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An Interview with Brother Pierre QUATTARA, General Councilor—RELAF

Good morning Brother Pierre Ouattara. On 22 May 2014, 'principal Brothers' Institute met at the 45th General Chapter you have elected General Councilor for the next seven years. How did you welcome the new and the mission?

Some Brothers had already predicted that with such an assurance that still amazes me today. On May 22, around 11:00, while votes were scheduled in the afternoon, two Brothers Visitors RELAF, knocked at my door. They came to ask me to accept to be the candidate of the Region for the election of the General Councilor.

It was from that moment that things took, in my eyes, a very serious turn. A bit like Jonah, I felt the need to run away from home. So that after the results of votes, the Superior General searched in vain for me to know my answer and send it to the Chapter.

We are curious to know more about our new General Councilor: family, schooling, vocational journey and work experience.

Mom not being originally intended by the tradition of my father she loved, she had to flee her village Guéna, to join him under the protection of Father Hébert, parish priest of Toussiana. As far as I know, my parents destined my birth to be "the cane" of my maternal Grandfather after whom I was named Ouattara, according to our traditions. Being the oldest of five boys and four girls, I'm the only one bearing the name of Ouattara, while all my other brothers and sisters are Coulibaly.

In 1964, I was enrolled at the Toussiana primary school by Brother Michel Levallois, the last Director who was Brother. I still keep the memory of the master that was admirable for us, Mr. Traoré Adrien, the father of our Brother T. Denis. Renowned to be 'severe', yet he was loved by all. He made the success of his students to the primary certificate and the entry in secondary school a personal matter. Having passed the entrance exam in Secondary School, I asked to be assigned to Toussiana School in order to enter the boarding school where was then called "little novitiate" or juniorate.

If I have to name at least one Brother who attracted me by his kindness, Brother Theophane Elola comes immediately to my mind. Our class was so "catastrophic" that led to the closure of Juniorate in Toussiana. After the novitiate in Toussiana, my education continued at Tounouma School in Bobo Dioulasso, where we had, among other well-known teachers, Brothers Raoul de Anton, Sylvain Konsimbo, the late Ignatius and Garcia as director of seminary, Gabriel Zabramba ... After obtaining the «Baccalauréat», it was for me an unforgettable first two years of teaching experience in college Charles Lwanga in Nouna (1982-1984).



My first academic career took place in two stages: that of two years for DEUG in philosophy at the University of Ouagadougou during the revolution (1984-1986) and then the Licence and Maitrise (1986-1988) at the University Charles de Gaulle Lille. The friendship and encouragement of Brother Michel Sauvage were a great help during my stay in Lille. Back home, almost 10 years after the first vows I made perpetual profession in the company of Brothers Jean-Baptiste Coulibaly and Gabriel Somé.

These years were inspired by the figure of Brother Dominique Samné, too early deceased, who was successively our Director in Juniorate, our professor in School, our Novitiate Director (1976-1978), then became the Visitor of the District and finally a Councilor.

I was then appointed Director of Charles Lwanga College of Nouna. I must admit that Brothers Philip Bai and Philip de Monteti and Brother Augustine Cruvelier helped me a lot in these early years as the community and School Director ...

In 1994, I was asked to accompany the community of young students Brothers (CEFEC) in Ouagadougou. Then, in 1995, the Region solicited me to be a Formator in the community of St. Miguel Scholasticate in Abidjan. A year later, I was asked to be the Director of that international Scholasticate, where all the groups of scholastics were then combined ... During this stay in Abidjan took place my second academic career. While lecturing at CELAF, at the request of Brother Sylvain, Visitor of my district at the time, I prepared the DEA (1998) and then the third cycle doctorate in philosophy at the University Houphouët Boigny (2000). Someone called Guillaume Soro was then agitating the Cocody campus ...

Following the sudden death of beloved Brother Desire on January 26th, 2000, I find myself, for five years, Director of La Salle College in Ouagadougou. In 2005, the sudden death of Brother Manuel Plumed, well respected by his students, led to my appointment as the Director CELAF Institute. During this second stay in Abidjan, I also took pleasure in teaching and writing. Six years (2005-2011) were utilized to obtain such recognition of our degrees by the CAMES and organize the academic curriculum under the new provisions of the Licence-Master-Doctorate (LMD) system. After two terms as the head of CELAF, instead of the requested sabbatical year, I received from Brother Superior General, Brother Alvaro, an obedience of 3 years at the La-sallian International Center (CIL)...

After your election, you have joined the Chapter as a member by right. What experiences do you draw from the Chapter, especially in the last two phases which you were intensely involved? How do you appreciate the participation of RELAF in this 45th General Chapter?

I must begin by congratulating you for the quality of your participation. Your interventions were much appreciated during the Chapter. This remarkable and noticed participation is a source of pride for all RELAF. That we detected in our young brothers, people of great value who leads us to hope. That being said, one of the things that impressed me the most during this first participation in a Chapter is the fraternal life! Then we are in the presence of something greater than our differences of opinion. The frank and open debate for me is the sign of an authentic common search for truth rooted in

the love of God.

When one identifies himself with the truth, all challenge of what is being said is immediately perceived as a personal attack ... It is not easy to reach this level of perspective that, despite our disagreements, we should not question the fraternal relations between us ... personal quarrels are usually indicators of a "spiritual dwarfism."

The last two phases of the General Chapter, I must confess, left a bit unsatisfied. Interventions and contributions recorded in plenary ultimately had little impact. It is not always enough to pass legislation and to meet a relative numerical strength. It is important to strive for unanimity, even if it is rarely achieved. Even a minority point of view always has something to teach us.

It must be recognized that a huge amount of work and quality was provided. The most important thing is yet to come: the appropriation and implementation of these texts by the Brothers with the collaboration of all La-sallian.



Now General Councilor, how do you accomplish your mission, "together and by association" with other members of the General Council, knowing that «This work of God is also ours.»

Brother Superior General announced at the Chapter his intention to appoint another Councilor. We, the entire Council, will meet in September to develop our work plan. It seems to me that the first and main tasks of a Councilor is to listen, observe ... With Brother Gabriel SOME, my predecessor, we started meeting so he can share with me his experience. It will then be necessary to turn to the Brother Visitors to know their expectations.

What vision for RELAF? What are your expectations of the Brothers? Visitors and in particular? Lasallians in Africa? Do you have any fears for the accomplishment of your mission?

The vision for RELAF, we must build together with the Brothers Visitors. I remain attentive to the expectations of Brothers and lay closely sharing the mission of education in the service of especially the poor. My role is to help the Brother Visitors to build the unity of the Region which have strong Districts enjoying some self-sufficiency. To move in this direction, it will be noted, particularly the challenge of formation of Brothers and lay people capable of providing an exciting animation works and communities ... Without the contribution of Districts, the Region will remain a concept of the mind.



What message to the Brothers and the Lasallian Family of RELAF, at the beginning of this term?

It seems a little 'premature' to send out a message other than that which comes directly from the Chapter: "This work of God is also ours." This message is addressed to each and everyone. Live Jesus in our hearts! Forever!

Thank you Brother Pierre!

Thank you to you, Brother Raoul, for this opportunity offered to express myself on relevant topics.

**Interview conducted by
Brother Raoul TRAORE**



Some News from Lwanga District

Immersion Experience—Novices

We are very grateful to the Brothers' Communities in Nyeri, Nakuru and Marsabit who have welcomed wholeheartedly the 2nd-year Novices (8) for their 3-months community and apostolic experiences. We received very positive and encouraging echoes from them and from the respective Communities.

New Novices

After having waited patiently for weeks our Postulants from Nigeria (3) and from Ethiopia (3) received the green light from the Immigration Office to join the Novitiate Programme in Nairobi. On April 7th, 2014, they received the uniform of the 1st-year Novices, the Rule of the De La Salle Brothers and the star of faith during a well prepared, thoughtful and inspiring Eucharistic Celebration. They have already joined the 2nd-year Novices in a football match against the Brother Scholastics. What an ambiance!

Milk production

In order to reduce the daily expenses at the Novitiate and at the Scholasticate their daily milk consumption is provided by their respective cows. Even they are able to obtain a small income in selling milk to their neighbourhood. We congratulate these two Formation Communities for having taken initiatives to reduce their daily expenses in one way or another. Bravo!



The New Brother Provincial Visitor

After a long period of discernment, Brother Alvaro, Superior General, appointed Brother Ghebreyesus Habte, General Director of the Hagaz Agro-Technical School, Hagaz, Eritrea, as the new Provincial Visitor of the Charles Lwanga District of Africa. Brother Ghebreyesus attended the CIL-Session at the beginning of this year. He has already spent nearly two weeks at the Provincialate in Nairobi in order to get more acquainted with the reality of the District. He will start his ministry of animation and of administration as Brother Provincial Visitor on July 1st, 2014. We are grateful to Brother Ghebreyesus for having accepted this challenging but rewarding ministry in a spirit of faith and of availability.



Brother Ghebreyesus Habte, the new Provincial Visitor, Lwanga District

Giving thanks to the Br. Provincial Visitor

We would like to give thanks to Brother Esayas, for his inspiring, future oriented and diligent leadership during the last 8 years as the Brother Provincial Visitor. He was able to enlist the aid and support of others, especially of the District Council, Sector Coordinators and Sector Councils, in the implementation of the various District Policies. He was fully dedicated to his challenging but rewarding ministry of animation and of administration. One of the most visible signs of his future oriented leadership is the construction of the new La Salle Primary School that will be an Income-Generating Project for the District. We wish him all the best and God's choicest blessings for his future assignment in the District.



Brother Esayas Tzegay, Former Provincial Visitor, Lwanga District

Ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the La Salle Primary School.

A few weeks ago the Architect, Contractors, Engineers, De La Salle Brothers and Well-wishers participated in a significant ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of a new La Salle Primary School on the District Property that is situated near the Scholasticate. This project should become one of the Income-Generating Projects of the District that would provide supplementary financial resources for the District, in

particularly for the formation of a new generation of well-formed and fully dedicated De La Salle Brothers. This project has been discussed for several years under the leadership of Brother Esayas Tzegay, Provincial Visitor, and the District Development Commission. We are grateful to all the benefactors who made the construction of this new La Salle Primary School possible. The project will be implemented in at least two stages.



South Africa: Young Lasallian Mission Camp

On Saturday 7th June, the Lasallian Youth group gathered at school bright and early, ready for our full day ahead of what we do best: **SERVE!**

The group was split up in smaller groups that would enable each of us to visit six different places on our mission camp to help the community. These venues included:

1. The Culture of Life Apostolate – where the vegetable garden was worked on;
2. The Linden Police Station – where our creative artists decorated the inside of the children's trauma unit container.
3. A shelter in town – where soup and sandwiches were prepared for the 100 people that they feed;
4. Lighthouse Safehouse in town – where we assisted at a function serving food and entertaining the children;
5. Cleaning of the Delta Park spruit – with the Johannesburg Junior Council; and
6. At school in the staffroom and Consumer Studies kitchen - where we knitted mittens and make soup and sandwiches which were later distributed by the St Vincent de Paul Society.

The whole day was very successful and educational as the boys learnt a new skill: knitting. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the experience and what they got out of it. Some feedback from the soup kitchen: “It was very eye-opening to see how they feed so many people and it's also inspiring that the people who work there don't get paid, it's all voluntary” – Ashleigh McMullen.

Ashleigh Webber who went to the Linden police station to paint described her experience as: “The fact that we were able to make a safe haven more welcoming and ‘homely’ for children that don't really know what safe is, made our mission there that much more real. It was awesome!”

It was great to have so many teachers serving with us too.

The day filled with serving the community was full of love and fun!

By Lauren das Neves
Young Lasallian



Novitiate: First Profession of vows

On Thursday, June 12, 2014, the Inter-Novitiate, Our Lady of Grace in Bobo-Dioulasso, celebrated the First Religious Profession of eight new Brothers of the Christian Schools. The Eucharist was presided by Father Dominic Sawadogo, a Religious Carme and one of the external formators in Novitiate. Six other Priests concelebrated the Mass with him.

The Vows were received by Brother Dieudonné KOLOSNONRE, Acting Visitor in the absence of Brother Janvier DEMBELE, Visitor of the District of West Africa. Before the assembly of over nearly a hundred of faithful, our new Brothers have publicly said their "yes" to God, Holy Trinity, by the formula of vows of our Institute. This happened in two rounds. In the first round, the two from Mozambique and in the second round, three Congolese, two Malgaches and one Beninese pronounced respectively their vows in Portuguese and in French.

All those who came to live this great event and support our new Professed, religious, lay and priests have heard them say "*I promise and vow ...*" at the decisive moment of the rite of Religious consecration.

In the assembly, many Christian Brothers from communities in Burkina Faso including Brother Domingos FAZVER, who came from Abidjan, were present.

It was with great joy that they welcomed the new professed at the time of brotherly hug. After the Eucharist, a fraternal meal is shared by all the guests at the party.

The eight new African Brothers have walked in the path Saint John XXIII, 17th promoting the Novitiate of Bobo-Dioulasso (founded in 1997). They started their training in September 2012 with a total of twelve Novices, under the leadership of former Director Brother Valere ADONSOU. The theme of their formation journey was "*Journey of faith of a pagan. Only say the word ...*" (John 7.7 b). They finished their formation journey in the Novitiate with eight Novices (now professed), thanks to the Direction of Brother Sylvain CONSIMBO, current Director of the Novitiate.

*Brother Jacques MONCHEBI,
Formator, Inter-African Novitiate
Bobo-Dioulasso – Burkina Faso*



A synthesis of the 45th General Chapter

«This work of God is also ours»

More than 100 Brothers gathered in Rome from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday for their 45th General Chapter. The delegates, from thirty-two countries on the five continents, experienced great fraternity and unity in diversity. As their Rule states, the General Chapter is "the ultimate expression of communion that exists among all the Brothers and it perpetuates among them the living fidelity to the special charism of the Institute." It is held every seven years and this year it was a "paperless" Chapter.

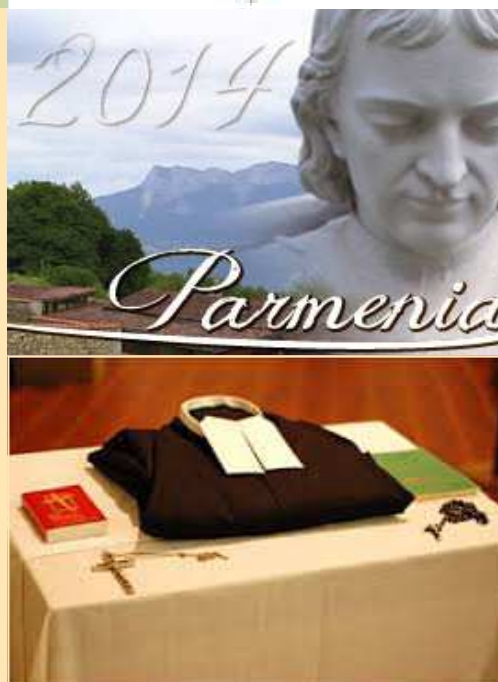
The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is an institute composed of religious Brothers. Its origins date from 1682. Its primary mission is that of educational service and evangelization, with special attention paid to the needy. The 4,485 Brothers along with 86,651 other teachers today educate 938,690 students in 83 countries.



The Chapter's central motto, **"This work of God is also ours,"** was inspired by a letter sent to Saint John Baptist de La Salle by the first Brothers exactly 300 years ago. In April 1714 those Brothers ordered their Founder to return to Paris from Parmenie, the name of a small hill near Lyons where he had confined himself. They did this in virtue of the vows of association and obedience that he had made along with them. They also asked him to take up again the governance of the nascent Society of the Christian Schools because that Work of God was also "theirs." (...)

With a duration of seven weeks, this was one of the longest Chapters on record, due to the fact that the customary work of a General Chapter of assessment and planning for the future was augmented by the work of revising the Rule and Constitutions of the Institute. The last revision of that document was in 1987.

In his opening address, Brother Álvaro Rodríguez, the outgoing Superior General, invited the capitulants to live this moment with hope and to discern the presence of God in daily life. As in the origins of the Institute there are three criteria that should guide this discernment: the greater glory of God, the good of the Church, and that of the children and young people who, thanks to the Lasallian schools, find a response for their educational needs and a Gospel journey for their lives. (...)



De La Salle

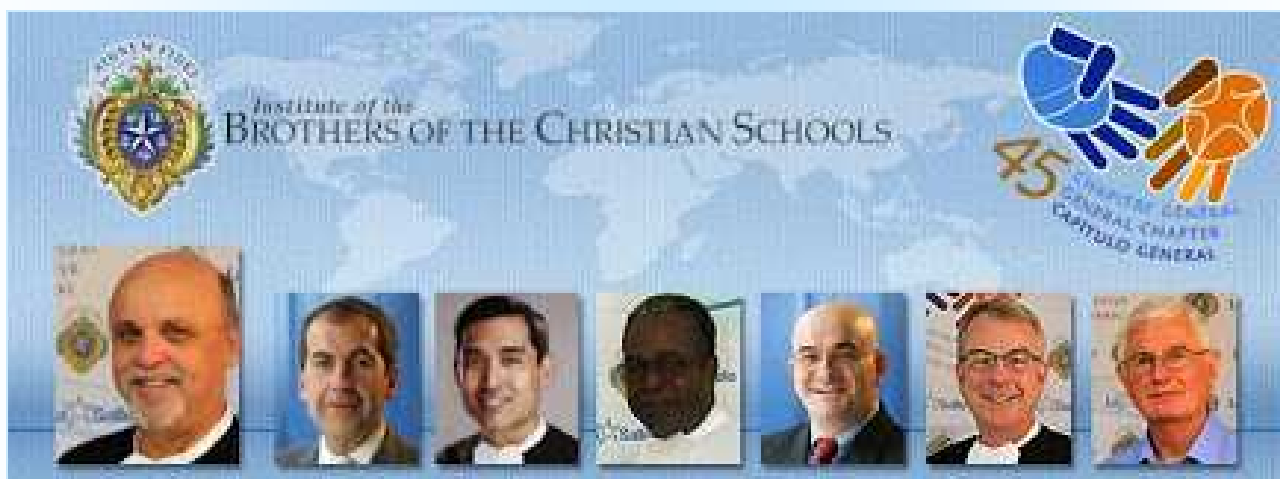


With regard to the educational mission the General Chapter took into account the propositions from the Second International Assembly for the Lasallian Mission. Said Assembly was made up of two-thirds laity and one-third Brothers. Each Province also held its own Mission Assembly and each Province has a Mission Council also made up of Brothers and laity. The purpose of these structures is to make real the concept of shared mission between all Lasallians on all levels. In the past 14 years steps have also been taken to recognize communities and lay persons as being associated with the mission of the Institute.

The 45th General Chapter thought it a priority to empower a pastoral ministry of vocations program that would, in turn, favor the creation of a culture of vocations and accompaniment. The revised Rule states that the Brothers look upon the pastoral ministry of all vocations in the Church and in the Lasallian Family as an integral part of their ministry and their personal and community responsibility. They believe that their vocation is of great necessity for society and for the Church and they are happy to promote it.



In the area of formation there was a great impetus for the training of formation personnel, Brothers or lay persons, on all levels and for all involved in the Lasallian mission. So that this wish does not simply stay on paper, good formation programs, particularly at the local level, will be offered and human and material resources will be optimized.



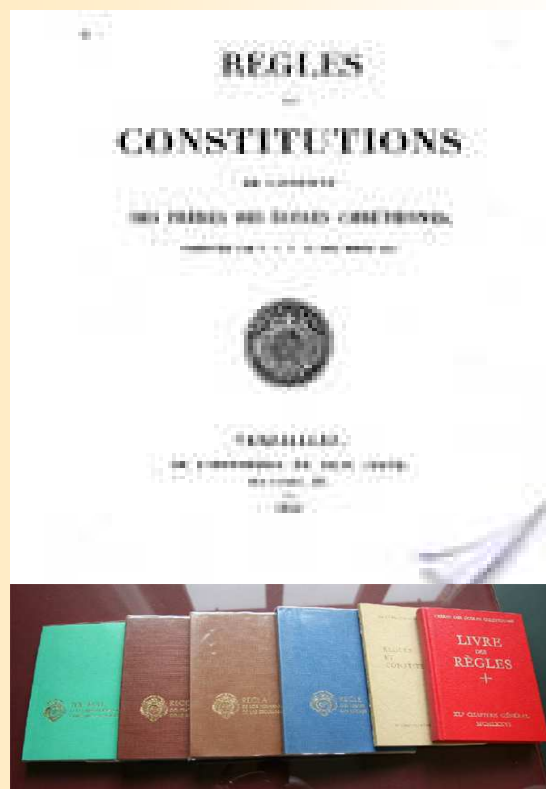
Brother Robert Schieler, a native of the city of Philadelphia, USA, was elected Superior General and Brother Jorge Gallardo de Alba, a Mexican, is the new Vicar General. Brothers Ricardo Laguda (Philippines), Pierre Ouattara (Burkina Faso), Paulo Petry (Brazil), Timothy Coldwell (USA), and Aidan Kilty (Ireland) are the new General Councillors with special responsibility for the five Regions into which the Institute is divided. In recent years the Regional experience of governance has been very positive and this, in turn, has facilitated greater closeness to the local reality.

The new Superior will appoint other Councillors for those areas that will need priority attention in the coming years.

Father Robert Prevost (O.S.A) led the opening retreat with true spiritual wisdom and Father Adolfo Nicolás, a former Lasallian student and Superior General of the Jesuits, guided the discernment process for the election of the new government. Also involved in the Chapter event were Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, the Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, Secretary of the same Congregation. Archbishop Angelo Vincenzo Zani, Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education and Archbishop Jean-Louis Bruguès, O.P., also a former Lasallian student and the previous secretary of the same Congregation presided at Eucharistic liturgies.



The final weeks of the Chapter were devoted to the revision of the Rule and Constitutions of the Institute. Over the course of the past seven years a group of Brothers had prepared a draft based on the discussions held by Brothers worldwide. The multiplicity of social, religious, and cultural contexts in which religious life is being lived today has not impeded the unity of hearts and wills in this difficult work of revision. The new text will continue to inspire the life and the mission of the Brothers and it will open paths of evangelization and holiness just as previous texts have done.



The 45th General Chapter concluded on Pentecost Sunday, June 8, after many days of intense work, during which the delegates fraternally lived the joyful experience of their ecclesial identity as Brothers. During that time they planned their life and mission for the future – a future that continues to be marked by a passion for teaching the children and young people that God has entrusted to them all over the world.

The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools continues reading the signs of life with eyes of faith and it continues to be open to the paths of fraternity and mission that the Holy Spirit will inspire for the coming years. It is the Institute's intent to strengthen existing works and to open new ones in border places where education and evangelization are greatly needed.

The presence of the Institute in the inter-congregational project of South Sudan, in the words of the new Superior General, will continue to be a priority.

Recalling the letter of 1714 mentioned above, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, "together and by association," with all those who today share the Lasallian mission, affirm that the Work of God, begun by Saint John Baptist de La Salle, is the Institute's work today – a work of great necessity in a world in which 57 million children do not have access to schools.

Brother Alberto Gómez