BROTHER

2.1 Observations

Although, here and there, there are signs of hope of an increase in the number of vocations, one has to be honest and recognise that the number of novices in the Institute remains small.

Certain sectors have in fact made the effort and have made Brothers and resources available for the pastoral ministry of vocations. They have adapted their approach to local realities. Some have been blessed with vocations, while others have not.

The desire for vocations is in some places not always matched by a genuine effort to awaken them. Some Brothers are discouraged; others have difficulty today communicating the identity of the Brother to young people. In some places, a lack of planning and genuine interest in the pastoral ministry of vocations is noted. Vocation ministry does not appear to be a priority in these places.

2.2 Suggestions

In order to facilitate the young person's choice in his vocation, every Brother makes simple, explicit and personal proposals to any young person who manifests the appropriate vocational dispositions.

Experience has shown that involvement of youth in ministry among the poor with similarly interested young people is a good environment for vocational discernment to occur.

Each District draws up or reinforces its plan for awakening vocations. Recognising that pastoral ministry of vocations is best situated in a good pastoral ministry of youth, such a plan includes, therefore, those activities of youth ministry which favour the awakening of vocations (Guide 59-64). Where no local community exists, the District or Region assumes this essential responsibility for awakening vocations.

3. ACCOMPANYING BROTHERS IN TEMPORARY VOWS

3.1 Observations

We have a small number of Brothers in the Institute in temporary vows. They are not evenly distributed. They are often isolated among many older Brothers and not well accompanied. Because of this disproportionate number of young and older Brothers, the Brothers with temporary vows tend to be overworked.

There is a risk of gearing their formation along the lines of maintaining existing educational works rather than of searching for new or adapted educational services which answer the real needs of the poor.

The realities are that due to the disproportion between young and older Brothers, some communities tend to have

established structures of community living directed towards older Brothers and the institutions and works they serve. On the other hand, not all communities are aware of, or conversant with, their newly defined role as a formative community for the Brothers with temporary vows. Other communities need to be more visible in offering an alternative to the values of a society that in some places is consumeristic, individualistic, self-centered, intolerant of minorities, etc.

Among the reasons why the accompaniment of Brothers in temporary vows is sometimes neglected are:

- Brother Directors are overworked, do not have the necessary skills in accompaniment, and/or play a diminished role in the community;
- interaction with other Brothers and religious in temporary vows is not easily available;
- there is no specific Brother appointed to accompany the Brothers in temporary vows.

3.2 Suggestions

The community specifies in its community plan how it will accompany the Brother in temporary vows. In making out this plan, the community:

- dialogues with the Brother in temporary vows himself (allowing him to share his personal background, needs and expectations and to propose initiatives regarding community life and educational service);
- dialogues with the District leadership (Visitor, Formation Commission, Brother in charge of Brothers in temporary vows...);
- specifies different roles in this accompaniment.

At the time when the Brother requests renewal of vows, the community is encouraged to look upon this as an opportunity to evaluate not only the development of the Brother in temporary

vows but also its own life and development as a formative community. This process, best accomplished over several months and not only at the moment of the vow chapter, allows for community accompaniment that is open to real growth both for the Brother and for the community.

The Brother Visitor is encouraged to evaluate regularly the way in which the community accompanies the Brother in temporary vows.

4. PREPARATION OF FORMATION AND VOCATION PERSONNEL

4.1 Observations

Initial and ongoing formation programmes vary a great deal in the different sectors of the Institute.

Certain sectors suffer from a lack of sufficient formation and vocation personnel. This is a matter requiring even greater cooperation and interdependence.

The work of formators today requires a wide range of qualities and skills. We also see the enormous complexity of topics dealt with in formation: human development, psychology, sociology, the bases of religious life and theology, and Lasallian studies...

4.2 Suggestions

That in the next seven years the Regions, in collaboration with the Formation Secretariat, give priority to the establishment of centers, meetings and programmes for the preparation of local and/or inculturated formation and vocation personnel.

That the Formation Secretariat keep formators of each District updated on the various articles, publications and translations that come out on themes of Lasallian formation.

5. THE FORMATION SECRETARIAT

5.1 Observations

The work of the Secretariat in helping formation and vocation personnel is greatly appreciated throughout the Institute but it is acknowledged that there are limitations in time, personnel and practical materials available to achieve its goals.

5.2 Suggestions

Each secretary should possess at least two languages in such a way that between them the three most used languages of the Institute are covered.

The Formation Secretariat is asked:

- to give priority to the formation of formators;
- to provide practical material to help the formation of formators;
- to continue to visit the formation centres and give special attention to the postulancy and to the Brothers in temporary vows.

6. PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 9

The General Chapter asks that each community, as part of its community programme, include its plan for the awakening of vocations that is adapted to the local setting. Such a plan explicitly expresses, among other things:

- the central role and responsibility of the community in carrying out the plan;

- the manner in which the community will be a welcoming and hospitable environment;
- the specific means for Brothers and young people to meet regularly and in an ongoing fashion for prayer and retreats, catechesis, shared apostolic activity;
- which Brothers will, in a personal way, accompany the person who wants to be a Brother;
- the relationship that exists between the community's plan and the District's vocational plan.

The Brother Visitor regularly evaluates with the community these aspects of the community plan.

Proposition 10

The General Chapter asks each community in which there is a Brother in temporary vows to specify in its community plan how it will accompany this Brother. The Brother Visitor regularly evaluates with the community how this is done.

Proposition 11

That the Centre of the Institute maintain at least two Secretaries of Formation.

Proposition 12

That the Formation Secretariat give priority over the next seven years to the formation of formators.

BROTHERS IN LATER YEARS

1. PRESENTATION

"By faith the Brother recognises that his life consists in a succession of calls from God to which he continues to respond." (R 100)

"The achievement of a personal vocation is the life-long task of every individual through fidelity to the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit." (Declaration, 15, 2)

Over recent decades a new group has appeared in society, in the Church and in the Institute: persons referred to as "third age" (retired) and "fourth age" (those in need of special care).

Today the age graph has been reversed and this involves more than half the Brothers in the Institute. The 1986 Chapter noted that *"ageing affects every Region in the Institute to varying degrees."*

We emphasise that the Institute, in a spirit of pastoral concern, wishes to accompany the Brother as he remains attentive to the succession of calls in his life. Special fraternal concern is felt for those Brothers who are forced to limit or redirect their activities because of age, loss of energy or retirement legislation.

A considerable number of notes sent by Brothers from various countries invited the General Chapter to treat this subject as a matter of priority for the Institute today.

Many Brothers in this age group are a source of genuine hope as each of them *"plays his part in the vitality of the Institute"*. (R 145)

2. THE CURRENT REALITY FOR OLDER BROTHERS

2.1 New perspectives

With a lessening of activity or responsibility in the educational mission, the Brother may be led to question his identity. He wonders if his life is losing its meaning within the Lasallian charism. He may be overcome by a feeling of uselessness, questioning his mission in an Institute that has radically changed since he first became a Brother. This may result in the awakening of new affective, psychological, spiritual and especially health needs.

With an attitude of joy and hope the Brother sees an opportunity for a new call within his Lasallian vocation.

2.2 The Brother and the mission

A Brother who has spent all his life working with the young or with active adults is in no way prepared to face the challenge of living with older, sick and handicapped people. He would be unhappy to limit his contacts only to this group.

He may also wish to continue with activities which he found fulfilling in his more active years:

- apostolic activities,
- activities which keep him in good psychological and physical condition (e.g., manual work),
- service to the community.

Many retired Brothers are already involved in varied activities with the young, with adults or with older people, on behalf of the missions or in parishes.

Young people are able to relate confidently to Brothers living their retirement gracefully who give witness to a whole life vowed to the service of others. This brotherly presence can be a positive attraction to the consecrated life.

There is a danger that a retired Brother without some activity or ministry will feel a **great void** in his life.

The Guide for Formation notes:

*If the Brother has learnt to “**advance in age**” and comes to terms with the course life takes, he will enter upon old age gracefully, seeing it as a journey towards God (291).*

Old age affords opportunities for using personal talent in ways that could not be imagined in previous stages (292).

2.3 The Brother, a man in continuing formation

A positive attitude towards this stage of life needs to be developed and worked out especially in the years immediately prior to retirement. Whatever new commitments he may take on, it will call for some special formation, preparation or training.

2.4 The Brother and his community

A retired Brother may be suited to various types of community—from an active, school-centred environment to one specially designed for older Brothers.

In whatever community he finds himself, his energy and presence are valued. However, it could also be a place of loneliness, as in the case of a small community beset by many demands or in a large, anonymous group.

Because certain personal difficulties appear or are accentuated with advancing age, Brothers may require the services of specialised personnel.

Preparation for **death and the funeral rite** are special moments in the life of a community. As the Guide for Formation recalls:

*“The nearness of death gives the sick Brother and the whole community the grace of experiencing this time **together and by association**, and of sharing peacefully and*

realistically the sorrow of the illness and the reality of the impending separation” (293).

2.5 The Brother as a member of his District

The District provides the material and financial means for supporting its older Brothers by ensuring conditions which meet their needs and favour a good quality of community living.

This effort by the District is reflected in the caring leadership within these communities. The Directors of the retirement homes, by responding to the call of their Brothers, undertake a meritorious and fraternal work.

3. ORIENTATIONS

3.1 For the Institute

The work of the Institute in the field of education for more than 300 years is the work of the Brothers done **together and by association**. The 42nd General Chapter looks back and rejoices at this mission carried out since the time of the Founder and expresses its gratitude to those numerous Brothers committed to the service of young people.

Today we invite all those who are retired or who are approaching retirement to look back with pride on their lives as educators and in thanksgiving to the Lord for calling them to take part in the Church's mission of education under the inspiration of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

We encourage these Brothers to continue to participate in the mission of the Institute by undertaking new ways which will bring renewed energies and personal satisfaction.

We recognise that they are the memory of the Institute and that their witness is irreplaceable in preserving the Lasallian educational tradition.

3.2 For the Districts

The General Chapter is aware as it considers the needs of our ageing Brothers that the situation in which they find themselves differs widely from place to place.

It therefore considers that it is the responsibility of the District, especially of the Brother Visitor and his Council, to establish a plan which will:

- ensure adequate preparation for Brothers reaching retirement;
- provide all necessary care for Brothers who are old and retired.

3.3 For the communities

All our Brothers who have given their lives to God in the service of the Institute must be assured that their community will continue to cherish and support them after their years of active service.

For those who are invalids, the community shows its affectionate concern in providing for all their needs.

“The Brothers’ community must make this period of life a source of rejoicing, discover the beauty...” (Guide for Formation, 292).

3.4 For the Brothers

The Chapter wishes to affirm for each Brother, whether in or approaching retirement, the high esteem in which he is held as one who has lived out his consecration in faithful service.

This Brother accepts this new stage of his life with peace and serenity. He places his trust in the God of goodness and compassion to whom he has been faithful all his life, and who has promised that *“those who instruct many unto justice shall shine like stars for all eternity” (Dan 12.3).*

He can be confident that he is valued by the Institute and the District and he is assured that regardless of age or activity, he has *“a role to play in the vitality of the Institute”* (R 145).

It is important for him to understand that his identity and worth as a Brother have not been lessened by his retirement.

Motivated by faith and zeal and in response to a new call from God, he looks for a new way to exercise his ministry. In discovering this new form of ministry which is in keeping with his capabilities and is in accord with the mission of the Institute, he is supported by the Brothers of his community and by his superiors (cf. R 16d).

This stage of his religious life allows him time and opportunity:

- to be a sign of God's great love;
- to witness to the value of fidelity;
- *“to unite (himself) to the Paschal mystery of Christ and to offer (his) sufferings for the Institute, the Church and the salvation of the world”* (R 56);
- to develop the more contemplative dimension of his prayer.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 That Communities show their affection for the older Brothers (particularly in houses of retirement) by contact, visits, invitations....

4.2 That the various groups within the Lasallian Family involve the older Brothers in the shared mission (catechetics, basic literacy work, family visits....)

4.3 That in those large communities of retired Brothers where there is a risk of loneliness, the Brother Visitor, his Council and the Director study the possibility of regrouping the Brothers in “smaller units”.

4.4 That the Brother Directors of retirement communities encourage links with religious of other congregations, with Christian groups and with local associations.

5. PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 13

That each District draw up a comprehensive plan for:

- Brothers who are approaching retirement,
- Brothers who are already retired,
- Brothers who are in need of special care.

This plan will include the means of formation to undertake new works in keeping with the mission of the Institute. This plan will be evaluated annually by the Visitor and his Council.

Proposition 14

That the Districts take great care of those Brothers who have responsibility for the care of the aged and give them the opportunity for appropriate formation in preparation for this task.

Proposition 15

That those in positions of responsibility at Regional or District level facilitate some participation of retired Brothers in the various representative bodies of the Region or District: chapters, councils, commissions.

Proposition 16

That the Brother Visitors encourage those in charge of communities of retired Brothers to create and develop an environment which is open to:

- the Church's life and mission,
- the Institute's life and mission,
- society at large.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE INSTITUTE

A. Central Services of the Institute

The Chapter receives with acknowledgement the reports from the Secretary General and the Personnel Office, from the Postulator General, from the Procurator General, from the Secretary for the Educational Mission, from SECOLI, from "Signum Fidei", from the World Confederation of Lasallian Former Students, from the International Council of Lasallian Studies, from the Director of CIL and SIEL, on Institute Publications, on the Guadalupanas Sisters of De La Salle, on the Lasallian Third Order and on the Catechetical Union of Jesus Crucified and of Mary Immaculate.

The fine detail provided in the reports and the high quality of their preparation were noted by the Commission. The Commission also deliberated on the organisation and efficiency of the Central Services provided at the Generalate. These services are to help the Districts as directed by the Superior and Council and at the same time to keep the Superior and Council fully briefed in their particular areas of service (cf. Report of Superior General 9.32 & 9.35). The services provided at the Centre of the Institute have not been directly part of the structures of government.

The Commission has taken cognisance of the good work done by the Brothers and staff who provide these Central Services. Nevertheless, since the Report of the Brother Superior General to the Chapter twice returns to the idea of a "*closer coordination between the General Council and the Secretariats*" (9.32; 9.35), as well as highlighting the importance of strengthening "*links between these three Secretariats (SECOLI, Formation, Educational Mission) and similar bodies existing at Regional and District levels*" (cf. 9.36), the Commission expresses its support for whatever structural adjustments the incoming Superior General and Council judge necessary to

improve the two-way exchange between the Centre of the Institute and the Regions, Districts and other sectors. The confusion provoked by any parallelism of structures needs to be avoided.

Proposition 17

The Chapter appreciates the report of Brother Superior General for the quality of its preparation and for its content. It expresses the gratitude of the Institute towards Brother Superior and his Council for the competence with which they have directed the Institute during the past seven years.

The General Chapter requests that the report of Brother Superior General and his Council and his personal commentary be published in whole or in part.

Proposition 18

The General Chapter requests that Brother Superior General and his Council investigate the possibility of decentralising or of re-assigning certain General Services to Regional or District level.

B. The District

1. Introduction

Our reflection is on the basis of the Rule (125a, b, c, d, e), the Brother Superior General's report (cf. 9.1) and the memorandum of the General Council on Structures of Government (17-06-92).

2. Basic principles

2.1 "*The District is the key-structure in the government and the animation of the Institute.*" (General Council Memorandum, 17-06-92)

2.2 Two types of District could be envisaged, those which are identical with a homogeneous territory and those which take in different countries. (Cf. Memo 17-06-92)

3. Criteria for maintaining or creating a District

3.1 Criteria as regards personnel

- a) The possibility of having a Visitor in a full-time role.
- b) The possibility of having among the Brothers of the District the competence necessary to be able to carry out satisfactorily the government and animation at the levels of District, communities and works (R 85d, 87a, 125a, 136, 140).
- c) The number of Brothers. It seems utopian to set down an absolute minimum number of Brothers to maintain or to create a District. The following factors need to be taken into account:
 - 1) the great diversity of cultural, social, political and geographical factors in the area;
 - 2) the significant differences in the average age of the Brothers in different sectors;
 - 3) the number of Brothers involved in the mission;
 - 4) the importance of the number of lay persons involved in the mission.

3.2 Criteria of a material order

Observation

A difficulty felt in several Regions is that of being able to assume financial responsibility for the formation of Brothers, the care of retired Brothers and maintaining works.

Suggestion

There should be taken into account the importance of being able in the near future to have at its disposal resources which guarantee the financial autonomy of the District (R 125a).

Take into account as well the aid that might come through the twinning of Districts or through the Institute Sharing Fund.

3.3 Geo-political and socio-cultural criteria

- a) The assurance that the situation of the area allows the Brother Visitor to visit all the communities.
- b) Being able to safeguard the relative autonomy of the sectors concerned (cf. General Council Memo, 08-06-92).

Proposition 19

That within the coming years the General Council bring about the reorganisation of Districts, Sub-Districts and sectors after consultation with the Brothers and those concerned.

C. The Delegation

1. Observations

1.1 The Rule foresees the establishment of Delegations only in special cases: "*In exceptional circumstances, the Brother Superior General may establish a Delegation with the advice of his Council and after consulting the communities concerned.*" (R 126a)

- 1.2 Presently, there are 14 Delegations in the Institute.
- Some may be able to be joined with existing Districts;
 - some may be able to be joined together to form a new District;
 - some may have to remain as Delegations.

1.3 The large number of Delegations has brought about certain difficulties:

- the difficulty in finding Brothers who can take on the extra work involved in being a Delegate;
- the multiplication of administrative units in the Institute;
- unequal representation at General Chapters.

Proposition 20

Brother Superior General and his Council should undertake a study of Delegations with a view to suppressing as many as possible and of integrating them into Districts (already existing or newly formed).

2. Observations

2.1 The Rule states that "*The Superior General can appoint as canonical superior of the Delegation a Brother having at least five years of perpetual profession in the Institute*" (R 126b) and "*In addition to this Brother Delegate, the Brother Superior General appoints one of the Brothers belonging to the Delegation and proposed by them, to be the Brother President.*" (R 126c)

2.2 We affirm that the lack of precision as regards the sharing of responsibilities between Delegate and President is at the source of certain tensions in the functioning of Delegations. Hence we propose:

Proposition 21

The Brother Superior General and his Council are to set out clearly the respective responsibilities of the Delegate and the President of the Delegation.

D. The Region

Observations

1. The orientations contained in the Rule have helped in the development of Regions.
2. In general, the functioning of Regions has been positive in animation and in promoting interdependence.
3. A greater coordination between the General Council and the Regions has been developed.
4. Inter-Regional exchanges and cooperative projects have been developed.
5. Given the plurality of geographical, cultural and political situations, etc., there is a great variety of Regions, both as regards the way they are formed as well as in their statutes and functioning.
6. Some Regions should be studied, in view of their reconstruction.
7. In some cases there is no clarity as regards the functions, responsibilities and powers of the Brother Regional.
8. The Regions use different terminology such as Regional, Coordinator, Executive Secretary, President, etc., with a lack of precision. (R 127d)

Recommendations

1. In their organisation and functioning, Regions are invited to develop inter-Regional, collaborative projects.

2. The General Council is invited to standardise and define the vocabulary used in regard to the Region.

3. Each Region is to set out clearly in its statutes the powers and authority of the regional representative for carrying out his mission.

Proposition 22

That, within the next seven years, the Brother Superior General and his Council strengthen their contacts with the representatives of Regions.

Proposition 23

That, during the next three years, the Brother Superior General and his Council work together with the Districts concerned in order to establish, if necessary, new Regional groupings.

E. Representation in the General Chapter

PREAMBLE

This section of the Report is a direct consequence of the preceding themes treated, viz., Districts, Delegations and Regions.

Indeed, it is the Commission's viewpoint that the geographical map of the Institute is likely to change greatly in the coming years because of the following:

- the fusion of Districts or the creation of new Districts;
- the disappearance of Delegations as they are integrated into existing Districts or join with others [Delegations] to form a District.

In addition, Regions are being invited to consider their reorganisation.

All of this will require an adjustment of the representation of Brothers in the General Chapter in relation to administrative units. One could also wish that some consideration could be made in reference to age groups, especially with respect to the young Brothers.

PROPOSITIONS

Modifications of the Rule by the General Chapter: the present text of the 1987 Rule is in the right column; the new text is in the left column.

Proposition 24

Article 106

(The first two paragraphs remain unchanged.)

With the consent of his Council, the Brother Superior may name up to ten supplementary delegates so as to ensure a better representation of the diversity of the Institute.

With the consent of his Council, the Brother Superior may, should it seem desirable, appoint four additional Brothers as Capitulants.

Proposition 25

Article 106a

The number of delegates to be elected, based on publication of the Circular of Convocation is as follows:

The number of delegates to be elected, based on the statistics of the Institute on the day of the publication of the Circular of Convocation, is determined as follows:

1° The number of delegates is a function of the number of Brothers in the District. It is fixed at one more than the whole quotient of the number of those Brothers by the number N fixed by Brother Superior and his Council.

2° Each Sub-District or Delegation officially constituted elects one delegate.

3° Brother Superior and his Council fix the number N...(*idem.*)

Proposition 26

Article 109c

Brother Superior General and his Council as well as the

1° Every District which has fewer than (N) Brothers elects one delegate;

Every District which has a total number of Brothers at least equal to (N) but less than 2(N) elects two delegates;

Every District having at least 2(N) Brothers elects three delegates.

2° Every Sub-District officially constituted which has 20 Brothers or more elects one delegate.

3° Every Delegation elects one delegate to the General Chapter.

4° The Brother Superior and his Council fix the number (N) in such a way that the total number of elected delegates be not fewer than one percent and not more than one and a half percent of the number of Brothers in the Institute.

The General Chapter can invite various persons to assist

General Chapter may invite persons to participate in the work of the Chapter as experts or as consultants.

the work of the Chapter as experts or consultants.

F. Other Modifications of the Rule

Proposition 27

Article 112

The ordinary General Chapter proceeds to the election of Brother Superior General. It fixes the number of General Councillors, which must not be less than six. It elects first of all the Brother Vicar General who is the first among the Councillors. It then proceeds to the election of the other members of the Council.

(Text continues as before.)

Proposition 28

Article 112b

To prepare for the election of the Brother Vicar and the oth-

The ordinary General Chapter elects the Brother Superior General.

Once the Chapter has determined the number of General Councillors, which must not be less than six, it proceeds to their election.

The Chapter then elects the Brother Vicar-General from among the Councillors.

Each of these elections must be determined by an absolute majority of the votes validly cast, no matter how many ballots may be necessary.

To prepare for the election of the members of the General

er members of the General Council, the newly elected Superior General gathers all the useful information and makes it known to the Capitulants.

If he judges it opportune....
(*idem.*)

Proposition 29

Article 119, 2

He is elected normally in the course of an ordinary General Chapter....

Proposition 30

Article 122a

Apart from the instances prescribed by law, both universal as well as particular, the consent of the Council is required in the following cases:

(1°, 2°, 3°, 4° unchanged.)

5° The possible designation of ten Brother Capitulants.

Council, the newly elected Superior General gathers all the useful information and makes it known to the Capitulants.

If he judges it opportune, he may suggest that a straw vote be taken within the Chapter and then present to the electors the names of the Brothers whom he judges suitable for the role.

He is elected from among the General Councillors, normally during the course of an ordinary General Chapter....

Apart from the instances prescribed in the universal law, the consent of the General Council is required in the following cases:

(1°, 2°, 3°, 4° as written.)

5° The decision to name four Capitulants to the General Chapter.

Proposition 31

Article 122b

Unless circumstances make it impossible, all the Councillors in office ought to take part in the deliberations and votes provided for in articles 118d, 119, 119b, 120, 120a, 120b and 120c above. These votes should be taken by a secret ballot and require a majority of two-thirds of the votes cast, taking into account the two cases referred to in article 120a.

Proposition 32

Article 127

The Region is not understood first of all as a structure of government but as a means of coordination and collaboration between certain sectors of the Institute which choose to join together. Nevertheless, the statutes of each Region can confer on the Regional a role of decision and authority in certain matters or in certain cases.

(Other paragraphs *idem.*)

Unless circumstances make it impossible, all the Councillors in office ought to take part in the deliberations and votes provided for in the above articles 118d, 119, 119b, 120, 120a, 120b and 120c. These ballots must be taken by a secret ballot and require a majority of two-thirds of the votes cast.

The Region is conceived, not as a structure of government but as a means of coordination and collaboration between certain sectors of the Institute which choose to join together.

Proposition 33

Article 129

The District Chapter is normally held.... (*idem*)

If the circumstances warrant it, the Chapter to follow a General Chapter can be considered as the final step of a District Chapter which began prior to the General Chapter.

Proposition 34

Article 137

(1st paragraph *idem*.)

The minimum number of Councillors is six. At least two-thirds.... (*idem*.)

Proposition 35

Article 137b

(A replacement of a word in French: *consultants* for *consulteurs*. There is no change in the text in English.)

The District Chapter is normally held.... It must also be held following a General Chapter in order to apply its decisions.

(1st paragraph is unchanged.)

The total number of Councillors is between six and twelve. At least two-thirds....

Proposition 36

Article 138

(The first three paragraphs remain unchanged.)

(Add to the last sentence of the 4th paragraph:) "but he makes the final decision."

Proposition 37

Article 138a

The following acts require the consent of the District Council:

1° admission to final profession.

(The rest is unchanged.)

Proposition 38

Article 95a

Not later than two months before the end of the novitiate, the novices freely make a request in writing to their own Brother Visitor stating

The quorum required for a meeting of the District Council is one half of the total number of its members. The Brother Visitor does not take part in the voting.

The following acts require the consent of the District Council:

1° admission to first vows and to perpetual profession;

Not later than two months before the end of the novitiate, the novices freely make a request in writing to their own Brother Visitor stating

their desire to make their first vows. The Brother Director provides the Brother Visitor with such information as may be useful concerning the external conduct of these novices.

Proposition 39

Article 95b

The pronouncing of vows is regulated according to the norms of canon law and the following arrangements:

1° (The first paragraph remains unchanged.)

2° Each candidate's request is examined by a Chapter of admission whose composition is determined by the

their desire to make their first vows. The Brother Director provides the Brother Visitor with such information as may be useful concerning the external conduct of these novices. Admission to vows is decided by the Brother Visitor with the consent of his Council. At least one member of the novitiate staff should be present at this meeting.

For all other occasions when vows are to be made, the canonical norms are to be observed together with the following prescriptions:

1° Admission to temporary or perpetual vows is decided by the Brother Visitor. However, admission to perpetual profession must be ratified by Brother Superior General.

1° Each candidate's request is examined by a Chapter of admission whose composition is determined by the

District Chapter. When there is a question of perpetual profession, the Chapter of admission must necessarily include the District Council. When it is a matter of first vows, at least one of the staff of the novitiate is invited to take part.

G. Relationships with other organisations

The 42nd General Chapter recognises that "*the spiritual gifts which the Church has received in St. John Baptist de La Salle go far beyond the confines of the Institute which he founded*" (R 146). Within the framework of the Lasallian Family and shared mission, it is happy to ask the General Council to strengthen the links which bind the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools with:

- the Institute of Guadalupanas Sisters of De La Salle;
- the Institute of the Lasallian Sisters of Vietnam;
- the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and of Mary Immaculate;
- Signum Fidei;
- The Lasallian Third Order.

1. Relationship with the Guadalupanas Sisters of De La Salle

The propositions which follow are answers to the questions addressed to the General Chapter by the Guadalupanas Sisters of De La Salle. (Letter of April 1993 to the Chapter).

Proposition 40

The General Chapter recognises the autonomy of the Institute of Guadalupanas Sisters of De La Salle as well as its

District Chapter. When there is a question of perpetual profession, the Chapter of admission must necessarily include the District Council.

closeness to the Lasallian charism. It encourages collaboration between the two Institutes within the framework of the educational mission and of programmes of initial and continuing formation.

Proposition 41

The General Chapter maintains the possibilities offered to the Guadalupanas Sisters of De La Salle to share in renewal and formation centres established by the Institute, CIL and SIEL. The Centre of the Institute will be responsible for half the cost of these formation sessions.

Proposition 42

The General Chapter asks that the links between the Districts and the Institute of the Guadalupanas Sisters of De La Salle be made the object of written agreements between the Brother Visitor and the Superior General of the Sisters, after having received the agreement of Brother Superior and his Council.

Proposition 43

The General Chapter leaves the possibility that Districts name Brothers as advisors to assist the Institute of the Guadalupanas Sisters of De La Salle.

2. Relationship with the Lasallian Sisters of Vietnam

Recommendation

The General Chapter has been happy to welcome a representative of the Lasallian Sisters of Vietnam, who share with us the Lasallian charism. The Chapter wishes the Institute to maintain good relations with the Sisters and to continue working with them at the service of the Lasallian mission.

3. Relationship with the Union of Catechists

Recommendations

- 3.1 That the vocation and mission of the Union of Catechists be better known and shared at Institute level;
- 3.2 That the Institute and the Union programme common initiatives in the fields of education and evangelisation;
- 3.3 That the members of the Union of Catechists be able to share in the programmes of Lasallian formation organised by Regions and Districts.

4. Links with ecclesiastical and educational authorities

The General Chapter recognises the importance of the mission carried out by those Brothers who at various levels represent the Brothers in ecclesiastical or educational organisations. It emphasises the importance of continuing this direction.

Recommendations

- 4.1 That the Institute, at all levels, pursue and strengthen its participation in ecclesiastical organisations:
 - in order to share the specific riches of our vocation as lay religious vowed to the education and evangelisation of the young;
 - so that our concerns and our specific approach in these matters be known.
- 4.2 That the Institute, at all levels, pursue and strengthen its participation in the different national and international organisa-

tions which are in relationship with the world of the young and of education:

- in order to know better the reality and the educational needs of our day;
- in order to make known our concerns and our specific approach in these fields.

H. Propositions adopted to facilitate election procedures in the 42nd General Chapter

One of the tasks of the Government Commission was to provide propositions to facilitate the election of the members of the General Council. Rule 114a allows for such decisions:

The General Chapter can also make a certain number of decisions without incorporating them into the Statutes. Such decisions shall remain in force as norms or directives until the following ordinary General Chapter, which will evaluate their suitability.

The following propositions were voted by the General Assembly of the Chapter but were not formally proposed as modifications of the Rule.

1. The General Chapter proposes to the Brother Superior General that he entrust to the Brother Vicar General the animation and coordination of some responsibility which touches the whole Institute.
2. The General Chapter requests that, before the election of the General Councillors, there be within the Chapter a straw vote to indicate six names. The result will be announced.
3. The General Council will be made up of six elected members.
4. The Chapter elects the Councillors one by one.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Preamble

The Commission makes the following recommendations in light of two principles:

Interdependence and subsidiarity are two dynamic concepts which have permitted the Institute to meet numerous needs both in the central administration and in the help given to sectors in need. We are pleased with this fraternal richness. This practice should continue and be intensified.

In the coming years, and even before the next General Chapter, the Institute will face a serious financial crisis. The increasing needs in the less fortunate sectors on the one hand and the decreasing number of Brothers in the Districts assisting these sectors on the other hand call for bold decisions. These facts suggest that it is important that the less fortunate sectors work, with the help of the entire Institute, to become financially self-sufficient.

Orientations

In light of the observations in the reports of Brother Superior and the Bursar General and those in the notes sent to the Chapter, the Commission developed its recommendations in accord with the following orientations:

The goods of the Institute are both at the service of the mission and for the needs of the Brothers.

The decrease in the number of Brothers coupled with the increase of expenses in the better-endowed Districts demands a financial plan for the future. This observation suggests the need to establish a stable patrimony and reserve funds. It likewise

suggests that steps be taken to work for the financial self-sufficiency of those sectors which presently require financial assistance.

Better planning and controls are necessary in order to reduce the expenses of the Centre of the Institute.

The Institute throughout the world has, from the beginning, acquired assets and resources and managed them in such a way as to fulfill its mission of education of youth. Thanks to sound management and favourable opportunities, these assets have grown over the years. Moreover, they are administered primarily in the Districts and local communities.

These resources are still at the service of the mission. And as the work of the Institute is constantly developing, its needs are growing too. However, the funds available are not always where the greatest need exists. To fulfill its mission in our world today and in the coming years, it is necessary for the entire Institute to benefit from existing resources while it also continues to insist on sound management.

Keeping in mind the above, the following three principles guide the recommendations to be adopted:

- the sharing of resources,
- open financial reporting,
- financial responsibility.

Recommendations

Addressed to the General Council

1. That the Financial Directory prepared by the International Economic Council be sent to the Districts, so that they may make their suggestions before the text is published and put into effect.
2. Without prejudging the central services of the Institute, that the General Council, from a financial perspective, attempt to consolidate services or decentralise them.

3. That special appeals for financial donations be made far enough in advance that Districts can include them in their budgets.

4. That the General Council study the question of whether or not the operation of Istituto Convitto Jesus Magister can be developed to produce a net income sufficient to pay on an on-going basis all the expenses of maintenance and renovation of the Generalate's physical plant.

5. That the General Council make a study of the various Institute publications in order to avoid repetition, to discern the orientation of each and to evaluate the service they render and the financial implications thereof.

6. That the General Council study the feasibility of establishing an Office of Development which would have the responsibility of researching, developing and procuring new sources of funding for the Institute's endowment and future operations.

Over the past seven years, we have seen the work of the Institute grow and expand while at the same time we have seen the number of Brothers decrease and the average age of the Brothers increase. In 1986 there were 9,010 Brothers; in 1992, 7,897 Brothers—1,103 fewer. Presently, over 56% of the Brothers are over the age of 60. During this same time period, the operating expenses of the Centre have increased significantly, so much so that the contributions of the Districts generated by the taxes has increased from \$664,286 in 1986 to \$1,653,304 for 1993—an increase of almost 149%. However, the tax rate has grown at an even greater rate: from \$91.25 (category 5) in 1986 to \$258 presently—an increase of almost 183%.

As the work of the Institute continues to expand, so will the need of funding for the work. The current method of funding the Centre mostly relies on the Brothers and the

Districts. Because this method alone cannot support the expanding work of the Centre and the Institute, it is imperative that new sources of funding be developed and created. It is in this spirit of providing for the future of the Institute that the above recommendation is made.

Addressed to the International Economic Council and to the Bursar General

7. We are pleased with the renovations made at the Generalate with the financial donations and loans from the Districts. We ask the International Economic Council to formulate a maintenance plan that will consider future renovations, budget, calendar and methods of financing.

8. That the International Economic Council establish their projections of future taxation for the near and long terms, so that the Districts are informed in a timely manner.

9. That within the next three years, Regional meetings be organised between the Bursar General and the District bursars and Visitors to study the implementation of the new Financial Directory.

Addressed to the Districts

10. That all the Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations adapt their accounting system to the system in use in their country in order to facilitate clear and reliable financial information for themselves and the Centre of the Institute.

11. That all the sectors of the Institute which receive aid be responsible for training their financial personnel.

12. That the Districts which can and which have minor initial formation expenses contribute voluntarily to the initial formation expenses of Brothers in other countries.

13. The achievements of the Lasallian Studies office in the areas of research and publication are appreciated. That the Regions, Districts, institutions, universities, publishing houses, etc., help sponsor these publications.

1. THE FINANCIAL OPERATION OF THE CENTRE OF THE INSTITUTE

Proposition 44

That, to facilitate the annual budget preparations of the Districts, once the regular budget of the Centre of the Institute for 1993-94 and the annual contribution of each District are approved, this budget and contribution schedule shall be maintained at a fixed level with an annual increment of 10% for a minimum period of three years. The ordinary budget of the Services of the Generalate shall be adjusted to conform to this new reality (calculated in USA dollars).

2. THE ENDOWMENT OF THE CENTRE OF THE INSTITUTE

Considering the present financial situation of the Institute and the necessity for the proper functioning of the Institute,

- in view of the decrease in the number of Brothers and the maintenance of those expenses that cannot be reduced;
- in view of the need to stabilise, and even decrease, the annual contributions of the Districts to the Centre of the Institute;

- in view of the present difficult situation which requires that we withdraw funds from what should be called the "permanent endowment" of the Institute, and in view of the necessity of conserving, and even augmenting, the value of that endowment;
- in view of the report of Brother Superior and his Council, and of the more and more numerous instances when the Centre of the Institute has to support the needs of formation for the Brothers and the demands of interdependence:

Proposition 45

That a permanent endowment fund be created at the Centre of the Institute and that the fund be increased.

That no withdrawals be made from the funds placed in the endowment.

That the interest and dividends earned be reinvested in the endowment for three years.

That the Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations which can contribute to the endowment fund do so according to their means.

They may choose to contribute by either one of these two ways:

- by doubling their annual contribution to the Centre each year for the next three years, or
- by donating a substantial amount by making payments over a period of time, the specifics of which would be mutually arrived at in agreement with the General Council.

3. TWINNING

Certain Districts and Regions, as a way of practising interdependence, have been gradually creating funds dedicated

to the District, Sub-District, or Delegation with which they have a twinning relationship. The interest and dividends from these funds help to cover partially the expenses of formation and District administration.

Proposition 46

That the twinning between sectors of the Institute be established in agreement with the Superior General and his Council.

That the fund be administered jointly by the twinned sectors and with respect for the principle of subsidiarity.

4. SHARING FUND AND SECOLI

SHARING FUND

The Institute by means of the Sharing Fund aids those sectors that are not able to support fully their formation programme. (General Chapter 1986, proposition 2)

The Sharing Fund has two components:

- 1) the annual amount used for distributing aid;
- 2) the reserve fund called the Lasallian Special Formation Fund, the interest of which is part of the annual amount distributed as aid.

Proposition 47

That 15% of the annual contributions to the Sharing Fund be placed in the Lasallian Special Formation Fund.

That, on the occasion of the 42nd General Chapter, each community be invited to make a special contribution, as soon as possible, to the Lasallian Special Formation Fund, as a sign of support and a symbol of confidence in the development of our

mission. Each District, Sub-District and Delegation will determine the practical arrangements.

SECOLI

It is hoped that the donor Districts continue to be as generous as possible in responding to the growing needs of the developing sectors, in a spirit of cooperation and of interdependence.

Proposition 48

That the sectors of the Institute that give aid and those that receive aid inform SECOLI of the aid given and received.

That the recipients of the aid send to the donor an accounting of how the aid was used, in order that mutual trust and a spirit of cooperation be developed which would facilitate receiving more aid.

5. LASALLIAN FAMILY

We have studied the questions relative to the Lasallian Family from the financial perspective; therefore, our proposition does not cover the entire subject.

Proposition 49

That the formation and animation of the members of the Lasallian Family be financed at the local level.

CONCLUDING REMARKS **42nd General Chapter**

15 May 1993

Feast of St. John Baptist de La Salle

Brother John Johnston, Superior General

Among the many moving experiences I have had as Vicar and as Superior, one of the most striking and most memorable occurred in Djibouti, just six months after the last General Chapter.

Djibouti is an Islamic country. There are very few Christians. In Tadjourah the Brothers operate a *Centre d'Apprentissage* for young people who have dropped out of ordinary schools and are unemployed. The people of Djibouti are traditionally nomadic and pastoral, in the strict sense of that word. The Brothers are giving them the opportunity to acquire a certain number of technical skills which will in turn help them to earn their living.

Brother Bernard Bauffe, Director of the Centre, arranged for me to visit the homes of two of the young Muslim students. As the four of us drove towards the village, enjoying a very pleasant conversation, one of the young men suddenly cried out, "Stop the car." Brother Bernard immediately pulled over to the side of the road. The young man darted from the car, ran down an incline on the other side of the road and chased away a dog that was attacking a goat. The young man picked up the severely wounded goat and walked back up the incline, carrying it in his arms. Several men responded to his call for help, but it was too late: the goat was dead.

The Good Shepherd

That experience has given me a new understanding and appreciation of the Good Shepherd parable and of our Founder's

meditations on that parable. The Good Shepherd is, of course, Christ. The parable teaches us, in the words of one scripture scholar, that God's mercy contradicts all human expectations of God's attitude towards sinners and his treatment of them. It teaches us that God's mercy is as "foolish" as that of a shepherd who abandons 99 sheep in order to save one.

The Founder urges us, Brothers of the Christian Schools, to envisage Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep and to remember that we are called to take Jesus' place today and to make Christ's love and mercy a reality for those he confides to our care. To be Christ, the Good Shepherd, in the world of education and among children and young people is indeed our vocation as Brothers of the Christian Schools. The Good Shepherd is a model for each of us individually, for our communities, for our Districts and for the Institute. The Good Shepherd is a model also for every person who shares our mission. More than that. It is a model for the entire Lasallian Family.

But, of course, like all parables, this one must be read with care. The parable is about the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. It is not about the sheep. The parable in no way advocates a paternalistic relationship to people whom we consider to be sheep. Considered intelligently, however, the parable can inspire us. Permit me to use my experience in Djibouti as the point of departure for a very brief reflection upon the decisions of this Chapter.

What kind of people are we?

The action of that nineteen- or twenty-year-old Muslim reveals much about his character. He is obviously a loving and caring person. His focus of attention is not himself but others. His cheerful participation in the conversation during the automobile drive did not blind him to a need which required an immediate response. He was attentive. He was alert to the needs of those around him, even to those of animals. He responded decisively and boldly. He was not like the priest and Levite in the parable

of the Good Samaritan, men who were perhaps so preoccupied with maintaining their prearranged itinerary and intentions that they closed their eyes to a situation which might oblige them to change their plans. It is instructive also to note that this young man did not succeed. The goat died. But he made the effort. With pain, he accepted what had happened, returned to the car and, in a short time, regained his composure.

I think that the most fundamental question we face today is, what kind of people are we. What do we stand for? What are our values? What are the principles and priorities that govern our lives—as individuals, as members of our communities and Districts, as Institute? During these last six weeks, we Capitulants, directly and indirectly, have wrestled with questions concerning our principles, our values, our priorities and the depth of our commitment.

We Brothers of the Christian Schools are called to be men who have integrated—that is to say, made one—the three dimensions of our vocation. For this reason we have examined the quality of our lives as consecrated men, as community men, as apostolic men. We have sought also to understand more profoundly the implications of the evolution that is taking place in the exercise of our mission. More specifically, we have sought to deepen our understanding of shared mission and to clarify our specific role, contribution and responsibility in that mission as members of a religious institute. We have prepared a beautiful message through which we hope to communicate successfully to our Brothers what we have experienced and to invite them to live with greater authenticity.

Fully aware that to BE the men we say we want to be—to close that gap to which so many references have been made during these weeks—we must be men of faith, men of prayer, men of zeal, men of community. To nourish that steady growth in prayer already evident in the Institute, we have recommended that 1995 be declared a Year of Prayer. With regard to community, which we have called a sign of hope and source of life, we have prepared orientations, recommendations and propositions,

which, when accepted and implemented, will surely foster greater depth in our life together as Brothers. The Chapter has kept in focus all our Brothers, but has given particular attention to our young Brothers and our aging Brothers.

Spirit of the Institute

Conscious that “*that which is of the utmost importance and to which the greatest attention should be given in an Institute is that all who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it, that the novices apply themselves to acquire it and that those who are already members make it their first care to preserve and increase it,*” the Chapter has given careful consideration to both initial and ongoing formation, as well as to the formation of formators. Our decisions, if implemented wisely, will contribute to growth in that spirit which reveals whether or not, or to what extent, we are “*living members*” of the Institute, men who are faith-filled, loving, proactive, that is to say, men who are attentive, responsive, creative, decisive—characteristics so evident in our young Muslim friend.

Our experience

In my opinion the quality of the reports, propositions and debate at this Chapter has been exceptionally high. The prayer and Eucharistic celebrations have been extremely rich. The various festive celebrations have nourished our sense of unity and brotherhood. Yes, there were some disagreements and misunderstandings, particularly in reference to the elections. But those difficulties should be viewed objectively and relativised. The important thing is that we profit from this experience by creating at the next Chapter an electoral process which is inspired by faith and love, a process which incorporates dialogue with all persons concerned, a process which is constructive and efficacious.

Our shared mission

The experience of the moving and fruitful weeks we spent with the Consultants is historic and prophetic. It is prophetic in that the participation of the Consultants has itself communicated, and will continue to communicate, a powerful and very important message to the entire Lasallian world—and, I think, to other religious institutes and to the Church generally. Through constructive dialogue we have progressed in the formulation of common goals and common language. We have prepared for the Lasallian Family a written message about our mission of human and Christian education, a message which invites both the Brothers and our partners to ever deeper levels of participation in the Lasallian heritage. We have clarified and strengthened our relationship with the Hermanas Guadalupanas De La Salle and have become better acquainted with the Congregation of Lasallian Sisters and the Union of Catechists. With regard to all those who share in the mission and spirit of St. De La Salle, but particularly those who wish to live their baptismal consecration in some form of Lasallian group, association or community, we have provided guidelines which can form the basis for dynamic and creative action during the next several years.

Educational service of the poor

Several days ago, the proposition to make available one hundred additional Brothers and a certain number of Lasallian partners for missionary service stimulated a magnificent exchange of views. The quantity and quality of the interventions revealed a strong desire, together with a sense of commitment, to take more seriously the orientations of past Chapters and of our Rule that call for a significant reordering of our apostolic priorities, a reordering that will make progressively the educational service of the poor—at home and abroad—the effective priority of the District. That proposition is truly a prophetic gesture, one that, on the local level, must be explained, justified, defended and, above all, implemented.

During the Chapter there have been, of course, many more directives, orientations and recommendations treating of all aspects of our mission of human and Christian education, decisions which will contribute significantly to the ongoing revitalisation of our apostolic activities everywhere in the world.

This Chapter has, I think, made very important decisions concerning governmental structures and the financing of the services of the Central Government of the Institute. But, of course, implementation of these decisions is the task that lies ahead of us. For successful implementation we—the persons who made the decisions—will have to provide strong leadership.

Vocations

An issue that has never been far from our hearts and minds throughout the past six weeks has been that of vocations. We have examined directly the question of the pastoral ministry of vocations and provided orientations for strengthening that ministry. But I am convinced that all the work of this Chapter can and will contribute to the fostering of vocations. I think that many of the young men whom the Lord is inviting to be Brothers will say YES when they see us as men who reveal in our daily life that we know who we are and what we are about, that we have significant and clear goals to which we are corporately and enthusiastically committed, and that in our personal, communal and apostolic life we are totally committed to becoming the men we describe in our documents.

Furthermore, I believe that the work of this Chapter will help us to grow in confidence and pride as Brothers. That renewed belief in ourselves will give us the boldness we require to invite qualified young men to consider our vocation. Brothers, we must be instruments of Christ in extending to young people the invitation, “Come, follow me.” Experience clearly indicates that when such invitations are extended with total respect for the freedom of young people, they, far from being offended, are truly honoured.

The destiny of the Institute . . . our personal responsibility

This has been the third General Chapter in which I have participated directly and the fourth which I have studied carefully and tried to implement. I find myself recalling the words of Brother Charles Henry in his introduction to the Declaration:

A document of the Chapter, or even the General Chapter itself, must not be confused with the adapted renewal of the Institute. This renewal is something yet to be realised, and its effective realisation is confided to the common effort of all the members of the Institute.

I have recalled also those challenging words of article 142 of the Rule:

The life and development of the Institute depend primarily on the mystery of and the power of grace. By the gift of freedom, however, the Lord has willed to place the destiny of the Institute in the hands of the Brothers.

Brothers, as has been said a number of times during the past six weeks, what we need today is not a new vision, but rather a renewed effort to walk forward in the light of the vision expressed so well in the Rule. The major task the Institute faces is a task that cannot be accomplished by a General Chapter or by the Central Government of the Institute. The task of closing that gap between the ideals presented to us in the Rule and the lived reality can be accomplished only on the local level. The transformation we seek will occur when, in the words of the Declaration, each Brother at the local level starts out along the path of spiritual conversion and determines to have a personal share in the great community work of renewal and adaptation. Transformation will occur when, in the words of the Rule, the Brothers at the local level are strongly committed to work together for greater authenticity and fidelity.

Brothers, as Capitulants, we have the serious responsibility to serve as leaders. When Brothers say, "There is nothing we can do about our District or community," we must answer: "On the contrary. Let's look at the concrete, constructive steps we can take." When other Brothers say, "This is the way things are in our District or community. Change is not possible," we have to say: "No, Brothers, we are not governed by something outside of ourselves. We can indeed change the situation if we decide to change it." When still others complain, "The existence of so many problems today is the fault of our past and present superiors," we have to say: "Brothers, let's stop blaming others; let's take responsibility for our lives and act positively and effectively."

In short, Brothers, we Capitulants have to be "proactive" people, people who take responsibility for our own lives. We have to strive to help others stop "reacting" to situations and to start "acting" constructively. We must not allow our future to be shaped by factors outside of ourselves. Our destiny as an Institute is in our hands. If we commit ourselves unreservedly to helping our Brothers, our communities and our Districts to become more faithful and more authentic, the Institute will indeed experience that new Spring for which we all long and pray.

Union of minds and hearts

In his testament our Founder states that he commends to God all the Brothers to whom God has united him. He is convinced in faith that God has called him to live in union with his Brothers. In like manner it is God, God in his Providence—that is to say, in his love and concern for young people—who has called us to association with men who have received a similar call in nearly half the countries of the world.

In that same testament St. De La Salle urges the Brothers "to maintain an intimate union among themselves". Brothers, let's follow our Founder's example. Let's commend to God all those to whom God has united us. Let's commend to God today on this feast of St. De La Salle all the Brothers of the Institute. But

in a particular way, let us, Capitulants, consciously and BY NAME commend one another to God.

Brothers, we are men of many different cultures, nations, languages and histories. But we are one. We are one because we are all children of the same loving Father, because we are all brothers of Jesus Christ and therefore brothers of one another and because we are all sons of John Baptist de La Salle. We express our vocation in our particular culture. For this reason we are diverse. We are diverse, but we are one. We enjoy unity in diversity.

At this time when the world is experiencing a disconcerting amount of ethnic, national, racial, religious and cultural division, let us Brothers of the Christian Schools be truly a communion of persons, a communion of Good Shepherds, an international community of consecrated men nourishing that communion of Good Shepherds which is the entire Lasallian Family, an international communion of Lasallians with a commitment to generate other communions.

Convinced with our Founder, therefore, Brothers, that "*Union . . . is truly a precious gem*", let us BE BROTHERS to one another, BE BROTHERS to all those with whom we are associated, BE BROTHERS to all those whom God confides to our care.

As Capitulants of the 42nd General Chapter, let us dedicate ourselves, together and by association, to helping the Brothers of our Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations to understand and to put into practice what we have decided, and thus contribute significantly to the ongoing transformation of our beloved Institute, an Institute that is needed more than ever by "*the young, the poor, the world and the Church*" (R 141).

* * * * *

I invite you now to stand, to join hands and to sing the antiphon "*Ecce Quam Bonum*"—"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for Brothers to dwell together in unity."

(*Ecce Quam Bonum . . .*)

I now declare the 42nd General Chapter to be closed.

APPENDIX 1

A PRAYER SERVICE FOR PRESENTING THE CIRCULAR ON THE 42ND GENERAL CHAPTER

A. OPENING SONG

(to the Holy Spirit ... or Our Unity/Fraternity as Brothers...)

B. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

(by Brother Capitulant, Consultant or Visitor...)

Suggested Theme

The role played by the General Chapter in the Life of the Institute:

Constituted as an image of the whole Institute, the General Chapter is, since the days of the Founder, the ultimate expression of the communion that exists among all the Brothers. It perpetuates among them the living fidelity to the special charism of the Institute. Being responsible for the entire Body of the Institute, the Chapter is qualified to undertake in its name a periodical evaluation of the life of the Institute, to provide for its continuing adaptation and renewal and to set out the main guidelines for future action. In addition, the Chapter elects the Brother Superior and the Brothers Councillors. It has the power to take all suitable legislative and administrative measures that concern the establishments and the members of the Institute. (R 103)

The action of the Holy Spirit and the continuing formation of each Brother:

By faith the Brother recognises that his life consists in a succession of calls from God to which he continues to respond. This dialogue between God and each Brother permits the Brother to grow continuously in fidelity. For this reason the Brother is invited to be open each day to the presence of the living God in such a way that he discovers it and lives it in his mission, his consecration and his community life. (R 100)

Three phases of the General Chapter:

- 1) convocation-preparation phase,
- 2) discernment-decision phase,
- 3) implementation-renewal phase.

C. READINGS

Deut: 11:18, 26-28 (Yahweh's words... blessing or curse)

Let these words of mine remain in your heart and in your soul.... See, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: a blessing, if you obey the commandments of Yahweh our God that I enjoin on you today; a curse, if you disobey the commandments of Yahweh your God and leave the way I have marked out for you today, by going after other gods you have not known.

Rev 10: 8-11 (Take the scroll and eat....)

Then I heard the voice I had heard from heaven speaking to me again. "Go," it said "and take that open scroll out of the hand of the angel standing on sea and land." I went to the angel and asked him to give me the small scroll, and he said, "Take it and eat it: it will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will taste as sweet as honey." So I took it out of the angel's hand and swallowed it; it was as sweet

as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, "You are to prophesy again, this time about many different nations and countries and languages and emperors."

D. RESPONSE: Psalm or Song

Possible Psalms: 15, 39, 62, 84, 103.

E. READINGS

1. Excerpt from the Message of the Consultants to the Brothers Capitulants

To have taken part in the 42nd General Chapter signifies for us the Brothers' acceptance of the challenge to share the mission and our undertaking an explicit commitment of fidelity to the work of the Institute and to the charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

In this way we are listening together to the call of the Holy Spirit in order to respond to the world of today with a radical message and with evangelical hope.

We acknowledge that the invitation which we received is, in itself, a message to all our colleagues and, at the same time, a most significant indication of the commitment of the Institute to those with whom the Brothers work....

We want you to know that among our colleagues with whom we work daily there is a great respect and affection for the Brothers....

At this time we would like to express our gratitude for all that we have indicated above but especially for making us feel that we are your brothers and sisters.

BROTHERS, THANK YOU FOR YOUR FRATERNAL WELCOME. THANK YOU FOR THE AUTHENTIC NATURE OF YOUR FRIENDSHIP. THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR PRAYER AND EUCHARIST. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SIMPLICITY. ...AND THANK YOU, ABOVE ALL, FOR PROVIDING US TOO WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST AND OF DE LA SALLE, WHOSE EXAMPLE AND CHARISM MORE THAN EVER TODAY GIVE SENSE TO OUR LIVES AS LASALLIAN EDUCATORS....

We want to encourage the Brothers to continue to be an authentic witness of the Lasallian charism which is a source of inspiration to us as we ourselves understand and embrace the mission and its consequences personally and communally....

We are confident that this work can be done. We pledge our support to you.

So together, and with the help of God and of our Founder, let us face the challenge of our mission together.

2. Excerpt from the Message of the General Chapter to the Brothers

Dear Brothers,

As this 42nd General Chapter comes to a close, we address a word of thanks to you. You did not leave the work of the Chapter to us alone. You were present with us in your prayers, in your many notes, in the questionnaires you filled out and in the careful work of the Preparatory Committee....

We are convinced that if John Baptist de La Salle, canon of Rheims, stood on the steps of the cathedral today and gazed upon our society, he would be as "*deeply moved*" today as he was over three hundred years ago (R 11). He would also see in the hearts of many a searching for the meaning of life and a hunger

for justice and solidarity with one another. He would be touched by their yearning to experience the love of a God who wants all to be saved. But he would also see the dignity and rights of so many people, young and adults alike, abused on an interpersonal, national and international level. He would see many poor and abandoned people, left to themselves with little chance of a better life....

Today, in 1993, we are persuaded that John Baptist de La Salle would again resign his canonry and form a group of teachers with whom he would live in community, and they would call themselves "*Brothers*", Brothers living a contagious brotherhood among themselves, for their students and with others who wish to be associated with them in their work....

Brothers, you among us who are in or who are approaching retirement, each of you has "*a role to play in the vitality of the Institute*" (R 145). Your identity and value as Brothers are not at all diminished because of advanced years and declining energy. Many of you can and have taken on new commitments beneficial for others and fulfilling for you. We count on you to transmit our spiritual and educational patrimony to new generations of Lasallians....

Brothers, those among you who are fully active, you also know that the gifts and talents you put at the service of your students, of your Brothers, of your Lasallian partners come to you from the Lord. Thank you for sharing those gifts and talents so generously. In your responsibilities of teaching, administration, formation, support work and many other forms of educational service, you are examples of zeal and dedication to all of us. Invite young people to join us in vowed brotherhood so that they too can share their talents with others in a special way. To ask someone to become a Brother is to show great confidence in him and to give testimony to the esteem we have for our vocation.

Brothers, those who are the younger among us, you should remember that John Baptist de La Salle was 29 years old when he got involved with a handful of school teachers. That involvement would later result in the Institute of the Brothers of the

Christian Schools. And as he did, live your life, accompanied by your mentors, in a dynamic itinerary, urged on by the critical educational needs of our day. In you we find the creative forces and vitality in the Institute which will help us overcome the tendency to keep unchanged the existing structures, even when they become obsolete....

The prayer we said throughout the Institute for the intention of the Chapter asks the "*Lord, God of freedom, to make us docile to the Holy Spirit and to the will of God in our regard.*" We made a sincere effort to respond to the movement of the Spirit during this Chapter. Our hope now is that all of us throughout the Institute continue to pray and work "*in a spirit of faith and zeal as did our Founder*".

(Time for silent reflection and prayer)

F. SHORT EXHORTATION By Brother Capitulant or Consultant

Theme: The significance of one (or more) direction(s) or proposition(s) given by the Chapter for the life of the Institute today.

(Time for silent reflection and prayer)

G. PRESENTATION OF CIRCULAR OR CHAPTER DOCUMENT TO THE BROTHERS

H. CLOSING PRAYER (For the Church and the Institute)

I. CLOSING SONG (Hymn in honour of our Founder)

APPENDIX 2

DAY OF RECOLLECTION ON THE 42nd GENERAL CHAPTER

(To reflect and pray on one of the themes of the Chapter)

N.B.: The Leader should be a Capitulant or Consultant, or one who is very familiar with the General Chapter documents.

THE INSTITUTE, A COMMUNITY OF BROTHERS ASSOCIATED FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF THE POOR IN A CHANGING WORLD AND CHURCH

- I. **OPENING PRAYER SERVICE** (see the one suggested in this circular)
- II. **OVER-ALL VIEW OF THE CHAPTER DOCUMENT** (by the leader)

Message about shared mission to the worldwide Lasallian Family,
Message of the 42nd General Chapter to the Brothers,
Preambles and observations vis-a-vis ideals,
Recommendations,
Propositions.

- III. **PERSONAL READING OF TWO PARTS OF THE CIRCULAR**

- A. The introduction to the circular.
- B. The Institute, a community of Brothers associated for the educational service of the poor in a changing world and Church.

IV. TIME FOR REFLECTION AND PRAYER **Questions to guide the reflection**

1. Reflecting on the situations described in the selected text: Which ones are happening in our country? in our District? in our community? in our school? How have I experienced a situation personally? How have we (District, community, school) tried to respond?
2. Among the recommendations presented by the General Chapter:
What can we carry out now?
How?
3. What does the General Chapter, as "the Body of the Society", stipulate (in the propositions) that we do? How do we implement these "*as far as we are able*"?
4. How can we express one or more of our responses in a symbolic action today (during the Eucharist or closing prayer service)?

V. SHARING IN SMALL GROUP(S)

- Results of personal reflection and prayer.
- Proposed symbolic actions. The group arrives at consensus as to which one(s) to implement during the Eucharist or closing prayer service.

VI. TIME FOR PERSONAL PRAYER and BREAK (preparation for Eucharist or closing prayer service)

- #### **VII. EUCHARIST or CLOSING PRAYER SERVICE**
- Possible theme: shared mission, unity, consecration, community....
Symbolic or ritual action carried out.

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