

Brothers of the Christian Schools

Lasallian Region of Africa
Regional CIL



"Being Brothers Today in Africa with the Revised Rule"



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The relevance of a revision of the Rule in the changes affecting African Societies

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Session 1

General Introduction

«Developments in the Institute, the Church and our world during the past quarter century led delegates to the 43rd and 44th General Chapters' call for revisions to our 1987 Rule.» Circular 469 8.1

The members of the Revision of the Rule Commission, among the "reading keys" essential to their work included: the desire to recognize that our mission is greater than what we do on a daily basis in our ministries—it also includes the elements of witness, service and communion". Circular 469, 8.2

Our societies have changed and continue to change. If we think about the changes they have experienced, it is not only to **justify the revision of the Rule**. It is for us to **understand the importance of our vow of association and to deepen the understanding of the particular**, original character of the Consecrated community that we form. In other words, changes in our societies demand that we re-tell ourselves what the meaning of our vocation is. They lead us to reread and reinterpret our identity as Brothers.

Change means firstly **trends** not temporary, but permanent. A trend has an "explanatory power"; it provides a context in which a wide variety of events, issues, and developments (...) can be understood as expressions of a deeper impulse." Through changes, one thus seeks to get into a substantial dynamism called again trend. It also has "predictive power"; it anticipates the direction in which society can go. (cf. Pastoral Letter to the Brothers, December 25, 2014, P. 19)

But, unlike the **linear changes** that are for example trends, there are other paradigm shifts, which are breakdown in discontinuity with the past and necessitate a new system of thought, new theories or intuition ... All these kinds of changes arouse fears in us, apprehensions and even anguishes ... They give us the feeling that the present time is full of dangers, especially for consecrated life...

This perception we have of social and ecclesial events may cause us to lose the essential: "faith in God, trust in his wisdom and insurance facing his promises." If we talk of association in the Institute, the most important is not just in the statistics, which is the

attention to a growing majority of Lay persons involved in the Lasallian mission and the feeling of a number of Brothers increasingly reduced. What we must be the most sensitive about in my opinion is the paradigm shift, to the evolution taking place in the conception of social ties.

I- The transition from status to contract

An old proverb says, "*We bind oxen by horns and men by words.*"¹ What we call "society", in the modern sense, refers to a set of "ties of words", fixed words or often put into texts; these words are used to tie people together.

All our words are not binding on us, that is to say, do not "*force*" us in the sense both literal and etymological "*ob-ligare*", attached to... Among the words that bind me to others, we must distinguish those that proceed from my initiative, from those who come from others. The latter have authority over me without having accepted them before or pronounced them; they usually precede the course of my life. The social being that I am, proceeds from social institutions and not the reverse. For me to know who I am and that I can speak and in turn engage myself, in and by words, it was first necessary that parents recognize me, enroll me in filiations, give me a name, nationality, education ... It is finally words and texts that preceded me that allow me in my turn to speak freely and to bind myself by my own words...

In common French, on one side it is called Law and on the other contract to designate two kinds of links that take us and make us stand together with others ... On the side of the law are found texts and words that are imposed on us regardless of our will and on the other side of the contract are those which proceed from our free agreement with others.

Thus, each of us is bound on one hand by the status assigned to him by law and on the other by the commitments he has contracted. It seems that the sense within which modern society evolves is that of a "contracting". That is, the share of prescribed ties imposed, retreating more and more to the benefit from the ties consented. The exchange of consents is sufficient to create the contract. The submission to the statutes gradually gives way to the freedom of contract.

In complicated or sophisticated terms, autonomy is progressing at the expense of heteronomy. Modernity is thus characterized by the fact that the contract has become "*the*

¹ Cf Alain Supiot ; La contractualisation de la société ; *Courrier de l'environnement de l'INRA* N° 43, mai 2001.

ultimate basis of human rights" ... The individual would eventually carry other chains than those he himself laid down.

This idea, from a sense of history to an emancipated world, that is, affirmation of the autonomy of the human being, is, according to Alain Supiot, an idea of Western origin. This idea derives from the creative function assigned to the verb, that is to say the word, in the system of the world.

We find this asserted function in the prologue of the Gospel of St. John: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God. All things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made."* Alain Supiot says that: *"Only in the West, with the secularization of the word made by the law that was thought that, in the image of God, every man could have his own account of the legislator power of the word. In the wake of the Enlightenment, the idea has settled that the emancipation process in the contract was universal and would extend to all people still in infancy"*. Accessing to the culture of contract is presented as the society's gateway to modernity and in the concert of nations. Freedom of association is now seen as the constitutive basis of society of men. The idea of contract, making its way everywhere, is in the process of establishing itself as a universal category. It appears therefore that the Western way of thinking about man and society would have to extend to the entire world.

We have here an element of the creed of globalization, which extols the virtues of free trade and the contract. These virtues are flexibility, equality of all and empowerment of the arbitrariness... To this, we oppose the inertia of traditional communities, authoritarian states; these burdens are felt through the defects of the laws and rules deemed rigid, unilateral, enslaving ... With the progression of this idea of contract, a world order is gaining ground across boundaries of national laws while using these laws as its instruments. Globalization, in its deployment, makes economic science its own speech, justifying discourse of a universal order that leaves a meager space for human rights. The right is considered a mere instrument of economic regulation.

The notion of "regulation", recovered today by sociology, comes from the molecular biology... Living beings are treated as machines whose operating and adjusting mechanisms to their environment can be formalized. To regulate a society is to seek the mechanisms of mutual adjustment, the settings that allow its members to live and work together. These settings are then formalized in the form of conventions. The society lives in

this manner "by means of" adjustments between different components of social life, **by means of compromise**. It is shared between subordination and willingness of individuals to derogate from the affirmation of their autonomy.

The regulation theory, developed in sociology seeks to understand the terms of the construction of social obligations to which individuals submit themselves. It is based on the fact that these social rules are endogenous product of relations.²

How did it happen? It must be said that, initially, it is through faith in the existence of one God, who sees all and before whom one must never lie, that one was able to give legal force to the word and the writings of men. The modern concept of contract is rooted thus, originally, in a monotheistic culture, accompanied by the belief in a universal guarantor of the given word. Even today, contractual freedom is inconceivable without **faith in a third guarantor** of conventions. The State, monopolist of the statement of the law, of the coining of money, can play the role of the third party guarantor God... A law is needed to establish the personality of both contracting and give strength and value to their word. But today the contract tends to emancipate itself from the guardianship of States and also of the state of persons... Sole guarantor of trades yesterday, the State rather appears today as an obstacle to the flow of trades. The dynamics of contracting even undermine some states of persons: The persons are thought on the model of account unit, equal contracting particles in the sense of "identical", "interchangeable". We can no longer perceive the distinctions male/female; child/adult; father/mother; animal/man... (Wedding, surrogate mother, organ donation...)

The dynamics of the principle of equality, which bears the West for two centuries, is gaining ground in our African societies. It leads to substitute as much as possible the contract to the unilateral exercise of power, bilateral to unilateral, autonomy to heteronomy. In principle, no one is supposed to be above the law that we have given ourselves and which serves to express our common determination to live together.

But even the voluntary subordination found in the employment contract, for example, no longer meets the needs of some institutions. These institutions reject any pyramid model in favor of a model of **networking structure**.

The network has only to simply obey to orders. It seeks to subdue persons without depriving them of freedom and responsibility that make most of their price. We are facing a

² Cf. Works of Jean-Daniel Reynaud (1997-1999)

new kind of interventionism (State control) that seeks to involve many people in the exercise of power. We are facing a creeping universalism that is gaining ground everywhere with its corollaries of relativism and nihilism...

The development of communication and information technology establishes a new network society, communication network inwards and outwards ... It encourages the growth of individualism, increase powers and rights especially of the individual. With the explosion of indistinct offers of knowledge, different concepts such as proximity or distance, age, sex ... are relativized. We are faced with the need for a paradigm shift (conceptual revolution), the requirement to change our way of thinking: « *the perspectives that plague us no longer have only the challenge the organization more or less right of our societies but the principle of humanity itself* »³ « *Today, the question is not only about the survival of mankind, defined as community inhabiting the planet Earth, but in each of us the persistence of man's humanity* »⁴ Three revolutions are in the process of becoming one, called **globalization**. These changes make the system:

- A global economic revolution. It means accelerated disappearance of national borders, liberating the forces of the great international market; decline if not disappearance of nation-States as regulators of economic development. Bearer of interesting promises, this revolution is also big threats; the most obvious is the devaluation of politics, i.e. the ability to act collectively on the course of events at national level.
- The second revolution is digital or informatics: The word informatics was forged in 1962 by Philippe Dreyfus from "*information*" and "*automatic*". It refers to the science upon which rests this technology. This revolution changes our relationship to time and space. It makes us into a virtual immediacy. « *The triumph of the internet, digital, cyberspace brings out before us a "sixth continent"; de-territorialized, ruled by immediacy, this continent is elusive, uncontrollable...* »⁵ All human activities emigrate, one after the other, to the continent: trade, finance, culture, education, communication, science, economics ... The long term effects of on social relations, on learning knowledge will certainly be important. How much

³ Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *Le principe d'humanité* ; éditions Seuil ; Paris ; 2001. P. 16.

⁴ Idem p. 17.

⁵ Jean-Claude Guillebaud; *Le principe d'humanité* P. 31.

will weigh the national and international rules, commercial agreements, codes face with this digital continent, this global non-suit?

- The third biogenetic revolution fits into the logic of the previous two. The imperatives of the business prevail over the moral considerations, ethical order. These three are interacting with one another. They all contribute to dematerialization phenomenon ... If on one hand there is a clear need for rules, supervisory measures, reflection; there is, on the other hand, commercial and industrial precipitation over determined by generalized competition, a frantic race toward profit.

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The cult of the autonomy of the human individual has given birth to a sort of god. Does this cult still allow recognizing the God who became man? Fundamentally, beyond the social facts observed, what has changed is the relation of the human being to himself and thereby, to nature, to the universe, to God ... the human individual perceives himself and wants to be perceived as "center of decision", "the source of his own choice". The human being must be built from what he is, the reality of his corporeality. What the cult of autonomy prevents us from understanding and living today is precisely the mystery of the incarnation itself. The cult of autonomy has become a cult disembodied. Indeed it is necessary to learn make community in order to genuinely make body, to be body...

When we, Brothers, make vow of association, what does it mean? We make vow of association in response to God who would not like to save us without us, despite ourselves. The proposed salvation implies a commitment both personal and community. This salvation is not only the soul but of our whole being of flesh and blood. Making vow of association for the educational service for the youth, especially the most unprivileged, beyond the fact of giving one's word bears witness of an open heart, open to God's love, open to others.

As Pope Francis explains: «Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a "mystique" of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity...To go out of ourselves and to join others is healthy for us. To be self-enclosed is to taste the bitter poison of immanence, and humanity will be

worse for every selfish choice we make». ⁶ Thus, facing the challenge of the world changes, our authentic experience of God translates into a transforming experience of community life. The mission is the actual place where we are given transformation, conversion. The mission, according to Pope Francis is not a part of my life, a moment of my existence. "I am a mission on earth, and for that I am in this world." It is within the mission in this sense that the **educator at heart** appears; one who decided within himself to be with others and for others. ⁷

Session 2

II- The way of the freedom of God's children

Our African societies, throughout the continent, are experiencing unprecedented anthropological crisis. Everywhere, self-realization, self-fulfillment, are more important to individuals than traditional community ties of solidarity. The traditional order, organized by supposedly immutable Community rules, where everyone had a place and his role, gradually gives way to societies of free individuals. Individuals, while competing for the best places, engage each other in contractual ties. These ties develop mainly in two forms: the tie to the State regarded itself as the result of a social pact and the merchant tie between producers and consumers, employees and employers, exchanging goods and services against money...Even the climate crisis, that looks environmental crisis, shares the same profound anthropological crisis as our societies. We are all encouraged to behave mainly as perpetually dissatisfied consumers. Science and technology are mobilized to transform individuals into products (potential customers) that are sold without their knowledge to commercial enterprises

Advertisement or propaganda in favor of goods is oriented according to the scientific knowledge accumulated on target audiences ... It is in the interest of the consumer society to guarantee a state of dissatisfaction, if not permanently frustration among its members.

⁶ Pape François, The Jo, N° 87. Oui aux relations nouvelles engendrées par Jésus Christ.

⁷ Bruno Cadorè OP, La visione antropologica di Papa Francesco interpella la missione della vita consacrata ; Rome 28 mai 2015.

Television, especially commercial space and entertainment, has become a daily consumption common enough at least in cities. It serves to colonize imaginations and alienate people to their own environments and cultural values. It also produces a narrowing of social and family life. The individual is pushed to finally lock himself in with the new technologies of communication and information. In reality, he does not live where he stays. Or "*Only the isolated individual can be totally dominated*" (Hannah Arendt).

In individuals, there is a thirst for welfare, improvement of their material conditions of existence... This thirst for welfare aggravates tensions, rivalries and family and social conflicts. It motivates the claims for greater rights and struggles for justice... It also causes an exodus from rural to urban centers.

Rapid urbanization leads to the intermingling of peoples and cultures and the development of multiculturalism. This results in complex individual identities based on multiple affiliations. As a result, large movements of populations to cities, new forms of poverty emerge: that of the unemployed, families without decent housing, marginal subjects to mental disorders, children on the street... Significant migration flows to Europe for religious, economic or political reasons. People want or need to leave their country despite all the disincentives. The increased exodus phenomena and desperate migration due to war, terrorism, poverty and hunger make it more and more evident the need for active solidarity on the global level. The concept of nation-State and citizenship is challenged by these movements and intermingling of populations. State sovereignty is undermined also by the interference of powerful multinationals. There is a growing need to create new structures and organizations for a broad integration of too small States to compete on the international level...

The anthropological crisis has not spared the family. The crisis of the family, more than a moral crisis, questions the very conception of man and woman, gender, parental models ... We observe changes, decompositions, blending around family and all this has implications on children's education. Following family breakdown and traditional communities emerge new forms of exploitation of children, trafficking of human beings for commercial, medical, political purposes...

The predominance of young people in our populations is a blessing because of the potential and strength that the youth represents. But this predominance becomes a time bomb when there is a serious lack of necessary so that the lives of young people can effectively deploy

to positive potential. Unable to cope with the growing of all their youth education needs, States tend to encourage the privatization of school... With the resignation of the government, civil society as well as parents, accelerated commercialization of school and culture occurs. The school tends to be hijacked by special interests: those of teachers, private founders...

The secularization of society, attributing to the State the responsibility for education, health, social security, eventually turns against individuals, particularly against the poor. They see their financial situation deteriorate and the traditional sense worsen, source of security, of belonging to a community. Individuals, while seeking to safeguard the achievements of individual freedom, seek therefore to recreate on a voluntary basis, the human warmth of a voluntary community. In reaction against the excesses of individualism, citizens on a voluntary basis, create new forms of social bonds. These bonds, of a new type, allow them to break the loneliness and find the values of solidarity. Putting himself away from both the State and the Church, the new forms of association have thus appeared. They advocate a social economy opposed to purely market liberal economy ... some commit to more equitable trade, others take care of the poor, AIDS patients, disabled, abandoned children, in short, to protect the most vulnerable... The economy is growing at the base with a sense of human community, sensitivity to a community where the sense of solidarity and reciprocity develops.

Caring, as part of a human community, both souls and bodies, is not simply an activity to entrust to administration, or to reduce to a source of profit. To devote oneself to the service of people with special need for personal, intellectual or cultural care, we need people associating a real concern for others to a professional expertise. Such dedication has a valuation sense of gratuity.

How to enhance the sense of gratuity in a "de-traditionalised" world engaged in modernization? The modernization leads us into the logic of the consumer society where everything is supposed to have a price. It is not much use to criticize or to spend his time protesting against the failings of the consumer society.

There is no need to criticize or to spend one's time protesting against the failings of the consumer society. There is no more effective criticism against the consumer society than opposing it to alternative social practices. This is to engage a different type of relation to things.

At the same time new lifestyle, this different kind of relation to things, must allow to testify and show new ways of being human ... The challenge is to help invent a living together in the most fundamental areas of human existence: education, the use of property in the world, community life...

On anthropological crisis background, our first duty as religious, is first to fight for the preservation of the meaning of our humanity. Human life, a life worthy of himself, is not given to man; he must build. It implies a sense of production, direction, signification.

This production requires the contribution of our imagination and our thinking. The association, given special attention in our revised Rule should correspond precisely to a **personal and community commitment** to produce a human sense. The challenge for us, religious educators, is not to get trapped by the **prevailing social materialism**. We are called to conquer the depth against superficial materialism ... But emergency of the mission often leave little time for ongoing formation, for reflection and meditation...

When we talk about association, we first think about a form of **personal commitment**. Note that there is anonymous form, if not banal, commitment. Indeed, each of us finds himself **being committed in association**, even before knowing it and wanting it. This means that once born, everyone discovers himself "situated", "caught", "involved" in a family, social, cultural environment... So we all start that way by being subjected to commitments that have preceded us, the commitments of our parents, of our States... We assume these commitments where we have nothing to do with. This fundamental position determines us before we become able to determine ourselves. To live in this situation means getting caught up in a direction or an orientation that we did not have to choose.

To educate an individual in accordance with his dignity as a human being means precisely to teach him to not simply suffer the weight of his past, his family and social environment, his social and natural conditions. It is to take him to avoid being reduced to a being without his own will, assuming only the course of events. Refusing to be an object tossed in all directions by events, the educated learns to gradually become reflected interiority. He becomes able to realize conscious commitments.

Existing humanly means to commit one, precisely said, having the courage to be oneself, to form oneself into "**self-help center**". With the commitment capacity, appears the fact that I do not abandon myself to the game or the fantasy of circumstances. I do not submit myself to a comedy; to a play of a character, imposed by the society or the group to which

I belong. One who is truly committed ceases to be a function of the character trying to outwit with others and with himself too ... He gives himself, as it is well said, a **line of conduct** and faithful to it.

The commitment, in the most serious sense, mobilizes my entire person. It contradicts the natural tendency of the individual to economize himself, wanting to keep control of the property he represents for himself in order to always be able to enjoy as he pleases. Cautiously, people usually prefer to commit themselves as a **loan** of their person rather than the **total gift of themselves**.

Moreover, fidelity in the gift, the extension of the duration of the commitment in the strong sense, is never a simple and easy repetition but continually requires creativity and invention of freedom. We do not commit ourselves "once and for all." The commitment remains all the time "constitutively open". It is when there is a persistent long-term commitment, that can a meaning can be found and read, a posteriori, in synonymous life other than inconsistency and uncertainty. By definition, a truly committed person is someone you can count on.

The commitment in the strongest sense used here is only possible with the support of a certain **faith**. Believing is both a need in humans and the expression of a fundamental freedom. In an uncertain world, any serious commitment implies an act of faith in an "other" world, not yet established but "yet to come." Attendance of the Word of God is for us Christians, a school to learn to believe in life. In Galatians 2, 20, St. Paul says, "*it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me ...*". If it is not he, Paul, who lives but Christ who lives in him, it means that he then became another man. He experiences in himself a new life. He is seen here with Saint Paul: the fundamental problem of our spiritual life is thus formulated: how to let Jesus Christ be in me?⁸ What attitude of mind and heart to cultivate allow Him to act in us? We must at least agree to be in a perpetual state of education, permanent conversion.

Following the teachings of Pope Francis, the heart of the consecrated life, should find the change. An authentic experience of God is a self-transformation experience. How do we welcome this challenge of change which we must operate on ourselves? Where do we situate the change to be made? If we listen well to Pope Francis, this change should be

⁸ Cf. Jacques Philippe, « *Recherche la paix et poursuis-la* », Editions des Béatitudes, 1991. P. 8 -11.

within the mission. The mission is the same place where our transformation is given. The mission within the meaning of Pope Francis is not a part of my life, a moment of my existence; it is the mission within the meaning "*where I am a mission on earth*" and I'm in this world for this mission. Along with the mission in this sense appears the educator in the soul; one who decided the merits of himself to be with others and for others.

When we talk about traditional mission, we first think of a long trip to distant geographical locations (continent, country, regions, towns, villages or neighborhoods) ... With the anthropological, social and cultural crisis in which we live, we must consider otherwise the meaning of our mission. Among the "*key reading*" essential to their work, the members of the ad hoc committee for the revision of the Rule specifically included: « *The desire to recognize that our mission is greater than what we do on a daily basis in our ministries—it also includes the elements of witness, service and communion* » Circular 469, 8.1.

If the vow of association is at the heart of our identity, it is necessary to see that it requires us to some extent a certain detachment. It implies that we break with the "tribal" attachments, regionalists, which are sources of frequent conflicts in Africa...⁹ There is no doubt that many Africans are tempted by ethnocentrism which represents a response against the disarray caused by the anthropological crisis in our societies. Just as we talk about polygamy, "geogamy" is to describe attachment, without mentioning the wedding of some Africans with their land, their soil... The geogamous marriage leads to geolatry, to the worship of one's ethnic group, to the idolatry of the land and the geofiliation. We only have consideration for the sons of the same land and nothing but contempt, if not sometimes hatred for others. When the attachment to one's ethnicity becomes exclusive of "others", the door is open to the worst... While claiming to be Christians, it is shows by our behavior that the blood of our ethnicity speaks louder than that of Christ. We must undertake a critical review of our traditions, our cultures. Without this, we will continue to see reigning power struggles, fear and mistrust between different ethnic groups.

Another false solution to the anthropological crisis of our societies: a secularism hidden behind a **misleading religiosity**. The hidden secularism of Africa is a functional religion, especially utilitarian. Europeans expect of the human spirit that it changes the world towards their satisfaction. On their side, many Africans are seeking the same thing by

⁹ Revue Spiritus N° 219. June 2015... P. 195-214 ; an article of Bede UKWUIJE.

simply invoking God. What matters is not the transforming relationship with God but rather what God can do for the material improvement of their living conditions. The Church is seen as one of the answers to the existential problems that we live. We do not try to serve God but to make use of God.

This materialist religion, "*enemy of the cross*", is widespread and commercialized with the influence of Pentecostal churches. For these churches, religion becomes a "business". They spread promises of extraordinary interventions of God in favor of their faithful... This utilitarian religion is a form of neo-paganism, which poses a serious challenge to evangelization. It is difficult to convince a "*materialist religious person*" of his atheism...It is this new form of paganism that the Pope specifically denounces¹⁰. Pope Francis, commenting Phil 3, 17-21; 4, 1, speaks of two Christian groups, the two go to Mass on Sunday, praising the Lord and are called Christians. But the second "*behave as enemies of the cross of Christ.*" These are "*worldly Christians, who are Christians in name only, with two or three Christian things but nothing more.*" These "*Christian pagans*" are "*pagans with some varnish of Christianity*" but without following "*its requirements*". Pope urges to "*be careful not to slip into the path of Christian pagans, Christians in appearance.*"

Beware also of "*the temptation to get used to mediocrity,*" which leads to "*ruin*" because the heart becomes lukewarm. He warns recalling the "very strong word" of God to the lukewarm: "*because you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth.*" Pope shows interior signs that we are taking the slippery slope of worldliness: "*attachment to money, vanity, pride.*" On the contrary, one who "*seeks to love God, to serve others, [which is] gentle, humble, servant of others, is on the right path.*"

The Pope also referred to the Gospel of the day, with the deceptive steward (Luke 16: 1-8): "*How is this steward happened to defraud his master? Did this happen overnight? No! Gradually. A tip here, a pot of wine there and thus gradually we come to corruption. The path of the worldliness of these enemies of the cross of Christ is so, it leads to corruption. And it ended up like the steward, stealing openly.*"

Like St. Paul, the Pope encourages to "*stand firm in the Lord*" in the attitude "*of the Cross of Christ, humility, poverty, meekness, service to others, worship, prayer,*" without allowing the heart to give way to "*nothing, corruption.*" He gives a few questions for an examination of conscience: "*Do I have any worldliness thing inside me? Anything*

¹⁰ During the Mass on Friday 7 November 2014 at Saint-Martha. (cf. Zenit.org)

paganism? Do I like money? Do I like pride? Where are my roots, where I am a citizen? Of heaven or earth? Of the world or of worldly spirit? »¹¹

Session 3

III- Vow of association and consecration

In this period we are experiencing changes, it is not enough to change some aspects of the life of our Institute such as the management, government, formation, etc. It appears necessary to revisit our identity. Who are we? Our identity has its foundation on the reason why we exist as an Institute. The mission is our reason for existing, our collective identity as Brother, our charisma, from the origin till today. From this mission, the ministry comes out as well as distinguishes itself. The ministry translates the form, the method and the service through which the mission is incarnated in a concrete realisation.¹²

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The Brother, through his vow of association for the education of the youth, particularly the poorest, takes an engagement which goes beyond the job contract. The vow of association makes him more than an employee of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools or of the Church. Moreover, the importance of the engagement as recommended by teaching as a ministry of education forbids that the Brother be considered as a mere employee. Besides, through the vow of association, the Brother bounds and roots himself in the Word of God. He engages himself in the school of the Word. He responds to the invitation of Saint John Baptist De La Salle to take the Rule as his first and principal Rule. The Institute is at the service of this personal perpetual dialogue with the Word of God. According to what has already been affirmed, the Institute encourages its members *"to nourish themselves faithfully and abundantly with the Word of God. Moreover, (it) makes available to them the means facilitating the **active reception** of the Word. These means may include: biblical formation and studies, the practice of silence, the scheduling of important*

¹¹ These questions of Pope allow including religion in a new perspective. It opens another perspective on religion. The term religion has a dual etymology. Cicero proposes an etymology from "relegere" in the sense of "re-reading" instead of "religare", i.e., "connect" came sense of Lactantius and Tertullian. The verb "ligare" means the action of "binding". Religion, according to them, has the function of linking man to divinity, in the sense of "home", of "dependency". The etymology meaning of *to re-read* seems to be more in line with our time ... Religion; "relegere" is understood as *to read*, *to read carefully* for a second time. Religion is *re-reading*, in the light of the Word of God, which is in addition a first reading, that of science. Scientific reading highlights the chain of determinism, biological, physical laws ... Re-reading done by faith involves another order, that of the creative freedom of new relationships. Religion intervenes in the order of meaning that everyone wants to give to their existence.

¹² Catherine M. Harmer (1997). *Religious life in the 21st Century*. Bellarmine. p.57

moments such as times for meditation, spoken prayer, adoration, retreat...Being everyday in the presence, listening to God and letting oneself be judged by the Word, engage the religious to be more deeply and generously in his mission, if he shows availability for that. (...) Through the accomplishment of different school tasks, it is not simply the destiny of the children in the world that is put in the hands of the religious but also that of God. His teaching mission as a religious, he receives it from the Church and from families as well but this mission is first entrusted to the Institute and it is through the mediation of the latter that every member participates in it. Thus, every active member of the Institute who is a participant of a faith community, every Brother can therefore hope to efficiently accomplish his mission by being faithful to the Word of God and so to his vocation... ”¹³

The Declaration summarizes well the conditions of the faithfulness of the Brother to his vocation: “ *...by listening to men, he makes himself available to become a more faithful listener to God’s Word; he allows Christ to grow in him by humbling himself; dedicating wholly oneself without interest, he forges a poor heart. The corruption of the apostolic activity in vain agitation or self seeking could not come from the incapacity to perceive God’s call in the real needs of the world which awareness makes the Brother to give himself to prayer and to turn more and more to God who is the only one capable to build his Kingdom.* ”¹⁴

The Declaration links this faithfulness to the capacity to **recall the spirit of community of the beginnings**: “*In the beginnings of the Institute, the vows that were pronounced by the Brothers show that the personal consecration to God and to his glory was inseparable from their engagement in a community established for a light of a specific service of God’s Kingdom.* ”¹⁵

It appears in the end that “the body of the Institute” is an inseparably the **work of God** and at the same time **the result of the concrete engagement** of each one of the Brothers.

Through the vow of association, the Brother expresses its personal availability to receive the life offered in Jesus through God the Father. The religious consecration is precisely the life of the Spirit that is shared and is announced through all the moments and all the activities of the Brother’s life. It is finally this received life that consecrates the Brother.

¹³ Saïdou Pierre OUATTARA, *The vow of association for the for the educational service of the poor; CERAP Abidjan 2014. P 50-51*

¹⁴ The Declaration n°25, 2.

¹⁵ Declaration n°20.

The consecration is neither a formula, nor a magic act, nor a liturgical ceremony which automatically gives the status of religious to an individual. It cannot be reduced to a set of rules but appeals to personal choices throughout one's life. Consecration is in the choice of the acceptance of a life that slowly makes us consecrated, that is, sons and daughters of the Spirit. It represents a journey through which we learn to pray, to celebrate our existence as a gift, as a daily call to fight for a new world. It is expressed through the engagement in totality of our human existence. The Brother's consecration implies all his efforts to **intensify his presence to the world**, that is, to be a sign of love in the end. It is in line with his way of living that he consecrates himself and is consecrated. The most profane tasks can then take a religious meaning.

The challenge for us here African Brothers, is to overcome the **superficiality** and the **banality**. We must therefore polish our way of speaking, going beyond these ways of speaking about the religious/religion that do not touch the hearts and do not convince the youth... Looking at the changes of sensibilities in our societies there is a need for a new language... The old language which has become the language of superficiality remains only on the tip of our tongues and does not concern our profound sensibility as Africans... We keep on repeating like a parrot what we have read or overheard. We do some kind of psittacism. We are not really convinced of what we are saying. It means, to be credible, to conquer some depth by forging a personal language that comes from the bottom of the heart... This requires sincerity and forthrightness with oneself.

Unfortunately, more often, the emergency, the emergencies of the mission give little room to the Brothers for ongoing formation, reflection and meditation... Yet, in a materialistic and ever changing world, permanent formation, meditation and critical reflection become an existential necessity. The depth is a conquest against the many incitements of the society to laxity. Even though we invoke Him at all times, we are living in a world which tends to exclude God, setting him the least possible place. Nonetheless God represents our depth and our salvation... He calls us to freedom.

The Brother, through the vow of association, immediately engages himself to manifest the signs of freedom to which all the universe is called by God. He thus is the witness of the hope of salvation for the creation. Through his consecration, he adheres in his own particular way in the process of groaning in labour pains mentioned by Saint Paul. "For

the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed. It was not for his own purposes that creation has frustration imposed on it, but for the purposes of him who imposed it - with the intention that the whole creation itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God. We are all aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains"¹⁶ Our educational mission participates in a groaning labour pain such that its fundamental characteristic is unseen by the world. The true children of God¹⁷ know how to perceive the Father's call in the groaning pains of the sufferings and the underprivileged. Unknowingly, they are witnesses of the Father's compassion. Through this testimony, they manifest the priority of "to be with" over "to do for". The mission comes out in the sense of passion, compassion, in other words of the communion for a damaged human and social condition.

As educators, we must be keen on the manifestation of new forms of sensibilities. The rising voices to defend children, women, gays and lesbians, and animals...reveal these new sensibilities. These voices are the manifestation of human sensibilities apparently growing and touched by the sufferings of women, children and even of the non human sufferings, that is, animals, insects and plants... These new sensibilities are very active and very critical, especially through social networks, and the civil society groups. They express the aspirations of the people and the youth for a more just and humane world where everyone can find his or her place and their well being. Through them, critical reflection on the stereotypes and social prejudices related to sex, age, health status, ethnic group, religion, economic status and to the ontological status of the human being are developed... Finally, it is not only the peoples and the persons who are victims of violence caused by men but also animals, the earth with air pollution, soils, water, and forests.

However, all these new forms of sensibilities remain ambiguous if the true nature of the human being is not understood. The biological individual through himself and in himself is nothing without ties with others. The genes say nothing essential on the true nature of human being. The factor of difference with animals is not in our genes. The foundation of our originality as humans is the kind of ties that bind us with the others throughout our existence. These ties with the other arouse within us interactions, millions of connections

¹⁶ Rom 8 : 18-22

¹⁷ Those who bear the Father's love in their hearts

of neurons in our brain. Humanity is not a purely materialistic fact but a cultural creation for ever ongoing and never completed.

What we affirm through our life as Brothers is that humanity is not a state, an exclusive privilege, a species or a measurable characteristic. It is a project and a process of creation never completed and always threatened. Therefore, we can say that it is not purely hereditary even if it has its foundations on particular physiological abilities.¹⁸ Humanity in which we are leaving in has one part of ethical choice, a will, and an assumed collective adherence. This part is stimulated by feelings of pity and respect from which the experience of history forms us. If animals have rights, it is from our own humanity that these rights truly proceed. In fact, to respect animals is like respecting humanity of which we are the beneficiaries. Animals' rights depend on the duties that man should impose on himself. By learning to better respect the animal, man builds and at the same time improves his own humanity.

We are leaving a new age of passion and compassion. Given that our mission surges from compassion the practice of vows does not first have as main objective a personal perfection which sets us aside and places us above others. Their objective is rather to always widen more our abilities of compassion and to move from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. The aim here is radically to become free, that is, capable of compassion that leads to passion, to a certain extreme and to the identification with Christ. This is to say that through the vows, there is the decision not to allow oneself to be amused or distracted from the desire to belong to Christ by the desire of material possessions, enjoyments, and by any powers of this world... Love of material things of this world, pleasures, and power end up always hardening our heart. Asceticism related to living the vows aims at freeing ourselves and freeing others in us, to open up ourselves more and more to God, to fill ourselves of Christ in order to become perfectly a gift.

Belonging to Christ takes place in a liberating way. Compassion and passion are the seeds of the sown mission in our hearts, the mission that is growing. They represent, so to speak, the soil on which is thrown the seed of the Word. This Word is a loving Word that is made to become flesh. Such a word which is ferment in the human paste can only be freeing indeed. In Galatians 5:13-ff, Paul indicates the meaning of the commune vocation of whole

¹⁸ Jean-Claude GUILLEAUD, *The principle of humanity*, Seuil Paris, 2001, p. 67.

humanity: we are all called to freedom which is a universal vocation which the Brother aspires to manifest the **radicalism**. Believing and claiming that « *one person's freedom ends where another's begins* », is to suggest that we would be perfectly free if we were alone without the limit imposed by the presence of others. Yet in Christ freedom is not a property, a right, but a demand of communion. Rather, my freedom begins where that of the other begins. By freeing myself, I free the other who is in me at the same time.

Our world encourages rather the search for self-blossoming and individual well being. *"The modern era is characterized by the rising of the homo juridicus, man who has rights and who thinks only about his rights (...). This instinct of right kills love: it empties the most profound source which is gratitude."*¹⁹

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In conclusion, to make the vow of association for the educational service of the youth, especially for the poorest is a way of being bound by one's word and to give one's word. By giving one's word, it is the whole person that we give. This represents a beginning made possible because God, first, gave us his unique word. This God's first gift, like any of His gifts becomes a responsibility and a human task. In fact, only God really knows how to give. That is why, we must learn from him how to give. To give the way God gives consists in making the other to give, which is, being capable in return to give. To make the vow of association in this underlined manner is to engage oneself on the path of dispossessing and depriving oneself even of their virtues. That is why we could see in the vows of association, chastity and obedience different forms of expressions of the unique vow of poverty. These vows which bind us to the word of God engage us on the path of the freedom of the children of God. This freedom is a one to conquer on oneself and in relation to the society. It is lived in the relations of service of others, especially the poorest. In this dynamism of the growth to freedom of the children of God we instill relations where we become our brothers' keepers, keepers first against ourselves and against the greediness of power.

Wednesday 12th August 2015

CHANGES IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE INSTITUTE FROM 1986 TO 2014

Brother Romain Sodey

¹⁹ Gustave Thibon; *Man's destiny*, p. 60, Ed. Desclée de Brouwer, 1941

Introduction

The module entrusted to me is about **the changes in the Church and in our Institute**. To define these changes in time, I found it convenient to set chronological limits to a certain period of time in our history. This choice is not fanciful. It respects the moments that marked *our mother* Church's history. The lower limit is justified by the fact that May 18, 1986 John Paul II released its encyclical *Dominum et vivificatem* (He is Lord and giver of life) in which he recalls and deepens the theology of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and the world. That same year, the Institute organized its 41st General Chapter in which was adopted a "final" Rule. 28 years later, in the dynamics of great movements of *Perfectae Caritatis*, that is to say the return to the Founder, the needs of the world and those of the Church, the following of Jesus Christ and seeking not to be deaf to the various changes underway in our world, the Brothers recognize that *this work of God is theirs* by adopting the revision of Rule 1987. A few months later, i.e. in October 2014, Pope François called for a synod on the family on the theme *"The pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization."* These are all facts that marked ruptures in the course of the history both of the Church and that of our Institute. But the reference of all events within the Church after the 1960's, remains the Second Vatican Council and the various documents which were produced.

The fruits of this Council have certainly an impact on the way to evangelize in order to reach the man of today. They invite us to go from the shock of the surprise to the adaptation to novelty. That is why I will try at first:

- To mention, without being exhaustive, the impact of Vatican II for the Church of today and perhaps that of tomorrow. Then;
- To address the implications of different mutations of our Church on our Institute that led to the revision of the 1987's Rule.

I- The impact of Vatican II in the Church

On January 25, 1959, Pope John XXIII went to the Basilica of Saint Paul Hors Les Murs (Outside the Walls) in Rome to celebrate the closing of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. To this end, all the cardinals present in Rome were summoned for the celebration.

At the end of the ceremony, the Pope brought together all the cardinals in the sacristy of the basilica to a secret consistory and told them three projects that he held in his heart: the convocation of a synod for the diocese of Rome to rethink the evangelization of the city, the reform of canon law code and most compelling announce was the convening of a Council. The cardinals welcomed this last point in a *religious stupor and reverent*. This project of the sovereign pontiff was probably not undertaken as a urge.

The general feeling was that the Vatican Council had been abbreviated, incomplete because of the Franco-German war and the capture of Rome by the kingdom of Italy. John XXIII did not have in mind yet to complete the work of Vatican I Council and considered less condemning modernism. The pontiff did not want a certain number of condemnations but to initiate a new council that will be a joyous proclamation of the good news of salvation to all men. For him, the Council should be the manifestation of the joy of the Church to know Christ and to make it known to all men. This Council was pastoral in that it expressed the conscience of the Church to be sent to the whole humanity to lead it to Christ the real Pastor. Pastoral does not just mean practical, organizational or turning to immediate action but it reflects the light of the good shepherd and his way of going to his sheep by sacrificing his life for her.

During the Council's work the majority of the participants had remained close to the spirit of openness shown by the Pope: be attentive to the realities of the world, adaptation needs to proclaim the Gospel to all men, the requirements of the testimony of Christian unity, the need to root theology and church life in the Holy Scripture. The fruits of this Council have certainly an impact on the way to evangelize in order to reach today's man. They invite us to go from the shock of the surprise to the adaptation to the novelty.

We must not deny the decisive character of this event not only for the Church but for the modern world. General De Galles knew a lot about history declared one day that he considers the Second Vatican Council as the most important event of the twentieth century. This century has now passed, the list of eyewitnesses is held every day more and there will come a day when it will disappear completely. It would be pointless to hope having any mind beyond the generations. The spirit cannot survive if it is not embodied in the writings and practices. Invariably happens the moment when the most profound reforms need to be reformed. John Paul II said and Benedict XVI confirmed that Vatican II is the "*compass*" for our time. Far from having sparked disorder, he introduced the means to understand and

integrate a vision both traditional and renovated the immense changes that were looming in the world that is ours now.

Going through the various councilor documents, it seemed that one of the keys of interpretation is *"listening to others."* Listen, one of the most frequently used words in the Bible. *"Hear O Israel ..."* so began in the first covenant every sermon of the Lord to his people. Vatican II wanted to place listening to others at the center of the Church, society and ultimately the whole human life. This listening leads to the tasteful experience of the other, then to being concerned for others and finally in the perception of oneself as another. Thus emerge strong trends that irrigate our present and our future undoubtedly. The others, who are they? The other is first of all the Other, the *Wholly Other* that is to say, God.

The taste of the Word of God. If we asked the Synod Fathers on December 8, 1965, which text would have the longest historical impact; it is not certain that a majority would have answered *Dei Verbum*. 50 years later, this constitution acts as a musical opening. It gives the council its dominant tone. *"The religious listening of the Word of God gives a taste of the Other, the taste of God first, then the taste of the other made in the image of God, finally the taste of the divine work of the entire creation."* (*Dei Verbum*, n ° 4). God still speaks to men. How can we hear him? How to interpret the Scripture? The Synod of Bishops in 2008 on the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church has created a distinction of essential methods already outlined in the councilor constitution. God speaks to man's level of understanding and it is normal that man uses all his scientific intelligence resources thanks to the academic exegesis to listen to texts. As this is firstly a divine word, you should use what might be called canonical exegesis based on the living tradition of the whole Church. Faith is first and last, it is up to him to guide the exercise of discernment. 50 years after the Council while the individualistic interpretations have increased, we have to still agree that the divine intervenes in human history, and disagree that the reported episodes are not reduced to a mere literary or theological production. Of course the facts reported are true facts by which God displays his beautiful loving plan to save all men. Of course the Word became truly incarnate, it's not a myth. Of course Christ shared our human condition, it is not a beautiful story written for children and simple minds seeking for wonders. Many will probably give testimony of this enthusiasm that has advanced over the last fifty years. Books, magazines, collections, training session are elements that show that the people of God have a passion for Scripture. Bible groups have sprung up

everywhere. *Scripture was the soul of theology* reminded the Council, it has since become familiar to a large number of baptized. The first trend has been encouraged by the liturgical reform that has suggested a wider selection of biblical texts for mass. Success often leads to excess. So it happened that the excessive deployment of the Liturgy of the Word condemned the Eucharistic liturgy itself to become a kind of appendix. And for this reason, in the laps of four short years, the Church has acquired an impressive body on the Eucharist. On 17 April 2003, Pope John Paul II signed an encyclical on the link of the Eucharist to the Church. Later, he opened a year dedicated to the Eucharist. Finally, by maintaining a great synod devoted to this subject, Benedict XVI made public his apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* on 13 March 2007. This emphasis should be read as the manifestation of a will to fidelity to the Council which had already largely treaty on the Eucharist in its Constitution on the Church and its Constitution on the Liturgy. The words at the moment seem to support a common view that Vatican II was an essentially Christocentric Council. We could also show that it tried to react against excessive Latin Christocentrism to recover something of the traditional pneumatic wealth.

The taste of the Holy Spirit. Of course I know that there is no text of the Council devoted to the third person of the Trinity but already there are designed roads that will guide the paths of tomorrow. After all, Christ cannot be reached in his very being if not in the Spirit. It is in the Spirit that the Christian assembly is received and recognized as the sacrament of Christ. It is He who guides men in their journey to the kingdom of the Father, He who helps the baptized to interpret the signs of the times, He who directs the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth. As desired by Paul VI to Christology and particularly the ecclesiology of the Council must follow a new study and a new cult of the Holy Spirit, precisely as a indispensable complement to the teaching of the Council. John Paul II tried to fill this gap by his encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem* on 18 May 1986. But it seemed to fall into a kind of deep indifference²⁰. It was therefore to the Spirit to manifest itself. In its way, it provoked from the decade following the Council a flowering of movements in which the closest communion and sometimes even in the sharing of life, priests, religious, lay people proposed to testify to have received charisms and regain the model of the first Christian communities. There were ideas of a *new springtime* for the Church. Since Vatican II, the magisterium has always insisted on the universal action of the Spirit in the

²⁰ Listening to commentators this encyclical was long and difficult to digest

world. The taste of the Holy Spirit leads naturally to the desire of the other. But who is the other?

The more distant concern. The other one was initially the farthest who is to be approached and appreciated. In the relations between Christianity and religions that do not claim to belong to Christ, the Council has caused a kind of Copernican revolution. Two documents illustrate this shift: *Nostra Aetate* dealing with the relations between the Church with non-Christian religions and with time it became one of the most decisive texts of the Council; and the declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* which deals with religious freedom. In reality, the Council referred to two traditional notions: that of the seeds of the Word that inspires action of men of good will beyond the diversity of religions and the respect for consciences which cannot be forced by an external constraint to adhere to any faith. The Council calls for universal brotherhood. Several events seemed to have started building this fraternity. I have in mind the famous Assisi meeting on October 27, 1986 followed similar ones. Since the declaration of Paul VI up to Benedict XVI's travel to the Holy Land, the teaching of the magisterium pleads with remarkable continuity for a respectful and sincere dialogue among the followers of various religions. This attention enriches strong knowledge and can purify on any point of understanding that the faithful had of their own belief. It does not, however, exclude submitting Christian theology to daunting questions. For example the following: would God have chosen other mediators than Jesus Christ as supports the current pluralist? In contrast to the latter, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had published deceleration *Dominus Jesus* on faith in which were recalled the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church. Companies marked by cultural pluralism could do without inter-religious dialogue which has become an essential element of social peace. By using it, have civil leaders measured that they are engaged in a process of revision of the practice of secularism. All religions have become true social partners. This is termed recently as *positive secularism*. It is no longer possible to confine them to the narrow area of the only personal beliefs. Faith communities have acquired the right to express themselves as such in the public square. The other is still the separated brother.

The worry for the separated Brother. The concern is to gradually overcome the barriers left by history and sin. Vatican II affirmed that the restoration of Christian unity was one of its major concerns. More than five decades of dialogue brought down many prejudices.

Bridges were launched between viewpoints judged yesterday irreconcilable. An impressive number of documents were adopted by all parties. I am referring in particular to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in 1999 which allowed the Catholics and Lutherans to overcome conflicts of crucial importance dating back to the 16th century. This concern for communion has become a leitmotif of Catholicism. The Council saw in the ecumenical movement, a work of the Holy Spirit that should arouse in the hearts of Christ's faithful an ardent desire for unity. The fourth trend is not yet marked today. The initial enthusiasm has given way to more sober and measured approach.

Some have even spoken of a crisis. But as explained by Cardinal Karlspel "A crisis is a situation where the old methods have reached their expiration but where spaces open for new possibilities." In reality intercommunion in the truth is not for tomorrow. New obstacles have come up, such as the ordination of women among Anglicans. But ecumenism, regardless clashes, remains a pressing appeal to the conversion of hearts. The other thing is about everybody, that is, every man living in this world.

The concern of the world. The concern for others then blossoms into a concern of the world. A Council will never have the power of Joshua, it does not stop history. It has become ordinary to recognize that over the past 50 years, this history has known an unprecedented acceleration. The Council only barely sensed the advent of the globalization of economies and cultures. It could not foresee the vanishing of ideologies, nor the fall of the Berlin Wall, nor the appearance of thesis suggesting a clash of civilizations, nor the prodigious advances in biology applied to the human body and nor the worries every day more pronounced on the health of our planet. It was still speaking of atheism when the major challenge for the religions will be that of indifference and the loss of interest in things of sense. Yet we can argue that Vatican II instilled in Christians what I would call a principle of goodness towards the world as it is. It was in this world so concrete, so carnal, so dark sometimes, and not in that idealized and full of utopia that, as said in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Spirit continues to write the wonderful story of salvation. This world, God loves it: how would we not have concern for him? This concern has not since rejected. Basing on the constitution of the council, Christians have deployed an ethics of human rights which gave this world a new power of grace. Communism has given a soul it had never had and dictators have given up under the pressure of the people. Most often, I think particularly of Latin America, the Church found itself among the forces of social renewal. There is today

the risk of making these rights a somewhat empty rhetoric while the most fundamental of them, the right to life as reminded by the encyclical *Evangelii vitae* of 1995 is daily denied to thousands of innocent human beings at the dawn of their existence. This concern for the modern world requires the Church to revise thoroughly its mission and mode of presence. It is this adaptation and the renovation effort that *Perfectae Caritatis* requires from Institutes and religious people. It invites them to begin to listen to the calls of the men of our time, to *"communicate with the today's Church's concerns and in doing so, to go back to the evangelical source Sequela Christi of Christ and the charism springing out of their origins."* (Lasallian Studies No. 18) Secularization has shaped societies as we had never known in the past. This requires that Christians encourage a new evangelization, an evangelization of culture by culture. It seems to me that all the forces of our Church have not yet perceived the extent of the burning obligation. To the man who asked him what he should do to be happy, Jesus asked him to love his neighbour as himself. The Council did not act differently; he who speaks of the taste of the Other has concern for others and finally can accept himself as another person, I am paraphrasing Paul Ricoeur. We shall now mention this last kind of primordial love of the baptized for their church.

The love of the Church. If we do not like the Church, why would we trust it? Why would we follow the moral it teaches? *"Loving the Church as a mother ..."* We only love what we understand. In the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II seeks to make our understanding of the Church deeper and more emotional. While the emphasis had for a long time been on the hierarchical aspect of the Church, the Council proceeds from the Church's mystery that only faith can grasp and it is in this mystery that it welcomes the communion that unites Trinitarian persons and endeavours to make it known among its members before it radiates in the world. Each member of the new people, the people of God walking with men, is encouraged to receive this divine communion and to live it, since all, absolutely all are called to the same holiness. The insistence on the unity of holiness partly renewed the face of our Church; never in its long history of two millennia had the laity regained value at this point. The Council had already reminded them of their responsibilities in the construction of the city and since then the Church pleads tirelessly so that the lay people are engaged in the great causes and the crucial challenges of our time. Neither the concern for justice, nor the assistance of the weak are optional matters for lay people. Some lay people, for a number of years are related to religious institutes either to be helped in their daily prayer life or to share a common desire to contribute to the effort of

the society and the Church through specific activities (education, health, etc). Others are touched by the spirit of the founder or foundress of the Religious Institute, spirituality and commitments while remaining in their status as lay people, they live, in various modes, a human and spiritual fraternity with religious men and women. For communities that bring together Christians of different vocations referring to the same spirituality, we use the term *"evangelical family."* *"The workers of the vine are all members of the People of God: priests, religious men and women, the lay faithful, all who are both subject and object of the communion of the Church and of the participation in His mission of salvation. Each and all of us work in the single vineyard of the Lord which is common to us all, with various but complementary charisms and ministries."*(Christifideleslaici, No. 55.1)

At all time, the Church maintains that nothing could replace the family because it knows that the health of a society awakens in the cradle of a communion of persons. The church sent lay people to the outpost of the mission. The reception of the Decree Ad Gentes was revived by two major documents: Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii in unum* and John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris missio*. *"I see the dawning of a new missionary age, which will become a radiant day bearing abundant fruits, if all Christians, and especially missionaries and young churches respond with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time."*(*Redemptoris missio*, No. 92). In some icons, the Church is portrayed as a building with the very tip of the dome penetrating into the Trinity. The image gives feeling that the communion of the divine persons must come down and drench the whole Church call to convert its practices and structures.

The idea that unites the various documents of Vatican II and all the ecclesial documents that follow it is "communion". The Church-communion invites to communion among all its members and designates religious as *Expert in communion* while assigning them the mission to be their *"in the ecclesial community and in the world, witnesses and artisans of this project that is at the top of the history of man according to God."* (Fraternal Life in Community, n ° 10.4) The post-council Document *Vita Consecrata* published in 1994 emphasises more on communion. The expertise of religious life in communion is to appear at two levels, *ad intra* and *ad extra*.

Are the trends we thought we could detect enough to illustrate the great avenues for our world of today and tomorrow? With the acceleration of history, our Institute is trying to understand and digest the Second Vatican Council through *"careful listening"* to the urgent needs of the world and the Church.

II- The implications of the discussed trends in our Institute

The 1986 General Chapter had to give the Institute a "final" rule. The preparation had an invitation sent to all the Brothers to formulate their propositions of changes - new essay to develop the Rule from the life of the Brothers and of all the Brothers - and the appointment of a drafting Committee. It worked out five drafts and the last was communicated to all the Brothers in 1985. But meantime, the new Code of Canon Law was promulgated in 1983. This had necessary implications on writing the Rule. Let us recall some of its dispositions:

Canon 578. *All institutes must observe faithfully the mind of the founders and their project that the competent ecclesiastical authority has recognized concerning the nature, purpose, spirit and character of the Institute and its sane traditions, all things that make up the legacy of the Institute must be faithfully maintained by all.*

Canon 587.

§1. To protect more faithfully the vocation and identity of each institute, the fundamental code or constitutions of every institute must contain, besides the points to safeguard specified in canon 578, the basic rules of governance of the institute and the discipline of members, their incorporation and their formation, as well as the specific object of the sacred bonds.

§2. This code is approved by the competent authority of the Church and can be only changed with its consent.

§3. In this code spiritual and juridical elements will be well harmonized, but the rules should not be multiplied unnecessarily.

§4. The other rules established by the competent authority of the institute are to be reviewed appropriately and adapted according to the needs of places and time.

In practice, our Rule brings together in a single text, under the title of rule, as well "the fundamental code" - called Constitutions – and the "supplementary Code" - called Statutes. We know the typographical arrangement that distinguishes them. Our Rule claimed that its spiritual guidance and legal standards remain as close as possible to the life of the Brothers, present in all kinds of cultures and in very diverse missions.

Our institute is of pontifical right. The competent authority to approve its underlying code - the Constitutions - is the Holy See (Canon 587 §2). In fact, in 1986, the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes asked to see all the text and not just the "fundamental Code" and demanded some changes to what had been approved by the General Chapter.

The majority of the changes consisted in adding a few statuses in the Constitutions. The approbation of Vatican has the symbolic date of 26 January 1987.

This "final" text underwent some corrections in all subsequent General Chapters...

The latest revision of the Rule. The General Chapter of 2000 noticed the advent of new realities in the Church and in the Institute. They can be summarized in a few points: important Church documents, a new understanding of shared mission and association for the service of the poor expressed in the documents of the Institute, the Chapter decisions that might require some modification in the future with the text of the Rule. All that led to Proposition 38 of the Chapter *"The Brother General Superior and his Council will appoint an ad hoc committee to study the implications, for the present text of the Rule, could have some new realities in Church and in the Institute. This commission will present its work to the Brother Superior and his Council at least two years before the 44th General Chapter."* The Commission or the Ad hoc Committee, was duly formed and met three times at the General House between February 2004 and March 2005. Its report, completed by a presentation and several annexes, was the second of a series of five preparatory documents to the General Chapter of 2007.

Report of the ad hoc committee 2004-2005. From their first meeting, the Committee saw that some entire sections of the Rule deserved a substantial revision in the light of four lines of thought:

- The dynamism of the origins of the Institute and the new ecclesial context of our identity as Brothers.
- The centrality of the vow of association to understand our consecration and our identity.
- Our identity and vocation seen in the light of a theology and spirituality of communion.
- The co-participation of Brothers and other partners to the same ecclesial mission lived according to the Lasallian charism.

In the second meeting in December 2004, it became clear to the Committee and the General Council that to introduce in the rule some minor changes would be a waste of time. Consequently, it asked the Committee a document that shows what implications the new realities of the Church and of the Institute contained in official documents in one and in the other would have on the Rule. The requested document was handed to the General Council in March 2005 and communicated to the Institute as we have already said. Let's take a quick glance at it.

Section A was referring to changes that happened in the church in three areas of particular interest to the Brothers: the ecclesiology of communion from Vatican II; community life and religious mission; and Church documents on education.

Section "B" looked at changes that had taken place in the Institute. The number of Brothers was declining, while their age was increasing. Lasallian ministries were multiplying and growing with more and more participation on the part of laypersons, priests and other religious who were involved in them. The documents of the Institute at the time tried to shed some light on this evolution and they highlighted four topics, which, although they appeared before 1987, were taking on more and more importance:

- the *identity* of the Brother,
- the development of the idea of *association*,
- the evolution of *shared mission*,
- changes in the way of living *in community*, as communities opened themselves to the presence of lay persons.

(We are all aware of how these topics have been repeatedly recalled and developed by our recent Superior Generals in the pastoral letters sent to all the Brothers along with their greetings for Christmas and the New Year.)

Section "C" included implications that were derived from the preceding analysis of a revision of the Rule. Allow me to recall some of the first paragraphs ("*General Observations*") and I ask your indulgence for the length of this citation.

"These substantial changes confront the Brother with a number of real-life situations with regard to mission and community (two of the constituent elements of the Brother's identity) which, in fact, are no longer adequately expressed in 1987 Rule..."

"The central axis of the post-Second Vatican Council documents of the Church, communion-mission, is the historical and theological basis for the existence of the Institute as presently formulated since 1986 in the fourth vow, the vow of association for the educational service of the poor. In the origins of the Institute, this vow associated each Brother only with others who made the same commitment. Today the very formulation of the vow in light of developments in Church and Institute documents now implicitly, at least, associates the Brother, in his consecrated life lived within a community in view of mission,

with all those others who come together through some kind of association to carry out a similar mission. In an increasing number of situations, this association also welcomes persons into sharing some aspects of the life of the community."

The Committee saw here an interweaving of axes: that of the communion-mission, which is a constitutive element of the Brother's identity but which also crosses into other Lasallians, and that of vowed consecration, proper to the Brother. "The idea of association has become a central idea among the very diverse persons who share in some way in the Lasallian mission..." The Committee concluded, *"the idea of association has become a unifying concept that points to a different future, already being realized, for the Lasallian mission."* In more detail, the Committee pointed out aspects from each chapter of the Rule that would merit particular attention in a revision of the text.

Since that report, nearly ten years have passed. Today there are fewer Brothers, the average age continues to increase, there have been District and Regional mergers and we have closed ministries or handed them over to others. At the same time, the Institute has become present in new regions; there have been two world assemblies on the Lasallian educational mission; there has been an increase in the number of international, regional and district assemblies which involve greater numbers of other members of the Lasallian family; there have been two assemblies of young Brothers and Young Lasallians; there are many other signs that we need to read and interpret. All of this (and this list is not exhaustive) raises questions for us and it offers us paths for responses that ought to influence our revised Rule. It is the life of the Institute, in obedience to the promptings of the Spirit, that is asking for sufficient reflection on the Rule.

Since the General Chapter of 2007

The General Chapter of 2007, in addition to its production of important documents – which has influenced the new draft of the Rule – introduced two modifications, small but significant ones, into the text of the current Rule, specifically in the formula of vows: first of all, *"....I promise and I vow to unite myself and to remain in society with....,"* recovering, and rightly so, a clause from the formula of 1694 which was there until the beginning of the 20th century; secondly, the vow of association for the educational service of the poor is again placed at the beginning of the list of vows. Thanks to these retouches, the current formula of vows is closer to the one used by the Founder and the first Brothers; more than anything, it makes prominent the centrality of "association for the educational service of

the poor" in the spirit and the intentions of the Founder and the foundational community. Since this text was a constitution, these changes were submitted, as they ought to be, for the approval of the Holy See.

The Chapter adopted, in addition, the following **proposal**: *"That under the authority of the Brother Superior General and his Council a Commission should undertake, in dialogue with the Institute, a revision of the Rule. If the Superior General and his Council think it appropriate, they could convoke an extraordinary General Chapter or a special session of the ordinary General Chapter of 2014, so that the proposed revision of the Rule can be submitted for consideration."* The Chapter mandate was carried out to the letter. Circular 459 of September 23, 2008 highlighted the goals, described the process, and appointed those in charge of its two stages.

The first stage lasted from November 2008 until September 2009 and all Brothers were asked to discern the gaps and incompatible elements that may be contained in the Rule as regards the Rule itself and daily reality. The responses were placed in a document that was handed over to the commission in charge of the second phase.

The Superior General announced the beginning of the second phase to the Visitors in a letter dated October 3, 2009. In that letter, the following was said, among other things: *"It was the intention of the last two General Chapters, the highest representation of the Body of the Society, that the Rule is of the Brothers and for the Brothers. This was the thinking of the General Council when this study began: We should bear in mind that the beneficiaries of the Rule are the Brothers and that, as such, the Rule must always include these three purposes:*

To express our identity within the Church and in society.

To serve as a guide for the life of the Institute and for each Brother.

To give guidelines for the leadership, governance and mission of the Institute."

The commission in charge of the second phase had six plenary meetings, each lasting two or three weeks: October 2009, September 2010, February and October 2011, February-March and June 2012 (the final meeting was for one week). What came out of the first meeting was communicated to the entire Institute and it provoked varied reactions; the text was incomplete and it needed much more work.

At the beginning of the second meeting Brother Superior sent a letter to the commission in which he specified that its task was to revise the Rule, not write a new one. From that time on, the commission stayed strictly with the 1987 text as its point of departure for the new

plan. The draft, updated up to that time, was communicated to the Brothers who took part in the 2011 intercapitular session. After the October meeting of the commission that same year, the text was sent to Brother Visitors so that they could make their own observations. Some Visitors made the text available to other Brothers or even all the Brothers in their District. At various times the opinion of the consultants who were appointed in Circular 459 was sought, either on the overall text or on particular topics.

After the plenary meeting in February-March 2012, a smaller group was put in charge of cleaning up the draft. The meeting in June 2012 had for its goal to give the text some finishing touches and a definitive approval. It was still necessary to adjust some details regarding style (and it is possible that there are still mistakes). Thus finished, the project was officially delivered to the Superior General and his Council in September 2012. That text was fortunately communicated to the entire Institute for study.

In comparison with the Rule in force, it is obvious that many articles of the current *Constitutions* have been modified. Thus, it has become necessary to seek the approval of the Holy See once again.

CONCLUSION

During the closing ceremony of the 2nd Vatican Council, December 7th, 1965, pope Paul VI expressed the following: *"Would not this council, then, which has concentrated principally on man, be destined to propose again to the world of today the ladder leading to freedom and consolation? Would it not be, in short, a simple, new and solemn teaching to love man in order to love God?"* The 2nd Vatican Council gave us as legacy the pastoral charity that is itself an invitation to follow the path of the service and to love the man and all man who feel the mystery of God. Therefore, it's mainly in the experience of charity where the man can find the presence of God. To be faithful to this call, the religious Institutes must to renew themselves in order to re-find the *creative dynamic principle* that is the core of the revision of the Rules of life.

The revision of the Rule is a collective work. The Rule is a text by which all the Brothers should recognize the meaning of what they live or want to live. A consensus is needed in order to live that meaning, and the consensus should be the most we can reach, almost unanimity. It requires a work of listening of the biggest possible number of Brothers, an effort of understanding of the different possible options, the seeking for a possible synthesis, and an arbitrage between them with the synthesis is not possible. The current

text responds well to this concern. We just received the approval of the Holy See. Now, the phase of reception starts, and this phase is not the easiest.

Dear Brothers, you have an important role as facilitators of the revised Rule for your Brothers. Give the time to yourself to interiorize it individually in order to help other to fully interiorize it. I hope to you to live these days as a time of grace and a preparation for the mission.

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Thursday 13th August 2015

**THE BROTHERS' COMMUNITY, A MINISTERIAL COMMUNITY
COMMUNITY, A LIVING HOME**

Brother Jean Luc Traore

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of new concepts in the history of our Institute such as "shared mission" "partners in education" "Lasallian Community", "ministerial fraternity", etc. had influence on the direction of the new rule. There was at times confusion in the minds of the members of the commission for the revision of the rule and also in the minds of many Brothers throughout the Institute. Regarding the latter, the notes received by the Commission after consultations show it clearly enough. But the roadmap of our Commission following the work of the ad hoc committee was very clear: it is a rule for the Brothers, that considers "significant changes in the Church and in the Institute "and which would express adequately the identity of the Brother today. The rule must assert the centrality of the association for the educational service of the poor as key to understanding the consecration and identity of the Brother. Then it must consider the theology and the spirituality of the Church Committee to understand the place of the Brothers' vocation. Finally, the new rule should not lose sight of the Lasallian mission and charisma which are no longer the exclusive property of the Brothers but shared by lay people increasingly numerous and committed.

It is well understood in this context, why the Brothers are all confused. We also understand their fears and concerns and even hostility to the proposed revision of the rule. Their mindset is justified and legitimate because it was not an easy task to rearrange, rethink, restate or revise a rule that reconciles all expectations. There must be a rule for the brothers, but how should we write it so that it takes into account the reality of the association with the lay? And what about old Brothers, disabled, sick or invalid? So this is the context that prevailed when it came to revise the chapter on community life. The debates were sometimes heated within the Committee especially on what was meant by ministerial community, a concept that did not exist in the rule of 1987, more so in the revised rule. This is the place to explain some expressions.

1. Ministry, mission, ministerial community, ministerial fraternity.

Brother Antonio Botana who has done much research on the association, noted the use of words ministry and mission. In general they are used confusedly one for the other. But for him, although Ministry and Mission are linked, the fact remains that the ministry is how to achieve the mission in our context of educational mission. We can have multiple ministries to achieve this mission. A ministry is accomplished through a ministry of tasks or services to give. We should not identify the ministry to the tasks. The ministry leads to a lifestyle, a way of being, a spirituality that relates to the realization of an area of the Church's mission and is reflected in the tasks. The Minister himself tends to configure with the Church's mission to which he is called, hence his ministerial identity.

Today, when we hear about Brothers of the Christian Schools, one sees immediately the school. Our ministry is in the school and for a long time our ministerial identity is always linked to the school. Within the school there are several ministries and within those ministries there is a multitude of tasks. We can consider teaching as a ministry. But inside teaching, there are several tasks: among teachers there are those who carry out administrative tasks, others carry out educational support, and others for example are invigilators. But all of them work to accomplish the same mission that could be called the educational service of the poor, or to be evangelized by the school. Each brother, wherever he may be has in mind the mission, a ministry that can be summarized in a specific task, but not only that one: each brother contributes first in the mission through his state of consecrated, his life testimony, through his prayer and his ideas. So all the brothers, whether sick or disabled by age, take an active part in the accomplishment of the mission.

We talk of ministerial fraternity because one is a Brother for mission. We are constantly building a fraternal community for the sake of the same mission. Our brotherhood is linked to the mission. We must strive for the unification of our life to the mission. Our identity of Brother is fused to the mission; all our "being Brother" tends to identify with the saving mission of God. This "being Brother" must be subject to all the attention, all the community cares. This is an opportunity here to insist on the need for a community annual program that takes into account all the commitments of all the members of the community. The community is the place of their discernment.

The community annual program is the privileged place where each brother lives the Rule in communion with the other members of his community, but also with the entire Institute. It is the place where the apostolate or ministry of each Brother is clearly defined. This is

important because increasingly, we will be in community with the Brothers with whom we shall have different ministries and in various places: some in school, others in prison, others in social centers and you can add to the list. The community is now the place where each Brother comes to commune with others and takes force. The community annual program should create the conditions for this communion and for this renewal. The Brothers are already very few in the work (schools, institutions, etc.). In the Institute, there are many areas where they are absent or when they are present, they no longer have responsibilities. We are witnessing therefore new situations. A Brother may be alone in a work (school or any other apostolate) without being the first responsible insofar as he could be. For this reason, the community annual program should consider his situation. It is clear that the decisions about the work cannot be discussed in community as it used to be; the modalities have changed. In some cases, it is no longer the lay who are associated, but it is the Brothers. This is a situation that is source of frustration for the Brothers, but we must accept it as such. In this context, the community annual program becomes the place where each Brother informs the community his role within the Lasallian team in which he is included. He gets support from the community, advice, ideas ... to carry out his ministry among the lay.

2. The community of brothers as a ministerial community.

The revised rule, like that of 1987 has the concern for the faithfulness to the spirit of the beginnings, that is, the foundational charism. That's why the first article of the chapter on community life of the 1987 Rule (art 47) is kept unchanged in the revised rule. La Salle associated with men, of course led by the Holy Spirit, to ... They associated for something and that thing is to respond to the needs of a poor youth and away from salvation. The purpose of their association is the educational service of the poor according to the charism which La Salle was inspired. This apostolic ministry of education is at the root of our identity as we are called to a ministry. We are communally and individually signs of the mission both for ourselves and for others. We are fulfilling a ministerial function since we are identified to the ministry of education. Like every Christian community and the Church itself, we find our mission in the implementation of our mission, our specific ministry. Any Brothers' community as such, is a ministerial community, dedicated to the educational service of the poor according to the charism of the Institute. This is the ministry that gives the community of Brothers its particular identity in the Church.

Brothers individually taken, but members of a ministerial community, perform various functions, but it is the community that fulfills the ministry. The ministry is not bound to a specific function, but these various functions of the Brothers contribute to the ministry. The members of the ministerial community live in communion, so that everyone regardless their status, contribute either through what he does though who he is to the accomplishment of the mission. Without this spirit of communion, elderly or sick Brothers will have the feeling of being offside. However, as a member of a ministerial community they are in solidarity with others through their prayers, their sufferings, their ideas etc. They are members of a ministerial fraternity which is a prophetic sign of the Lasallian charism.

There is an intimate connection between a community of Brothers, vows, consecration and mission. In the formula of the heroic vow of 1691, it is interesting to observe the pronouns used: We (we consecrate ourselves entirely ...) our (to procure with all our power), our (and with all our cares ...) We (The way that we think may seem to be most pleasant to you...), I (I John -Baptist de la Salle, I Nicolas Vuyart, I Gabriel Drolin...), We (We from now and forever ... make association vows) and finally "We have signed ...". The "We" expression of association and union depicted since then, that is to say from the beginning of the Brothers' community and how the mission calls are discerned as a community. All projects for the mission are first in the sense of a community. The inspirations, initiatives can come from individuals, but they must go through the discernment of the community. It is the community that sends into mission. Brother exercises a ministry which is a plot of the mission of the community or of the institute.

When Gabriel Drolin was sent to Rome, it was in the name of the community of Brothers, in the name of the institute. He did not send himself; he is sent by the community. He did not go to do what he wants; he went to do what he is sent to do. This is the meaning of our vow formula today, which derives most of its substance from the heroic vow. The pronoun "we" refers to the body of the society of the Brothers and the "I" to the personal commitment of each individual member of this society. So in a ministerial community, there is a mission assigned according to the charism that calls the commitment or the personal investment of each Brother through a ministry entrusted to him. The Brother as a minister does not forget that he is sent, protagonist of an ecclesial mission that comes from the Holy Spirit, that is to say, the (lasallian) charism.

We are all called by the above, to make our hearts and minds available to accept the will of God. We are also called to the evangelical detachment, we often are "hung to our amenities, to our conveniences, to our old ways, to our positions, to places that we value a lot, we resist when the Brother Visitors want to send us elsewhere, which is synonymous of new beginning for us. Let us remember our vows, of "We" protagonist and of "I" personally committed to the mission. The mission and the ministry are the foundations of a community of Brothers.

3. Community and ministerial mission: two realities intimately linked.

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How to tackle the theme of the ministerial community without touching on that of the mission? Indeed, the community of Brothers is dedicated to the educational service of the poor, which is a ministry, ministry understood as the way in which we put the mission in application. Ministerial community means community for ministry or mission. We cannot separate the community and the ministry because for us Brothers, there is no ministry outside what the community assigns and sends us to do. We are always sent by the community; the mission is always that of the community and therefore the ministry entrusted to each Brother participates in the realization of the mission of the community. In our context which is also that of the Church, there is no sense in assigning a mission personally. We are always sent by someone. Being sent on a mission does not first come from a personal project.

We should therefore not be surprised about this interpenetration between Mission (ministry) and community, because the community identifies with the mission, they become one and each Brother unites in his person, mission, ministry and community. It is the community that sends; it is the community that receives the mission of the Church. We must not forget the basic idea related to the mission: we are sent by and in a specific objective. The charism and mission of the Brothers have been recognized and authenticated by the Church and from there, it is recognized that the Brothers are sent by God as a community to bring salvation to the poor children. Our Institute's mission is to bring the light of the Gospel to the world of education through the institutions we create. As a ministerial community, our mission flows from that of the Church which sends and the mission of the Church itself comes from the apostles. That's why in the last two versions of the Rule (1987 and 2014) we talk of apostolic community to mark this intrinsic

link between the community and the mission of the apostles. Canonically, the Brothers' community is sent by the Church. It is the Church that gives mission to teach in its name.

John-Baptist de La Salle himself links the Brother's vocation to the ministry of the Apostles. The Brothers participate in the ministry of the apostles and as such they are their successors. He constantly reminds them that their work is apostolic because they educate their students in the faith and in the religion (MF 128.1; 159.2; 167.2; 81.2 ...). The Brothers have a responsibility to teach the doctrine of the apostles (MF 116.2). They should explain the doctrine of Jesus Christ and strengthen the faith in the mind and heart of those they teach catechism which is their principal function (MF 145.3).

In 1684, according to Blain (CL7, Book 2, chapter 2, p.232) La Salle brings together the principal twelve Brothers for a retreat during which they address the issue of the regulation (they deliberately avoided the word rule), issues related to food that must remain ordinary, a distinctive habit which is neither that of laymen nor clergy, vows. For the latter, it was mainly obedience, stability and gratis education. The number of principal Brothers is significant because he wants a narrow link between the ministry of the community and with that of the Apostles. No wonder that later in his meditations he assimilates the Brothers to the successors of the Apostles. From the beginning, the Brothers' community is intentionally apostolic, thus ministerial. The Founder puts it in the line of the early church.

The vows pronounced by the Brothers institutionalize their identity. There is now a lived relationship between their community and the education of poor children. As for the vow of obedience, it aims at ensuring cohesion in the service of the mission. Their association is to respond to the educational needs of abandoned children and who are far away from salvation. From the beginning, the Brothers are aware, through their association as a progressive unveiling; they are protagonists of a history of salvation, in communion with other persons moved by the same spirit. They "come into a ministry which increases their responsibility before God, the Church and the beneficiaries of the mission".

We must not undermine the role of the community in the commitments of each its members. For, it is the community that gives the responsibility of a ministry to a Brother or to Brothers. It is the community that validates all the commitments and all the ministries of the Brothers. All our responsibilities and our tasks are first those of the community.

The identity of the Ministerial community is built around the charism of the Institute. It's the charism that gives a ministerial direction to our identity. And this charismatic identity implies for us a lifestyle, a way of being with the beneficiaries of the mission (the children of artisans and the poor), but also a way of being with the world for which we have a duty of testimony of life and service. Our ministerial identity built around the Lasallian charism implies a spirituality, attitudes and behaviors as well as missionaries reflexes. We are indeed a consecrated community, a community of God's ministers, consecrated together to bring the Gospel wherever we are sent to. As a ministerial community, we live our consecration in solidarity with the poor and firstly in communion among ourselves (together and by association), then in communion with those who are committed in the mission with us (the lay). Our vow of association is a role model for them, as this vow itself has the Trinitarian communion as role model. This journey of the first Brothers, who are becoming increasingly aware of their history, highlights the importance and necessity of the community as mediation in the accomplishment of the educational mission.

The community dimension of the mission of the Brothers is very present in the formula of vows they profess and this inaugurates the association for the mission: "To unite myself and remain in society with ... to keep together and by association ...". In fact, their formula of vows is a "lived community missionary project, the vow comes from life the way they share it. It's a response to people and to needs. The Brothers give themselves goals and community attitudes related to the mission and its continuity "in the words of Jean-Louis Schneider. The three vows refer to a community project and the body of society. These are vows for the mission, since the purpose of their association is to hold gratis schools. As for stability, it is the expression of the faithfulness to the community project. Finally, the vow of obedience makes one to accept the job or the ministry anywhere assigned by the body of society!

The vow of association determines the lifestyle of the community: united and living in society. This vow also determines the mode of doing the ministry: to keep together and by association gratuitous schools. Through the vow of association, the Brothers make their educational profession a ministry, a meeting place of God and a path to holiness. This association is the fruit of the experience of community life that preceded it; it roots and moves it toward the mission. The community of Christian schools is primarily composed not as a team work, but as a communion of persons who feel called by Jesus Christ and sent to represent him.

Friday 14th August 2015

COMMUNITY AS A LIVING HOME

Brother Jean Luc Traore

In his excellent book, *The Community as a place of forgiveness and celebration*, Jean Vanier, highlights the reality of a community with its ups and downs, joys and sorrows. Our rule insists that the community is for the Brothers a living home. While it is true that stated in these terms we see a beautiful ideal, a perfect model of our living together, the fact remains that our community life is not without difficulties. Community life is not only sorrows and it is not only joys. It has both joys and sorrows.

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1. An ecological approach of the community

Let me borrow the paradigm of ecology to show my view of community life as home. The concept of "living home", we should know, is an expression of the rule of 1987. If I borrow the concepts of ecology to express how our community of Brothers should be, first it is because the ecology has been a burning issue since we started dealing with environmental issues such as those related to climate change. Pope Francis has just published *Laudato si* on the environment.

Compared to the ecology, the community is our vital living environment because ecology emphasizes concepts such as relationship, action, interaction and living environment. The community as a living home life would thus be our ecosystem. Ecosystem understood as biotope (living environment) and biota (Relations, interaction between those who inhabit the place). As much as living species in the environment have relationships, as much in a community the Brothers are not "piled up." They do not simply coexist; their existence is governed by relations that are lived and are explained by their complementarities and their interdependencies. If in the nature we talk of biodiversity, this explains in our lives our differences and similarities that are so much wealth to be accepted (differences) and to be shared (similarities). As far as the balance of biodiversity is established in the maintenance and the protection of each species, it follows that the community balance is not established in the destruction or the repression of differences (cultural, racial, intellectual ...). We are called to enrich each other and to allow ourselves to be mutually educated.

2. Living together

This is a beautiful reality but has a lot of demands. Sometimes our social environment envies us. This means that outwardly we show the beauty of community life, although sometimes these are just appearances. Often, in fact, we know how to save the forms, even when everything goes wrong in our community living home. All this means that the unity, the harmony, the joy to live together and to be united should not be taken for granted. These are the fruits of our efforts, our sacrifices and of our asceticism. The community understood as living home is the result of a construction. Each member brings his stone that is as indispensable as that of others. The fraternal warmth and communion are the result of the effort of each member of the community. For a home to be lively, it should first be well built, it should be a good home and there should be good firewood. Otherwise, there may be too much smoke which is very irritating for the eyes. The home should also be well maintained if it is to remain lively. At times, we must release it from its ashes otherwise the heat suffers. It is the same for the community. It should be the priority care of each of its members. Everyone has to bring what's best for its balance and unity: his talents, his heart, especially his quality, his generosity, his fraternal warmth and his person...

The community is not a grouping of people who have chosen themselves. In the community, we did not choose each other. It is a providential meeting of people sent and gathered for a mission where everyone has a ministry that has been entrusted to him. It is a place where a self-conversion process starts for each member, if he accepts this spirit, and where he learns daily renewed self-acceptance and mutual acceptance. Everyone is invited and sometimes strongly called to be aware of that free gift he is for others and the others for him, a wonderful reality by which we called each other Brothers, not according to the bodily nature but according to the Holy Spirit who makes our unity. This wonderful gift of brotherhood that is lived in community is the best gift that the Church through the consecrated life, gives to the world in terms of testimony of beauty. Our community life is already foreshadowing of universal brotherhood which ends in Christ in his Kingdom. Through our testimony of life in community, we show more that we are signs of the Kingdom and we take our stature of prophet.

The beauty of this gift lies in the fact that we call ourselves Brothers, yet we are so different in terms of culture, language, race, our origins, etc. We are even from different

continents. But in the name of someone and his message we are Brothers. It is a mystery to contemplate. In the name of the Gospel, we break so many barriers, so many differences, with the ambitious ideal to strive towards the unity of the Trinitarian life.

3. Sharing the daily bread is more than a vulgar action

Mutual respect, friendship, esteem and mutual trust are a necessity for a community to be viable. Eating together is a sign of friendship, respect, esteem, trust, etc. Just look at what the meal symbolises in our African cultures. We do not eat with anyone! We do not eat at anybody's place, especially when we know each other in the village, when everyone knows who is who! We do not eat with one in whom we do not trust; we run the risk of being poisoned. On the other hand, there is nothing to fear from the stranger, the unknown who asks for hospitality. When we receive a distinguished visitor, a friend, a parent who came from far, after the welcoming drink, we try to cook a quick dish for him to eat. Since he has come, we prepare a special meal to delight the whole family. In short, in all our societies, the meal plays an important role. We say that our community is our living home. What role does eating together play in our communities? Let me remind here that eating together is a community exercise just as it is with prayer. Eating together is already sharing our life, it is already celebrating our togetherness, our coexistence; it is already to experience friendship and mutual esteem. This is already a sign of trust; it is already a space where we share our joys and sufferings to tolerate one another, to accept one another and to welcome one another. Finally, eating together is a form of our being together.

When we have not become aware of all the above, we easily fall into escapes and we have excuses. If we want our communities to be truly living homes, we must take care of our being together. We must succeed in making our presence a necessity for the others and in making their presence a necessity for ourselves. We're like in an ecosystem where everyone needs for his growth what the others are and vice versa. The observable harmony in an ecosystem is what we would call the cohesion of the community. This cohesion is the business of each and everyone.

4. The community, a path to conversion

The community is an instrument of our conversion. It does not need to be converted because as an institution, it is perfect. But it is a gift of God for each Brother for his training to holiness. The community is a school where we learn integration, asceticism,

fraternal love and the acceptance of our differences. We also learn self-giving, to render service without calculating and to let oneself be educated by others. If one knows how to be in the community school, it reveals us to ourselves. It teaches us that others are not to be changed as it pleases us, but to love. And since the others reveal us to ourselves, given that they help us to grow as a person, we must be grateful to them, whether it is those who make us vibrate with joy or whether it is those who make suffering and frustrations grow within us. Because through them, life teaches us what we still have to learn, and how far we still have to go.

It should not be inferred from the above that we must let everyone do what he wants alleging that we are accepting differences. The Rule recognizes that difficulties are part of life, that a life without stumbling is idyllic. Therefore, Article 49.1 and 2 uses a genius way to give responsibility to the individual Brother, the community as a whole and the Brother Director. Drawing the Brother's attention about what can cause difficulties is seen as a service that is up to each Brother and the community itself. The rule is well aware of the practical and daily reality of community life.

5. On the use of the means of communication

Today, some avatars of information and communication technologies are in the process of being a plague even in our communities. We religious educators who are supposed to help others, especially our students, to use them wisely, we are sometimes more than slaves of these technological means. We completely ignore any technological object is a double-edged knife and as such it has its negative side. We're more attached to these technological objects than to our rosaries. They are a plague today for our community life. Mobile phones and the internet keep us away from our living home because they put us more in touch with the outside and sometimes the remote outside, than with those who share the same roof with us. Mobile phones are used without any discernment; they ring all the time, everywhere, especially where it is least expected and with what kind of sound! How often our table conversations are listened to a thousand miles away because one of us does not leave the table to receive his correspondent, without forgetting that he disturbs our table talks. How often our meditation prayers are interrupted. To keep it aside from prayer seems too much to request from Brother! In fact, we too are victims of modern slavery. It is up to everyone to see how he can fight against the chains he has chosen and freely put round his neck.

6. Building a living home with the fruits of the Spirit

As it has been pointed out already, the community is the result of a construction with the assistance of all its members. In the words of Saint Paul to the Galatians (Gal 5:22), each one must be guided by the Spirit and not by the desires of human nature. Thus, our communities will be homes burning with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

7. The new forms of communities

Just to say a word on those communities not well known in our districts because they do not exist. During the work of the committee, we discussed at length about these new forms of community. The question was how to take into account these new forms of community, in a rule designed for Brothers only. The shapes of these communities are varied. One often finds Brothers and lay forming a community to respond to a specific educational need. These lay can be men or women or both. One can also have communities composed of Brothers and other religious men and women from other congregations. How can a rule of the Brothers consider these types of communities? Our discussions resulted in Article 54.4 as formulated. Brothers can be forced or sent to form a community with partners in education in order to provide a relevant answer to a given educational need. But these cases go beyond the framework of community annual programs and are the responsibility of the Brother Visitor and his council who should discern the modalities according to the local realities.

Conclusion: prayerful communities

The community is our living home, i.e. our home. For life to be pleasant, everyone must be aware of the sacrifices he has to make. One must submit to the demands of community life that are not always easy. But the essential pillar of community life is firstly prayer; we must pray together. It is prayer that can make the communion among the members. This is the cement of fraternal cohesion. So we are all invited to an intense and regular spiritual life if we do not want to lose the meaning of our dedication and commitment. It is a grace to ask from God.

Monday 17th August 2015

CONSECRATION AND MISSION, CHAPTERS 2 AND 3

Brother Alain Houry

Short introduction of me (without reading the "prologue" of the 1967 Rule), I refer to the texts: relationships between consecration and mission (St Pius X and Vatican II) and a presentation of questions for us on the consequences of the choice of order between the two (article 1) = 30 min: Introduction and item 1. Then group work: Role of lay teachers working with Brothers in the mission received by the Institute. Lastly we will go back to the beginning of chap 2

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I begin with some few and brief remarks on the topic that I will be talking about with you today: Consecration and mission, chapters 2 and 3. Since I gave you a long text, I will refer you to it when I think you only need to read it. If you wish to ask questions, I intend to use the fifth presentation of the day to attempt to answer or to deepen one or some aspects of my presentation. I will mainly focus on what seems to be new in the rule but you could suggest that I focus it more in the history of the Rule.

When we talk of consecration, there is a risk of looking at it abstractly or to think implicitly about the act of consecration independently from the life journey of each individual. You may have noticed that since 1986, the rule deals with consecrated life. In this sense, we should focus our attention on formation.

I am using now the precise words that are in the circular **Religious consecration and vows, 39th general chapter 1966-1967**. I copied them in the text **The Brothers and their rule**, number 11.

Words that we often use bring out different meanings for the reader or the listener. That is why it is necessary to precise their meanings in the texts that are presented, though the thinking has a bit developed today.

- a) Consecration: it is an act of God through which He takes possession of a human being, either for the first time in baptism or in a more deeply way in religious life. There is at the same time the person's answer dedicating the powers of his/ her being to God's service. (**Lumen Gentium 10**).

- b) Charisma: this term applies to the gifts as they are described in 1 Cor 12, gifts which are manifested in the presence of the Spirit and assuring the well being of the Church. The current use attested by the council (L.G. 4, 7, 12 ; Lay Apostolate 3) insist on the specific spiritual gifts given to all believers within a unique baptism, but always for the edification of the church. It is in this sense that religious life is charismatic. We must situate the charism of the Institute in this context.
- c) Apostolic mission: We understand it at the highest level as it is written in « Ad Gentes ». « By its nature, the church, during its earthly pilgrimage is missionary given that she draws her origin from the mission of the Holy Spirit according to the plan of God the Father. » (**A.G. 2**).

This goes hand in hand with the thinking of Saint John Baptist de La Salle in the Meditations for the time of retreat: the mission is a manifestation of God's plan. It is realised in the Church, we participate in it through the ministry (Ref. MTR 1 ; 7 ; 8).

It is important to carefully distinguish this meaning from that of "Apostolic works" with which it is frequently confused with. [...]

I go back to the 1986 Rule: it places the mission before the consecrated Life. For **our Revised Rule**, I remind you the broad **theological vision of the mission** that our outline presented.

Theological reference

II. e We suggest that the mission to be based on the theological foundation / Trinitarian that is reflected in the structure of the chapter. The importance of the theme of ASSOCIATION suggests that we approach the theme of the mission by linking it to the work of reconciliation of the Holy Trinity according to the divine plan.

II. f The association of Mr. De La Salle and the first Brothers can be viewed as a moment of the manifestation of the fruitful action of communion of the Trinity. Association is a historical expression of the work of reconciliation of the Trinity who saves by bringing together in communion the people and with God.

The lasallian mission in which Brothers and Lay participate

II. g **Association for the mission** which gives birth to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools finds its transcendent origins in the work of reconciliation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Today, this dynamism of association goes beyond the Body of

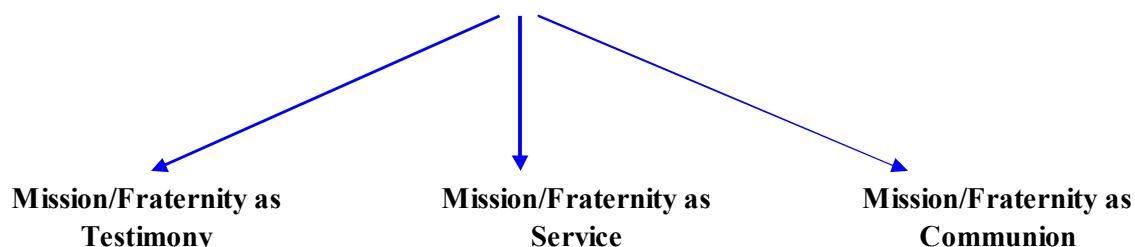
the Institute which attracts in the mission men and women of good will and drives them to be together for the love of the mission. Thus, they, together with the Lasallian family share the mission.

The Brothers today

II. h This parts underlines the continuity and the difference between the first ministerial community of Mr. De La Salle and our ministerial communities today.

Fraternity: a salvation reality

II. i This section underlines the particular contribution of the Brother in the shared mission. This contribution cannot be reduced to a task or a given ministry, but is related to the reality of consecrated fraternity which is simultaneously a mission rooted in the work of Trinity. To point out our main mission as “fraternity” sends us back to the dimension of the relation of our lives and to suggest that the relations we form can be mediators of the grace. Therefore, it is by being “brother” of all, especially of the excluded and the oppressed that we are being witnesses and becoming instruments of the reconciling power of God. The mission of fraternity can be understood in the following three dimensions: testimony, service and communion. The other sections of the Rule can be subdivided in the following three themes.



This link between **Mission and Reconciliation** has been criticised because it has no foundation neither in the texts of the beginnings nor in the Circulars of the Institute. This aspect of reconciliation does not appear in the revised Rule: we say salvation in our tradition. On the contrary, two themes appear which may stir up our discussions:

- That of ministerial community which must have been dealt with before my coming (unless there is an explicit demand, I am not going to talk about)

- And that of dynamism of association (with the emphasis on **the fraternity**) which not only founds the existence of the lasallian family and of the shared mission but also helps to talk about the sharing of the lasallian charisma.

Before looking at what the revised Rule tells us, I think it is beneficial to gather our perceptions, in the RELAF, this perspective of the sharing of the lasallian charisma.

In the two questionnaires that the commission has sent to the Brothers of the Institute, the answers brought out two groups which had proportionally answered less than the others: the young Brothers and the Brothers of the RELAF. It seems important to me to give you now the floor.

I think that you already have sharing groups. I suggest that each one of you expresses himself freely there: in each group, one of you will at the beginning of the session of this morning make an anonymous presentation of the noted answers, by trying to give a report on the diversity of the answers so as to avoid giving a general answer which may not reflect the different point of views. This is in order to listen to one another without starting a debate in the bigger group at this stage.

Here are the three questions I suggest.

- According to you, what are foundations of the sharing of the lasallian charism?
- According to you, what are the realities which make this sharing possible, wishful or problematic beyond the Brothers only?
- What do you expect from the Rule about this topic?

Does anyone have a remark to make before starting this group work?

1. Feedback from the groups. I refer you to the text on the changes which were taken into account in the chapters two and three of the revised Rule (Circular 455 excerpts). Presentation: what the Rule says about "sharing of the lasallian charisma" (Art. 13, 19, 154, 157).

The sharing of the lasallian charisma: what does the Rule say?

Chapter 1: The purpose and the spirit of the Institute

11. The life engagement of the Brothers for the educational service of the poor gives the Institute its specificity. The Brothers live their ministry in communion with the Church mainly with those who share the same educational mission. They represent the witnesses of

the dignity and the splendour of the educational engagement, of the care for the youth, especially the poor.

The association for the mission leads them to welcome and to guide those who desire to share and deepen the lasallian charisma. The specific contribution of the Brothers in the shared mission is based on their consecration to the Holy Trinity.

(Cf. R 17c: ... *The Brothers offer to those who desire it a more intensified sharing of the lasallian spirituality, encouraging such persons to make a more specific apostolic commitment...*)

Chapter 2: The mission

From the beginning to the present

-13. Deeply moved by the neglected state of “the children of the artisans and the poor” ,and as a result of their contemplation of God’s saving plan, John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers joined together to run gratuitous Christian schools.

By combining Christian formation and good quality teaching, and doing so in a Brotherly manner, they rendered an important and much-needed service to the Church and society.

Today, the Brothers pursue the Lasallian mission in partnership with men and women who recognize the **relevance of the Lasallian charism**.

(Circular 677, 2: if associations of the faithful are united to institutes, they would help them with a special care so that they are imbued by the authentic spirit of the family)

In a pluralistic world

14.2 *In order to remain faithful to the **charism of the Institute**, the Brothers analyse new educational and pastoral needs. They respond to the mina creative manner, either in their existing educational establishments, or by founding other educational institutions for the service of the poor.*

Inspired by the same charism

-19. **The Lasallian charism** is a gift of the Holy Spirit given to the Church in view of human and Christian education. The Brothers joyfully share the same mission with their Partners. Together, they ensure **the vitality of this charism** by creating or developing

organisational, formation and research structures, in which where each one can deepen his understanding of his own vocation and of the Lasallian mission.

Chapter 6. The formation of the Brothers – becoming a Brother, a life- long process.

The pastoral of the vocations

84. The entire People of God is responsible for awakening vocations in the Church. The Brothers make their Lasallian charism known, and show the importance and specificity of their vocation. They show they are willing and ready as intermediaries of the Lord to invite and accompany young people and adults who feel called to the various Lasallian vocations. (Cf R82)

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Chapter 10: Brothers today

-154. The life and development of the Institute depend above all on the mystery and the power of grace. But by the gift of freedom, the Lord wanted to put the destiny of the Institute into the hands of the Brothers. At the heart of the Lasallian Family, the Brothers are a source of inspiration for all Lasallians who increasingly **share** the mission and **the charism of the Institute**. (Cf. R 142).

-157. By making a life-long commitment with his Brothers, John Baptist de La Salle opened a path to holiness for all educators. The Brothers, the **first** guardians of the **Lasallian charism**, are happy to see numerous Partners wishing to deepen the knowledge of the Founder revealed in his life, spirituality and work.

In the growth of association with men and women who walk side-by-side with them and identify themselves today as the sons and daughters of John Baptist de La Salle, they see a sign of the times which fills them with hope.

As a consequence, the Brothers feel they have a special responsibility to share their pedagogical and spiritual heritage with all those they work with. Through this sharing they receive the calls of the Spirit to be Brothers today :

- the call to be brothers with them and to live fraternally as a sign for all Lasallian educators;
- the call to be for them and with them a channel for the light with which God “himself enlightened the hearts of those he destined to announce his word to children”;
- the call to be among them and with them the heart, the memory and the guarantor

of the **Lasallian charism**.

The core idea is that the mission derives from the Trinitarian life and reveals its productivity: **"As the Father sent me, so I send you too."** The received mission is of the sign order, not in the work that we do, but **through the manner which transforms and informs our life**. *By making a life-long commitment with his Brothers, John Baptist de La Salle opened a path to holiness for all educators* (157).

By combining Christian formation and good quality teaching, and doing so in a Brotherly manner, they rendered an important and much-needed service to the Church and society. Today, the Brothers pursue the Lasallian mission in partnership with men and women who recognize the **relevance of the Lasallian charism**. (13).

Let us begin with the question of **the relevance of the lasallian charism** which the revised Rule talks about in its 13th article. **What is the meaning of this vocabulary for us, for us first: in what way is it relevant for the world that we know, how can we characterise the lasallian charism and give examples on the way in which it is lived?** In other words, we are buying words for ourselves.

I do not pretend to have a universally accepted answer. In France, I participated in the CORELA (Lasallian Research Committee) which includes Brothers and lay who try to answer to the needs of the District and of the network of the Lasallian Institutions. What constitutes the core of our research is **the relevance of the Lasallian tradition in the secular world** which is our case in France.

Concerning the pedagogical and educational practices, as well as our spirituality, what is it that is relevant today? It is difficult to say and yet a good number of teachers in educational professionals find that our Lasallian schools have some specific identifiable features, especially an atmosphere of relation which is a fraternal way of living the educational relation in which they identify themselves with and want to develop with the Brothers. The counter- examples encountered (which exist) do not discourage them: is it a gift of the Spirit or the search for a continuity of the Lasallian spirit despite the end of the pre-eminence of the Brothers? Only time can tell!

We must not mainly focus ourselves on what the Rule could say about others: the most important is what it enlightens and enthuses in us. Through the questions it raises in us it invites us to convert our way of leading our life in order to be more faithful to the calls of the Gospel. In particular, is the invitation of Pope Francis to go to the peripheries present in our minds or mentality and well integrated in the Lasallian history?

Should it be discussed in the Rule? Yes, but only in relation to what it concerns the Brothers at various stages of their lives.

In short, what does the Rule say about the sharing of the Lasallian charism?

-The Brothers are the first guardians (157) not only in the past but mainly through their association for the mission is rooted in the life journey of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers (11). That is what was talk about in the Circular 447 (in 2000) based on a long educational experience in a pluri-religious context of teachers and students (p. 7 and 25).

-The Brothers are a source of inspiration for all the Lasallians (154). The Rule of 1987 reminded that the Superior General and his counsellors were custodians of the charism and the mission of the Institute (n° 117). In the message of the 42nd general council to the Lasallian family, the Brothers are called upon to be “in a way the heart, the memory and the guardian of the Lasallian Charism (Circular 435 p. 16). This is reformulated in a inclusive manner in the revised Rule in its 157th article. We cannot limit ourselves to Chapter two to talk about the mission.

-The Brothers, at the heart of the Lasallian mission, are happy to note that a number of partners have the desire to be formed and see in that a sign of the time and a call of the Holy Spirit (157): **together**, they ensure the vitality of this charism by developing animation structures, of formation and research where each one can deepen the understanding of his own vocation and the Lasallian mission (19).

-By working on the formation and the government of the Institute, you will see that the Rule intends to put in place structures in this line and without which the open perspectives on the sharing of the charism would be unworkable: to forget such perspectives would be dangerous (bringing confusion of vocations).

I am just doing an important first remark: the Rule has taken into account and in a new way the call to be, among them **and with them**; heart, memory and guardian – a call from the Holy Spirit. We have never been such explicit.

-**What does the revised Rule suggest through the expression “Lasallian charism”?** The revised Rule had no mandate to give precisions on the forms.

I am echoing here a question that **Brother Valere Adonsou** had sent us. I do not know when we will have the ability to answer it sufficiently. We should move on with prudence. The chapter, not more than the commission (it was not its duty) did not tackle it deliberately. In the n° 13 of the *Lasallian Studies*, **the Lasallian charism**, in 2005, does not lead to a definition... (Cf. P. 185).

“if the charism of the Institute is the association for the mission, why don’t we write it explicitly in the Rule?” Given that the charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the whole Church, an explicit formulation of the Lasallian charism would still have the advantage to show the logical consequence of the commitment of the partners. Besides, this would enlighten better the Brothers who justify the partnership with the lay with the simple reason that there are vocation crises in Europe. *** I am re-writing in two pages what I wrote as conclusion in my contribution to the *Lasallian studies* n° 13, on **the Lasallian charism**: *to define the Lasallian charism by the association for the mission may reflect the central knot but there is a big risk not to be considered in all its dimensions and to harden it.*

In the same line, to stress strongly the **Ecclesiology of communion** lived in a genuine manner by Saint John Baptist de La Salle through facts (a priest and lay engaged in the same action) before its formulation by the Second Vatican Council.

About the Lasallian charism – Cf. LS 13 (2005)

In the article I wrote for this book – V. *The charism in the recent Documents of the Institute* – I am now quoting the texts which talk about my conclusion.

5. Perspectives opened by these “official” texts

Speaking about the sharing of the Lasallian charism with the partners (p. 4) and the youth – especially when they are from other religions (**p. 7 and 25**) – the *Circular 447* opens a field of reflection wider than before, for example, the *Guide of formation* in 1991.

-Cir 447: the Acts of the 43rd general chapter – 01/10/2000

Recommendation 2: *The Institute has a long educational presence with the youth and with the other faith believers’ educators. We request that the reflection continue to develop in the Institute concerning our way of **sharing the Lasallian charism** with the educators and the youth from other from other religions.*

25 The lasallian charism is lived in the multicultural and in the multi-religious context of societies. **The youth** from all cultural and religious tradition have the right and the freedom to benefit and to **live the Lasallian charism**.

Perhaps there is some misunderstanding of meaning when we include the youth who are first considered as the beneficiaries of the lasallian mission among those who can share the lasallian charism. It is not about the "young Lasallians" but the youth with whom Brothers and partners are sent to. The audacity of the expression to share implies the youth are the agents of their own formation and that of their fellow (They too evangelise their educators!) and therefore find themselves in a state of living the "Lasallian characteristics of reference" as found on pages 4 and 5

-Cir. 447: the Acts of the 43rd general chapter – 01/10/2000

4-5 ... they live a certain number of the Lasallian characteristics of reference:

- a vocation to be lived in reference to the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle as well as in reference to his values
- a life of faith that discovers God in the reality in light of scripture and the people from other religions according to sacred texts
- a community experience lived in diverse ways and according to each one's identity
- a mission which associates to the educational service of the poor and which involves a given time
- a universal openness which transcends the person and their local reality

We could find here a new ground for the charism of fraternity (Cf. **Circ. 435 – 1.4, p. 21**) that every Brother – not only him – holds within. It is for sure an open door for the youth and the educators who are of other religions or spiritual traditions different from the Brothers.

-Cir. 435: the Acts of the 42nd general chapter – 24/06/1993

1.4 As an Institute of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, we reaffirm with conviction our option for the human and Christian education of the youth and of the adults in formation, especially poor.

21. [...] Every Brother bears the charism of the fraternity: thanks to the gifts of the Spirit he is able to meet the youth and the adults and to find together with them the means of human and spiritual growth. (R 20).

The Institute as a community of living men (**Declaration 7.1**), plays a central role in the extension of the Lasallian charism in a world that is multi – religious: it means that the institute must assume, interpret and actualise the founder's charism (cf. **Circ. 422, p.15; Guide, n° 100**), which the rule faithfully expresses (**Rule, ed. 1987, Decree, p. 9**).

-Declaration: The Brother of the Christian Schools in the world today
(39th General Chapter, 1967)

7 **Interpretation of the charism** 7 §1 [...] *Saint John Baptist de La Salle founded at the beginning a lively community of Brothers with whom he shared his apostolate ideal and who later on transmitted this ideal to other people. The faithfulness to the specific intentions of the founder and to the history of the Institute is therefore put under the care of the living men that we are and it is in that way that we should carry on this search.*

-Rule 1987 Decree *After a careful assessment of the document about which different modifications were done, The Congregation for the Religious and the secular Institutes recognised in the texts the faithful expression of the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the tradition of his Institute [...]*

Maybe we should emphasise more, in our presentation of the Lasallian charism, on the evangelisation of the cultures (**Cf. Rule, art. 18**), on the spiritual experience which comes as a result of the work, on the interpretation of the charism (**Cf. Circ. 422, p. 15**), on the renewal of the practice of meditation (**id. P.22**) and on the exodus (**Circ. 403, p. 63**) to which this work invites us by following “afresh in the steps of Saint John Baptist de La Salle” (**Circ. 422, p. 22**).

Rule, art. 18 *Every culture needs to be evangelised. The Brothers strive to know, to respect and to assimilate the positives values of the people's cultural heritage where they are settled and whom they are called to serve. They discover there with joy and hope*

the signs of the presence of the Spirit. They ensure that the Gospel ferment is able to renovate and enrich this cultural heritage.

- Circ. 422: 41st general Chapter, Propositions and Messages – 01/07/1986

15 **Post-capitulary Pastoral. Application of the general Chapter.** *The spiritual experience born out of the interpretation and the actualisation of the charism of our founder John Baptist de La Salle, this experience that took flesh in the new Rule, the messages, the propositions and the directives, must be assimilated and lived by all the Brothers. [...] If it is true that the Chapter strongly call upon Brothers to a personal and institutional conversion, it is as well true that the writings are not enough to convert people to change the mentalities. [...] The conversion and the renovation are the works of the grace and of our efforts. [...].*

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22. **"The spirit of this Institute is firstly a spirit of faith."** [...] We call upon all of you to follow afresh in the steps of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and to dedicate yourself to the spiritual adventure of surrendering oneself to God for the educational service of the youth.

-Circ. 403: XI general Chapter – October 1976

63 *Why permanent formation? The crisis of the actual civilisation, the deep disenchantment of many unhappy men about material comfort, open to "other things" which always seem to be far from their reach, the suffering of many other smashed by injustice and slavery are enough calls for a renewal of our religious life lived in the heart of the reality of the world.*

We are called to give up our safeties and to live an exodus which goes hand in hand with the experience and the teaching of the founder. He surrendered himself to the "God's guidance" who moved him from commitment to commitment in a journey completely unintended.

Brother Alain Houry and the formation commission,

2. Peace-Justice-Integrity of the creation of child's rights: new emphasis? (Art. 17.1)

+

The mission as service (evangelisation), art. 17.2 in a pluralistic world.

3. Peace-Justice-Integrity of the creation of child's rights: new emphasis? (Art. 17.1) +

17.1 The educational programs have a concern for promoting peace, justice and integrity of creation. The Brothers are careful to defend the rights of children and youth.

Those working in higher educational institutions will prepare students to integrate in their personal and professional commitments, the concern for social justice and the fight against poverty.

The 1987's Rule spoke only about developing *social responsibility* of students (13b), and for the Brothers of *the promotion of justice and peace* (7). Here we expand to take into account recent emphases and the growing number of Brothers' customers. Let us identify few steps.

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The 44th General Chapter, talking about **commitment to solidarity**, urges the Brothers to:

- *Take their share, possibly in conjunction with the Lasallian Universities; in training programs to assist "children, youth and families living in situations of risk, especially youth facing extreme situations" (cf. AI- 2006 1.1.2)*

- *Encourage educators and young people to form themselves in issues concerning Bio-ethics, the rights of the child, respect for life, the safeguarding of creation...*

This is part of a broader perspective:

4.2.2 *We want an Institute capable of meeting the educational needs of children and youth in low-income families.*

An Institute that builds relationships and collaborates with the (political, social, religious ...) authorities to work towards solving the problems of educating the poor.

An Institute which recognizes as part of its mission the fact of making everyone aware that education is a right for every child. It claims the economic contribution of the State, which should guarantee parents freedom of choice of educational model.

4.2.3 *We want a network of structures in service of the poor, sharing educational offers, searching for aides and ally itself with other educational movements, NGOs, institutions... close to us in order to have a greater impact on societies where we live and the structures generating poverty. (Circ. 455, p. 33-34).*

The **Bulletin of the Institute** dedicated a *Lasallian response* in 2002 in its No. 247 **Children's Rights**; in 2004, its No. 248 *to Educate in justice*; in 2011, its No. 253 *to Children and Youth in danger*. **What do these emphases represent for us? How do we make it right in situations where we are?**

There is also another formulation about the vow of association for the educational service of the poor: *protection of the creation*.

29.3 *By their entire life and by their teaching inspired by the social doctrine of the Church, the Brothers prepare their pupils to create relations that are more just among peoples. They help them to become actively involved in promoting justice, peace, solidarity, and the protection of creation.*

A note on the classic trilogy: *Justice, Peace, and Integrity of the creation* (or: *Protection of creation*). For a certain period of time, it was not allowed in the Institute to speak of the action for peace, a term that was monopolized by the Communist parties and would have caused difficulties for our Brothers in anticommunist countries. Justice and Peace was then opened to ecological perspectives: the expression *Integrity of creation* must not be understood naively, as if man was an intruder in a spotless setting, a child to whom a gift is given to which he must not touch, or as not being part of creation! The recent Encyclical of Pope Francis offers us a rich gateway linking ecological and social problems: man is created too with a responsible steward role (cf. *Protection of creation*); even more, the creation is history, irreversible commitment and promise of the Father in the Incarnation of his Son.

Citing **Laudato si'**, No. 92: *"Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation are 3 themes which are absolutely related and cannot be set apart to be treated separately to avoid falling back into reductionism"* (**Conference of the Bishops of the Dominican Republic, 21/01/1987**). *Everything is connected, and as human beings, we are united as brothers and sisters in a wonderful pilgrimage, intertwined by love that God has for each of his creatures.*

Another input to glimpse new insistence of the Rule is to look at how it is addressing the complexity of today's world in a target of evangelization, without proselytizing, both adults and young people, as much as themselves (reciprocity):

In a pluralistic world The mission as a service (evangelization)

17.2 [...]. In their contact with people with different religious traditions, or in highly pluralistic or secularised countries, the Brothers seek inventive ways to announce the Gospel: the witness of a Christian presence and fraternal relations, gratuitous service, the experience of prayer in common, inter-religious dialogue, and sharing with one another the story of Jesus Christ. In their turn, the Brothers allow themselves to be questioned by these people.

When they work with Partners with different beliefs and religious traditions, the Brothers seek to establish common ground for cooperation on the basis of the promotion of human dignity, solidarity among all human beings, and the integral development of the individual, in line with Lasallian tradition.

In 1987, the Rule was speaking of enculturation of the faith, evangelization of all cultures (**R 18**). And there was a section on young Churches (**R 19**). The outlooks were fairly well drawn but the means of getting there were barely sketched. The study of other religions (**R 18c**) is not enough to enter into dialogue; especially the development of pluralism (or relativism) and especially religious fanaticism randomizes the dialogue that will not support a certain community of life. We had to be creative to renew what the Rule says. For years, an important work was done in the church to locate evangelization or new evangelization lived in a route *with* people: witness of life, fraternal relationships, free service, and prayer offered in common, Interreligious Dialogue, Jesus of history. This is not only to be *for* people, but *with* them: that implies let themselves be challenged by them on our own faith and how it is embodied in our lives. The Commission has benefited from the theological contribution of the Brothers in contact with non-Christian religions, especially in Asia. The reference to the Bible often does build a wall against those who do not know God's revelation in Jesus Christ, while the life of Jesus allows a more peaceful approach: everyone can find spiritual nourishment. Note that the Rule does not only said "Jesus of history" but "the story of Jesus Christ." This refers, it seems not only to the man of the past, but the way it manifests itself in a Jewish and then Christian religious context in the history of mankind. Various are the approaches but none of them should invalidate Jesus' relationship with his Father.

The most important here is **what you find in the approach sketched by the Rule, the contributions you see in it, as the limits you envision.**

The other aspect of 17.2 concerns *the shared work with our Partners of different beliefs and religious traditions*. The Rule now offers a common ground for cooperation, based on universal values related to our Lasallian tradition. And here, we have years of practice but not always thought and that has revealed its ups and downs. The recent Encyclical of Pope Francis is also based on universal values to address all people of good will since fortunately are all concerned with the future of our planet.

One crucial question remains but I do not have to develop it here: How does the specificity of our vocation manifest itself with these new guidelines? I intend to talk about our consecrated life, but I think that the study of the formation, chapter 6, will also provide you some aspects.

4. The consecrated life. From *associated with God to Consecrated by God* (Brother Alvaro). The following of Christ, the order of the vows (*perhaps Vow and Promise*). The new way to introduce our vows.

Let us study the amendments brought to **chapter 3: *The consecrated life***, by the proposed rule from 1987.

Structure and content of Chapter 3: The consecrated life

From the origins to today; Following Christ; the formula of consecration

The association for the educational service of the poor and stability in the Institute: a charismatic dynamism, associated for the educational service of the poor and stability in the Institute.

Obedience; Chastity; Poverty.

A total consecration.

From the echoes that reached me, it seems that the General Chapter did not fully approve the grouping carried out by the Commission (including the common format of association and stability). Moreover, it should be noted that "*the separation from the Institute*", which was an annex function in the chapter on consecrated life in 1986, was moved to the end of the chapter on education, since it is followed by "*the readmission in the Institute*": this is

more consistent with this chapter 5 which deals with the formation and membership of the members to the Institute, with a more legal perspective for consecration.

A replay of the Lasallian itinerary

From the origins to today

22. John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers committed their lives to the progressive establishment of a community which responded to the needs of poor and neglected children.

Called by God to procure his Glory by undertaking his Work, and by making a lifelong commitment to remain associated with one another in order "to run together and by association Christian (and gratuitous) schools", they lived out their consecration to the Most Holy Trinity.

The path they followed continues to inspire and focus the consecration of the Brothers today.

The chapters of the 1987's Rule often began with an evocation of the Evangelical itinerary of the Founder: there was not about consecrated life. But here, as in other chapters, it is said that the Founder was not alone but with the first Brothers, from *the commitment to consecration*. The second sentence shows the link between the Consecration and other dimensions of the life of the Brothers. By trying not to leave out anything, the sentence is a bit complex. The following article will clarify what this consecration is really about following Christ, *Sequela Christi* that the tradition of the Church considers the essence of religious life.

If we have some leisure, we could take the first article of each chapter, to see the nuances that each brings to the reading of the life journey of the Founder and that of the first Brothers: repetition, complementarities, omission ... The members of the Commission, we wanted to do this exercise before we depart, but time did not allow us to do so.

Following Christ, the firstborn of many brethren (Rom 8, 29)

23. In response to the personal call of the Holy Spirit, the Brothers consecrate themselves entirely to the Most Holy Trinity. For this purpose they associate with one another to procure the glory of God in the ministry of Christian education.

By this total gift of their lives they manifest their confidence in the love of God for them and for those who will be entrusted to them. They find in this ministry and in this love the fundamental motivation for their consecration and their sanctification. They make their whole life a process of identification with Jesus Christ "the first-born of many brothers" in order to be the living memory of his love, and to continue his ministry of salvation.

The reference to Romans 8: 29 is to emphasize that brotherhood is constitutive of the being and the acts as Christians, and thereby sign of the Trinitarian love. The ministry is not a religious job but the transcription in human life of the mystery of salvation: the consecration and the sanctification of the Brothers are unified. *Make no difference between the state of your own affairs and the matter of your salvation and your perfection.* (R 16, 1, 4).

24. The consecration of the Brothers expresses the richness of baptism in a distinctive way which complements other forms of Christian life. This consecration gives meaning to the specific activities which it inspires, and gives unity to all the moments of their life. It is for all a constant sign that the work to which they are committed is the Work of God. It is a manifestation of the mystery of communion in the Church, an expression of the love of God for humanity, and a prophetic sign which establishes the values of the Reign of God as criteria for discerning human realities.

The recovery of R 23 in the 1st sentence emphasizes the complementarity of the forms of Christian life. And then the sentences follow each other. The consecration of the Brothers unifies their lives (= **end of R 22**). It is a permanent sign in the Church and for human realities. It is our responsibility to check how our way of living our consecration is significant, and what it means. The *formula of consecration* (we said Formula of Vows) will give the main accents.

It may be noted that we do not repeat the second part of R 24: *As religious vowed to the ministry of Christian education, their primary apostolate consists in the witness of their consecrated life*. There were several requests to waive this expression. This is the decal of Canon 673: *The apostolate of all religious consists primarily in the witness of their consecrated life, they are bound to foster through prayer and penance*. The R 24's inserts this Canon in the context of the ministry of Christian education which seems to narrow the field regarding *all Religious*; secondly, the choice of terms used in 24 specifies the testimony of Brothers: *an expression of God's love for humanity and a prophetic sign which establishes the values of the Kingdom as criteria to discern human realities*. R 23

specifies that it is the *community* that is for Christians a special sign of the covenant between God and men. He might have been able to maintain the community character of the witness of consecrated life of the Brothers.

Some Brothers would have liked our consecrated life to be presented in a more prophetically, *from a perspective counter-cultural*. The Commission did not follow it up:

- A consecration is not contested but first certificated;
- It is true that the prophets, Christ and the apostles denounced the hypocrisy and injustice, as a result of their testimony. However, it does not amount to a Rule to denounce what is wrong in this world but to bring evangelical way remedy.
- Some felt that the counter-cultural is not specifically Christian and provides an outlet to political recovery.
- The international character of the Institute makes it face a great diversity of cultures and a rule cannot be limited to taking a position, even in relation to a dominant culture.

It is in this spirit that disappeared the content of R 13c (*The Brothers educate their students to acquire a critical attitude toward contemporary society*). But maybe is this a little cautious attitude.

Christian confrontation (Emmanuel Mounier) is an attitude that is needed in many circumstances of religious engaged in the world of education, for example to defend the rights of children and young people (**Cf. chap. 2**).

Was there enough light in the presentation of the Brother of his character as Religious Brother or **lay Religious**?

During the drafting of Article 4, identical repetition of R 2 and of the Decree approved in 1987, the Commission discussed the proposal to adopt, in the line of the Roman Congress on Brother Vocation the phrase "Religious Brother". I flatly refused to go in this direction: For me that name would introduce an ambiguity for us, given the many of use by religious priests the title of Brothers (Dominicans, Franciscans ...). The lay character of our religious consecration is particularly suitable for our engagement in the world of education among our colleagues. And as is the term adopted by the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes in 1987, the choice of the Commission has focused on keeping the phrase "lay religious".

The order of the vows: *note from Br Valere Adonsou* underlining:

- The facts in the documents of the Magisterium (Notably Perfectae Caritatis No. 12-14 and Vita consecrata No. 88-91) and in our Rule ...
- It seems to me, taking into account the form of the life of Christ and the historical trajectory of our vow formula, to reverse this trend. This is to give precedence after the vow of **association** to the vow of **obedience** in relation to the two other classic vows. A fundamental characteristic of the life of Christ is that He came to do the will of the Father. "*I do nothing on my own*", "*My food is to do the will of him who sent me*"; "*Father, not my will but yours*" ... Following Christ, the Institute in its original formula of vows was part of this vision of commitment. (Vow of association for the educational service of the poor, obedience and stability).
- He who truly surrenders to the will of God can only accept to receive himself from Him and let Him the first place in his life in relation to other realities: **vow of poverty**. So his love will be fully for HIM to be materialized in the love of others: **vow of chastity**.
- Then we will have in order: vow of association, obedience, poverty and chastity.

The presentation of the vow of association can not only announce the vow of obedience but take root in it.

The Commission was in the same direction, up to more strongly binding the vow of association for the service of the poor - becoming the first vow - and the vow of stability in the Institute - becoming the 2nd. It was also, be it noted, to reduce the length of this chapter because we risked giving to the revised Rule more words than the 1987's that we were strongly urged to reduce! This stability-association grouping avoided repetitions but I regret a little, took away a prospect that I find very dynamic and concerning not only each brother but also the whole Institute: commitment to work to maintain it in loyalty to an end and its specific character.

I reproduce here another note of *Br Valere Adonsou*: **Vow and promise**. This anthropological reflection is also much toned and in connection with our vows of association and stability.

- If the vow is exclusively addressed to God, the promise is facing a triple leadership: **to oneself, to the Institute and to God**. But the three orientations are also facing the FUTURE. In other words, these words I speak, I "stand" and I "will keep" them.

- **Oriented towards oneself**, the promise corresponds to what is stated in Article 05 of the document that could be summed up: *"self-recognition, based both on a story of life and the commitment to long lasting future."* It is also a light that is projected on the vow of stability: *"it is the constancy of will, self-maintaining, which puts its seal on a life history faced to the altered circumstances and vicissitudes of the heart. It is an identity maintained despite ... despite ..., all that inclined to betray his word."* (Paul Ricoeur, *Journey of recognition*). Such an understanding is also illuminated by *"as much as I can and you will require of me."*

- The promise **facing otherness** is another lighting of the association. The other is by the Institute i.e. the Brothers. To promise is to keep his word in all circumstances, since the other trust in you for future action in which Brother said to be effectively engaged. The other Brothers, witnesses of the promise, are sure that the one who says it will keep his promise.

- The association, being so enlightened by the promise and **anchored in God** by the "vow" gives specificity to the identity of the Brother. It is in this sense that it is the first form (Institute of the Brothers). In the second form, it constitutes with the laity, the promise of the latter is implicit (*"associated to the heart"* since many affiliates do not engage themselves in a formal act) and is not sealed by a "vow".

The new way to introduce our vows

A charismatic vitality

27. Following the example of John Baptist de La Salle and of the first Brothers, Brothers today take the vow of association for the educational service of the poor. This vow, together with that of stability in the Institute, expresses the specificity of the religious consecration of the Brothers for the glory of God: it unites each Brother strongly with the other Brothers, while also extending and strengthening the spirit of belonging to the Institute as a whole based on solidarity.

This charismatic dynamism stimulates the creativity of the Brothers to provide the best possible and lasting response to the needs of those who benefit from their mission. It leads them to understand and to live out their other vows from this same perspective.

It was noted that the Rule of 1987 was not clearly referring our vows to the Evangelical itinerary of the Founder and the first Brothers. Here, the reference to

the heroic vow of 1691 and the first perpetual vows in 1694 emphasizes the lasting and entire engagement.

What emphasis for the vow of association for the educational service of the poor?

As the previous article reproduced what the R 41 said about *the preferential option for the poor*, the text reproduced almost word by word the R 39. But it seemed necessary to affirm strongly that the consultation for community discernment (local, District and Institute level) is both a right and a duty, otherwise we could not speak of association. Would there be a deficit at this level, in connection with the growing individualism in our societies? If this is the case, the truth of our association is a sign more necessary for our time.

It also shows that this dynamism of Association opens itself to our partners.

28.2 To arrive at necessary decisions, they exercise their right and fulfil their duty to participate in discernment processes which take place at various levels of the Institute.

28.2 The dynamism of unity shown in Brothers' communities binds the Brothers also to all those committed to the Lasallian mission.

The vow of stability in the Institute today

The stability in the Institute

30. By this vow of stability, the Founder and the Brothers expressed both their trust in God who "does not abandon his Work", and their desire to build together, with mutual trust, a community that would ensure the continuity of the work of the schools.

It is this same intention which leads the Brothers today to pronounce the vow of stability in the Institute. By it, they profess that fidelity to their vocation is a precious gift of God's love received day after day, as also a daily human response to his fidelity.

32. By their promise to "remain in Society", the Brothers commit themselves to strengthening fraternal bonds in community and cohesion between the communities which compose the District and the Institute.

They ask the Holy Spirit to "make known to them the gifts God gives them" so that they may generously put them at the service of the common mission.

References are important: the commitment of the Founder and the Brothers were not refusing the priesthood or an easier life, but that of ensuring the sustainability of the

common mission through the establishment of the Company in mutual trust, even if we have to beg for it and live by bread alone. As for the request to the Spirit (MF 189, 1 - Meditation on St. Martin), this is a quote Paul (1 Cor 2: 12-13) which continues: Therefore pray the Spirit of God to you know the gifts that God has given you, as St. Paul says, that you may declare them to those you are charged to instruct, not with discourse employed by human wisdom but in words that the Spirit of God inspires his ministers. Here the rule encourages the sharing of gifts at the service of the common mission.

Let us not forget the paradox, for some, a temporary vow of fidelity. Above all we can ask ourselves about the outputs of perpetually professed Brothers of course, put this question to those who are faithful may seem incongruous, as parish priest at Mass, calls parishioners ... who do not come! But we know that the departure of some of us asks us hard: my own loyalty may be questioned. I cannot find in me the strength to keep in circumstances that others have known: it is in God alone that I trust ... and my brothers. They will not stop calling me every day to build our overall response to the first gift of the Father, Jesus, the Yes-Amen Paul speaks (2 Cor 1: 19-20).

As we shall see, about the vow of obedience, the Commission has finally taken the text of R 36, with only the expansion of evangelical reference. Here's why. One of the members of the Commission flatly rejected the idea of showing once again how this vow is understood from our association to come back for each vow, he said, it would seem to mean that all our wishes come boil down to this one wish, while history has led us to make religious vows, the vow of obedience which is identification to the obedience of Christ. We should not reduce obedience to a vow only "functional" before the Bull of Approval, as some have wanted to present...

We decided when a strong disagreement would manifest us not to repeat the endless discussions of the previous sessions, and to return to the 1987 text, since it was the one we had to leave. This was the case. I still managed to double the scriptural citation, combining Jn 6, 38 and 18 Mt, 14: Christ came not to do his will, but that of the One who sent him "to that of these little ones should be lost. " In this way, following Christ obedient is not only presented as ascetic (renounce his own will) and mystical (to unite with the will of Christ) but also ministerial (participate in his mission of salvation).

How Does the Rule speaks now of chastity?

36. In order to follow Jesus Christ, and as an expression of the total gift of their life to

God, the Brothers commit themselves by vow to live a chaste celibate life in community.

Consecrated chastity, a gift of the Holy Spirit and a mystery of death and resurrection, sacrifice and fruitfulness, bears witness before the world to the value of a life in which love is put at the service of all. It also manifests the hope of a promise, based on Jesus Christ's resurrection, that this love has an eternal value.

The vow of chastity makes Brothers fully available to live the association at the service of the mission.

Comparing with R 27, we see the emphasis on the link between consecrated chastity and community; we renounce the reference to *the very fatherhood of God* but we insist on the various aspects of the paschal mystery. We find the relationship between association, mission and communion at the service of love.

The General Council had planned Consultants Brothers. It is their suggestion that the Commission enrich the text by recalling the conditions to balance our emotional life. I am particularly pleased that I found that in general, it indicated the meaning of our life as a bed of roses, while the pitfalls are many and they are part of our human condition: We must be alerted and helped.

38. The Brothers strive to take control of their affective life by being discerning and disciplined in their relationships. They find in their community the support they need, thanks to prayer and appropriate accompaniment. They recognise that the call to a life of chastity implies the need to govern their affective life according to Gospel values.

38.1 Spiritual accompaniment and the help of competent persons will be made available to Brothers during their initial formation, and in continuing-formation programmes.

39. Chastity leads the Brothers to value the gift of true fraternity and affection which stimulates community relations. To maintain it, they take care not to allow themselves to be absorbed by their work or their personal interests. They are careful also to maintain their physical health and their psychological balance.

We must see if during the formation, the means provided for accompaniment are in place and that each of the brothers can be a beneficiary.

80. Every vocation originates in the mystery of a personal meeting with God, whose calls elicit free responses.

By faith, the Brother recognises that his life is a dialogue with God, which enables him to grow continuously in fidelity.

He discovers in this way the daily presence of the living God in his mission, his consecration and his community.

80.1 Personal and community accompaniment help each Brother to integrate the constitutive elements of his vocation. This accompaniment requires particular attention to be given to the various processes which lead to his affective, intellectual, moral and religious maturity.

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In the dioceses, there are people, priests or laity, responsible for accompanying the priests who allegedly have relational or health problems. Would this not be something which could inspire us as Institute, so that it is not only a superior (or a member of the local community) who has to advise or to interview one whose behaviour seems inappropriate to their situation or age?

What does the Rule say about of poverty?

40. By evangelical poverty, the Brothers choose to follow Jesus Christ who, out of love, made himself poor in order to enrich us all by his poverty (**2 Cor 8, 9**). Following his example, John Baptist de La Salle divested himself of his goods to make himself similar to the poor teachers, and with them, he put his hope in God's Providence, making possible the "Society of the Christian schools".

The itinerary of De La Salle to incarnate himself among the poor teachers is underlined.

Today the Brothers, men of hope, engage on the same route to make a poor heart and turn to God, their true wealth. They make possible the association between them, the availability to their partners and to the calls of the Church, solidarity and closeness to the poor that they want to serve.

The association is also included. The evangelical references which disappeared are Mt 8.20 to 19.24. The following evokes both personal and community dimension of poverty, related to their association in serving the poor (Art. 41-43, corresponding to Canon Law, are unchanged).

As for chastity, concrete notations give it a meaning: simplicity, reciprocity, solidarity, not proud self-sufficiency.

40.1 In the spirit of the Beatitudes, the Brothers consider all that they are and all that they have as gifts to be shared. In their work, they maintain a spirit of gratuity. They pay special attention to the very poor to whom the Good News is preferentially addressed. They are always looking for better ways of responding to their needs.

In their personal and community lifestyle, the Brothers seek simplicity in order to be closer to them. When working with the poor and sharing their conditions with them, the Brothers are happy to run the risk of losing their social prestige.

40.2 By pooling the fruits of their work, the Brothers demonstrate their fraternal solidarity. Through a spirit of association, each one feels personally responsible for shared resources before God and the community. Each Brother freely puts his talents and abilities at the service of others and does not hesitate to ask for help when he needs it.

40.3 Through love of the Gospel, and as signs of the hope to which the Reign of God invites them, the Brothers make themselves poor and commit themselves resolutely to love the poor and to fight against poverty.

As for chastity, concrete ways and common sense reminders want to help us not to run away into indifference, resignation in relation to community property, as compared to the poor. *Special attention to the weak and disadvantaged, always seeking better means to meet their needs.*

In their personal and community way of life... simplicity to get close to the poor: they accept the consequences. Each ... responsible before God and the community of the common resources ... freely puts his talents and abilities to serve others and do not hesitate to seek the help they need. Reciprocity, and not selfish self-sufficiency.

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The Commission had prepared a conclusion of chap. 3 by a return on **A total consecration**, doing a little inclusion with the first section of this chapter. The members of the Chapter have preferred to end with community life. Without using the term here *Ministerial community* is almost the equivalent is called back with the link between mission, association, community and consecration, in reference to the salvation of those entrusted to the Brothers:

A consecration lived in community

44. John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers lived out their consecration to God in a community entirely dedicated to the educational service of those He had confided to their care.

Aware of participating in the plan of God “who wishes all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”, the Brothers live out their consecration day after day by devoting themselves “as far as they are able” and “together and by association” to the mission of the Institute.

I do not know when we can take an interest in the text in the Rule of the Brother of Brothers. I mean that in 1967 the Declaration spoke of *the* Brother of the Christian Schools, while saying there is no *"immutable and universal type of Brother which all should abide"* (Decl. 14.3). Since the Rule of 1967, these are *the* Brothers: this is not to describe an ideal but to accompany life journeys in various contexts.

By closing this chapter on the consecrated life, it is always good to ask ourselves: what we learn from the Rule will it allow us to be religious round the clock, educator Apostles 24 hours on 24 and men in community round the clock?

Does each of us feels quite "welcome" in our Rule, both for receiving as its own in order to make that one way or the other its contribution? The Chapter was positively challenged by the contributions of young Brothers (and Lasallian Youth). Maybe this CIL will tell how Africa can take years to come to play a full role in the renovation of the Institute.

5. Answer to questions and supplementary of the discussion of the day.

1904

The choice may have seemed to be between Mission and Association and most of the brothers were not prepared to see the implications of their choice. One can speak of discernment by the Institute. Unlike what happened in many revolutions, there was no killing, although some Brothers, forced to retire, gave the impression of dying from sadness of losing which gave meaning to their lives.

You can find in the book of Brother Pedro María Gil, ***Three centuries of Lasallian identity*** (Lasallian Studies No. 4, Rome, 1999, 5. ***The secularization of educational administration*** -.

What theology of religious life p 257 the French translation), two different interpretations of this historical period of the Congregations. **Laude**, a diocesan priest, one of the leading church leaders of the reorganization of the Christian school from 1904, estimated that *the secularization of religious and maintaining their schools, far from being a mistake, is the return to the idea of their Founder*. For him, the secularized remained true to their founder, more than other religious who are expatriates. We find the same idea among the Turkish bishops who criticized the few French Brothers, when the law came in 1934 will prohibit the wearing of the cassock, chose to go to another country to retain their religious habit, and deserting the either of their schools. *You betray the young for whom we have called you: you are not Brothers for yourself only!*

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Quite different is the Pope St. Pius X's stand: *"Learning that you will soon hold a solemn Chapter of your Order ... We absolutely do not want that among you and among similar to yours Institutes, which aim the education of children, introduce the opinion that we know now spreading and by which you should make to education of children in the first place and religious profession only the second on the grounds that the spirit and necessities of the time and want ... That's why, as you are concerned, it is well established that religious life is far superior to the common life of the faithful."*

The letter addressed to Brother Gabriel-Marie, our Superior General from 1897 to 1913, dated 04.23.1905, was published quietly in the Circular 143b, of 17.7.1906, addressed "to visitors and other Presidents of Brothers retreats in France." The Pope refused to condemn the secularized: *"we must, as much as we can, to bring remedy to the ills of society and therefore, give in many things the needs of present circumstances, but without going down, up 'impair, in anything, dignity of very venerable salons, which would, in turn, undermine the sacred heritage of the doctrine itself."* **(Rigault The times of "secularization" 1904-1914. Lasallian Studies No. 1, Rome 1991, p. 177).**

If we follow St. Pius X, it seems clear that between the Mission and the Consecration is the consecration that is first. And this, because religious life is far superior to the common life of the Laity! We see that Vatican II adopted another perspective therefore not a

comparison between the two vocations but the common call of all to holiness and reciprocity of spiritual gifts.

This letter has however had a positive effect. Putting aside the life of secularized religious ("far superior") of lay teachers, it will ultimately prevented diocesan directions to consider the former as a simple congregational diocesan staff. The secularized have remained more or less grouped and the day the threat of sanctions under the law will be lifted in 1925 they will re-form "canonical" communities: Teachers Institutes in France find an uncontested existence, and part their schools.

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Integrating the three dimensions

Art. 10 1987 seems to deny the predominance of one of these poles: the real issue is to integrate these constitutive dimensions *"Every Brother strives to integrate in his person the constitutive dimensions of his vocation: consecration to God as a religious layman, the apostolic ministry of education, especially among the poor, and community life."* Perhaps we could say that what is missing here are ways to integrate them. There are about this very rich text in the Declaration entitled ***Integration of religious consecration, community life and the apostolic mission (nos 25-26)***. We were told that this approach rather within spirituality has no place in a Rule. Failure to resume it, the Rule refers to it. But who cares to go to the references?

Note that the Rule of 1987 returns to this integration, at the beginning of Chapter 6 (the formation): *"The integration effort of the elements that constitute the life of the Brother must be engaged during initial formation and continued through lifelong learning. The Rule and the Chapter Declaration "The Brother of the Christian Schools in the world today" express these elements and the need and how to integrate them."* (81a). And here, the reference to the Declaration 13.1 requires to be informed by our 26-52: extensive program!

Note that the term *elements* was not incorporated thereafter. The *elements* are separable, they may have a more or less independent existence before entering the composition. The *dimensions* are inseparable from the solid. Analogously, Brother's life *dimensions* are views on the whole: what matters, but takes time to be structured is their integration. You may recall the Pastoral Letters from Brother John Johnston: We are religious round the clock, 24 hours of the Apostles 24, community of men round the clock.

That's at least one method of reading our Rule's articles: look what are the marginal references.

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Note: Since when are-there, in the Brothers' schools, non Brothers (Laity, Fathers or Sisters) teacher alongside Brothers? Cf. my study of Paris (*Lasalliana* No. 47). Basically: in countries where Catholicism is a minority very soon after the arrival of the Brothers; in France, when the brothers must leave municipal schools (secularization of public schools in 1886) and especially since 1889, when young Brothers were subject to military service 3 years (see the first reaction of Brother Assistant and the decision Exupérien Brother Joseph Superior). How long before we recognize Lasallian teachers' vocations?

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- See also some achievements: the Third Order, masters of Trade Unions of the Christian Schools. The General Chapter of 1884 suggested to organize "Catholic Teachers of companies that would be attached to the Institute." For the lay teachers of the schools of the Brothers of Paris, Brother Exupérien organizing a solidarity fund, educational conferences, spiritual retreats and even launch a union. The Institute's Bulletin reported in 1907 that union created in 1897 and which, according to the article, still seem to exist in 1907.

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During the presentation of the status of the review at the meeting of Visitors, Br Ambrose Payne, Chairman of the Auditing Commission of the Rule, and had indicated the bottom lines that made transformations:

* **Cross Lines:** The vow of Association for the educational service of the poor gives the Brother of the Christian Schools the specific identity of his vocation and his religious consecration.

The Association comes from the "communion" (koinonia), sharing the life of the Holy Trinity to which they are called to be reconciled.

Charisma, the gift of the Spirit to the Church through Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, manifest itself especially in the practice of personal ways of living baptismal consecration and by partnering with others for the glory of God for the service of the poor.

Hence the structure of each chapter: after the recall of John Baptist de La Salle's history (and the first Brothers), the text is based on the theology of baptism, the mission of the

Church of establish the Kingdom of God, the signs of the time and a preferential option for the poor.

Each chapter presents the Association for the educational service of the poor as the recognizable sign of the Lasallian charism in the world today.

Chapter 2: The mission of the Institute, entrusted to him by the Church, is based on the "communion" (koinonia) embracing the Brothers and others called by the Spirit through the charism of M. de La Salle.

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It is **the 2007 Chapter** that has most clearly indicated this **path of integration**:

44th General Chapter 2007. 3. Association for the educational service of the poor. (Circ. 455)

p. 23-24 *The Church-People of God has reappropriated for all the people, the charisms that were traditionally regarded as belonging exclusively to religious institutes. "Many Institutes, due to new situations have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity, who are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of the Institute itself. We can say ... a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity "(Vita Consecrata 54 § 2; cf. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, Starting Afresh of Christ, 2002, No. 31).*

Similarly, from our fundamental roots, we Brothers, we have rediscovered our identity as consecrated in the light of our Vow of Association for the educational service of the poor, and from there we try to "clarify our gaze on the other vows "(43rd General Chapter, Circ. 447, The Brothers, Identity and Formation, Orientation 3).

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One could also question our text the Rule from the new encyclical Laudato if 'at No. 105, "modern man has not received the necessary education to make good use of its powers" (Romano Guardini , The end of modern times, p.68) because the immense technological progress has not been accompanied by human development in liability values in consciousness.

Tuesday 18th August 2015

THE CENTRALITY OF THE VOW OF ASSOCIATION

Brother Alain Houry

1. Introduction: the vow of 1691

Each of the verbs which indicate the consecration, the promises, the vows, are **for**, with a purpose, a plan of life and action: establishing and maintaining the Society of Christian Schools. **The vow is a vow of association and union: a refoundation of the Institute on Community, who claims risk everything, trusting in God to carry out his work, his life, his time, his life, his abilities.** He wants to capture:

- * **The totality of persons:** we are dedicated entirely to you; all that we believe in conscience and without human consideration...
- * **Their entire action:** all our strength and all our care; be for the greater good of the said Society...
- * **The entire time:** now and forever; to the entire consumption of the establishment of the said Company; we depart without power...
- * **The entire Community:** to the last living; even when we do we would stay in three said Company; unanimously and by common agreement...
- * **The entire way of life:** that we would have to beg for alms and live on bread alone ... (see MF 153, 3rd point for the feast of St. Gaetan)

Hope in God, indicated by the early Trinitarian vow is incarnated in gestures and men, in a living history, shared in a community of destiny, assumed together, community sign by itself. Hope in God through the mediation of confidence in men by the same call, called in that ministry, having already experienced the difficulties of this task, but also rose by the same conviction and the same ideal. They are aware that the salvation of the children of the poor and artisans has been given for that time, by God, and he lays in their hands and their creative fidelity.

Men entrust to God all they are, their talents: *all our power, all of us, all that we believe in conscience and without any human consideration. They have mutual trust confidence: I and WE, unanimously and by common consent, a vow of union.* They have discovered

themselves in solidarity with all that has been done and what remains to be done. There is a dynamic of human relations and the experience that lies behind this commitment. John Baptist de La Salle and the two Brothers have gone from the "*community*" of the Memoir on the Habit, a term which expressed the horizon "religious" group in Saint-Sulpice, to the "*Society of the Christian Schools*", a term that includes, besides the religious dimension, school appearance and associative perspective of Lasallian work.

This dialogue with the Trinity, which runs throughout this vow, is the expression of an experience of God, shared by three contractors. A look of Faith on the lived reality, a rereading of the signs which God addresses them through events, what dies and what lives in their lives and those of their Brothers, their schools also; a look that leads to a commitment, a new creation. The three, to express their decision in this vow, had necessarily reflect and pray together and then write text by agreeing on terms, finally choose the circumstances:

Vaugirard, November 21, in secret ... That is the sharing of the experience of God, the sign of the existence of Lasallian communities...

This prophetic gesture announces that a new reality is present, it creates this new reality: the salvation of God for the children of artisans and the poor, through this new community is on and is again possible. It is effective, words spring from the evangelical experience and its history: we are dedicated to ... we vow of association for ... words that create a new reality.

Brother Jean-Louis SCHNEIDER, 25/03/2007

1. What is the place the association in the Rule of origins?

When looking into the origins of Lasallian vocabulary "*the vocabulary of the association*", one must look at the Rule several times not to be trapped by the words: they are so familiar that we do not grasp its important in our lives.

If one seeks the words "*association*" or "*associates*", there is nothing in the text of 1705: we must wait, as annexed to the Rule of 1718, the formula of renewal of "*the vows that I made heretofore to unite myself and remain in society with the Brothers of the Christian Schools who are associated to keep together and by association gratuitous schools wherever I be sent or to do in the said society in a which I shall be employed either by the body of the Society or by the current or the future superiors ; that's why I renew the vows of obedience that I made as to the body of the Society as Superiors.*"

These vows of association as of stability in the said Society and obedience, I promise to keep inviolably all my life. » **(RC 33, 1)**

In considering this formula, one sees "unite", "together" and "remain in society," the "body of the Society". For the first term, I refer you to the Testament of De La Salle: "*I recommend my soul to God first and then all the Brothers of the Society of Christian Schools which he joined*" (EP 4,0,1). The divine initiative is the origin of the union with the Brothers De La Salle. And the Brothers of the society are not the first Masters recruited by Nyel but those who by divine vocation, entered, formed and joined together to keep together and by association gratuitous schools.

Let us look closely at the phrase "*in the said society*." The Company has not previously been designated otherwise than in the expression "remain in society ... with the Brothers who have associated themselves".

This gives another perspective on Chapter I: "The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a society in which profession is made to hold gratuitous schools." (RC 1.1) The society is not first organization but movement of union but which God is the origin, movement finalized by the Christian education of youth in gratuitous schools.

As for "***remain in society***," it's not to live in community, in the sense of having the same residence but to make this Society a living body that fulfills the mission received. Although the case of Brother Gabriel Drolin is exceptional, he remained in association with the Brothers of his time, despite living and working alone in Rome away from them. The fact that he corresponded with De La Salle and we had transmitted letters received is a strong sign of this association.

After outlining the creative movement of this Society, the Rule specifies in two ways **the type of man that corresponds to it**. It is said in a way that we have to deepen more: "Those of this Institute will be called Brothers." The fraternity is a way not only to make contact but to receive each other from God in Christ, the firstborn of multitude brethren (**Romans 8:29**). The revised Rule uses this reference in the same perspective: They make their whole life an identification path with Jesus Christ, "the firstborn of multitude Brothers" to be the memory of his love and to continue the salvation ministry. **(23)**. Sign and effective sign.

Chapter II, **the spirit of Faith**, presented with any relation to the precedent becomes clear in the Rule: « *it is of great consequence that the Christian Brothers, who for the end of their Institute to raise children who are in their care in the spirit of Christianity, and to ensure to provide them, either filled and so abundantly filled with the spirit of faith...* » (R 11, 1, 1).

2. Some limitations in the understanding of the vow of association :

When looking at the vow formulas pronounced at the time of the Founder (CL 3, p. 7-23), we see a change, that make ask ourselves how association is perceived. Because there are variants that seem significant.

The formula of vows of Brother Gilles, Pierre Cluse (CL 3, p. 17, f 38), September 8, feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin in 1700, has a significant shift compared to the other Brothers. "*I vow to unite myself and to remain in society with the Brothers of the Society of the Christian Schools in the said society what I would be employed ... That's why I promise and vow obedience vows ... these vows of association as well as stability and obedience, I promise to keep ...*".

Other formulas say that the Brothers of the Society ... have associated themselves to keep gratuitous schools by association. Here, it is ignored: is it distraction of the copier? Even omission in the vows of Brother Theodore, Simon Sceillier, the day of the Trinity June 7, 1705 (CL 3, p. 18, f 41 and CF 14). - This Brother Theodore entered the Institute before his 3 Brothers and his father (ab 73-79 Blain, Abstract of the Life of Brother Dominic).

Association is therefore not explained by Brother Theodore and Gilles. More significantly, the formula of Brother Theodore does not have the vow of association, while Brother Gilles made this vow. What does this difference mean? Brother Gilles and Brother Theodore are servants, who are not in school.

Nevertheless: the Society of the Brothers are associated to keep gratuitous schools by association, even those employees to other tasks than school, indirectly contributing to the purpose of the Institute, which is the Christian education of children of artisans and the poor. It is difficult to say why, referring to the Brothers of the Society, Brother Gilles and Brother Theodore did not report that these Brothers have associated themselves. As if, servant Brothers, they were not committed exactly like the others.

When Brother Irenee wrote, at the back of his formula of perpetual vows on 29/09/1717, « When Brother Irenaeus transcribed on the back of his formula of perpetual vows on 09.29.1717, "To which require vows of obedience, stability, and to keep schools free by association", he distinguishes "the vow of Association with the Brothers who are associated to keep gratuitous schools "and "the vow of teaching children gratuitously "(CL 2, pp 63-64.) He prepares, probably unconsciously, the disappearance of the vow of association in the Bull of Approbation.

3. The disappearance of the vow of association from the Bull of Approbation

In the documents which were sent to Rome in 1721 for the Bull of approbation of the Institute, the summary in Articles 18 spoke very likely, as the Rouen memory, of the only vows of obedience, stability to hold schools by association and gratuitously (CL 2, p. 108). The requirement of Rome adds those of poverty and chastity in the Bull, we will have five vows, "chastity, poverty, obedience, stability in the said Institute and to teach gratuitously the poor" (Bull, 9). The vow of association must disappear in the formula of vows. Here is the text in the printed edition, in 1726, common rules and constitutions of the Brothers of the Christian Schools approved by Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XIII:

« Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, prostrate with the most profound respect before your infinite and adorable majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to you to procure your glory as far as I will be able and as you will require of me. And for this purpose, I.....promise and vow to unite myself and to remain in Society of Brothers of the Christian Schools who have associated themselves to keep together and by association gratuitous schools wherever they may be, even if I were obliged to beg for alms and to live on bread alone, and to do anything in the said Society at which I will be employed, whether by the body of the Society or by the superiors who will have the government thereof. Wherefore, I promise and vow poverty, chastity, obedience and stability in the said Society, to teach in gratuity, according to the Bull of approbation of our Holy Father Pope Benedict XII, which vows of stability and obedience to the body as well as to its Superiors of the Society, as poverty, chastity and to teach in gratuity, I promise to keep inviolably all my life.» (Perpetual vows formula).

If the association remains a key element in the life of the Brothers, **the vow of association, having disappeared from the formula of vows, is therefore absolutely not "central" during most of the history of the Institute.**

A note: in the Bull (9th), it is about of the vow *"to teach the poor gratuitously"* but the formula of vows in 1726 said *"teach gratuitously."* Successive editions of the Rule say the same. Not until the 1946 General Chapter for the 1947 Rule write *"to teach the poor gratuitously"* in the formula of vows, even though there is no longer the formula for Servant Brothers. And the vow of association is still not reappeared.

We must therefore consider how the vow of association reappeared in our texts for the educational service of the poor and the extent to which our lives as Brothers have been unified.

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Going through the Pastoral Letters of Brother Álvaro, we see that he outlined a rereading of our vows from the fourth vow. Recognize the richness of what he says, I will allow myself to point out however that in his desire to be inclusive, Brother Álvaro sometimes seemed not to mark sufficiently the **distinction between the association between the Brothers** and what I prefer to call **the dynamism of the association** which may include Laity and Brothers without confusion of each of the vocations. There should not be a misinterpretation that prevents us from reaping the benefits of this openness underlined in the 44th General Chapter.

We will have to take the time to read pages 10-25 of the 2003 Pastoral Letter. I have copied the most significant passages. You can see it, from p. 5 that I have prepared.

At the General Chapter in 2000, Brother John Johnston declared:

My third point touches Evelyn's observation this morning on the confusion surrounding the meaning of association as distinct from the Brothers' vow. My comments will not resolve the confusion. Nevertheless, I am convinced that clarifying the meaning of the Brothers' vow of association is very necessary and will contribute to an understanding of association in general. Whether we are enthusiastic about the generalized use of the word "association" in the Institute or whether we have reservations, it is clear that the vow of association is something very different. (See Bulletin 251, p. 46)

Brother John Johnston continues with a request, which will part of the decisions of the Chapter of 2007 (only) : *Today, instead of vowing association explicitly in the second paragraph, we promise association. We then proceed to profess vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, association for the educational service of the poor, and stability. Association is*

now an extra vow, our 4th vow, instead of the integrating vow of our consecrated life. My personal view is that it is possible canonically to revise the formula by adding the and vow and by editing slightly other parts of the formula. The addition does not add another vow, but does in fact place our other vows at the service of association for mission.

These are the **orientations and decisions of the 44th General Chapter** (2007):

4. Association for the educational service of the poor: — 1.1 **challenge:** the centrality of the vow of association in our identity as Brothers. The experience of lived association in the last few years, as well as our fuller understanding of the original vow of Association, challenge us to become more aware of the centrality of this vow and to give witness to it in our lives as Brothers and in our educational mission. We feel challenged, therefore, to live association according to the Gospel, first of all among ourselves.[...]

1.2 **Horizons.** Aware of the meaning of our consecration, we offer ourselves to the whole Lasallian Family as examples of communion and spirituality in order to give a Gospel foundation to the whole mission of Lasallian educators.. [...]

1.3 **Lines of action.** [...] 1.3.2 With a view to expressing better the specific consecration of the Brother and the centrality of the vow of Association for the educational service of the poor, the Government of the Institute should take the necessary steps for the following modification in Chapter 3 of the Rule n. 25.

In the 2nd part of the Vow formula, restore the words “and vow” that corresponded to the original formula of the Brothers: “For this purpose I, ... , promise and vow to unite myself ... “

In the 3rd part of the Vow formula, that the vow of association for the educational service of the poor takes first place, thus beginning the list of the five vows:

“Wherefore, I promise and vow association for the service of the poor through education, chastity, poverty, obedience, and stability in the Institute ...”

2.1 **Challenge:** the specific role of the Brothers in association with other Lasallians.

2.2 **Horizons:** [...] The Lasallian charism has become a focal point for many believing educators who discover the worth of their mission through the journey and spirituality of

John Baptist de La Salle and who together, in this way, offer to the Church and the world, a living witness of the Gospel. We see with joy that educators of other religions or without religious affiliation find in this charism an important source of inspiration that motivates them in their educational work.

So the vow of association of the Brothers among themselves to fulfill their mission is also central to the very existence of Lasallian groups, provided that the Brothers are in it appropriately. We will have to see what chapters 3 and 10 of the Rule talk about this.

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Let's come to what chapters 3 and 10 tell us of **the centrality of our vow of association for the educational service of the poor.**

One note: In the text of the 1987 Rule, articles 39-41 talk more about the service of poor and the preferential option for the poor than to the association. In the draft that the Commission had prepared the emphasis was put so much on the association. Let us hope that the work of the General Chapter was able to give a good balance in Chapter 3.

On the other hand, when we saw that we needed to develop Chapter 10, one of the major developments highlighted as a sign of vitality, the part that lay people took to the mission of the Institute! We had to make adjustments to locate the shared mission with regard to the vitality of the Brothers' vocation and renewal of the Institute. And we will see how the General Chapter finally chose the text to be submitted to the approval of the Vatican.

Remember what we learned in Chapter 3:

Bottom lines: The vow of Association for the educational service of the poor gives the Brother of the Christian Schools the specific identity of his vocation and his religious consecration.

Association comes from the "communion" (koinonia), sharing the life of the Holy Trinity to which they are called to be reconciled.

The vow of Association and that of stability distinguish the Brothers from others, through their consecration to God and commitment to perseverance to ensure the continuity of the Mission.

From our fundamental roots, we Brothers, we have rediscovered our identity as consecrated in the light of our Vow of Association for the educational service of the poor, and from there we try to "clarify our view of other wishes "(**43rd General Chapter, Circ. 447, The Brothers, Identity and Formation, Orientation 3**).

Now look at how expresses this centrality.

Let us see how this centrality expresses itself:

A charismatic dynamism

27. Following John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers, the Brothers make today the vow of association for the educational service of the poor. This vow, with the stability in the Institute, expresses the specificity of religious consecration of the Brothers to the glory of God: he strongly unites Brothers each other brothers, while it broadens and strengthens the spirit solidarity belonging to the whole Institute.

This charismatic dynamism raises the Brothers creativity to bring their best possible and sustainable response to the needs of the beneficiaries of their mission. It leads them to understand and live their other vows in this perspective.

We have already seen yesterday that No. 27 of the revised Rule. This vow expresses the specificity of our consecration; it unites us among Brothers, broadens and strengthens our solidarity; its charismatic dynamism arouses our creativity to the recipients of our mission; he makes us understand and live in this perspective our other vows.

This is what Brother Àlvaro said in 2003:

It is a call to creativity and new initiatives on their behalf, not just on a personal level but also on community and District levels since we are associated for that purpose. This movement beyond ourselves is all the more necessary today given the difficulties that we are experiencing. These might easily lead us to turn in on ourselves in pursuit of our own security.... At the same time, it seems to me that as we revitalize this constitutive dimension of our vocation it will enable us both to capture what is essential and return to our roots. In this context it is important to realize that running good institutions does not mean, in itself, that we are evangelically significant (p. 12).

28.3 *The dynamism of alliance, manifested within the community of Brothers, the Brothers also ties to all who are committed in the Lasallian mission.*

It's not to distract us from what is essential for us, speaking here of what is reflects the other Lasallians. The Lord of history calls us, unites us and sends us to his Gospel reaches the poor:

– The economically poor, the victims of social injustice, criminals and outcasts, the preferred ones of (our) Ministry of Education (26) -

The Lord raises us and all those who have conscience to engage with us in this mission are involved in this dynamic alliance.

The Lord raises us and all those who have conscience to commit with us in this mission are involved in this dynamic alliance.

If this is not the case, the Rule asks us: are we sufficiently entered into a journey, individually and collectively, of conversion? I will tell you soon as I'm off the mark but I also wonder grounds well before the journey of Brothers and Districts!

29.1 Regions and Districts draw up plans which enable all their works to be really committed to helping the poor and combating the causes of poverty. These plans, which include cooperation between congregations, develop the community dimension of educational works, and encourage the shared mission to open up more to the service of the poor.

29.2 Following the example of their Founder, the Brothers see their lives as a process of affective, intellectual, moral and religious conversion, which commits them increasingly to the cause of helping the poor. They do this through dialogue and by taking into account existing social conditions.

You will have noticed broadening these two articles bring to art. 40a and 40b of the Rule of 1987. There was no mention of cooperation between congregations, shared mission, the cause of the poor in relation to our vow of association. And the final notation, attentive to the human realities, I understand it on many levels:

- it is to reach people in their situations, not to make plans from only requirements of those who bring money to this type of action; (see cooperating in Africa: Can project, which meet the needs of people)

- Dialogue takes into account the reality of those who can commit themselves in this approach: there is a need of formation and great humility to be useful to the poor; (Brothers Manila shantytown, Circ.)

- the economic situation of the people is not the last word of their human reality: I had the echo of the great French young people from participating in an action with young Africans, came back transformed by the quality of the receiving and the joy received.

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Before moving to how our vow of association renews the understanding of our other vows, I think it is useful to look at the main texts **of Chapter 10, Brothers today** that can shed light on the centrality of our vow of association – to make it short, I sometimes say vow of association, but without forgetting its specificity, "for the educational service of the poor". I hope not too much repeat what we saw, what I remember here is this centrality in the vocation and life of the Brothers in the world today.

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Let us quickly the plan of this chapter:

- 152 From the beginnings, the gratuity of God's work
- 154 The destiny of the Institute placed in the hands of the Brothers
- 155 Paschal Mystery: perseverance in adversity and strength of new beginnings
- 156 Reasons for hope: fidelity, vocations, missionary spirit...
- 157 Way of Holiness, call to share spiritual gifts
- 158 The Rule manifests the charism of the Institute and the meaning of life
- 159 Fraternity, prophetic sign and pastoral of vocations
- 160 Incessant creation in fidelity.

We see that 157 is the key text on the question of centrality:

154 [...] At the heart of the Lasallian Family, the Institute will be source of inspiration and of life for all Lasallians.

156 [...] The Brothers ... see in the increasingly broad understanding of their vow of association for the educational service of the poor a will to be more faithful to their origins

157 By making a life-long commitment with his Brothers, John Baptist de La Salle opened a path to holiness for all educators. The Brothers, the first guardians of the Lasallian charism, are happy to see numerous Partners wishing to deepen the knowledge of the Founder revealed in his life, spirituality and work.

In the growth of association with men and women who walk side-by-side with them and identify themselves today as the sons and daughters of John Baptist de La Salle, they see a sign of the times which fills them with hope.

As a consequence, the Brothers feel they have a special responsibility to share their pedagogical and spiritual heritage with all those they work with. Through this sharing they receive the calls of the Spirit to be Brothers today:

- the call to be brothers with them and to live fraternally as a sign for all Lasallian educators;
- the call to be for them and with them a channel for the light with which God “himself enlightened the hearts of those he destined to announce his word to children” (**MR 193,1 et 2 Cor 4,6**)
- the call to be among them and with them the heart, the memory and the guarantor of the Lasallian charism.

Let us look at those which talk about **the centrality of our vow of association**:

- (154) Institute, at the heart of the Lasallian Family
- (156) the vow of association, fidelity to origins
- (157) Brothers, first guardians of the Lasallian charism
- (157) association with the Laity, signs of times and call to the spiritual and educational sharing:
- (157) the call to be brothers with them and live fraternity as a sign for them;
- (157) the call to be for them and with them mediators of the light of God's call;
- (157) the call to be among them and with them in heart, in memory and guarantor of the Lasallian charism.

Thus, Chapter 10 shows us that the central role of our organization including our vow of association:

- To understand the gospel of the Founder approach;
- To understand our vocation in fidelity to our origins;
- For the very existence of the Lasallian Family;
- For our vocation today: to live fraternity, be appeal the mediators;

- For Brothers: call for change from "1st custodians of the charism" to "heart, memory and guarantor".

Before detailing some of these different aspects of our vow, I think it is necessary to communicate to you some **thoughts that I made on what is and what is not association to which we vow.**

Sometimes there are ways to express themselves that can lead to a distorted attitude in our relationships. I have recently taken a clearer conscience by reading the remarkable introduction to the Book of Job, in the edition of the Ecumenical Translation of the Bible (NRSV): for my own I copied the entire section on theology book of Job, and I will extract for you the passage that seems most significant.

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When we speak of our association, we easily refer to our experience of associations that we know, with rights and duties of the associated, and this is what rightly gives us **a first understanding of our association.** But there may be elements that we have to correct as with regard to our vow of association. I speak very freely, from my own experience.

In a commercial association, there is agreement for a task, you give your best to it and for the obtained result, and we share the profit. In marriage, which the dictionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries give as an association to give life, we think of community property and community life, welcoming and educating the children, but the association ceases with the death of one of the associated.

For John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers, it is not only an association for life (in the sense of its duration), but also a commitment by vow in a Society whose purpose and the duration go beyond of the associated person, because it aims a body whose mission is from God, the salvation of the children of artisans and the poor. And difficulties may appear to place God in this commitment.

You probably know that to create the Seminary of St. Sulpice, Monsieur Olier had a notarial deed; John Baptist de La Salle, for reasons he did not explained, with the Brothers chose to associate themselves by vow. At most, he said in the Memoir on the Habit (MH 0, 0, 2), the Community of the Christian Schools is presently established or founded on providence. There is a dynamism that comes from God, and aim to participate together in the Work of God. What kind of "*collaborators of God*" are we? Exercising ecclesial

ministry, do we participate in some way in the world of God and His salvation of action? One must be careful to answer this kind of question.

Let us be clear: we associate ourselves among Brothers, but not with God! It is before God, acknowledging the gift to us that we associate among Brothers. **The gift of God** is the first, free, without merit on our part and we shall not confer any right on him, nor any superiority over other Christians. One who considers that his status as a Brother gives him the right to receive such a responsibility, to occupy such a position, or who would like to implement some kind of career plan in the Institute, (we sometimes find it in the "Personal project »), unconsciously enter into the logic of "give and take" with God. The Book of Job denounces this subtle temptation and calls for a more authentic relationship with the revealed God and to our Brothers. *** **Job and sin of moral man.**

We should not also distort the meaning of the expression of Paul (1 Tim 4: 8): Piety is useful for everything. Does it not have the promise of life, of the present life and the future life? TOB notes that, according to some authors, moral Pastoral Epistles has no longer the dynamic character of the great Pauline Epistles. The Founder quotes Paul's text: *Oh, how true it is, as Saint Paul says, that piety is useful for all things and produces great blessings, not only in those people who possess it but also in those who see them, speak with them, and receive their instructions.* (MF 98.3, for the feast of St Sulpice). He hardly lingers for the personal benefit but stresses on the goods it gives to others. Piety is not a wise practice that would give us more control over ourselves and on others.

A formula that is sometimes found in obituaries can also mislead us when a Brother is worthy to receive in heaven *"the reward of a good and faithful servant."* (Note that the Gospel is not talking about a reward, but rather to enter into the joy of his master - a relationship, not a salary). It is not our merits that crown our salvation, but it is the gift of God, reminds us opportunely one of the prefaces of saints. This is because God calls us to dedicate ourselves totally to him that we are entering the association of Brothers, and our response must be as free as the call that is done to us.

What I am committed by making the vow of association like the first Brothers is to unite myself and remain in society with the Brothers of the Christian Schools who are associated to keep together and by association gratuitous schools wherever I may be sent or to do in the said Society what I will be employed by either the body of the Society or by the Superiors (RC 33.1). This is not first **"unity is strength"**, but the association with the

Brothers whom God has united (cf. Testament of John Baptist de La Salle, EP 3, 0, 1). It gives me no right over my Brothers. Even if I can count on them and they depend on me.

You remain a man among men, with your weaknesses and your faults, but you are a given man. Do not think of you; think of your apostolate work, to Christ who lives in you as you live in him, to your Brothers called like you in the same love. You can count on them as they rely on you. United with them in joy, goes to God and neighbor, every day more.

We know the text of the draft "Preface" of the Rule not retained in 1967, for the lack of a 2/3 majority. "You can rely on them, they rely on you, but you are a man given. "Difficult balance between self-sacrifice and the gratuity that represent the brotherhood! Take to heart my mission without having a right to it. This applies to all, especially those who have to take responsibility.

When I became a Visitor, I have often pondered *the fable La Fontaine* about the **donkey laden with relics**, which took him to devotional signs that people were in his direction. Respect that people have for the Brother Visitor is actually addressed to the Institute; to the Brothers who have preceded us and which we admire the past dedication to the Brothers and lay persons who continue the mission of the Institute.

The Rule, however, introduces its **Second part: the Government of the Institute** by the Gospel passage from Luke 22.24 to 27, where the Apostles had come to quarrel over which of them is the greatest.

109. Gathered in community in response to a personal call from the Holy Spirit, dedicated to the Triune God to procure his glory, (and) associated by vow for the educational service of the poor , the Brothers , following Jesus Christ, consider the authority as a service.

110. Following the example of John Baptist de La Salle who, from the origins of the Institute, involved the "*principal Brothers*" in the consultation process of discernment and decision making, the Brothers live the exercise of authority in a spirit of co-responsibility and subsidiarity. Those in authority promote the initiative and taking responsibility of everyone in the field of its own.

The Rule in 1987, spoke of "the authority as a community service." Community has disappeared, leaving all its strength to the service. As part of our association for the educational service of the poor, the service is still diakonia to the benefit of the whole

Church of the poor. It's more than good personnel management: the discernment is not always easy.

110.5 Authority is careful to ensure that the mission entrusted to each Brother corresponds to his personal vocation and to the needs of association for the educational service of the poor. Those who exercise it seek to develop the quality and efficacy of the ecclesial mission of the Institute.

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We will continue to refer to Brother Álvaro detailing lighting we hope that our association brings to the understanding of our other vows.

The vow of stability in the Institute expresses especially the temporal dimension of the vow of association for the educational service of the poor.

The key terms of article 30 of the Revised Rule: trust in God, mutual trust, build together, and ensure continuity of the work of schools. A precious gift, received every day, daily response to God's faithfulness.

31. By this vow, they make a commitment to remain in the Institute in order to fulfill its mission, and to live in fraternal and apostolic communion, faithful to its spirit, to their Brothers, and to those whom they serve in their ministry.

Let us now listen to Brother Álvaro whose reflection led to some questions:

p. 43 In order to ensure the establishment of schools for the poor, the Founder, along with Gabriel Drolin and Nicolas Vuyart, committed themselves irrevocably to remain united, "without power to abandon the task, even should we remain the only three members of the said Society, and should be obliged to beg for alms and live on bread alone" **[EP 1,0,2]**. We cannot forget this significant moment in our history which should inspire us with the necessary energy to continue united, with God's grace, to ensure schools for the service of the poor. The relationship with our 4th vow is, then, obvious and it should motivate us with renewed creativity to carry out, together and by association, projects which respond to the needs of young people. Today, faced with the significant number of dispensations that we have always experienced, I wonder if we cannot give our younger Brothers greater possibilities of fidelity if we were to offer them apostolic initiatives that are closer to the ideal of our origins? As I have stated elsewhere, our younger Brothers have the right to be creative in their responses to the needs of the young who are poor or who are at risk. [...]

p. 45 Stability does not mean remaining immobilized in the past but rather being faithful to persons and, in particular, to the young who are poor and for whom we came into existence. It is for them that we begin anew, recover strength, look ahead, and promote new projects. We came into being for young people and they should be the ones to show us the path to follow. If we are their teachers, we 43 should not forget that it is also appropriate for us to be their disciples and to have our hearts open to their teaching.

The temporal dimension is not mechanical repetition of what has been committed one day: you have to know it again, taking new strength, look forward, promote new projects to respond with joy and creativity to the calls of God in the world of the poor.

As the Revised Rule says:

32.1 The Brothers commit themselves to the Institute in all their uniqueness as persons. Aware of the difficulties that await them, they are ready to respond joyfully and creatively to the successive calls of God at the various stages of their life.

We have already talked about **the vow of obedience** which in the revised Rule, did not resume the explanation of the link with the Association. Let us turn again to Brother Álvaro:

p. 40 What is most important about Lasallian obedience is the community's awareness of being called by God to do God's work by contributing to the salvation of young people who are poor and abandoned. This is its missionary character. Without financial, political, ecclesiastical support, it finds its strength in abandonment to God "who calls, consecrates, sends, and saves" (**R 21**).

p. 41 Obedience should be for us a path of freedom in order to serve others better. It is within the paradox that obedience to God makes us free that the profound mystery of our vow of obedience is revealed. We know that Christianity transformed freedom into service and therefore the question that should concern us is how to live Christian freedom within a world that is unsupportive and selfish. It is a world in which there are so many things which prevent fraternal service and the awareness of others' needs, such as money, power, prestige, sex, self-preoccupation, and the pursuit of one's own comfort. So Christian freedom is the rejection of all this in order to live the liberating freedom of Jesus who is concerned for the poor and who gave himself unconditionally for those who suffer, for the little ones and for those in the lowest place [...]

p. 42 *Our 4th vow also seeks the integral freedom of all young people, starting from the poor and abandoned, to the extent of even being prepared to give our lives for them: "Your*

zeal must go so far in this that in order to achieve it, you are ready to give your very life, so dear to you are the children entrusted to you." (**Med. 198, 2**).

Chastity, as obedience is intimately linked with the Association in the service of the mission, although the revised Rule only mention in passing:

36. ... The vow of chastity makes the Brothers totally available to meet the requirements of their vow of association for the service of the mission.

37. This commitment leads the Brothers to live a life of self-sacrificing love marked by tenderness, wisdom, maturity and respect, and to create among themselves and with their colleagues an atmosphere based on fraternal relations. It leads them also to love with respect those entrusted to their care in a way that gives them freedom to grow in humanity.

Avec le Frère Álvaro, entrons davantage dans cette perspective d'un amour qui se donne en réponse à l'amour premier du Christ :

p. 33 [...]chastity is a special love for the person of Jesus Christ in the Brother's heart. It is not a vow to be lacking in affection but rather to be radical in love. It comes from the very experience of human love which, in its deepest dimension, is inclusive and radical.

Our challenge is to experience in a similar way a love that is centered on the person of Jesus. "He loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal 2: 19 - 20) and his love establishes and sustains my existence forever as well as my ability to continue his commitment in favor above all of those who are loved the least and who need my love all the more. Our heart should love as his did. Our affective and personal relationship with the Lord should bring us to love those he loved the most: the poor and marginalized.

Understood in this way, celibacy is not an escape from the world in the pursuit of personal perfection. Nor can it be simply reduced either to a counter-cultural value in the midst of a sexual, consumeristic 32 and hedonistic world or to a financial resource which facilitates the mobility of the missionaries...

p. 34 Universal love for all people is simply a conceptual abstract if it does not become concrete love for particular individuals. Péguy talks about the contradiction of those who think they love everyone because they love no one. Concrete love develops in concentric circles. Chastity is a widening of the spaces of charity. It is a fine-tuning and a strengthening of love. It is love in the concrete, not in the abstract. The first circle,

certainly, is our community but should not the second one be children and the young who are poor for whom we have associated ourselves?

Here again is a question of the quality of our love. To interrupt this long text reading time, let me turn to a story which I was the admiring witness.

I was Visitor of Paris recently when, in Rome, they pointed out to me that a young Brother reached his 8 years of temporary vows and had to prepare himself to perpetual profession; otherwise, he could no longer remain in the Institute.

He taught the class of young people who have failed and that seemed destined to leave school without a diploma, and he managed to restore their taste for work to the point of being criticized by the public inspector.

So I just spoke to the young Brother, and he roughly said: *"I love the poor, and especially young people entrusted to me in this difficult environment, but I wonder if it is because of Jesus that I love, or rather by a political vision of a world where inequalities recede when we serve the poor. So I do not see myself commit myself all my life to God if it is not him I really search for. When I am sure that it is Jesus who sends me to them, so I can do my profession."*

For two years, I waited without disturbing him; and when I was visiting, he simply told me how he was doing his evening prayer: he reviewed the face of each student he had in class (he was also to see at their home, and they had accepted his coming, which is rare in these areas), so he remembered these faces: *"What does God expect of him, what he needs most, how can I be the educator he needs?"*. And I had the testimony of parents of her students realized how their son was transformed, taking the value in his own eyes, *"God gives us many educators as this Brother!"*. And when he decided to make his profession, I felt like passing at a higher altitude. I do not think I am mistaken: he later rendered great service to the District of France.

The clarification that our vow of association brings to **the understanding of our vow of poverty**. We have already spoken of this vow yesterday: here I emphasize its connection with the association.

Poverty

40. By evangelical poverty, the Brothers choose to follow Jesus Christ who, out of love, made himself poor in order to enrich us all by his poverty. Following his example, John Baptist de La Salle divested himself of his goods to make himself similar to the poor teachers, and with them, he put his hope in God's Providence, making possible the "Society of the Christian schools".

Today the Brothers, men of hope, set out on the same path to become poor in spirit and be converted to God, their true treasure. In this way, they make possible association among themselves, availability to their Partners and to the calls of the Church, solidarity, and closeness to the poor they wish to serve.

40.1 In the spirit of the Beatitudes, the Brothers consider all that they are and all that they have as gifts to be shared. In their work, they maintain a spirit of gratuity..
[...]

40.2 By pooling the fruits of their work, the Brothers demonstrate their fraternal solidarity. Through a spirit of association, each one feels personally responsible for shared resources before God and the community. [...]

40.4 The Brothers are careful to ensure that the pooling of the fruits of their work does not lead to collective wealth. Rather, they share generously with their Brothers, with Districts most in need, and with the poor.

Brother Álvaro ended his presentation **about poverty of the Brother** by formula shock: our vow of association for the educational service of the poor is no other than the incarnation in history of **our vow of poverty**.

p. 37-38 To follow Jesus as a poor person in a society such as ours involves actively opposing the tendency to fall prey to a consumerist spirit. It means that we use things in such a way that constantly allows us to recognize that God is the only Absolute necessary and that our neighbors, especially the poor youth whom we educate, are God's presence in history. In a world such as ours, marked by ever greater inequality, in 36 which 40 to 50 million people die of hunger annually, where so many people are excluded from economic benefits, where new forms of poverty are emerging, we should be ashamed to apply too hastily to ourselves the title poor. Nevertheless, our being different does not prevent us from being poor and in solidarity with the poor but rather it invites us to use that difference in their service. [...]

p. 39 the Rule tells us about “the spiritual journey of John Baptist de La Salle, our Father” (R. 32) and we know that his journey was incarnational. “From one commitment to another, the Lord led De La Salle and his disciples to take on fully the mission of the Son of Man, participating in his incarnation among the poor, in his obedience and abandonment to the Father, to serve poor and abandoned youth” (M. Sauvage). All of this is about identifying with the poor, freeing them from their dehumanizing situation, and proclaiming to them the saving message of Jesus. [...]

p. 40 To follow Jesus is to continue his life and his cause. It is “to have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus” (Ph 2: 5). His poverty translated into commitment. If, like Jesus, we want to live an incarnated poverty it is necessary to take on a commitment to justice for the great number of economically poor and for those who have been deprived of their dignity as men and women. In this sense our fourth vow of association for the educational service of the poor is nothing more than a concrete way of living our vow of poverty..

Brother Álvaro continued with other points of view: The promotion of Justice and our 4th vow; An unknown continent; Educating for Justice. Let us remember one quote:

p. 51 Therefore, just providing welfare is not enough. It is important to get to the root causes of poverty and search for solutions of a structural nature. At the same time, we need to be aware that we cannot do everything and that we ought to respond, first and foremost, by means of Christian education. But it is important to be familiar with reality. The Rule tells us that the Founder was deeply moved and concerned. If we are not so moved, we run the risk, pointed out by Brother José Pablo, that: “Some even seem to deny the very existence of such a world, believing it is merely an extreme fringe of society” (Circ. 412, p. 26).

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We know the role of association in the path of our Founder: I quoted what Brother Jean-Louis Schneider has written about it. We must return to this text, to see if we commit similarly, if we find such an evangelical dynamism for our future. Otherwise, the evocation of the past would be a nostalgic vain downturn or evocation of a bygone reality. Or simply with words.

We encountered in the Rule, the reasons to give thanks and to grow in hope: Brothers ... see, in ever greater understanding of their vow of association for the educational service of the poor, increased loyalty will to their origins. **(156)**

Here is a chart, we will recognize us? Confront us with the text of Brother Schneider.

A refoundation of the Institute on Community claiming to risk everything, trusting in God to carry out his work: his life, his time, his life, his abilities. [...] Hope in God, indicated by the Trinitarian early vow is incarnated in gestures and men, in a living history, shared in a common destiny, assumed together, community sign itself. Hope in God through the mediation of confidence in men seized by the same call, called for the same ministry, having already experienced the difficulties of this task, but also raised by the same conviction and the same ideal. We understand that the salvation of the children of the poor and artisans entrusted to us, for this time, by God, and that is in our hands and our creative fidelity...

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Does it make us to take responsibility of our time, including in higher level of formations? Education for justice, teacher training, administrative tasks, care of the sick or elderly Brothers ... how does all this come together? These services can enter the global association in the Institute, but does everyone find his role? We will have to see what our vows are saying about it. But perhaps the way we want all the Brothers to be committed with the same depth is it a requirement of the association or an oversight of the freedom of God's gifts? Until the Code of Canon Law, applied to our Institute in 1919, the perpetual vow was not required of every Brother. This is not to return to the degrees of belonging to the Institute but the flexibility that the Institute has shown with its members: we have to be careful when we plan the dynamism of our association with some of our colleagues, our partners in mission.

How does our vow of association and its dynamism make specific our role as Brothers in the Lasallian Family ?

11. The lifelong commitment of the Brothers to one another and to the educational service of the poor defines the specific nature of the Institute.

The Brothers live out their ministry in communion with the Church, and above all, with those who share this same educational mission. They are for them witnesses to the dignity and the splendor of a commitment to education, to concern for young people, and especially the poor.

Association for the mission leads them to welcome and accompany those who wish to share the Lasallian charism and deepen their knowledge of it. The specific contribution of the Brothers to the shared mission lies in their consecration to the Most Blessed Trinity, lived out in community. Their total gift of themselves to young people is a special sign of God's own fidelity to them.

The life and development of the Institute depend above all on the mystery and the power of grace. But by the gift of freedom, the Lord wanted to put the destiny of the Institute into the hands of the Brothers. At the heart of the Lasallian Family, the Brothers are a source of inspiration for all Lasallians who increasingly share the mission and the charism of the Institute. **(154)**.

Our religious consecration requires us to be truly experts of communion and to practice the spirituality (*Vita consecrata* 46).

Let's go a little further. What gives its specificity to the Institute is that the Brothers are committed to the life in the association for the educational service of the poor. A first meaning of this commitment is that they are thus committed by divine vocation: it is God who calls them to dedicate themselves to Him for the salvation of these little ones of his favorite - a revelation of the dignity of the educational relationship. The well experienced educational action becomes a theological place that reveals both Jesus' preferential love for the poor, left behind, and the greatness of the vocation to Christian educator (and even without Christian reference). It is a message for all: the relationship with youth through the openness to transcendence. If we reach the sight that God has on the young, we can get back for this young a call to renew our evangelical commitment.

But not only that the Brother is committed: the Brothers undertake with each other, in combination, and before God. The school, educational action, is also a place for believers of the Church and a sign of unity which respects differences. When we play together and her life under the sight of God, **the eschatological unity of humanity is anticipated in Christ** (or the Omega point, for those who have not yet named him).

It is perhaps what can make us experts in communion; formators with a spirituality of communion without proselytism. With what we are called to live, we receive the grace to recognize the analog way with other educators who play their life - or a significant part of their lives - in a dynamic association.

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Let us return to basic questions: Is it the vocation of the Institute to care for the transmission of the Lasallian charism? What precautions to be taken to ensure that the specific vocation of the Brothers may not be blurred?

When John Baptist de La Salle recognized that God was asking him to take care of the schools (it was towards the end of 1682, he notes in the beginnings of memory), it is because he had already worked for teacher training that Nyel Adrien had gathered. The initiatives he takes, with much hesitation and difficulties (housing the masters home, go with them to Rue Neuve, renounce to his property and his canon), led him to join the Brothers which he acknowledged the divine vocation, even though a number of them did not persevere.

The role of those who persevere in the association between Brothers is fundamental. He was reminded about the letter of April 1, 1714. Throughout the history of the Institute, an insignificant number of perpetually professed Brothers left the Institute for various reasons: it is mainly after the Council and the Chapter of 1966-1967 that Brothers leaving the Institute became many, and not only among the Brothers. - Do not draw the conclusion, as I have heard sometimes it's because of the Council that many left.

I can say that some of those who left have asked a big question to the Brothers who remained. I just give an example that I witnessed. There was a Congress in Amiens on Vocations and had it was asked to the various congregations present in the city to come up with panels in the cathedral to present their specific vocation. It happened that Brother School Director of the Brothers had left the Institute but retaining teaching hours, the law prohibited to dismiss him: it was therefore not possible to appoint a another Director. Force was to retain him: big problem for the Brothers but not for parents. *"If he continues to exercise his duty as Director and if he is happy, that's no problem!"* Yes, it was difficult to present the Brother's vocation, which was no longer distinguished from that of a Lasallian educator.

Life consecration to God and the association of Brothers are necessary for the creation of the Lasallian Family without confusion of vocations. Brother will not be defined by what it does: there is a quality of personal commitment to follow Christ, on behalf of a love not only young people, but God, in the radicality of a choice without returning.

Does this mean that the appearance of good Christian teachers did not shade in the Brother's vocation? Of course, there are young people, and young colleagues, who, before choosing a state of life, have opted for that of Christian master in marriage while in another context, they would perhaps become Brothers. I think that tomorrow, Brother Chuy RUBIO, in the presentation of vocations, in Chapter 6 of the Rule will help you find enough elements to situate the Brother's vocation within the Lasallian Family .

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I will confine myself to a few reflections on the **pitfalls we encountered in France in the presentation of our vocation.**

A Brother Visitor met every two months a solidly Christian teacher who seemed capable of becoming Director of one of our schools. One day the teacher asked him a note: *"Dear Brother, you just made me discover my true vocation is to be a Brother, but I'm married with three children! I must say that I was 11 years old student of the Brothers and I was not ever presented the Brother's vocation! **"Does the problem come from us?"***

I was a colleague to Brother Henry which has long been the class teacher of class 3 and had a strong impact on his students. A mother of 4 students comes to see the Brother Director and told him, *"I believe in the influence of the Brothers. My son has just 3 years without having a Brother as a teacher: do me the grace to put next year in the class of Brother Henri"*- *"Madam, replied the Brother Director, we have few Brother; should that young people become Brothers, your son for example "- "Dear Brother, my son can do much better! **"Cry of the heart, revealing an ambition for his son more than a conviction.***

This same Brother Henry, classe teacher for class 3, has each year one or two vocations who become priests, religious: it follows them for years. One day, I would point out that there is no Brother among them: *"Call to be a priest or missionary, yes, he replies; but call to be a Brother, is it not to work a little to my own shop? ". **As if the Brother's vocation was our property?***

One of my former students at the boarding school in Passy-Buzenval just passed the toughest exam in Public Education and was appointed in Normandy. One day I asked him to come to Passy as a teacher of large classes. His answer is clear: "Do you believe that the formation that you give in Passy is strong enough to form Christians? I gladly give up my position, but what you propose is not worth it. "Am I credible in the exercise of my vocation?"

It is not only we who are having trouble **to make others perceive the originality of our vocation**. When I was a novice master, I went with novices to the inter-novitiate sessions. I met a priest who did his novitiate in Missionary Brothers of Campagnes, who are Priests or Brothers. He said: "I regret not having known the Missionary Brothers of Campagnes after I finished my seminary. Otherwise, I would have become Brother of Campaigns, without being as priest. "

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I do not know if I will use this, it's a bit far from the work that is asked.

What remedy? I may be a little ahead but I think the first thing to come out of the confusion is to look at the vocation of Lasallian lay teachers.

When the Council spoke about the vocation of the laity in the Church, I think we were among many Brothers find it very beautiful, very dynamic. But I delayed to apply it to my colleagues who are lay teachers.

The first time I realize it is in 1960, when the Passy Boarding School came to Buzenval. In community meeting, we recognized that the daily Mass, if it is possible for students is an important factor in vocation. And we decided to change a bit the schedule for a range of 30 minutes available before lunch: study or Mass.

And, during a "*back to school*" meeting, a colleague told me: "You know perfectly how to organize well the day, and if you had asked me my opinion, I would have supported you. But you did not even think to inform us: we have just learned, like the parents, in the circular. Do we, lay teachers, not have our vocation? "

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Job and the sin of the moral man

Theology of the Book of Job (Oeucumenical Translation of the Bible, 1446-1450)

The dialogue in verse The author of the dialogue gave vent to the passion that always captures the human spirit when faced with the enigma of pain. He never lost sight of the intellectual and moral scandal that troubled Judaism from its appearance in history and continues to worry people. The Jobien poet speaks to humanity of all time because it not

only that it is faced with the scandal of life and death, but it still has portrayed the man of faith who, in his agony, borders on blasphemy and research at the same time the presence of a God who loves. Worse than dismissal, loss of children, ostracized by society, misunderstanding of the wife and friends and the throes of a fatal disease for him, **the divine silence is the ultimate suffering.**

[...] Until the peroration of his long apology, the hero keeps the dignity of a man who has no sense of guilt. It only reminds youth peccadilloes. He will welcome the Divinity, coated with a right royal majesty. "As a prince," he will go to meet the Almighty (31.37).

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Theophanies of storms. Job's answers to the Lord changed surprisingly the tone. Here the reader discovers the profound intention of the poet. This is not to solve the problem of evil and justify the ways of God according to the canons of human morality. Rather, it is to purify the theology of any anthropomorphic moralism, to outline a new approach to the reality of faith and indicate the insidious nature of sin that threatens the innocent and pious. The primary purpose of Job's poem is to free the divine sovereignty of the human concept of justice. When the Lord "responds" to Job out of the storm (allusion to the theophany of Moses, Ex 19 and Elijah, 1 Kings 19), he has made no response to the questions of the a man of sorrows. It was he who raises new questions, one after the other, before reaching the most troubling. [...]

So brace yourself like a brave man. I will question you, and answer thou me. Are you sure you want to break my judgment, condemn me to justify yourself ? (40,7-8).

This double question gets to the heart of the discussion and provides the key to the book of Job. The poet uses the mystery of suffering to probe the mystery of God.

The hero has continued to proclaim his integrity. He repeatedly said that his misery inflicted lie to the righteousness of God. In fact, he maintained that God would recognize his innocence and, implicitly wanting to dictate his own terms to Almighty, he tried to justify himself.

While his friends were bogged down by tirelessly defending divine retribution and the value of the conversion (thus showing that they were engaged in an intellectual enterprise of "theodicy", or justification of God), Job insisted on the rights that man acquires by his moral conduct. So he locked himself in the pursuit of an "anthropodicy" or human

justification. The poet can then show that the man's justification can only be acquired at the cost of God's condemnation.

The style of the prophetic controversy appears in Jb 40.2 is found in v. 8 where the word "**break**" is the one employed by Jeremiah when he speaks of the breakdown of the Old Covenant (Jer 31,32). By using such a terminology, the poet suggests that Job actually shared with his friends the old belief in remuneration linked to the ideology of the covenant of mutual obligation. Job therefore did not "fear God for nothing" (1.9). Like his friends, he implicitly attributed to God a human sense of justice, based on the business idea of buying and payment.

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Wanting a link between the moral perfection of man and his happiness is conceive God as a businessman dealing with customers. The phrase "*give and take*" (2.4) expresses not only the mentality of the mythical enemy of the story in prose, it also characterizes all the characters dialogue in verse; and this is what, breast of the hurricane, the Lord reveals to Job. The poet shows the dangers of the theology of the Alliance each time the dogma of the contractual obligation is corrupt and does believe that God's freedom is limited. Like Israel, Job thought his integrity, superior to that of all the Orientals, had been acquired for him by rights on God.

The hero is finally persuaded to face the subtle mistake of his position. He cannot justify himself without declaring simultaneously that God "is bad" (literal meaning of the verb 40,8b). He learns that he has committed himself in the same path as his three friends. The defense of God is always a human defense. Theodicy is actually an "**anthropodicy**".

Confronted with the infinite holiness of the Creator of the worlds, Job discovers he cannot save himself. He must give up the illusion that considers that piety is a well-being technique and security. When he understood that he fears God "for nothing" (1.9), the ineffable grace of the presence becomes sufficient for him. He asks for nothing else.

The **second intention** of the poet was then to outline a new approach to faith. It is true that the ancient traditions "Yahwistic" had long expressed the relationship between God and man as a simple relationship of trust between two people (Gen. 15.6). And the great prophets, especially Isaiah, had discerned in the law (**emunah**) the secret of endurance,

that is the ability to live an amen (Ex 7.9) or live justice and righteousness (2.4 Ha). The jobian poet does not use this language, but he clearly shows that the miracle of the divine presence is the source of triumph over suffering. Invoking the theophany of Moses and Elijah and anticipating epiphany last celebrated in the autumn hymns, this poet told his deported comrades (without Temple without monarchy, without country or national future hope) that God of heaven and earth was still and always among them.

Storm and darkness are the ancient symbols of the presence behind the mask. While the mythical monsters, the Tortuous (Leviathan) and Bestial (Behemoth) still pose the enigma of evil throughout the universe, the architect of the cosmos reveals to Job, a single individual, the wonders of divine freedom. The human pragmatism has no place in the scheme of creation, where the rain falls even on the uninhabited lands (38,26). To have faith is to believe in a sovereign God who bows, despite appearances often to the contrary, to weakness, decay, or pride of the least of his creatures.

By developing these themes in way that d

While developing these themes in a way through the dramatic process, the poet subtly outlines a new path for understanding the ancient notion of sin. This is the third goal of the Lord's discourse and the final answer of Job. Before the holiness that exceed his understanding, the fighter withdraws. It is the presence that has opened his eyes. Now he sees with his own eyes instead of hearsay knowledge (42.5). Seeing the "holiness", he becomes aware of his sin. He did not commit any crimes that his friends accused him, but he has committed the crime by excellence of the moral man. He became a "judge-God." His confession is therefore inevitable: **Also, I hate myself and I disavow myself in dust and ashes!** (42.6).

He had asked for an audience so to defend his honor, but his morality became for him whitout knowing a technique destined to have a supra-human, an analogy to that of the ancient kings who

Il avait exigé une audience afin de défendre son honneur, mais sa moralité était devenue pour lui, à son insu, une technique destinée à obtenir une qualité supra-humaine, analogue à celle de ces rois antiques qui s'affublaient des oripeaux du droit divin (40,10-14).

The guilt of Job is not moral. It is that of the man who not only believes in himself the master of his own destiny but also unconsciously makes himself a divine being because he

judges God. The discourse of the Lord and Job's response contain a critic of the humanist subjectivism that think of God on standards of human thought. The poem of Job shows the reality of a God of restrictions or of human morality. The poet anticipates the Apostle Paul, for his Lord's vision allows him to discern the idolatry of the law, conceived as a source of self-justification.

This austere meditation invites us to a more accurate view of what represents for us the Rule of the Institute: we will not be judged on the practices required in the Rule (or commandments), but on «the love that made us to put it into practice». This is what John Baptist de La Salle wished to recall in the Rule, in 1718, when he added chapter 16 about the **Regularity**:

[1] It is necessary that the Brothers apply to themselves and take for the foundation and support of their regularity what Saint Augustine says at the beginning of his Rule: those who live in a Community ought before all else to love God and then their neighbor because these are the principal commandments given us by God and because any regularity whatever, if separated from the observance of these two commandments, is quite useless for salvation, for regularity is established in Communities only to give their members the facility to observe the commandments of God with exactness, and most of the rules are practices pertaining to the commandments. **(RC 16, 1).**

After giving many examples, the Founder continues:

Regularity is also the principal support of Communities, and it is such as to make them immovable as long as it subsists therein. Irregularity is the chief source of their destruction and of the loss of their members. In this view, the Brothers will prefer the rules and practices of their Institute to all other practices, however holy they may be in themselves, unless they concern the commandments of God and of the Church. **(RC 16,3).**

We find analog indications in Chapter 10 of our Revised Rule:

158. The Rule manifests the charism of the Institute and defines the meaning of the Brothers' life in today's context. It shows them how to live out the Gospel in the way the Founder did. Individually and as a community, they study it, meditate on it and assimilate its riches and its spirit. By being faithful to it, they follow and serve Jesus Christ.

Work Breakdown

Session 1

0. The Vow of 1691

1. How does association fits in the original Rule?
2. Some limitations in understanding the vow of association
3. The disappearance of the vow of association from the Bull of Approvalif the association remains a key element in the life of the Brothers, the vow of association, having disappeared from the formula of vows, is so absolutely not "*central*" during most of history of the Institute.
4. At the General Chapter of 2000, Brother John Johnston declared
5. The following are the guidelines and decisions of the 44th General Chapter (2007)
6. Association for the educational service of the poor - **1.1 Challenge: the centrality of the vow of Association in the identity of the Brothers.**

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In small groups: *In line with the identity of the Brothers, the specific function of the Brothers in the association with other Lasallians*

Session 2

- 1. Feedback from groups: questions that are asked**
2. Chap. 3 and 10 years the Centrality of the vow of Association in September
3. 27 (charismatic dynamism) and Alvaro
4. 28.3 (dynamic alliance) not distract us from the essential; 29.1 and 29.2
5. The main texts of Chapter 10, Brothers today: 154, 156, 157.
6. chap. 10: Central role of the association
7. Reflection: what is and what is not the association which we vow Job
8. Piety is useful to all things, the reward of the good servant: no right
9. The donkey laden with relics + 109, 110, 110.5

Session 3

Job and the sin of the moral man: personal reading and **sharing: what does this open to me as perspectives for my life as a Brother? What becomes the obedience in this sense?**

Session 4

1. vow of stability and Àlvaro
2. vow of obedience and Àlvaro – vow of chastity and Àlvaro
3. + a professed Brother in temporary and the final commitment
4. vow of poverty 40, 40.1, 40.2 and Àlvaro
5. + Àlvaro : up to denying the existence of the world of the poor.
6. texte YLs and we– our specificity in the Lasallian Mission 11.
7. Educational action a theological space – the Brothers commit themselves to one another.

Session 5

1. Is it the vocation of the Institute to take care of the transmission of the charism?
2. + Amiens: impact of a Brother Director leaving the Institute.
3. Obstacles to the pastoral of our vocation as Brothers in France
4. Perhaps the vocation of the laity in the Church – Job and the sin of the moral man,
5. + various questions.

Wednesday 19 August 2015

FORMATION FOR THE ENTIRE LIFE

Brother Jesus Rubio

Session 1

FORMATION IN THE REVISED RULE

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1. Formation is lifelong

The principal shift in the way of considering formation moves from a linear view to a more holistic view, or one could say, a systemic view. Chapter 6 in the Rule of 87 had a clearly linear organization: one inspiring article about the topic and then the entire chronological journey in the life of the Brother: pastoral ministry of vocations, initial formation, continuing formation.

The current scheme starts from formation as a whole, formation that is carried out at all times and is lifelong. From this approach, the chapter talks about pastoral ministry of vocations and the initiation to the Brother's life, with the same stages than in the version of 87. Finally, the chapter finishes with the topic of "Fidelity to the Institute".

The main intention in the revision was to avoid a separation or a dichotomy between continuing formation and initial formation. We can talk about a tendency in the last years to give much importance to the initial formation and less importance to the continuing formation. In general, the revision tried to decrease the use of those two terms as two different processes.

Formation is one, and is continuing, on-going, permanent, in every moment, during the entire life, for all the spheres of life. It's evident that the time of initiation requires a particular attention, and that this initiation has the same principles of the whole formation that will continue during the entire life.

The basic message would be that formation, that is continuing, is one of the main dynamics, energies, for the renewal of the Brother and of the institute.

2. Community is the context, the subject and the agent of formation

"Each Brother is responsible for his own formation."(RR 80.2, 83) This is a basic principle for the entire formation of the Brothers.

Without neglecting this principle, the revision of the Rule wishes to highlight the fundamental role of the community in formation. Certainly, formation is a personal journey, but it is a journey shared with others.

For Lasallians, this is also a fundamental principle: we are formed IN community (context), AS a community (subject) and BY the community (agent).

We are formed in community, because we follow Jesus IN community. No one can follow Jesus alone. We follow him with others. And this following of Jesus lead us and sent us to others. This is the same experience of the Lasallian community in the origins, when the structures of the community facilitated the personal process of formation.

We are formed AS a community because the discernment, the project and the action are communal. It's the community that seeks the will of God, that commits in the project for the Kingdom, and that works in daily actions. The process itself of the Lasallian community of the origins is also a process of formation as community. They learned to discern as a community the design of salvation and their role in it as a community.

We are formed BY the community because the community is a mediation of God for the Brother. God forms us through the community. The accompaniment of the community to each Brother is what facilitates the appropriation of the common identity.

3. Formation requires personal and community accompaniment/mentoring

In the Rule of 87 the word accompaniment did not appear in the context of continuing formation.

The revised Rule expresses that formation is a journey in which we are not alone and we need to be helped, supported and challenged by specific people and by the community itself.

In the journey, the community supports us and challenges us. This is our first accompaniment. This accompaniment is also effective through very concrete inter-personal relationships. Those relationships help us to grow up and to develop the best we can.

Accompaniment helps us, on the one hand, to integrate the different elements of the

Brother's vocation: for example, our inter-personal relationships, our professional performance or our spiritual view of all that happens around us. And, on the other hand, this accompaniment helps us to mature in various areas: the affective, the intellectual, the moral and the religious.

3. Catechetical formation

One of the relevant topics during the 45th General chapter was the importance for the Brother of announcing the Gospel and the Catechesis.

The proposition 16 of the General Chapter says: "That the initial formation of Brothers in the Institute have as a priority their preparation as catechists. In addition, the continuing formation of the Brothers will have a particular emphasis concerning the Brother as catechist" (Proposition 16).

When the time for revising the Rule arrived, this proposition was a topic of common attention. There are various places in the Rule where this concern is made explicit: RR 82, 93.3 and 99.5.

4. Attention to the first years after perpetual profession.

Other new element, which is already a practice in some sectors of the Institute is the attention to the Brothers in the period immediately after the perpetual vows. There is a concern for a shared reality in many religious congregations of both men and women, and also in the priesthood: the lack of perseverance in the years that follow the definitive commitment.

There is also an expressed intention to better attend to the period immediately following perpetual profession: RR 83 and R 101.1.

5. Formation of those who will personally accompany others.

Finally, the revision of the Rule states that accompaniment is not only a task of the Director, but that it is done also by other Brothers and that it is a task that requires appropriate formation: (RR 83.4).

The notion of accompaniment shifts from a “functional” perspective to a “pastoral” perspective, where other persons beside the community director have the responsibility to accompany and need the training to do it.

Session 2

THE PASTORAL MINISTRY OF VOCATIONS IN THE REVISED RULE

Pastoral ministry of vocations is developed in the revised Rule in the articles 84, 85 and 86. The articles 85 and 86 are the same than those of the 1987 Rule. The changes are only in the articles 84, 84.1, 84.2 and 84.3. I will try to highlight here one important shift and some other new elements of nuances.

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1. Pastoral ministry in the framework of Lasallian vocations.

The main shift in the revised Rule is related with the frame where the Brother's vocation is placed. In the '87 Rule the vocation of the Brother is done in the frame of the Church in general: the Brother is a lay baptized, consecrated to God by religious vows, in an Institute approved by the Church, whose members live in community, dedicated to the catechesis; his apostolate is mainly in the school, but not exclusively". In the revised Rule the Brother's vocation is laid out in the context of the ministry lived out in communion or of association for the mission (RR 11) where there is a variety of Lasallian vocations (RR 84). The term "Lasallian vocation" is new in the Rule. The accent is placed not only on the vocational aspect but also on the charismatic aspect: the Lasallian aspect.

The Brother, therefore, witnesses the Lasallian charism where his own vocation is placed with the vocation of other persons who also shared the mission. This is the main shift.

2. A culture of vocations

In the text of the revised Rule, there are several nuances that could help us to better understand what the same Rule calls “culture of vocations”.

The culture of vocations is aimed at everyone. In the text of 87 Rule, the targets of the pastoral ministry of vocations are the young people. In the revised Rule, the targets are both young people and adults. (RR 84 and 84.2). The vocational proposal is addressed to all: to the Brothers, to those who shared the mission, and to those who are served. The Brother questions himself for the transcendental meaning of his mission, and he shared that meaning as a witnessing to the others. This is the first feature of the culture of vocations.

The culture of vocations also involves everybody. In the text of the 87 Rule, the Brothers collaborate with the Christian community in the task of awakening, discerning and accompanying vocations (R. 83). In order to do so, they invite to the most committed members of the educational community. In the revision of the Rule the Brothers' community continues to participate in this, assuming that the commitment to promote this is on the part of everyone (RR 84.1).

3. The quality of ministries and movements

From the perspective of the culture of vocations, the pastoral ministry of vocations is not a pastoral ministry more among others ministries, but the "soul" of all pastoral ministry.

That means all pastoral ministry is truthful when it is vocational.

In a negative way: a pastoral ministry that does not help to each person to question him/her self for the meaning of his life from the perspective of God who calls each one in one's own circumstances and experiences, that kind of pastoral ministry is not really pastoral ministry.

The authenticity of pastoral activity comes from its ability to raise questions about the call that God makes here and now.

The establishments and movements young people and adults belong to (RR 84.2) can only be considered a support to the pastoral ministry of vocations if they awaken, accompany and discern God's daily calls. It's in these daily calls where it's possible to recognize "the call", the personal mission that gives sense to the entire life.

4. Volunteer experiences, direct involvement and commitment to the poor

In the same line proposed by the 44th General Chapter, the pastoral ministry of vocations requires approaching the reality of the poor. Experiences of commitment to the poor, particularly volunteering and other experiences of direct involvement, are the basic educational experience for awakening, accompanying and discerning a vocation. This kind of experiences needs to be multiplied and strengthened in pastoral ministry of vocations.

"2.3.3 The Center of the Institute encourages the making of concrete proposals to children and Young people to help them to develop their sense of solidarity and find means based on their experiences which can lead them to a deepening of their vocational discernment.." (Circular 455, p. 38)

5. Continuing formation and the pastoral ministry of vocations.

A last comment regarding the organization of the topics in this chapter: the pastoral ministry of vocations comes immediately after the formation in general and the continuing formation in particular. The following is not written in the Rule, but I think it could have some sense: The best way of influencing the pastoral ministry of vocations is to work on the continuing formation of the Brothers.

The formation of the Brothers also needs to have a vocational "soul." At the end, formation is the process we live in order to better respond to the call and to the calls we receive from God. Formation also guides us toward the support that others need in order to sense and discern those calls and to be able to grow in them. That is the quality of our formation.

Session 3

INITIAL FORMATION AND FIDELITY IN THE REVISED RULE

The revised Rule focuses on the topics of initial formation and fidelity to the Institute from the article 87 until the end of the chapter. I think there are several relevant elements in this last section of chapter 6.

1. The first thing that is needed: people to accompany others and points of reference (RR 87).

The new article 87 is practically the same, with the exception of a first statement and an adding in the last one. Before referring to the importance of the initial formation, and its plans and programs, the first sentence is related to the persons. Plans are very important but it is even more important to have people with the ability to accompany others.

To accompany means to support and to challenge. To do this, time must be dedicated to get to know the person and to have some reference points that allow us to identify the appropriate challenges at the right time.

2. The point of departure is each candidate and his own circumstances (RR 88)

The new article 88 does not have a reference in the 87 Rule. It proposes the point of departure in formation: the person of each candidate in his own circumstances. Formation

discovers the person where he is. Every candidate brings the richness of his person, his story, and from there he needs to be accompanied in order to interiorize his identity as a Brother.

A person cannot be challenged without first being known and supported. The family and the social, cultural and religious context shape different individuals and each individual needs to be appreciated in his uniqueness.

Plans are important, but the life journey of persons is not always linear as are our programs. In some sectors of the Institute the need of personalize formation is more evident than in others. Anyway, the revised Rule put the bases for this kind of interpretation of formation that was no so evident in the 87 Rule. A good example of the application of this principle can be found in the second part of article 93.7. There is a program, but it's adapted to the present persons with their contribution.

3. The international nature of the Brother's vocation (RR 88.1).

The Brother lives out his vocation in an international context. (RR 88.1) Internationality was not a relevant aspect in the 87 Rule. It was more important that initial formation would be as much as possible in one's own country and in one's own culture (R 87d). Without losing the value of being part of one's own culture (cf. RR 91.1), the Institute is more aware of the positive value of being formed from an international perspective.

From this value there are three implications in formation we need to be aware:

- (1) Openness to cultures that will allow each person to appreciate his own and that of others;
- (2) Learning languages that will allow him to work in a country different from his own and to facilitate communication with the Institute overall;
- (3) The expression of the Brother's vocation in the local context and culture.

Internationality is today a real challenge for the whole Institute because it allows us to overcome our own barriers and to become little by little on what the 45th General Chapter asked us "Brothers without borders."

4. A unified formation (RR 90)

One more feature of the proposed formation is the unity. The intention is to avoid any type of division between initial and continuing formation. The revised Rule keeps using both terms, but it uses also other terms to avoid any dichotomy. The revision talks about formation in general and continuing formation, initial formation, initial stages in formation

and initiation to the Brother's life. When referring in particular to initiation into the life of the Brother (RR 90), it is said that it is a unit which avoids the risk of fragmentation between stages: postulancy, novitiate and the period of temporary vows. Formation does not come from a plan, nor a house, nor a program of studies, but it comes from the continuity of the accompaniment through all stages. This unit is also expressed as a synthesis and integration of the constitutive dimensions of the Brother: RR 87, 93.4, 99.

Finally, this unit is also manifested in the integration of the evangelical and charismatic dimensions. In the same article 90, the finality of formation is expressed in both dimensions: "to meet Christ in their life and to follow him" (evangelical dimension) and at the same time "to help candidates acquire the spirit of faith and of zeal proper to the Institute" (charismatic dimension). Also the personal vocation is expressed in the same double dimension: the growth in the faith and the progressive integration into the Institute.

5. Fidelity to the Institute

In the 87 Rule, the articles on "Separation from the Institute" (R 43 - 46) were included in the chapter on Consecration. Now these texts were moved to the chapter on the formation of the Brothers under a more positive title: Fidelity to the Institute. The separation from the Institute can be also part of the formation journey. Sometimes, the Brother with the accompaniment of those responsible decides to leave the Institute. This could be also part of his formation process and not necessarily a personal fault or a rejection of the vocation received from God. Both the inclusion of a new article (RR 103) as well as a more positive drafting of the second part of RR 104, make clear that separation from the Institute could also be part of the life journey through which God is leading each person.

When this article was read, many Capitulants remembered many of their mates who with a right intention left at some moment the Institute thinking that God asked them that. Personally, I think the vocation of each person is a mystery and we need the freedom to accompany each one in his crises without pre-fabricated answers or double intentions.

I hope God may give us the grace of the fidelity in our vocation in the Institute for the poor and for the children and the youth.

Thursday 20th August 2015

INTEGRATED SPIRITUALITY

Brother Valère Adonsou

Session 1:

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN AFRICAN CONTEXT

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I must admit that I had great difficulty in preparing this conference on Chapters one and five of our revised Rule: "THE PURPOSE AND SPIRIT OF THE INSTITUTE and SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE BROTHERS". This is due to a fundamental reason. It requires reference to the immense heritage of Lasallian writings. The presentation of these two chapters cannot be fruitfully done without including it in this precious treasure. In this set, the life of de La Salle and the content of his meditations, especially those for the Time of Retreat, are valuable resources. You can have a glimpse once that the exploration of these two chapters engages us to what follows: the Brother can live a true spiritual life in assimilating the writings of the Founder. The numbers 10 and 76 of the Revised Rule orient us in this direction:

"Convinced that the Holy Spirit revealed himself in a special way in the life, work and writings of St John Baptist de La Salle, their Father, and subsequently, in the living tradition of their Institute, the Brothers find there the principle which inspires their mission and their conduct. For this reason, they strive to deepen their knowledge of the Founder and of the history of the Institute." (No. 10)

"To St John Baptist de La Salle, they accord the honour and love due to their Founder and spiritual master. They immerse themselves in his writings and in the lessons to be drawn from his life. They seek to make him known and invite others to follow him as Patron Saint of teachers. They imitate him in his love of the Church and his dedication to mankind." (No. 76)

The analysis of these two articles reveals us fundamentally that La Salle is our "spiritual master". He is not a master in the sense of our ultimate reference, but as one who shows us Christ as the precursor John the Baptist, *"Behold the lamb of God"*²¹. He is giver of spiritual life. His experience in the following of Christ is an example for us to find our own path as disciples of Jesus Christ. Experience which figures in his life, his work and his

²¹ Jn 1: 29

writings. The articles show how to benefit from it. It speaks of "infiltration", of "deepening", of "imitation" and "the principle of inspiration." In all of these terms, we must pay particular attention to the term "knowledge." Knowledge which is not only intellectual. In its biblical sense it refers more deeply to our intimacy with him. The purpose of these arrangements is to have an impact on building our identity of "ambassadors", "ministers" of Jesus Christ. An identity whose modes of revelation are in our love of the Church, our ministerial action and our way of life.

I am not a specialist in Lasallian writings. However, I relied on my little experience of their attendance to find a reading grid and tracks of appropriation of these two chapters. Certain points of the ten expectations that led to the revision of the Rule also used it as a reference. Remember these expectations:

- 1. A clear text, direct and inspiring which exposes the identity of the Brother*
- 2. That the text of the Rule of 1987 remains the basic text for any revision*
- 3. A revised text should be based on the Gospel, St. La Salle and the first Brothers, as well as the lived tradition of the Institute.*
- 4. A text which clearly establishes the vow of association for the educational service of the poor as central to the understanding of our other vows in light of recent Church documents and Institute*
- 5. The shared mission linked with our common baptismal vocation, the Lasallian charism as a gift to the whole Church*
- 6. The need to educate today's world in all its diversity*
- 7. A review that takes into account the demography of the Institute and in particular the impact of the aging Brothers in some sectors*
- 8. A text that addresses the theology of the Trinity and that of Reconciliation in the context of a world that is secular and / or multi-religious*
- 9. The considerable diversity in both age and social level of the "public" to whom we are sent to*
- 10. An appeal to both Brothers' communities and our partners to live "communion"*

Reading our 2015's Rule we may generally note in the background these points.

The different axes that I would like to explore include the following:

- Make some general considerations on the problems of the spiritual life in general and the reality of the religious world of Africa in particular;

- Identify changes in the structures and vocabulary of the revised Rule compared to that of 1987;
- Bring out the important elements of our spirituality that underlie this vocabulary;
- Open few windows that can nourish our spiritual life from Christian anthropology which is the heart of these two chapters.

Throughout the development, I will refer to as necessary articles of the Rule. Furthermore, one aspect addressed in one of the axes will be taken from a different perspective to another. My approach will not be linear. Whenever possible, I create space for interactivity and leave a little time at the end of each presentation for an exchange between us.

Brothers Pierre and Romain have painted a picture on the changes in the world and in the Church. The text of the Rule referred to it to allow the Brothers to live fully and authentically their consecration, community life and mission. We need to have the themes they have developed as a backdrop in the approach of our spiritual life.

Our societies have undergone profound changes and our contemporaries are faced with many realities that painfully affect their lives. They know poverty and hard unemployment situations. They endure the domination and abuse of power. They are victims of social inequality, the multifaceted exploitation and corruption.

Facing the misfortunes overwhelming them, they seek consolation in various kinds of spiritual power, schools of thought and worldview²². They are looking for markers that could give them inner peace, strength in the "terrible day" confidence and authenticity in their relations with others. In this new landscape with its challenges which are social, anthropological, psychological, educational and religious, to think and live our spirituality as integrated, is a grace for us. I am personally amazed and grateful to be a beneficiary of such spirituality.

I- THE TRUE MEANING OF SPIRITUALITY

It seemed useful to recall the concept of spirituality for us to understand the value and distinctiveness of our own. Spirituality is a fundamental characteristic of the human being from the moment he began to search for the meaning of his life. Spirituality should not be reduced to religion. One can have **spirituality without religion**, that is, a spirituality that

²² Il suffit de relever le nombre impressionnant de nouveaux mouvements religieux en Afrique pour s'en rendre compte.

does not appeal to beliefs, to a religious faith. Here is described "secular" spiritual development or profane one which is synonym of self-realization.²³ The goal is to meet the needs other than material ones of a person. In this case, the person intends to express its full potential to the maximum. Spirituality therefore is to live his human condition beyond the banality of human existence, giving ultimate meaning to its activities. This non-religious spirituality has limitations in terms of the big questions of existence. It gives no alternative to all the fundamental problems assumed by religion. These problems are part of the limitations of human life: limitation of the duration of life, reason, justice and sense of limitation. The psychologist Jung in the meetings with his patients observed that the religious dimension cannot be excluded of the human psyche. It takes no position on the existence of a transcendent reality beyond the images and religious systems. However, he noted that they contribute to the health of the mind. The human psyche seeks through religious data to give an answer to the question of meaning²⁴. *"Man can deploy himself after having experienced the divine in him. The idea of God-with-us, the word of Saint Paul: "it is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me," expresses to Jung is the experience of a man who has found the way to himself."*²⁵

In the Christian tradition, the spiritual life is nothing else than self-fulfillment. It is understood in the sense of the spirit that presides and drives our actions because we believe this is the way that allows us to mostly meet God. The Christian finds self-fulfillment by abiding in the hands of God. For him, spirituality is primarily a self-emptying, loss of one's bearings. He forgets what he learned to learn and receive from God. He surrenders to God the Father and gives up its self-realization in prayer following the example of Jesus who said: not his will, but the will of God is fulfilled in his life.²⁶

A strong emphasis is placed today on the need for spirituality in the Christian life. Karl Rahner expressed it vividly: *"The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he or she will not exist at all."*²⁷ So are the thoughts of many theologians of the post-conciliar period: only a theology rooted in the spiritual commitment of the theologian and practice-oriented may be significant for the Church in future. The mystic term may seem, at first glance,

²³ Abraham. H. Maslow, A Theory of Human Motivation in *Psychological Review*, 50, 1943, pp. 370-396, consulté 31.07. 2015 in <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>.

²⁴ Cf. Anselm GRÜN, *La crise du milieu de la vie. Une approche spirituelle*, Médiaspaul, Paris, 1998, p. 47.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 73.

²⁶ Mt 26, 42 ; Jn 4, 34 ; 5, 30.

²⁷ Cité par Sandra Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy", *Theological studies* n° 50, 1989, p. 677

only reserved for people who make exceptional spiritual experiences. To understand it i.e. to live as a mystic is within reach of every Christian. Lasallian spirituality offers us the means to engage oneself in this direction. The mystic is the believer who has personal experience of the sacredness of life, that is to say, the one who discovered the glowing and divine background that resides in the heart of every person and thing. This experience leads also to the transformation of the person.

Beside spirituality without religion there is also the practice of a religion without spirituality. Here, religious practices have no grip on the concrete life; the values conveyed by religion are not embodied by a style of life, by social commitments. True spirituality integrates all dimensions of life, the totality of existence.

It is characterized by two dimensions: its form and its content. The form refers to the modalities or mediations that make a genuine encounter with God in Christ (Meditation, different forms of prayer, community life, ministry ...). The content refers especially to the message of the Gospel just as the Holy Spirit allows us to interpret it. It is the source of the values that shape the existence of discernment criteria and choices. Spirituality allows us to judge the wholeness of reality and our own values and desires with the eyes of Jesus Christ.

In the Lasallian context, the life of La Salle helps us to understand spirituality as a dynamic integration of three elements: his convictions, commitments that flow from there and religious practices that punctuate his life. The Rule expresses vividly the encompassing character of Lasallian spirituality. It allows the Brother to unify his life (R 63). A life that is not fragmented into compartments as the Founder recommends us: "Do not make a difference between what concerns your own state and the matter of your salvation and of your perfection. Make sure you will do the best of your salvation and you will gain such perfection only by fulfilling many duties of your state. "

The Founder wants us to enter into a spirituality that saves us from a pathology which the human being today can suffer from. This is the scattered man, the man whose "life is shattered." The lexical field of this disease is extensive: *fragmentation, opposition, chunking, separation, division, multiplicity* ... However, integrated Lasallian spirituality means the harmony of the Brother's life in a spirit of faith. It reflects the idea of *gathering, cohesion, association, communion and closeness*. Given these different meanings, it is necessary to speak of Lasallian spirituality as a "systemic" approach to existence. Human

relationships, community life, ministry, the way of being with the world and in the world, the relationship to God are to be lived in a unified manner. The fundamental characteristic of these different domains of the Brother's life is their reciprocal link in a spirit of faith. Pope Francis draws our attention on the need to integrate all the components of our consecrated identity.

"Today one can find many pastoral workers, including consecrated people an exaggerated concern for the personal spaces of autonomy and relaxation, which leads them to carry out their tasks as a mere appendix of life, as if these tasks were not part of their identity. "

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We can also note the profound proximity of the holistic nature of our spirituality with the Encyclical "May you be praised Lord" by Pope Francis. A recurring phrase runs through his text: *"Everything is connected."* *"The belief that everything is connected in the world";* *"Human existence is based on three fundamental and intertwined relationships: the relationship with God, with the neighbor and with the earth."*

The highly diverse elements of the form of our spirituality give evidence that the Brother must meet God in all aspects of his life. This means the challenges he faces in his ministry, his personal life (R 63), the encounter with God in the work, *worries, joys (R 6), understanding of people, events and the world (R 64); "the calls of the ministry, of the Church and of the world" (R 66)*. Some expressions of the Rule summarize on a two-level this complete character of our spirituality:

- The level of everyday life: *"Everything that fills their day."*(R 67);
- the level of diversity of the components of existence: *"Everything that makes their lives"* (R 64), *"all earthly realities" (R.6); "Every event, every person" (R 6)*.

The idea of totality has its roots in the writings of Saint John-Baptist de La Salle. In the Compendium, for example, he speaks of the recognition of orders and the will of God in every action and in *"all the events of this life."*

The form of spirituality also turns into into the "attention to the presence of God" (RR 8; RR 64.1; 69), meditation, personal and community prayer, the Liturgy, the Eucharist (RR 8; 65.1 ; 67; 69; 73; 73.2; 74); adoration (R73.3); the daily examination (RR 70); religious studies and spiritual reading (RR 72.4), the poor (RR 64), the devotions of the Institute (RR 75).

The harmonious relationship of form and content offers us the guarantee to live an authentic Lasallian spirituality. Harmony referred to does not end only with happy moments or "normal" of life. It should also be carried out throughout the existence and during periods of crisis or suffering: individual crisis (professional, existential, vocational, of middle life / middle life crisis) and collective (institutional, congregational, community).

II- OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH AND OF AFRICA

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I suggest here to situate again our spiritual life in the context of the life of faith of the African person and according to some texts of the Magister.

An African religious context that challenges our faith

Our life as a Brother is part of a world we share with our African brothers and sisters. We share their "joys and hopes, sorrows and anguish". Because of our radical option of God, they set their gaze on us, on how we live the common human condition. They expect to find signs, lights that illuminate their own existence. Therefore, without being heroes, our own existence in faith must be comprehensible, meaningful. This requires of us a critical distance not to be consumer of the prevailing worldly spirit. The vigilance attitude that the Founder recommends us as a condition of the authenticity of our state and its preservation:

"If you want to preserve yourself and to die in your state, never trade with the people of the world; because gradually you will get the taste of their ways of acting, and you will enter if before in their conversations you cannot defend yourself through means of politics than to applaud their speeches though they may be very pernicious; which will cause you to fall into unfaithfulness, and by not being faithful to observe your rules, you will lose the taste of your state and you finally give it up. "

We understand the world as all that is the contrary of the Christian faith; everything that opposes the Gospel demands. The Brother is called to live his faith as a translation of Christian values in action. He will thus show that he made the radical choice of God, in a constant attitude of battle as says La Salle:

"If you are truly in God, you are the enemy of the world and yours as well, because it is the enemy of God. Treat it as such, have the horror to converse with it, and do not suffer that it

gets access to you, for fear that, by communicating with it, you will participate in its spirit."

Two paintings in Africa currently show, I think, the absence of the spirit of faith: the violence of terrorism in some parts of the continent and the division between the Christian message and the actual life of Christians African.

For the first painting, I understand the murderous violence of groups like AQIM, MUJAO, ANSAR DINE in Mali, Al - Shababs in Somali and BOKO HARAM in Nigeria. Their members claim to be followers of the God of Islam. Such a God can only be "perverse". Our life as Brothers takes place in this context of the mutilation of the true face of God, as revealed in the Gospels. The way these groups work, their vision of life and their social organization are surely strange to our conception of being in the world of the human. However, their obscurantism sends us back to a requirement: to constantly question the content of our own faith and its incarnation in real life. Because our ways of living the constitutive dimensions of our vocation might also draw the features of a perverse Christian God.

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The starting point of the second painting is the sense of transcendence which is a specificity of Africans. The African views a unifying world in which all beings are connected. They are in a hierarchical relationship but it is the same force that flows between them in varying degrees of intensity. At the top of the ladder is God who is the source of everything. Therefore, the relationship that the African man is called to have with all beings, animate or inanimate, living or dead, is a modality of the relationship with God himself. His participation in the life of God passes through his relationship with the visible and the invisible world. Thus, the absolute respect of the invisible world and the continuing openness to transcendence is considered as a fundamental option of the African:

It is an option of thinking, being and living daily the human life as openness to the transcendent world that gives him its meaning and ensures his strength through the profound values that it plants in the society . This confidence in the transcendent world is structured in ritual systems, liturgies or social obligations that mediate the invisible world in the relationship between man and reality, between man and man, between man and the absolute. "

Pope John Paul II propounds in the same direction when he said that *"Africans have a profound religious sense, the sense of the sacred, and the sense of the existence of God the*

Creator and of a spiritual world". In line with this religious view, the world of the African is not reduced to its material dimension. It is place of spiritual experience. God's world, spirits - good or evil - and ancestors with whom they are in communion. The function of the spiritual world is to regulate their lives in the visible world. Therefore, believing in God gives Africans to have directions, resources to do what is good and to renounce any act that is contrary to his decrees.

Benedict XVI builds on this sense of transcendence of the African to suggest it as a reference to humanity. Africa is "*an immense spiritual lung for a humanity that is in crisis of faith and hope.*"

The reality is that unfortunately this confidence to the transcendent world does not always come before the choices of existence. It does not drench the acts of social and political life of Christians. What dominates, on the contrary, is religion understood as liturgical celebrations, devotions etc. The true spiritual life that this belief should inspire and nurture is less effective.

The fact is that unfortunately this confidence to the transcendent world does not always lead to the choices of existence. It does not permeate the acts of social life and Christian policy. What dominates on the contrary, is religion, understood as liturgical celebrations, devotions etc. The true spiritual life that this belief should inspire and nurture is unlikely effective. "Consumption" of religious rites obscures the central issue of being a Christian: faith as a matrix of global existence. Faith in the concrete life of Africans is problematic, as noted by Brother Pierre Ouattara:

«They remains undecided in the practice of their faith. In their actions and behavior in everyday life, they do not obey God in reality their official creed, that of their religious affiliation. When acting, we do not know too to which God do they obey and trust. If in the most common discourse and through the multiplicity of different religions, God does not seem alien to them, but see their actions, it is likely that they would not know him.²⁸»

African Christians can appropriate the words of the psalmist: "*The heavens are the house of the Lord, but the earth he has given to men*" (Ps 115: 16). These words reflect the

²⁸ OUATTARA, S. Pierre. *La culture de l'amabilité. Comment penser autrement l'éducation en Afrique ?* Paris, L'Harmattan, 2010, pp. 26-27

separation between the divine world and the human world. This separation suggests a form of secularization among African Christians. Secularization refers to the worldly life, the profane. It is *"the process whereby whole sectors of society and culture are exempt from the authority of institutions and religious symbols."*²⁹ Religion certainly exists in the individual and collective consciences but does not encompass social representations. It does not influence the socio-political functioning. It does not play its social role as a normative framework. In this sense, Africans do not need God in their everyday lives. Their life is divided between two radically separate poles: on one side the worship under the **sacred** and on the other the spheres of activity corresponding to the profane.

When the Rule in Article 64 speaks of secularization, we may be inclined to only think about the Western world. As African Brothers, we must also be questioned in this regard. The same division between faith and concrete life can be present in our own lives. An existence that is not actually nourished by the Word of God as we the Rule requires us.

« In this pluralistic world in many places, secularised, the Brothers need to be in contact everyday with the word of God. It is what nourishes their entire life and help them to understand others, events and the world, in relation to God's plan. The Spirit of faith teaches them to learn to answer God's invitation to love and to serve Him in the others and in all that makes their life. »

Another problem is the thirst for power:

The thirst for power

The thirst for power can manifest in many ways. It is the **desire** to look for the first post of responsibility. In the name of the principle of subsidiarity not understood and desoriented, the areas of responsibility are considered as private property. The thirst for power also manifests itself through this permanent attitude to dominate others. It is also the search for possible means to give oneself a certain power, a force to utilize, against others. For this second form of power, I would like to talk about the problem of **syncretism and occultism**.

This phenomenon was discussed during the synods of The Church in Africa, because it influences negatively the relation among the clergy and religious communities. Even if "Ecclesia in Africa" does not make use of the term occultism and witchcraft, the theme

²⁹ BERGER, Peter. *La religion dans la conscience moderne*, Paris, Centurion, 1971, p. 174

was debated and finally integrated, in a way that is not adapted, to the African traditional religions. « *As with regard to the African traditional religion, sincere and prudent dialogue could, firstly preserve negative influences that affect the way of life of many catholics.* »³⁰

At the second synod, which was honored by the post-synod "*Africae Munus*" (*The commitment of Africa*) of Pope Benedict XVI, the insistence on the issue was very strong. This time, the term "witchcraft" is clearly mentioned, even though the article 93 was not up to the expectations.

*"Witchcraft, which is based on the traditional religions, is currently experiencing a certain revival. Old fears are re-surfacing and creating para- lyzing bonds of subjection. Anxiety over health, well-being, children, the climate, and protection from evil spirits at times lead people to have re- course to practices of traditional African religions that are incompatible with Christian teaching. The problem of "dual affiliation" – to Christianity and to the traditional African religions – remains a challenge. Through profound catechesis and in- culturation, the Church in Africa needs to help people to discover the fullness of Gospel values. It is important to determine the profound meaning of these practices of witchcraft by identifying the many theological, social and pastoral implications of this scourge."*³¹ ».

It is evident for us that the question of double belonging is incompatible with the Lasallian spirituality. The Brother, nourished by the spiritual journey of La Salle, knows that in all things, the search for God is a primarily. La Salle by living among the poor show us God's journey/path itself: A Fragile God whose power is a power to love. A God who does not the human and does not renounce to all

. La Salle en s'incarnant parmi les pauvres nous montre le chemin de Dieu lui-même : Un Dieu fragile dont la toute-puissance est sa puissance d'aimer. Un Dieu qui n'écrase pas l'humain et qui renonce à toute forme de maîtrise et de pouvoir.

A spirituality that preserve the « culture of anti-Brother »³²

The Rule invites the Brothers to "discern in anyone ... a sign and a call of the Spirit" (R 6). This article takes us into a spirituality which "*man is the sacrament of God for man.*" Anyone, of any kind, mediates the encounter with God Brother. There is therefore room for discrimination, exclusion in relationships. The title of Brother we bear finds in this

³⁰ Jean Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n° 67

³¹ Benoît XVI, Exhortation apostolique « *Africae Munus* », n° 93

³² ELA, Jean-Marc. *Ma foi d'Africain*, Paris, Karthala, 1985, p. 29

spirituality its justification and fertility. A fraternity, which in African context, must be beyond ethnicity. The reality of ethnic hatred was already discussed at the synod on Africa concluded by Ecclesia in Africa: *"Tribal oppositions at times endanger if not peace, at least the pursuit of the common good of the whole society and also create difficulties for the lives of churches and the acceptance of pastors from other ethnic groups."* Christ by his incarnation is linked to every human being, especially the most vulnerable.

Spirituality in the school of Jesus

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In total, the Lasallian spirituality leads us to the school of Jesus just like Saint John Baptiste de la Salle did. One of the constant attitudes of Jesus in the Gospel is to revelation of the spiritual sense of all realities and situations. He never reduces the elements of the creation, the facts of life, the encounter and human experiences to their horizontal dimension, profane.

The contemplation of birds in the sky and the flowers in the gardens allows him to recognize God's providence which has to appeal for trust and abandonment³³. The constitutive elements of agricultural production, the work of bread factory...are for him references in the identification of the characteristics of the Kingdom.³⁴

The offering of the poor widow to the treasure of the temple is for him the expression of a person who has radically chosen God. Many other examples are still confirming the spiritual experience of Jesus through ordinary things, simples, everyday life.

³³ cf. Lc 12, 24-31

³⁴ Mt 13, 3-8 ; Lc 13, 18-21

Session 2

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE, A SPIRITUAL MASTER

It seems to me instructive to revisit the expression of the love for John-Baptist de La Salle as "spiritual master" in the article 76. It is new. The 1987 Rule speaks only of the tribute to be paid to La Salle as founder. The Rule wants us to deepen what John-Baptist de La Salle represents for us. He is more than a Founder for us. He is a person to love. A love that consists of letting his life nourish and enrich ours. A relationship with him like the example Christ asks of his disciples. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." In this light, we are invited to draw in his life and his writings the elements which enabled him to configure to Christ and to surrender to God's will.

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These elements are not assembled in a systematic Treaty of spirituality. His spiritual thought is scattered in various and different writings. They are the fruit of his relationship with God. It accounts in a way for the way he lived this relationship in his actions and in the heart of events. Among these writings, The Meditations for the Time of Retreat are to be understood as a reference text. It is a fundamental text where his spiritual experience is revealed. He capitalizes the different areas of his relationship with God during hard times. It is this God that he met by binding his life to that of the teachers in his commitment to the foundation of the Christian Schools in the trials and struggles. Moreover, to help the Brothers to be spiritual men, he enriches the range of ways through the Explanation of the Method of Meditation. It is a tool he offers them to find their way in their heart to heart with God, recognizing his works and his pedagogy. It is a means to support their educational ministry and the deepening of their vocation.

Fairly significant aspects of the spiritual experience of La Salle have enriched the Rule of 2015. We can note, among other things, the deeper meaning of what represents for him "God's work" (RR 63; R 68) be "prayerful men" (RR 65.1) "led by the Holy Spirit" (RR 63), the place of the Word of God in Life (RR 8; 64; 67; 73.1), the presence of God (RR 8; 63; 64.1), the recognition and the adoration of Jesus Christ in the poor (RR 64), the configuration to Christ (RR 65). Perspectives are thus open to us so that from the Rule, a Lasallian sap may flow into our spiritual life. I might summarize these various elements of

our spiritual universe. The Brother who internalizes the fact that the work he realizes is that of God, seek to discover his will. This quest will lead him to be attentive to God's call (**interiority**), to discern his life and his mission in the light of his **Word**. Christ will be his reference, his model in this journey (**Configuration**). All these facts of the spirituality as La Salle develops them in his writings have one goal: to lead the Brothers to lead an evangelical life in all areas of their existence. In this range, I keep in mind two perspectives: to realise the work of God and to be capable of interiority.

1. "Dominus, opus tuum" (Hab 3: 2)

"This is your work Lord." In the Rules that I imposed on myself, on the eighth point, La Salle learned these words of the prophet Habakkuk as the basis of the direction of his life and of his commitment to the establishment of the Christian Schools.

"I will always look upon the work of my salvation and the establishment and conduct of our community as the work of God: that is why I will entrust into his care, to do all that will concern me there only by taking his orders; and I will consult a lot about all I have to do, either for one or the other; and I will often tell him these words of the prophet Habakkuk: 'Domine, opus tuum'".

La Salle gives great importance to this expression. He uses it from the beginning of the Meditations for the time of retreat. "It is you that he chose to help him in this work". In the meditation for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, he says that one becomes a thief when he attributes to himself the preservation of the innocence in the souls and the conversion which can only be a work of God; he invites the Brothers not to be "persons unworthy of a job that is his own work." This is a biblical Expression La Salle made his own and this nurtured his spiritual experience. It's his own and deep conviction that he shared with the Brothers as he expresses in his Memory:

"God who conducts all things with wisdom and gentleness, and who has no habit of forcing the inclination of men, wanting to commit me to fully take care of schools, did so in a very imperceptible way and in many times; so that one commitment led me to another, without having foreseen it in the beginning. "

The founder has been engaged in an experience he had not foreseen. *"De la Salle is first in charge of a work from the outside; gradually, he assumes it from within, it becomes his*

work. But this whole process is controlled by the attraction of God's work that he gradually recognized in the schools. "

Abandoning himself to God and responding to his successive calls, he discovered a particular reality. He sees himself in his itinerary as an actor in a plan, a larger project *"prior to his or prior to anything he could have imagined: God wants him to fully take care of the schools. And related to this conviction is the certitude that God leads all things, he "educates" him imperceptibly, without realizing it, without forcing him, with wisdom and gentleness. "*

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The Brothers also must be convinced that their commitment is part of a fundamental matrix: the universal plan of salvation of men. A short vision of their commitment could impoverish not only their way of life but also the means and the content of their action.

The Rule uses the same term, God's work or God's plan to strengthen in us the same conviction: the Word of God that helps us to live the whole of reality *"in relation to God's plan"* (RR 64); *"For John-Baptist de La Salle, the Christian education of the poor is God's work"* (RR 63); *"The Work of the Institute is God's Work "* (RR 68). The inclusion of this expression is an invitation to allow ourselves to be instructed by the spirituality of La Salle. The eighth rule he imposed on himself synthesizes several elements of that spirituality. We can see the attitude he adopts vis-a-vis God. La Salle is completely off the centre. For him, everything belongs to God. He makes no claim of what is not his.

"Whom should we be attached to if not the one from whom we have received everything and who alone is our Lord and Father."

We can say that he represents the human being as vessel; a creature configured as a radical emptiness. In this sense, man receives everything from God. His biological needs, affection and recognition of others up to the desire of the Absolute are a gift of God.

The experience of La Salle tells us that this radical emptiness can be experienced on two very distinct forms: lived as "greediness", it becomes introversion; lived as an offering attitude, it becomes openness and true communion. Wanting to monopolise or the "instinct of ownership" breaks fellowship with God and thus with others. The "instinct of ownership" was precisely the error of the origins: wanting to be gods at all costs or without God (Genesis 3). We were created "in the image and likeness of God." According to the Church Fathers, driven by the instinct of appropriation, we lost the likeness (Gen 1:26), but not the image (icon), which is the trademark or the divine seed present in every human

being. The task of every human being is to restore the likeness of God: to move from the instinct of ownership to attitude of gift.

A first implication of this attitude of the Founder's decentralism is to put the issues of his own salvation in the hands of God. He does not choose for that a total passivity by only relying on the exclusive effect of the grace of God. It erects, on the contrary, his own contribution to this salvation on the initiative and the action of God. In this, La Salle radically distinguishes himself from Jansenism that prevailed in his time. In fact, according to the Jansenism, man, because of his sinful nature is powerless to do good. Jesus Christ gives an inner grace to the small number of his predestined to eternal life. This grace allows them to practice the divine laws. Therefore, those who are deprived of them cannot be saved despite all their good intentions, their works and the strength of their investment. To save or to condemn man comes from his absolute freedom. The life and writings of La Salle teach us enough about the distance he has taken vis-à-vis this theological teaching. La Salle, unlike Jansenists, defends somehow "God's rights" by linking it to human freedom. These two constituent poles of the issue of human salvation are interrelated. The salvation is realized in a dialogue between God and man. A dialogue established through a double movement: from God to man who offers salvation by pure love and grace and man to God who gives an answer to that love. It is given in the faith enlightened by reason and in total availability.

A second implication of the position of La Salle vis-à-vis God is the entrustment of the foundation of the Christian Schools into his hands, "I will give him up the care to do all that will concern me only through his orders." Articles 63, 64 and 68 are precisely an echo to God as essential protagonist in this project. This first place given to God is still very clearly expressed in the *Memory of beginnings*. John-Baptist de La Salle presents the conditions of his discernment in the foundation of schools.

"My God, I do not know whether to found or not to found. It is not up to me to establish communities, nor how they must be established. It is up to you to know it and to make it known in the manner that is pleasing to you. I dare not found because I do not know your will. I therefore will contribute nothing to found our houses. If you found them, they will be founded. If you do not found them, they will remain without foundation. I beseech you to let me know your holy will. "

While fundamentally recognizing the primary responsibility to God in the work, he expresses at the same time his availability wholeheartedly to collaborate. He is in a receptive attitude in line with the decision and the work of implementation modalities that God will inspire him. It is only the will of God that will determine and implement his cooperation. Brother Miguel Campos says about it that:

"The process of recognition of his academic vocation is not that of a passive consciousness that is carried away by the influences of others. This is not that of an exalted religious who is move by his own ideal views or those of others. But it seems to us at the same time as man is utterly to God and utterly to men, available and attentive to answer here and now inasmuch as God requires him. "

La Salle is neither an exalted person nor a humiliated person. The exalted person finds his justification in himself. He tries to live an absolute autonomy. The humiliated is the one who is unable to carry on with his life. He lives in a register of heteronomy, that is to say, all the laws of his action come to him from outside without any input from him. Unlike these two extreme poles of the relationship of man with God, La Salle reveals himself and recognizes himself as a "person called". He is in the attitude of the respondent in the example of Abraham and Christ. The experience of La Salle reminds us of a fundamental reality of Christian identity. To come to his authentic humanity, the human being must recognize that he is preceded by a word and which founds him. He therefore receives his identity as a gift. That's what expresses and can be surprising for us the Hebrew expression of the call addressed by God to Abraham: "Go for yourself, go to yourself (Lékleka)" (Gn 12,1) .The meaning of this call is far from the idea of destiny often put forward in the interpretation of events in Africa.

But what exactly is the work of God to which the Founder is call to participate?

In La Salle's thinking, God's work is the plan wanted by God and in which the Christian education of poor and abandoned youth fits. This is the universal project of God shown by various biblical images in the Meditations: *"God's plan"*; *"The field he cultivates "*; *"The edifice he builds"*; *"His vineyard"*. This plan, according to La Salle, has a source and a foundation: divine goodness. "God is so good that having created men, " he wants them all to come to the knowledge of the truth ". It is this goodness that presided over the implementation of this plan of salvation through the mediation of his Son.

"God so loved the souls he created that, seeing them engaged in sin and unable to get rid of it themselves, the zeal and affection he had for their salvation engaged him to send his own Son to withdraw them from this annoying condition."

La Salle contemplates this plan of salvation of God and took the work of the Christian Schools as one of its embodiments. The Brother is called to link his vocation and commitment to the education ministry in this great vision of human salvation willed by God. It is God himself who chose the Brothers to send them to his vineyard and to collaborate with him in his project of universal salvation. An election on which La Salle talks about several times in his Meditations, *"He who brought you in your job"; or you were "called to this holy ministry" It is you he has chosen to help in this work. "*

*"You must not doubt that it is a great gift of God than the grace that he gives you to educate children, to proclaim the Gospel to them and to raise them in the spirit of religion; but by calling you to this holy ministry, God demands that you do it with a burning zeal for their salvation, because it is **God's work**, and that " he curses the one who does **his work** with negligence ' . "*

To know God's work, besides the human mediations, La Salle often prayed. He thus gives to grasp a fundamental dimension of all spirituality: the encounter, the conjunction of an external fact with an inner reality. For La Salle, it is the meeting with concrete people, events he had read in the faith. The Brother must integrate this alliance between the divine world and the human world and the realities. The Rule goes in the same direction: *"The work of the Institute is the work of God, prayer and apostolate are inseparable"* (R 68). This bond is the secret of the fruitfulness of the ministry of the Brother, *"The success of their work is in the hands of God."* He reminds him that he is not the "owner" of the work he performs. God established him in a mediation role and thus supports the difficulties they may encounter in doing it. Prayer gives him the means and the strength to achieve his mission with confidence and serenity. That is why he must love him and grant him *"the first and main place"* in his daily exercises (RR 69). In prayer, the Brother commits himself to a two-sided spirituality: a spirituality which starts from above, from the contemplation of divine realities and which seeks to live in his ministry and his own conduct. There is also a spirituality which starts from below, the rereading of the exercise of his ministry, personal and common human experience in order to look for traces, the signs of the Holy Spirit. Meditation 198 illustrates well this double-inseparable-movement. It talks about the ladder seen by Jacob in a dream and through which *"angels*

ascended to God to let him know the needs of those he had entrusted into their care, and to receive his orders concerning them, and they descended to teach those they lead what the will of God is with regard to what concerns their salvation. "

La Salle finds justification, necessity and purpose of prayer, *"You must do the same thing with regard to the children entrusted to your care; it is your duty to go up to God every day by prayer to learn from him all that you must teach them, and then you descend to them, accommodating yourself to their level so as to investigate what God has communicated to you for them."*

This link between prayer and educative action reveals at the same time that the purpose of the Institute, the religious life and apostolic ministry are not in opposition in the spirit of La Salle. The Brother consecrates himself to God for the mission and not primarily for the purpose of personal sanctification. This cannot be the primary motivation. It will be done consistently by articulating the option for God and the apostolic commitment. *"The writings of the Founder aim only at supporting, nurturing and guiding this vital link ... It is impossible to get in touch with the Lord, without the concern of his kingdom reappearing at the same time; it is impossible to engage oneself in apostolic tasks without the mind and the heart not returning to God."*

2. The Brothers, "interior men"

The theme of interiority is dear to John-Baptist de La Salle. He talks about it in his writings by drawing the Brothers' attention on everything that can promote it or not. Also, it associates it with the exteriority, that is to say, everything that concerns our relationship to the material and human world. The *Explanation of the method of prayer* and his *Letters*, for example, illustrate well enough the importance he has for the inner life. To Brother Robert who had a lot of dryness and distractions in his prayer, he shows him the source: *"You are too much outside and you talk too much"*; and to another, he tells him that his lack of application to prayer is the effect of his inner disturbance. In general, La Salle speaks about the excess of externality, curiosity, dissipation and of the world spirit. He offers ways to become interior, to restore one's interior, *"to commit oneself to the interior"* to live a form of novitiate, interior and exterior meditation, the attention to the presence of God or the application of God's thought, spiritual reading and prayer. When we analyse the writings of the Founder we can note that to be an interior human being does not mean to

reject the world. The challenge is how to live this openness. It is the modality by which it is done that will allow the brother to have an experience of God.

The realities of the world can be seen in two ways: either as **idol**, or as an **icon**. Both looks are representations of transcendence, two different ways of making the invisible visible. To see reality as an idol, it is to confuse it with purposive transcendence. This look encloses the invisible in the object. The object seen as idol seeks to fill the void of the invisible and eliminates the lack. The icon looks like a painting. It evokes and creates something. It does not aim at the resemblance with the invisible but it rather aims at linking it through the look. The iconic painting is the lack, it refers to emptiness. It represents an absence, a void whose content is to be sought elsewhere. The iconic look reminds us of the faith that illuminates all the realities of existence that La Salle exposes in his writings and one of them is the Compendium.

"The purpose of God in your exercises is what most will help ensure that you do well. God does not only ask for the outer part of our actions, he wants them to be done with internal dispositions ... I beg you, be very prudent to respect and to comply in all to the will of God and especially in not only external but internal submission. "

In other words, the Brother cannot carry out his actions from purely human motives. They must take their source from the views of God. What would God, who revealed himself in his Son, do if he had to act in my place in any circumstance?

Article 65.1 of the Revised Rule, by incorporating the specific terms "to be interior men" and "dispersion" open up a huge opportunity of immersion in a truly Lasallian spiritual life. The means advocated by La Salle for the necessary experience of interiority are found there: silence, personal prayer and mental prayer.

"Attentive to the call of the Founder who invites them to be interior men, the Brothers have a responsibility to live a deep spiritual life, paying special attention to their personal prayer and to finding opportunities for silence. They try to avoid anything that leads to superficiality and dissipation, in particular by a responsible use of communication technology."

In light of this article, the interior can be understood in two ways. First, as the ability to connect with the inner world of the person himself: the ability to observe inner movements, to hear the words and internal noise, to discern the feelings and judgments and to correctly identify one's desires and opportunities etc... But, on the other hand, interiority understood as the ability to relate with the outside world from the inside of oneself, not just from the

superficial layers of the person; we must include here the ability to pick up signs and to interpret gestures. This is ultimately to find God in all things. This should be the profile of the one who wants to be available to the experience of God. God is not on the surface of reality or events. He is not the first to make himself to be seen. Thus, the dispersion, agitation, speed or the banality that may be present in the rhythm of our lives, our ways of looking or interacting do not help us to meet him. In this regard, the reference to the use of communication technologies deserves our special attention. ICTs have created a new anthropological reality. This reality is based on three concepts.

- Ubiquity: the desire to be "here and elsewhere".
- Immediacy: never to wait, immediately being in contact with one's interlocutors. This is the time "crushed".
- Permanence: not to be separated from loved ones. Compulsive use of mobile reflects the emotional quest for permanent relationship.

These concepts reflect the sprain that is made to the reality principle. Reality teaches us that life is made of separation time, waiting and meeting. In a permanent communication, there is no more territory, meeting space and breathing time. There is no meeting which allows one to experience the true otherness. This is an experience in which the presence of the speaker allows learning opportunities: the body language with what it implies as management of intimacy; control of speech and its contents in the presence of the other.

Moreover, ICTs with the people locked in the immediacy of the universe live what psychologists call the CWRE: Cost 0; Waiting / 0; Reflection 0; Effort 0. Interiority as a means for human and spiritual growth is thus repudiated. CWRE becomes DECAY, interiority is equal to 0. The identity of individuals becomes uncertain or affected. They are unable to find breathing time and a relationship of self to self. It is a meeting with his internal universe to look himself from the "outside", to reread his experience, to readjust, and especially to meet God. Thus, ICTs affect the ability to evaluate and reflect on one's life in a fruitful manner. The moments of silence which the Rule invites here have all their importance. It is a silence in which reconciliation with life occurs. It should allow listening to the voice of God in our own existence.

To make the option for interiority helps avoid superficiality mentioned in this article. The look is thus oriented towards his benefits. The experience of interiority enables the Brother

to devote all his energy to what is essential. It offers him the opportunity to deepen the meaning of his actions and to take the measure of their value and importance. Ultimately, this article invites us to uphold the common sense, to be vigilant in our use of ICTs. Like any tool, they must be considered as means towards an end. In this sense, they are assets for our educational ministry. In the community life, the way we make use of ICTs can separate us from each other. Every Brother with its communication tools creates his universe. Thus, a community life is established without life communion. The community becomes the place where we "live alone together."

To live as interior men is to live as men of the Spirit. We should not suffer from a lack of interiority, from the fragility of the "inner man" of which St. Paul speaks. We have a safe means: to open ourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit in us, as recommended by the founder.

"The Holy Spirit who dwells in you must penetrate the bottom of your souls, it is in them that this Spirit should pray more in particular, it is within the Soul that this Spirit is communicated with it, that it unites with it, and it makes him known what God asks from him so as to belong utterly to him. "

The inner life is a cure for many ills that Pope Francis recalls

"When the inner life closes on its own interests, there is more room for the other, the poor do not come, we no longer hear the voice of God, we no longer enjoys the sweet joy of His love, enthusiasm to do good no longer throbs. "

Given the spiritual teaching of la Salle, I can say that the Brother of the Christian Schools is called to be mystical. His life in the world of education must be a contemplative action or contemplation in the action. His mission is to be a monk in the education ministry. The root of the term monk is "monos", that is to say, "one", "unique".

The monk is one who is unified: unified with God, with himself, with others and with the world around him. By being linked to them, he is at the same time set aside. This is a difficult presence and distance from the self, others and the world. We must live without devouring but to give oneself.

The vocation of the Brother is a "Monasticism internalized" in the words of the Russian theologian Paul Eudokimov. This is just because we are members of the city. Our desert, our monastery is life in the city and in the world of education. This must be the place of our encounter with God and the link of the gift of our person.

Session 3

ROOTING OF THE LASALLIAN SPIRITUALITY IN CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

The reading of chapters one and five inspired me some topics on the point of view of Christian anthropology.

They have their source in the experience of St John-Baptist de La Salle in general and his evocation in an explicit way or in backdrop in certain articles. As it is written in the numbers 6 and 65 which invite the Brothers to surrender themselves under *"the control of God"* in the manner of the Founder and to contemplate Jesus-Christ in his abandonment to the will of His Father. In articles 70 and 72, it is respectively question of "spiritual growth" and deepening of the spiritual life. The article 65.2 deals with the fact that aging Brothers should be aware of the specific stage of their life. The topic of permanent conversion already present in the Rule of 1987 (R 74) is reformulated with an accent more focused on the community dimension of faith (RR 72).

These various sets of themes, according to me, center us on the need for deepening what is the human identity. For the Christian in general and the consecrated person in particular, man is truly man only when his life is rooted in God. He builds his identity at the various stages of his existence in a specific relation to God. Also, these sets of themes send us back to the authors who explicitly established the link between faith and stages of growth. James Fowler for example aimed at the objective *"to recognize types of difficulties, developments, changes which characterize human beings"* in their relation to God. It is a question of identifying the image that the person has of God and his answer to His calls to the various stages of his existence and his psychological evolution. He proposes six stages of faith³⁵.

Others were focused on psychosocial development of the person (eight stages of Erik Erikson) or his moral development (Lawrence Kohlberg) without religious reference.

³⁵ James Fowler, STAGES OF FAITH (Le développement de la foi). La psychologie du développement de l'homme en quête de sens, Editions Harper, San Francisco, 1995

Carl G. JUNG tackled the problem of the Middle age crisis with the methods of applied sciences, without drawing theological conclusions but by proposing the same means of resolution same as spiritual authors.

The goal of those who integrated the religious sphere is to show that Christian spirituality and human maturity are inseparable. They all offer us keys of reading our spiritual route at the various stages of life. My intention here is not to make a systematic and exhaustive presentation of these various models. Although they have limits, the goal is to draw our attention to identify and read our spiritual life in the different moments of our existence. We note also that before all these models the fathers of the Church have described three stages of spiritual life: the purgative, illuminative, and unitized ways.

From the above mentioned articles of the rule, I would like to give a special place to the themes of abandonment and conversion. I will present in a synthetic way the stages of spiritual life according to Fowler and the three classic paths of the fathers of the Church.

1. The birth to oneself or being begotten

In the Gospel according to John, Jesus makes this confusing call to Nicodemus: you must be born again (Jn 3: 3). Nicodemus does not understand this appeal simply because his understanding of birth is purely biological and social. Jesus wants to signify to him the limits of birth understood in this sense. Fundamentally, man is born unfinished (neoteny). Maurice Zundel says in this regard:

*"The problem that we are it is that we are not born 'man', it is that our dignity is a calling, a vocation, an immense and imprescriptibly one, but not a given that we would find in our cradle. Man has to be 'man'."*³⁶

Incompleteness of human being that the Bible talks about in its first pages. We are similar to gardens, worlds to be controlled and directed, in short, human beings to be invented. We realize ourselves out through the multiple choices of our lives. This is the idea of birth to oneself, the law of being self begotten. Jesus aimed at signifying to Nicodemus that being

³⁶ Maurice Zundel, Extraits d'une catéchèse d'adultes, Paroisse Sainte-Clotilde à Genève, 1973

born is never completed once and for all; it is a process of perpetual re-birth, permanent regeneration. This invitation of Jesus can be linked with the experience of Abraham. It allows grasping the contours this law of being self-begotten has impacts on to our lives. What we have already said about the 'go towards you' (Gen 12: 1).

- **'Go to you' (Gn 12:1)**

At the dawn of the history of salvation, there is this call of God to Abraham: *"Go for you, your land, your labor pains, of the House of your father, to the land that I will make you see."*³⁷ A quick reading could suggest that this land is Palestine, given to Abraham and his descendants, the chosen people. In Hebrew, God actually said: *"go for you, go to you."* (Lekh lekha) "So, **God does not call to Himself**, in the sense that it would appropriate man, to submit him. Instead, he ordered to his creature to live himself, to enter in it, to be born and to be found. God puts the process underway and elaborates it giving precisions: "Go (leave) the land..."

The order is formal: Abraham must leave his 'envelopes', **the three envelopes (Placentas) the most needed by human beings**: the **country** (homeland), **material security**, and finally those of his **father's house** (words, customs, domestic religion...). To be born completely, you need at any given time, and constantly, **cut all the tiny cords**, that is, leave the **supports, shelters, safety devices, the ideas and beliefs, images**, everything which was necessary and reassuring at a given time, but which now inhibits growth.

Being in the **process of generation**, is **to separate from oneself without ceasing**. To refuse to leave, to get out and to separate from oneself is paid by the death of the subject. To take one's distance from the father, the mother and their substitutes (trainers, teachers, guardians), it is the condition so that the child could be born to himself, recognize and appreciate his parents otherwise.

It is a **painful process** insofar as there is no painless child's birth. We must tear one apart, disobeying the injunction to "remain" in. This means refusal, remoteness, transformation that makes us foreigners to each other in the family, even in the Congregation, and which therefore may become a **source of inner culpability**. So one remains attached, one pushes the time of separation - birth (Luke 9: 57-62). The **separation** is not necessarily physical; it is **psychic, relational**. And this, no one can do it instead of the person himself. This voice, this imperative, opens the history of salvation.

³⁷ Traduction de Chouraqui, DDB, 1989.

"Going where I will show you". It is vague purpose to thus let vast opportunities to Abraham. We could translate this injunction saying: I'll show you the land of I - YOU, i.e. the relationship of the alliance. The **Promised Land** (heaven) is **a cobweb of successful relations, true**, authentic, where everyone is self, true story, the image of divine I. Soon, Abraham goes to Canaan. Why? Canaan was the cursed son (Gen 9: 18-27) and a slave to his brothers, because of the fault of his father Cham who had perverted his rapport of filiations by uncovering the nakedness of his father Noah. Canaan is the land of the cursed, of the people who have no father. It is there that God gives us a rendezvous. It is in the obscure part of us that we should rise to humanity. **Abraham is the first man on the way of man**. He opens the way to get out of everything that makes us dwarves, sterile, to become a real free human being.

In the internal call to Abraham, he discovers a **fundamental law** which can be formulated as follows: discover and deploy his specific extent, go at the end of his capabilities, not beneath or beyond, without laxity, laziness, or nervousness, but without swelling of self-esteem, without denial of his humane reality. Then, it opens a full path of creativity and joy to love and serve.

It is therefore **prohibited**:

- to mingle with the identity of another;
- to be eaten, owned by someone else;
- to comply with whoever wants to steal our freedom or deprive us of our difference.

One day it was said to man, for this man that we are, that there **must be another place to be** his homeland, **something else to do** than to worship idols (way to be FSC, to live the mission, community life...). The Bible passes this call to go elsewhere, to start another thing, finally an existence which is yours. It is our life and our death.

We can read the life of La Salle in the light of the experience of Abraham. The founder, in his own way, has lived the law of being self begotten.

• **To leave the position of omnipotence of childhood**

What has been said should not lead to be eager to create one, to become one's own origin (to be his own father) and to occupy a position of omnipotence which eliminates the other

and thus make us God. To avoid borrowing this false path, just ponder on the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15: 11-32).

*"In claiming his share of inheritance, the **second son** puts himself in a position of **omnipotence**. He does not expect that his father give it to him; he demands it and takes it. He locates himself at the center of the world; it is he who decides. Others do not exist, in particular his father as a father, as an authority: he kills him symbolically; it's as if he was already dead. He thinks he can live by himself. He is his own origin. **The only law he knows is his enjoyment...** Moreover, he went to a distant country, i.e. out of any judgment and of any guilt. The law is yours: enjoy!"³⁸*

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In doing so, he wants to absolutely avoid the feeling of lack, and to give the illusion of having, to avoid depending on the other. **He tries to extend to infinity his "infant me"**, the position of the omnipotent child, reigning tyrannically on his surroundings, and subjecting everyone to his whims. This "infant me" searches for the illusion of security and refuses something which is of the order of a "first" death, yet necessary at birth to a state more and more adult.

The child-King: this is our first identity which is ever listed in our unconscious. Before birth, we are first dreamed by our parents. We are already the coming perfect child, who will repair the disappointments of life. Once born, the reality that presents itself to the baby seems to confirm him this dream. It is the set of all the care which is provided to him, the attention which he is the subject. It is difficult for the child, under these conditions, to resist to the sharing of such happiness and not to consider himself as a prince or a princess.³⁹

What ejects and cures the prodigal son of his mortal situation is the **resistance to what is real** which reminds him his poverty. It suddenly makes him violence through self deprivation, hungers and humiliation he suffers from. In summary, by depriving him not only of money and pleasures but also of dignity and humanity, this resistance of the real invites him to an inner journey, that the fate of his omnipotence by rediscovering the Other, his father, his law. A new **self begotten process** takes form in him. This **takes the aspect of awakening**. That is the imagination of the omnipotence, self infant outgoing. We wonder, regardless of our age, if our awakening, as a Brother of the Christian schools, takes really place in our history. We then hear the echo of the biblical Word: "**Awake o**

³⁸ Duigou D., **NAITRE A SOI-MEME**, Presses de la Renaissance, 2007, p. 120.

³⁹ Duigou D., op. cit. p. 21-22.

you who sleep; awake from the dead... "⁴⁰. **Sin** is to deny in his life this dimension that causes the individual out of a 'infant me' to be born to himself. It is all about **refusing the gift of life**. Refusal which is at the same time renouncing risk.

- **Accepting the risk**

For the child we used to be - and that we remain in our imagination and our unconsciousness – to leave the position of omnipotence which is **equivalent to jump into the void at the risk of ending up “into pieces”**. We can even estimate you have to be crazy to do so because it is taking a risk of dying. But revelation teaches us that without the acceptance of the Other, birth to oneself is impossible or illusory, and that the major risk is to not to take, and therefore to paralyze oneself in indecision. Our birth is a major and risky experience.

This is the lesson that gives us the parable of the talents (Mt 25: 14-30). Jesus highlights that the **psyche of an individual feeds on novelty and risk**. Therefore, the first two servants open the door of sharing the joy of their master. The third is condemning himself because he's afraid to live. He is afraid of being poor. He is afraid of the Other. He opts for security which in reality is an illusion. To live is therefore taking risks. Avoiding to risk is to be a living dead, it is to die. Living is to enter into the dynamics of the time, that of a story that is changing and that invents. Tomorrow will be different from today, if I want it.

Learning to do is to let the other in me express himself. In an insistent and stubborn way it make me dissatisfied with my current situation; it creates recurring disappointments; it speaks to me even in my obsessions, recurring defects. Listen to it, formulate it, specify it, follow it is not without risk; but it is the risk of living. Being born in oneself, is to accept that the other exists and that "I is Another", has another face, a different scale, a different dimension than the ones I know of him today.

But the reality is that we are afraid of the vacuum. Take a risk, especially to redirect his life, gives the impression of jumping into the void, to face the impossible. In fact, says the third servant in the parable, it is above all the fear of poverty - missing, losing everything in an unhappy bank speculation, which holds it and paralyzes it. It is the fear of letting go and jump. This letting go, fashionable today has little to do with the **attitude of surrendering to God**. In the Christian tradition, it is the confident self giving in the hands of God. Let us remember again here what La Salle said in the eighth rule he imposed on himself concerning the establishment of the schools: *"I will abandon him the care"*. De La

⁴⁰ Ep 5,14 ; voir aussi : Ap 3,2 ; Rm 13, 11.

Salle made the experience that the vacuum is not empty, but inhabited by the Other. This Other with whom he made alliance and who certainly told him in his long and frequent moments of prayer: "I am with you, you can rely on me!"

For Christians and significantly for us Brothers of the Christian schools, the jump of the risk is called faith in God in his son in the opening to the calls of the spirit. We are in full in the spirit of our Institute. In the article 6 of the revised Rule, the expression "in the faith", is repeated five times. The new element added to the 1987's Rule is enriched with the theme of abandonment. *«In faith, the Brothers abandon themselves, as their founder, to the conduct of God».*

To live this spirit of abandonment, this spirit of faith, the Brother should be freed of obstacles which secure and stabilized it.

- **Being loosed and take its road**

The founder calls the Brothers including himself from anything that can make them captive in their consecration. *"Because we have left the world, nothing ought to be able to attach us to it. We must always be ready to die. This is the consequence of detachment from all things. We find it hard to die because we find it hard to leave what we love and what holds on to us."*⁴¹

This calling is at the same line of the freeing actions of Jesus. *"Untie him and let him go!"* Jesus uttered this sentence under several forms in various circumstances.

- *"Girl, I tell you to get up"* (Mk 5:41)

- *"young man, I tell you: get up."* (Lk 7:14)

- To the blind man, he said: *"Trust and get up."* (Mk 10:49)

- To the paralyzed man: *"get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home."* (Lk 5:24)

- He calls Lazarus: *"Lazarus, out!"* And then he asks the entourage: *"unbind him, let him go free!"* (Jn 11: 43-44)

This callback defines **"the anthropology of Jesus"**, a concrete anthropology, incarnated in the humans' flesh. It draws strong traits of the human project of God, which is to put man and woman standing, **straighten** their magnitude. Thus, to get them **out of their tombs**, their closed worlds where they suffocate and die. It is necessary to **untie** their strips (fears, anxieties, sins, and stagnations) to give them back a movement, mobility and freedom⁴². The end of the road and of the pilgrimage is clearly indicated: **"Go off home"** (Mk 2:11), said Jesus.

⁴¹ MF 156,1.

⁴² Ezechiel speaks of giving flesh and life back to the dry bones of the house of Israel : Ez 37

The begetting, as acted by Jesus, is a **perpetual conquest** of one's freedom, a constant creation of his adult humanity. That is why one must always be born and reborn; unbend where we were bent before a master or a fatality, to deal with the other.

There are dangers on this road we have to identify, confront and defeat:

(a) **The repetition of past forms.** It is of course securing, because one has the feeling of being on a known ground. The surprise, the risk and therefore the creation and freedom were evacuated. Since the Other scares, it is better to ignore him or eliminate him settling in the repetition of the same!

(b) Conversely, we **cultivate the nostalgia for an idealized past**, we seek to recover or to perpetuate. We look back and we let ourselves petrify in the past⁴³. Jesus said to anyone who wants to follow him: *"Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God "* (Luke 9: 62).

(c) **To escape any form of idolatry.** To repeat, bowing before others or events, to lower arms and despair, locked in an imaginary and chilling past, these are in fact multiple figures of idolatry. The Psalm Ps 115 (113B) draws up the ravages: blindness, deafness, immobility and insensitivity... *"Their makers will end up like them, and all who rely on them. (v8)."*

(d) **To reduce the labour of begetting to a moral effort** in order to overcome such defect. It is to make-up the façade, work on the superficial. Being begotten takes us to the root of our being, where well our desires. We need to work our motivations, the reasons for our choices, our desires of grabbing, completeness...

We can inspire ourselves through the book of Marie Balmary which title is provocative. **"THE DIVINE ORIGIN. AND GOD DID NOT CREAT MAN.** The author demonstrates to us that God did not fully create us, completed, loop once and for all, like other living beings. He left us with enormous potential, to **grow our own garden** and order it. He wanted us creative in his image, inventors of our history, spawning the new man in us.

Of course, we are human beings fragile, dependent and limited. This is why God **offers to ally with us**, to make the road with us, to be light, food that remakes our forces. *"Get up and eat, otherwise the way is too long for you"*, (I R 19:7) said the Angel to Elijah. *"Supported by this food, he walked forty days and forty nights up to the mountain of God."*

⁴³ The wife of Lot in Gn 19, 17-26

By becoming our ally, God overrides our freedom and our desire. He excites them, feeds them, and unties them to allow them to flourish and to beget us.

By becoming creators of our humanity, we are also 'virgin'. Virginity is the **brand of "beginnings"**. We welcome every day as a blank page, on which we will write new things. Thus, it will not simply be repetition of the previous one. What we are going to invent it are not new ways to operate, to dominate others or to use, but new ways to give, afford to love, serve and enrich others of our poverty.

2. "a permanent effort of conversion" (RR 72)

In "Africae Munus", problem faced by the African continent are put in relation to the question of the effective engagement of Africans in an evangelical life in the heart of their own lives and in society. The specified path is the conversion that Christ asked his disciples.

"Christ calls constantly to metanoia, conversion. Christians are marked by the mind and habits of their era and their environment. But by the grace of their baptism, they are invited to renounce the dominant harmful trends and go against the tide. Such evidence requires a commitment in "a continuous conversion to the father, source of all true life, and the only which makes us capable us issue of evil, temptation and we maintain in his mind, within the fight against the forces of evil". This conversion is possible only based on convictions of faith..."⁴⁴ "The conversion is the process by which we come to conceive the world differently from the way in which our culture, our comfort and our control will encourage us to design it. To convert is a commitment to break with everything that takes us away from the Society of Jesus. Whoever opposed its refusal to all forms of temptation by a firm 'no', deliberate and prophetic. This conversion must be carried out at several levels.⁴⁵

- **Intellectual conversion**

"Intellectual conversion consists of a radical clarification and, consequently, elimination of a spurious and extremely tenacious myth concerning reality, objectivity and human knowledge. " (Bernard Lonergan)

⁴⁴ Benoît XVI, Exhortation post-synodale, Africae Munus, n° 32

⁴⁵ ⁴⁵ Cf. Gérard A. Arbuckle, Religious life : Rebirth through conversion, David L. Fleming, 1990

It takes place when the person takes responsibility for the truth and falsity of beliefs, adequacy and the inadequacy of how it sees the truth of the facts. It is to be able to see the facts of life, especially of his own inner life, without distorting them. This implies the willingness to accept the truth whatever the consequences that could arise for it. Prior to conversion, the person travels through the opinions and points of view involved, different, and contradictory. The conversion takes when she finds a principle whereby she manages to decide and to act, not under the influence of the environment or foreign opinion, but thanks to a clear and deep illumination.

The adult Christian feels an absolute need to acquire religious beliefs be it personal, domestic, to become a reliable evangelist. The intellectual conversion is anyone who has learned to reason in a personal way, to discover the reasonableness of faith, thanks to an evolution, which makes it able to enlighten others.

- **Moral conversion**

"Moral conversion brings a person to change the criterion of its decisions and its choice by overriding values looking for search of satisfaction." It is to the decision to operate and guide its choice on the basis of conscientiously understood and verified values. It is a form of self-transcendence. It is more difficult and more costly than the intellectual conversion, through not only the choice to operate but 'rewards' to give up.

- **Emotional conversion**

It is the process that is to assume the health of his own emotional development. It is the fight against negative emotions or anything that is a danger to a balanced emotional life.

- **Cultural conversion**

Culture is the set of ways to think, feel and act proper to a specific and shared by all its members. It is equipped with a powerful force that shapes individuals, groups and corporations. To convert from the cultural point of view, is to go contrary to the practices of our environments that prevent the full development of people.

The life of De La Salle shows us how he was obliged to do violence to live a common life with the teachers of a different cultural universe of his own:

"If even I had believed, he wrote in the memory, that pure charity care I took of school teachers should have never make me a duty to remain with them, I would have deserted him: because, as naturally I was putting my valet below those that I was obliged especially

*in beginnings to use in schools, the only thought that he would have had to live with them me would have been unbearable. "I felt great sorrow in the beginnings which I did to them coming home, which lasted two years."*⁴⁶

- **Religious conversion**

In the Christian sense it is *"the love of God poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."* It is the Act of God's initiative hoping from the beneficiary a free response. To convert from the religious point of view, is to guide his life in the sense of the way in which God has chosen to act in human history.

It corresponds to all that was revealed to us by the parable of the merciful father. We simply illustrate it here by the testimony of St Augustine: *"this book was singing my feelings, and directed me towards you Lord, he changed my prayers and made different my eyes and my desires. Vile became for me any vain hope; it is the immortality of the wisdom that I was about in a boiling of incredible heart and I started to get up to get back to you."* (Confessions III, 4)

It took him a reversal, a change of direction which is the beginning of the conversion: *«Ah!» As I was burning, my God, as I was itching to fly from Earth to return to you. »*

De La Salle has operated in his own way a religious conversion. *"It is by converting to the poor that he realized his decisive conversion to the God of the poor, for the service of the poor"*⁴⁷.

- **Ecclesial conversion**

One who operates this conversion directs his life to the Church, is committed to serving in the home of his discipline, his laws, his teaching. He joined the Church, as the body of Christ, a community that proclaims the faith in the mystery of God in Jesus Christ.

- **Congregational conversion**

It takes place when a consecrated person commits itself with the belief that the particular charism of his congregation is useful for the needs of the pastoral and the world of today. The commitment includes the strong desire to achieve something in establishing the link between charisma and pastoral situations in which it is, new calls that arise in our societies.

⁴⁶ BLAIN 1, p. 169

⁴⁷ Michel Sauvage et Miguel Campos, *Annoncer l'évangile aux pauvres*, Beauchesne, Paris, 1977, p. 26

3. Stages of life and spirituality

3.1. The three traditional stages of spiritual life

In the Explanation of the method of prayer, La Salle speaks of three States of spiritual life on the occasion of the ways to apply a mystery or the presence of God: these ways "*can be reported to the three States of spiritual life: interviews by speech and multiplied reasoning, than the beginning; Rare and long continued, reflections of the **profiting**; and the simple attention, than the **developed**.*"⁴⁸ The fathers of the Church have described in three steps other concepts of the dynamism of any approach of spiritual growth: the way, purgative, illuminative way and the unitized way.

- **The purgative path**

*"If anyone wants to be a follower of mine **let him renounce himself**..."* (Mt 16:24)

The purgative way occurs as a result of a conversion. It implies a work on oneself to raise his deep spiritual nature. *"Unless a wheat grain [...] dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest"* (Jn 12:24). A greater proximity to the Divine is experienced. This is the entrance into the illuminative way.

- **The illuminative way**

*"If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, **let him [...] take up his cross ...**"* Mt 16:24

The path to enlightenment makes us gradually enter into the mystery of our own being. This manifests itself in the emergence of a greater spiritual sensitivity that makes it a little more able to capture the essence of events and beings. The spiritual faculties are developed through meditation practice that makes us able to see beyond appearances and to transcend the most difficult life situations. *"Think of the lowers grow [...] not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of them"* (Lk 12:27)

This is a period of grace which gradually leads us into the unitized way.

⁴⁸ Œuvres complètes, EM 8, 212

- **The unitized way**

"If anyone wants to be a follower of mine let him let him [...] follow me." (Mt 16:24).

This way does not indicate the end of the spiritual journey but rather that the faculties of the soul manifest themselves permanently and that the whole being is in unity with the divine. *"I and the Father are one."* (Jn 10:30). The unitized way is the way of being that is realized entirely in terms of his person and that of God. *"And it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."* (Gal 2:20)

These steps are not necessarily linear. The testimony of mystics reveals that spiritual life consists of periods at a time of purification and enlightenment, sometimes succeeding almost simultaneously, besides it can also include periods of apparent stagnation. The image that would suit the dynamics of the spiritual life is that of an upward spiral, consisting of alternating between moments of purification, enlightenment and unity.

The parable of the treasure hidden in a field well illustrates the nature of the spiritual life. The person who finds this treasure *"goes away, sells everything he has and buys that field."* (Mt 13:44). Thus, spiritual life begins with a disinterment of our many "masks" (purgative) to discover the treasure, our spiritual being. Once we have tasted the joy of his presence within us, we want to invest for his growth (illuminative way). Reaching full maturity, our being can now be fully united with the divine (unitized way).

3.2. The stages of faith by James Fowler

The first three stages are essentially external. People depend on authority, external standards for the training of their spiritual beliefs. Steps 4-6 are rather internal order. They are moments of a difficult spiritual transformation that demand a rediscovery, at a different level, of what faith and spirituality represent.

- **4th stage: individualist-reflexive** (20-40 years).

People who go to the fourth stage begin a spiritual shift, the dependence of the faith of others to develop their own beliefs and values. Fowler said about it: *"An authentic progression to stage 4 is characterized by an interruption of the relationship to external sources of authority."*

This is a time of challenge, questioning, questioning and doubt. Many of the old truths and answers or practices of the religious group membership are insufficient or inappropriate to continue one's journey. Disconcerting stage where the person is asked to leave some of his comforts that have protected him so well, but who retained his deepest and richest experience of God.

- **5th Stage: Connective (30-50 years).**

This is the stage of mature faith, personal, thoughtful. The Christian no longer opposes. He integrates the paradox in the spiritual life. He remains firmly rooted in his own convictions but evolve personal concerns or dependence truths attached to accepting the views of others. It tends to be more tolerant and begins to accept the idea of being useful to others. The person experiences the love of God in his life. A life now opened to do His will without fear of consequences. Very aware of his faults, he allows God to work on his weaknesses.

- **6th stage: Universalisation.**

The believer is looking for universal values such as love and unconditional justice. This is a step related to self-centering to center his life on God. It can reach far beyond love; beyond his capacity to love his fellow man with deep compassion. He is capable of selfless love without the need to be loved in return. Moments of awareness that the more we adhere to God less we need anything else. There is a detachment from the consideration of things and people. The ambition to be known, to have success is significantly reduced. Having truly chosen God, the believer is released and is more willing to welcome His surprises.

Friday 21th August 2015

INTEGRATION

By Brother Jesus Rubio

Objective of the day: Reach a personal synthesis of the content of the program and of the identity of the Brother in Africa today and in the future.

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Session 1 and 2: (8:30 – 10:45)

Individual reflection on the following questions:

A. Ideas

Identify many ideas as possible that you have been thinking about during the program.

Which ideas could unify most of the ideas you have been thinking of? (not more than 3)

B. Feelings

Identify many feelings as possible that you have been feeling during the program.

Which feelings could unify most of the feelings you have felt? (not more than 3)

C. Actions

Identify many actions as possible that you have considered implementing after the program.

Which actions could unify most of the actions you are considering to implement? (not more than 3)

D. God's calls

So far, looking at your answers, **what are the calls of God for you in Africa, today, with the revised Rule? (not more than 3)**

E. Your response to God's calls

How do you want to respond to these calls of God in Africa today with the revised Rule? (not more than 3)

Session 3: (11:15 – 12:15)

Free sharing of your answers to the questions above. No report is expected.

Session 4: (15:15 – 16:15)

Answer together as a group the following questions:

1. Having had broad, realistic and collective view of our Region socially and culturally, **how do you visualize FSCs in our Region?**

2. The Post Vatican II Church is slowing in catching up with changes. Religious life is not an exception to the common factors in the African realities. Can we Brothers in the Region with the realities we experience initiate some changes for ourselves in view of the revision of the Rule? **Write ten statements of paradigm shift that can have practical resolutions in the years 2015-2021.**

Suggestion:

From a Brother in Africa who... to a Brother in African who...

From a Brothers' community in Africa that... to a Brothers' community in Africa that...

Session 5: (16:30 – 17:15)

Sharing the feedback from the groups

Conclusions

Monday 24th August 2015

BROTHER, INSTRUMENT OF COMMUNION

By Brother Joan Sala Coll

Session 1

Introduction

When I was asked to participate in this Regional CIL, I ask myself what could be my contribution, because I did not have a philosophical training or theological, but rather scientific, also my language will be very simple and concrete.

On the other hand to talk about authority, accustomed as I am to be in the simple and common brother's life is not easy. I will try to do so but unpretentious.

*An initial point that comes to my mind is that to talk about authority is not talking about others, of those who... It is **about us all**, even the youngest. All we have a portion of authority right now. When a young, even postulating, lives with us, he is vested with some authority. Students (and teachers) call him spontaneously Brother and comply with him as such. Furthermore when JBS in the meditations talks about our mission talks like the one to whom God has given authority on his students. The qualities and responsibilities that he makes us see are those of someone who has authority from God. It is therefore normal that we reflect on what is authority with regard to faith that the Revised Rule (RR) tells us.*

We are far from the time where authority rhymed with authoritarianism, with power, and absolute power. The words of today are any others: communion, animation, support research of..., discernment, service, a service combined in many ways, in particular the service of the decision, the service of the union of hearts, the service of the word... All this to make us see that to talk about Brother as an instrument of communion, we are in full in one of the core functions of the authority as the RR underlines.

*One of the key words to understand authority and the renovated rule is the word **Communion**, developed mainly from the Second Vatican Council and that extends to all the realities of the Church. The Brother is a being in communion and source of multiple communions. He often links apparently opposite realities.*

*Thus, within the Lasallian family the Brother is at the crossroads of relations and **rallying point of contrasting options, instrument of communion**:*

Located in the professional setting he witnesses the sense of transcendence and the presence of God.

In a society thirsty of efficiency, modernity and technology his vocation is to demonstrate the primacy of God, the Gospel values which are often at odds with those of the world. While we also advocate efficiency, rigor: our secular education gives it evidence.

In the midst of power struggles, course for certificates and results, he has for mission to witness the tenderness of God which had his preference in the little and the voiceless. There also our skills indicate the seriousness with which we are dealing with the affairs of this world, without so far bogged ourselves there.

He cares about human development through the acquisition of secular knowledge and, at the same time he proclaims the priority for the discovery of God and of the journey in the faith. Still the two poles which are our specificity and distinguish us from someone who would only give catechesis.

He is a bridge between adults and children. And see like Jesus that the true greatness is that which is located in the child of God.

In the midst of teachers he appreciates and seeks human skills, but also seeks to create in them a heart of brother to young people, and that they start to listen to the children. When we talk to our teachers we will be asking them also to feel as brothers of young people.

In the church he has an original vocation among those of consecrated ministers and dedicated laity: he has a lay ministry. A ministry for which we have consecrated our lives, not aspiring to anything else than to live it in depth.

*Many contrasts that the Brother is called to live and internalize and which become part of his **own identity**. This often creates vital tensions and varied answers that we need to reassess periodically. We often speak of **tightness**. One is tempted by activism, the other by mysticism. We discussed last week how we are called to integrate it all.*

*To unveil it all, it is good to deepen who we are in the light of the Gospel. Then on ourselves, we will exercise the originality of the service of authority which is the discernment to see clearly and to ensure that our communities have a credible and visible testimony of communion. Deepening on who we are our word on our mission and those on whom we have authority, will be more meaningful and understanding because we will be to them an **icon of God**.*

Brother: instrument of communion

1. "They will be called the name Brothers"

Firstly we carry the title of 'Brother '. It is the one Jesus wants his followers to adopt as a priority in their relations. Our name of rallying and that we are given is that of 'Brothers '. This name is a whole program, says the rule, it marks the style of relations and collusion, even when we are called to exercise the service of authority (thus brother John Johnston, pissed off, said one day in one of our assemblies where older Brothers called him constantly: Most Honored superior... "Please, he said in a dry tone, call me simply Brother John"... and Brother Alvaro, or Pope Francis so very simply call themselves and not only between us because it shows us that we must be as Brothers for the youth we serve and the masters with whom we work. In doing so we do also the desire of Christ who tells us to not make ourselves be called fathers... or masters... He added **"Make yourselves called brothers as you are sons of the same father"**. Jesus will give the example. After having called them "disciples" and then "my friends" he will call them "brothers." "Go tell my brethren..." he said to the women after his Resurrection by giving them a mission. He wants to let his followers know **he is** forever and more than ever **their brother**. And it is as such that he stands with the father. Making ourselves called Brothers we do not take ourselves too seriously, referring to someone else who really has authority, because we are from him, our Father.

As said Brother Alvaro in circular 466 in the Guide of Formation, "our brother's identity is distinct from the functions and tasks that I realize, although it is expressed through them" (C 466, 1.33). Our fraternal identity derives its strength from two inseparable solidarity: Solidarity with Jesus, our brother, through whom we receive filiations from the Father from whom we receive all as the source. We are a gift from God. To know ourselves as pure gifts produces in us an attitude of humility and gratitude which excludes any bragging and self-sufficiency.

Solidarity with our young people, our employees, the men of today, because like them I received the same gift, and we have a common Father. This makes us **basically equal**. We could take to our account by transposing the famous words of St Augustine: "for you I am Bishop, with you I am a Christian" When Benedict XVI presented himself for the first time to the people of Rome to acclaim him he introduced himself as **"a humble servant of Jesus and the Church"**.

We must keep firmly the two solidarities in all our businesses. "Passion of Christ, passion of the man" said the Congress of religious life. These two solidarities will give us the strength and daring to undertake the upheavals that the Spirit leads us into at the beginning of the 21st century. If we feel really brothers, our vision of Mission today will be all transformed.

2 - Brothers...Instruments of communion. Brothers, together... for a mission

*Our consecrated life is not designed unrelated to its mission. The rule defines us as devoted to God for Christian education: "The apostolic commitment is integrally part of the Brother's life". "As **"ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ"**, the Brothers consecrate their life to God to bring the Gospel to the world of education" R 15. Our mission, which is a form of authority, is not the result of personal merit, because by its nature education of a person is a crusader of influences. Our mission transcends us. One person cannot embrace the possibilities of young people living in an open and plural society, and no one can meet all the needs of young people today, in a so complex society. John Baptist De La Salle had already perceived it. From the origins of the Foundation we find solidarity and commitment to internal members of his community for the work of God through the **vow of association**. An association to hold better, association for better responses complementing a common challenge. We know the facts. In a moment of initial crisis, in 1691, 10 years after the beginning of the common adventure, while due to lack of sufficient clarity or attraction to a little understood life style, the members of the group of Brothers gathered around La Salle appear trampled and the small community is threatened by slow death with the departure of its members, La Salle brings together some of the more aware members and during a retreat he strengthens the sense of the mission God entrusts them. He opens their eyes that **they see the children that God has put into their hands, with the eyes of God**. JBS fully exerted a first function of authority, **to enlighten, encourage, and lead the consent** by loving persuasion. He demonstrated to them that He, God, wants the salvation of these children, theirs. JBS wants them to be aware of their greatness. Thus with himself, God takes the means and that is why he calls them to collaborate with him, to cooperate in his work. And La Salle adds that this God's plan will not be achieved unless we commit ourselves together and by association to hold these schools and do it nicely. This union for the fulfillment of the Mission is expressed by **the vow of Association for the educational service of the poor**. Associated, putting all our energy and all the gifts that God gives us to the same objective: Christian education of the*

poor, and through them to all children and young people. There we see that De La Salle does not speak about outsiders, a cathedra or a pedestal, but starts at their level as a Brother like them.

We know the result. This vow gave him forces and creativity to find ways to strengthen the emerging community and develop itself in the midst of adversities.

Later, when La Salle was sick, overwhelmed by difficulties, pursued by justice, feeling the eyes of some of his brothers, when he took refuge in solitude and left the Institute "in the grace of God" to use the expression of Saint Luc, brothers took consciousness of the serious dangers threatening them and in a burst of faith and confidence turned to their founder and father and on behalf of the vow of association, and they wrote a **letter dated April 1, 1714**, a day of Easter, where severally they wake up treasures of confidence in La Salle and he so decides to take over the helm of this boat. There also basing in turn on their brotherhood, sealed by the vow of Association, the brothers dare apply to JBS, their founding father, and remember him with affection and force the value and strength of their fraternity. And that together, with him at their head, they will overcome any resistance.

In 1691 it was La Salle who took the initiative to engage them as partners before God to steady the faltering community and overcome difficulties. In 1714 the Brothers themselves took the initiative to help De La Salle to overcome his fatigue, discouragement and doubts. The brotherhood sealed by this vow plays in both directions. Because we are associated in the fraternity binding us for a mission.

Let us make a jump in time.

Our current situation in many countries resembles these initial troubles. In a certain number of countries of ancient Christian tradition, the Institute is aging and its forces are declining. At other place, **as in our Region there are very positive signs of course:** many young Brothers and novices: 18 new Brothers and 22 novices, but also other signs which put us on alert: the overall number of Brothers remains stationary to 350 brothers since many years, with an average age that increased significantly in all age layers. Our significant dependency on other Regions in crisis, particularly in human and economic resources, merit attention.

On the other hand we find in Africa, a phenomenon that is in the whole Institute: despite the overall decrease of the Brothers, the Lasallian mission grew up.

In the **Institute** in 1967 there were 16 824 Brothers and 737 112 students and in 2014 there were 4 110 and 1 038 080 respectively, or an increase of the number of students from 40.8%. The laity also grew from a few thousand to 93 429.

In our region it happens something similar but in a more accelerated manner:

With a stationary number of brothers, the number of pupils increased from 38 732 (2011) to 58 452 (2014), an increase of 50.9% in just 4 years! The quality of our Mission, the meaning of who we are risk to suffer if we do not convey to our partners the ideal of the Lasallian Mission. The two aspects are linked. This is the fundamental Mission and the sharing of this Mission with our partners.

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3 - The shared Mission has indeed become **a fact and a necessity**. We have a role, an important role in the shared Mission. Not that of the master, owner, but the role **of authority** which speaks of the abundance of the heart, which share, grow up, who forgets oneself so that the other may grow (is not this the education summit?) This sharing of the mission has become a fact and a necessity. Indeed without the laity it is impossible to maintain our works and accomplish our mission with the youth. We need to discover their **irreplaceable contribution** as expressed by the Second Vatican Council: in family and social experience is much more meaningful than ours. When they live their faith, their language is at least as powerful as ours. Young people can identify themselves directly in a lifestyle managed humanely and Christian if it is experienced by someone who lives like them... They will be a different icon of God that we can be for them because they live in a family style like them and in the middle of the world like them. But we can talk to them and convince them that if we are convinced that it is really God who calls them as he calls us also.

If we do so, our association for the success of the work of God extends to contacting them. As we discover in contact with them the wonders that God wants to achieve in them. The rule commits us to it. The discernment of the callings of God that the Brothers are called to do in the community and they are asked to do in union with those who are committed to the same mission (see R 18.1). "Together and by association" with their partners, they work at this work of salvation in a trade where the poor are evangelized and where young people and adults grow as human persons and sons and daughters of God"(R 20) we do not have the monopoly of contact with God. Just as in a community must heed the voice of

the younger - the younger Brother who has just arrived, applicant who articulated among us - same God can and wants to be heard by voices who see us and see reality otherwise.

As the rule invites us we must engage ourselves without fear or reluctance in

- ✓ “promotion of the spirit of association within educational communities,
- ✓ make known the Lasallian message to all their members,
- ✓ strengthen their apostolic commitment,
- ✓ participate in the creation and animation of intentional Lasallian communities” (R 19.1)

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One may wonder to whom corresponds the initiative of making this effort? In the first place of course to those who have authority in the work, but also to us all, in pressing and lending strong hand. In so doing we are communion between all members of the Lasallian mission. We should get into the habit of thinking and acting in the mission always including the various components of the Lasallian family, especially our Lasallian partners. We would win the riches of their vision and their commitment. But this requires dedicating much effort and love to accompany in the discovery and the deepening of the Lasallian spirit. Let us be challenged by this call of the renovated rule: “For this purpose, and as an expression of the spirit of association, it establishes participative structures intended to help the Brother Visitor in domains which concern the mission (R 19.2). Therefore the advice from MEL (with participation of brothers and laity) are formalized at the level of the Institute as a normal Act in the mission. It means that it must be normal that lay - in union with Brothers - can challenge us with authority (through the E-mail for example)

4 -... for the educational service of the poor

As in physics I see two types of bonds of communion, bonds of union between all stakeholders in the mission

A static communion and a dynamic communion

Static communion is essential, it is to integrate in the life of every day the tension between our being to God and to our Brothers, and our mission, by living an integrated spirituality as the Brother Valère shared to us. She lives in joy, every day, and is a source of fertility.

Then a dynamic communion, communion outside, urging us to leave our safety, our habits, and a creative communion. It is specific to the objective of our Association as it

has clear objective the "educational service of the poor" (R 27 and 28). This dynamic communion is looking for catchy, unifying objectives, a communion which is always looking for new paths, worried and never satisfied because "the love of Christ impels us". We read in the renovated rule: *"In the light of the Gospel, the Brothers **always keep in mind the promotion of justice and the direct or indirect service of the poor - the economically poor, the victims of social injustice, delinquents and those excluded from society - which is the preferred option of their ministry of education. When they work with pupils from better-off families, they teach them the duties imposed by responsibility, and those regarding social justice and worldwide charity"*** R 29

Speaking of the poor for us in Africa, still poses problems as has been said by a colleague from the early days, because, especially in some countries, poverty is everywhere, especially economic and our works/schools receive little or no aid from the State. Yet there are many paths that are still untapped. There are poverties which are just as traumatic: the absence of parents, living almost permanently with grand parents or some kind of relatives. Need to feel loved. In some of our regions, culture poses a brake to the manifestations of tenderness which yet the children desperately need... Often in our schools, on behalf of the 'Holy discipline', we may miss real juvenile dramas. Rich young people that are knocking at our doors, we are easily inclined to practice the policy of exclusion, so harshly condemned by Pope François. For these misfits to our education system often we have nothing else to offer than full integration based on coercion or exclusion.

In Africa, we have much to learn of some elder Brothers and Associates, in places less favored with religious personnel and where however this concern of the poor remains very much alive, and where in particular "attention is special to those of their students with more learning difficulties and personal problems or suffering from social or family maladjustment" R 29.

I remember an **anecdote** in one of our schools in the capital Antananarivo. One of our 17-year-old students – I was the guardian - He had a very weird behavior. He did not have his head in studies. We were told that he was addicted to drugs. What to do? In disciplinary council, a teacher had strongly interceded for him. To do all to get him out she begged. She undertook to make him want to be without toxic. It was for us to accompany him. The

young student accepted and his old mother who had lost control of the situation agreed too... And we kept him until the end of his studies. He manifested us a great thank.



Another similar case in Tamatave: a difficult 14-year-old boy. He was untenable and blundering. All teachers agreed to remove him out of school. We listened to him in the disciplinary board. He accepted to be removed because it is that he had more than deserved but asked for forgiveness and we did the untenable situation where he struggled. He was virtually alone. His mother, who was present that day, almost all the time was absent from the house occupied in her business. And the father was a marine. After listening to the boy and his mother, the situation reversed completely. Unanimously teachers opted to keep him and accompany him so that he can remake itself. And it has been this way.

In both cases, **the initiative came from our teachers**. I was struck by the accuracy of their lasallian vision of the situation of the boys.

This concern for the poor is not only not before all an economic issue. It is rather a State of mind that moves all the resources of the person. "This charismatic dynamism stimulates the creativity of the Brothers to provide the best possible and lasting response to the needs of those who benefit from their mission" (R27) this creativity is precisely the subject of this discernment realized in "proceedings open to those who are committed to the mission" R 18.1 I believe that with the help of our collaborators and with their support, our charism can find great dynamism and creative answers.

We can read again and ponder the words of the Capitulates of the 45th General Chapter which is like an act of solemn faith with profit; a firm statement closed to the will of change on behalf of all the Brothers of the Institute they represented:

We want to **respond to this creative and daring to the urgent needs of the most vulnerable** (emigrants, refugees, homeless, unemployed youth...) located at the borders

-  To go beyond the geographical border, to a place where La Salle is not yet present (we have the embarrassment of the choice without having to leave the country).
-  To go beyond personal boundary, to a place that launches a challenge to our comfort and, at times, to the weakness of our means, (many barriers create in us used to a certain comfort!)

- ✚ To go beyond the cultural or religious border, towards a work where individuals of other faiths partake in the same post, we know it is not always easy to find a language understandable to the...
- ✚ To go beyond the boundary of the official retirement due to age to the voluntary service of the most vulnerable,
- ✚ To go beyond the boundary of the academic and social prestige, towards an educational project where we will appreciate the privilege of working with the poor, (I was edified by a Brother Director in Barcelona that I had as a novice, and he was doing everything to gain acceptance by good number of parents in the society to agree to also receive deemed difficult children in the schools where their sons studied).
- ✚ To go beyond the boundary of individualism to community service commitments
- ✚ To go beyond the border of discouragement, towards a horizon of hope project within God's salvation plan; (it is not easy to pursue projects humanly less lit)
- ✚ To go beyond the boundary of the structures preset to generate a space of freedom and Apostolic creativity; -I keep a deep memory of Brother Achille, a Malagasy Brother and my Godfather during my taking of the habit, in the community that welcomed me arriving at the great island, in 1966, which, after his class, with others, organized the literacy of adults in the district, next to the school, very unusual at that time

...

A process is suggested to us:

- Over the next 7 years, **each Brother integrates into his annual personal project a concrete commitment, discerned in the community, in relation to the metaphor of the border.**
- In a similar way each community **plans in its community annual program** what to do in order to "go beyond the border".

The maximum expression of communion in our Institute, commit us to engage ourselves without reluctance towards this communion for the mission, in confidence, boldness and creativity.

And The Chapter adds proposition 19:

*Each District in the chapter that follows the General Chapter (May 2014 - May 2015), studies the opportunities to open a new work/school where **Brothers and/or associates** respond to any of the previously listed borders in order to offer it to the Region.*

5 - A commitment of the whole community

In our latitudes there are often reluctant to the level of the people. I repeat the question which **should take the lead to be instrument of communion between the community and the laity?** to be a driving force in the pastoral animation? to respond to it otherwise. Easily we delegate this concern to the **Brother Director**. It is true that the Authority gives facilities to do so, but also the constraints linked to its function and causes thoughts arrears. Let me speak in my own name. My experience is that the position of **simple Brother** all engaged in education, without titles or authority specific but supported by the community and by the Director, **is the best situation** to transform little by little the spirit of our employees and hiring a significant number to enter fully into the Lasallian spirit. That is how my years of teacher and teacher in a large institution allowed me to initiate teachers and Lasallian groups first, and then the *Signum fidei*, and with them, groups of Young Lasallians. I was free to explore with them the Bible, the life of John Baptist de La Salle, the meaning of the Church. To do with them literacy sessions, labor camps by including young people from our school. Free to organize with the teachers who wanted, pilgrimage of young people based on the Messages from the Pope for World Youth Day. The Director was fully engaged. Youth and educators felt that the community supported us, especially the successive Directors that we gladly invited to speak to them and who shared our triggers when they could. And by giving me this mission with our adult staff, **my own Brother's identity felt strengthened and enriched.**

I could say the same of the accompaniment of the aspirants of the Guadalupana sisters who had arrived on the island, then Sisters themselves. This unexpected mission also was entrusted to me by the visitor then while my mind was far from all this. Rereading this I see that it was **the work of God** because everything happens without expectancy. And we were coming to grips with all the troubles. I realized what Jesus has said: "there is more joy in giving than receiving" because it is well known that he who gives himself receives more than he gives.

By saying so I do not minimize the role of the authority which is fundamental and indispensable, because it is the one which allows this freedom of spirit and in action and accompanies it. An authority that doesn't feel neither "jealous" nor frustrated in its prerogatives because others have influence on educators. This makes me think of the generous Moses attitude when Joshua complained more than others that his master prophesied or the attitude of Jesus when his disciples him relation others baptized in his name. Everything that is good should the welcome and by doing a real service, the authority will take care to make advice and assistance. That is how is built the together and by association to the common mission.

Questions to discuss in small groups

- *What are the experiences you have already had from the enrichment that the sharing of our mission with lay people or the committed young people gives to our vocation?*
- *What aspects of the Lasallian spirituality, according to you, are the most suitable to be shared with our Lasallian partners and what are the most appropriate to motivate their commitment in the common mission?*
- *What aspects of the vision of the authority as service, presented by the RR seem to you as the most likely to give dynamism to our community lives and our mission? Are there obstacles to overcome?*

Tuesday 25th August 2015

AUTHORITY AS SERVICE

Brother Joan Sala Coll

At the beginning of the section on authority and government in the Institute there is a quote from the Gospel of Luke chap. 22, 24 - 27:

"They came to quarrel about which of them they thought was the greatest. Jesus said "the kings of nations act with them as lords. For you, there's nothing like that but the greatest among you should take the place of the youngest, and the one who commands should take the place of one who serves" Authority as Jesus wanted it is a service. "I did not come to be served but to serve," he will also say.

"Gathered in community, the Brothers, following Jesus Christ, consider authority as a service" (R 109) an authority that consults, discerns and makes decisions.

During the CIL in Rome, **the Brother Superior Schieler shared with us his experience of authority**, as a simple Brother and as a **District responsible**. I would like to quote some excerpts that seem relevant to us (from the Government as a service of authority, November 20, 2014).

... "This is my itinerary according to my understanding of the role assigned to obedience and authority ...At the age of 25, I was completing my first three years of teaching in a middle class sub-urban school. It was a very good experience. I loved the students, the teachers and my work. I lived in a community with 32 brothers, some have become close friends. I could keep in touch with my family because my school was in my hometown. Fortunately, this led me to a deeper reflection on the meaning of what is to be Brother, as expressed in our vow formula. I quickly realized that I was too young to have such an attitude of belonging. We are called Brothers of Christian Schools, and not of a particular school. More importantly, every year when I renewed my temporary vows, the phrase "educational service of the poor" was a thorn in the side, a pebble in my shoe. Did I take very seriously our commitment for the educational service of the poor? This reflection came out at the same time when my visitor sent a letter to the District asking for volunteers for the District of the Philippines. We had just started a kind of twinning with that District. I knew nothing about the Philippines; and I was not even sure of the location of the country. The risk of doing something out of my temperament intrigued me. So I was a

volunteer in 1975 knowing that I could not return to the United States for four years. And at the age of 25, four years seemed to me a very long time.

The decision was seen as a moment and a significant period in my life. The decision has opened new horizons at many levels as it was the case with any Brother who leaves his own environment for another. This includes exposure to new and different cultures, interaction with other religious men and women, conflict / confrontation with the government and the political system which was a martial law in the Philippines these years, commitment with national conferences and associations of religious leaders and of Catholic education and, above all, the first real experience to work with the poor and learn from them.

The decision to go to the Philippines allowed me unknowingly to start building several threads that formed the tissue that would become our Rule of 1987. Some of the threads I witnessed in the Philippines and in my personal life were the role of the lay people in the mission and the emergence of the Lasallian Family, the Brother in minority situation in the educational institution, the constitutive elements of our vocation, successive calls of God in our life, the involvement in the local church, inculturation and the young churches. Let me just take two of these elements as an example. When have I in my life experienced the integration of the constitutive elements of our vocation and how did I understand the idea of successive calls in our lives as Brothers?

I experienced the integration when I served as General Director of Schools for the local diocese in Mindanao isle and living in community with other three Brothers. In this apostolate, I was very close to our educational charism to work for the working class and the poor. The children in the 13 rural schools of the diocese were girls and boys of sharecroppers, factory workers and fishermen. I also had my first experience of living in a small community of Brothers. Over a period of ten years, I went from living in a community of 80 Brothers in the scholasticate to 30 Brothers in my first teaching assignment and to a community of four. In this transition from a large to a small community, I learned that I was responsible and so I have to account for the life and growth of the community as well as the Brother who was near me. Later, I recognized the community dimension of our vows. We do not make our vows only for God. We also make them for each other. Our commitment to God is true inasmuch as the commitment with one another is true.

Looking back, I recognize successive calls in my life ... So, by looking back, from these experiences, I learned what we all know today. Obedience is our willingness to listen to

what God asks of us. And to do that, we need to be in dialogue not only in prayer with God but also with the people, places and events that God puts before us. "

A last example of when obedience was a personal challenge for me. In 1984, my visitor in the United States asked me to leave the Philippines to go back to my country to serve as Deputy Director of a college ... I did not want to accept this assignment and I opposed my resistance. I thought it was going against everything I was trying to live in my vocation in the past decade. After several exchanges of letters the Visitor said it was upon me to make the decision. He had started the process of discernment by clearly expressing his desire to see that I would accept the assignment, but in the end he was allowing me some freedom to make the decision. He offered me the chance of a personal reflection on the role of obedience in my life as a Brother. Not consisting of simple obedience to obey the desire of my superior but obedience as an effort to listen to the voice of God. I accepted this assignment. It was not a happy time for me. I did not like the assignment, but I assumed it. Looking back, I think God called me to get access to the maturity of my discipleship. "

As he explains it later to us, the Superior dialogued with him to help him discern new calls of God in his life, not necessarily pleasant ones, and by answering them he discovered new meaning in his life as Brother.

For the exercise of authority in the service of the mission, the Brother Superior gave us also an example.

... Here is a second example. Some of you know Brother Charles Kitson, former Secretary of the Institute for Lasallian Family and Association. When Brother Alvaro asked him to be the secretary, he wanted to decline; he wanted to say no. He was in a ministry of direct service with the poor and was not only a competent member of the first school of San Miguel in the United States; His presence is also strong in other aspects of the life in the District. But he told me later. "If I said no to this request, I knew that every year when renewing vows on Trinity Sunday, the vows and my act of consecration to follow Jesus as a Brother of the Christian Schools would be less meaningful to me."

He concluded: *"... In each of these examples, being a disciple of Jesus is the place where we learn obedience as a response to the will of God."*

In his introduction of the three chapters on Government we find the general meaning of authority to follow Christ: *"Following Christ, servant of his brothers and taught by the example of their Founder, the Brothers consider the function of the authority as a community service "(R111)*

I think we all have had similar experiences: unexpected benefits for accepting obedience accepted and assumed even if it has broken many fibres of our sensibility and if its initial acceptance was not easy for us. And secondly, decisions made by Superiors which after implementation we saw that they were not the best decisions that should have been taken. This shows us two complementary aspects. The first one concerns the individual as a person and validates the scripture: *"We are well aware that for those who love God, he turns everything to their good"* Rom 8: 28. It is these successive calls that God makes us hear through the most varied events. And through them he directs our action and makes it fruitful as La Salle himself had experience in many times. The second one concerns the Superior so that he does not overrate his strengths but to commit himself as La Salle *"in discernment and decision making processes (helping) the Brothers to live the exercise of authority in a spirit of co-responsibility and subsidiarity"* (R 110)

Evolution of authority as service

The excerpt from the Gospel of Luke as an introduction to our Free Government gives us the vision of Jesus on authority: a service. His life explains it further: long hours of preaching and attention to those who came to him to be healed, unconditional welcome, but also patience and active love for his opponents. For the followers, (disciples and apostles) there are demands of humility and of growth by setting objectives or a vision of things that sometimes confuses them. After Jesus left, with the power of the Holy Spirit the apostles practised authority without hesitations and without quarrels. We see this, for example, in the story that Paul tells us in his argument with Peter. The understanding by the Institute of our governance and our authority has evolved during our recent history. The Chapter of 1966 introduced the keyword subsidiarity and the 40th General Chapter in 1976 introduced that of communion and the 41st in 1986, that of interdependence.

Subsidiarity is understood that it is neither necessary nor good that the authority of a higher level to make the decisions that can be taken at local level, because this makes people childish and makes them irresponsible.

Problems arose with the autonomy of Regions and Districts. A pronounced individualism affected the meaning of community for some Brothers. The confusion vanished with the introduction of the need for **communion**, communication and **community** as communion of its members. The basic idea is a body which is one through the communion among all its members.

After new changes in the organization of the Institute in 1986, the need of **interdependence** became clear between the various Regions of the Institute and between districts within the same region. And the growing autonomy of the districts did not affect the unity of the Body of the Institute because through interdependence manifested among others with a need for accountability and transparency felt by all, it was made possible a greater solidarity among all. This interdependence has been materialized by the creation of twinning programs between Districts and Regions. Exchanges are not done in one way.

The life of the mature disciple

- In the book of prophet Isaiah, the Servant of God before driving and moving all the people was shaped into a disciple through his obedience. We can translate into modern terms the language of the third song of the Servant (Chapter 50: 4-6.) In the Lasallian definition that gives the Brother Superior on obedience: **active listening of God** exactly goes with the definition of disciple *"The Lord gave me a disciple's tongue, ... he awakes my ear to listen like a disciple ... I did not resist, I did not hide (he lets himself be led) ... I gave my back to those who struck me ... I did not let myself down (endurance in trial) ... I know I will not be confused (trust in the Lord who sends us and accompanies. ..."*

To be disciple today so as to "bring to the distressed a word of comfort" - a very common animation task for those who were given the responsibility of communities - requests:

- To learn to discern the will of God and his ways in our lives often full. To be people in search of something.
- This discernment is also a community discernment. Sharing with other Lasallian with whom we share the same spirituality can help us. *"The community knows that the mission is always to be discovered at the various stages of life and in touch with new realities."* R 54
- To be available, ready to fight, trust fully in God who sends us and accompanies, to give our time, our energies, our life if need be for the Lord and like him.

Some pitfalls and temptations today

The authority in our society often has a different structure. We get access to them through campaigns, propaganda, display of prestige, true or false things that the achievements provide. Sometimes, there is also a game of influences and interests manifested especially in elections. Some may be inclined to join together to explore strategies to get Superiors

"who fit into their plans." We are fully into mondanisation (worldly spirit) mentioned by Pope Francis and the beginning of any kind of abuse. There is misunderstanding of authority as service.

The fear of empowering lay people and to form them

We can see that there is competition and loss of our identity. There is confusion between doing and being, function and identity. Besides, the abundance of vocations gives us a sense of security and a look of complacency vis-à-vis the lay people. There is lack of awareness of the richness that their presence brings to our educational centres and their profound being which makes them be consecrated by baptism as we are sons and daughters of God, sent also to do the same mission. But according to the logic of Jesus, the greatest is not the one invested in authority, except the one who is closer to the Heart of God ("the little ones"). Greatness, according to God, is measured to holiness that him alone sees and not the qualifications or responsibilities.

Basically, simple Brothers or invested with authority, we are embarked in the same fidelity to our vocation, that of becoming a disciple and commit ourselves resolutely in the creative fidelity to our vocation. We are brought back to the meaning of responsibility that is common to us. This is what was expressed by the Declaration in 1967 giving the spirit of any faithfulness.

Societies and individuals grow old and die once the inherited habits of the past prevail over the will of renewal in the light of a dual loyalty to both founding intuitions and demands of life today. In the long run, the future of our Institute is in the hands of the Brothers. They should not expect that those in authority to give solutions to the new problems of a changing world. It is up to each Brother, in God's presence, to initiate the long spiritual journey of conversion and to determine his personal contribution in the joint work of adapted renewal. This is the price to pay if the Institute wants to ward off the threat of stagnation and to live a renewed youth and vitality. D 53.2

We could end with a question: How far have we gone in our communities regarding the faithfulness to our vocation and responding to the educational needs of multitudes of young Africans?

THE SERVICE OF AUTHORITY AS SOURCE OF COMMUNION

Brother Joan Sala

The chapters 7, 8 and 9 of the different structures or organisations of the Institute in the service of authority. The General Chapter (chapter 7), the Central Government (the Brother Superior and his Councilors) ch 8, and the territorial organisations : District and Region (chap9). These structure have only known few modifications. There are however some modifications or significant additions :

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- RR 109- 110 two articles which govern the exercise of authority and which gives the sens and the exercise
- And a certain number that are about the importance of the Lasallian mission by including partners.
- 114.2 *The General Chapter takes into account reports from various units of the Lasallian mission.*
- 132.1 *Those in charge of Districts and of District apostolic works develop and promote communion among the persons involved in the educational mission: the Brothers, Associates and Partners.*
- 133.6-7 for the formation of Lasallian partners and MEL Structures.
- 137.1 this is a parallel of 114,2 but for the District Chapter
- 142.3 for the meetings of Lay and the Brothers
- 147.1 Relations of Brother Visitor and his Council and the link with the MEL organisations.

In these three Chapters, it is a question of the **exercise of authority**. Thus, it is indicated to us that « *Authority has for its purpose to promote communion among all the Brothers, the vitality of the institute, the efficacy of the mission and independence among the various units that compose it.* » R111

What the exercise of authority aim at

1. To give life and cohesion to the entire body :

Often indeed, Districts or even some communities feel very little in communion with each other. Local issues of our mission monopolize our horizon and our feeling to be community suffers from the barriers of countries and different cultures. "Divide and

rule" was the motto of some conquerors. And in reverse, "unity is strength". The danger of division exists where sharing responsibilities and services require a certain specialization or where the extent of the Community makes communication difficult. Who says partitioning, division, says fragility. This fragility is compounded by the reduced number of Brothers in our communities.

This fragility is accentuated by the reduced number of Brothers in our communities. Saint Paul already felt it in his communities. He gives the vivid example of the human body "Can hands tell the feet I do not need you? "... The weakest members feel carried by the strongest, those who fail to honor those we are dealing with more respect ... because they all have their place and contribute to the common good. So the body corrects the universal tendency to the reign of the strongest or the most prominent. To feel part of large Community (District, Region, Institute) will help us better carry our fragilities but also to develop our potential. Although a large body is heavy to carry and has inertia, it also has many assets that do not have the small structures.

We have examples of this with common projects to the Region: CELAF, novitiate, but also common projects in southern Sudan, and in this case it is a common project between Congregations, a first in the Church. We can see this tendency to union also in other areas of the modern world. The trend of the economy is to group together in larger groups, with more ways to modernize and find their way, but without going overboard or otherwise of major multinational behemoth that scare and are almost incapable to evolve. In terms policy also with supranational structures ... Closer to us, we see the trend in our Institute to unite the Districts with more sustainable structures. We have just seen with the formation of the District of Central Africa.

But for these structures of unity to be more fruitful than paralyzing there needs to be a number of qualities and that they have a target in **profound harmony with the Body. Feel really united to the Body.** A community must be in communion with all that is happening in the Body, pray for it, the Brothers in difficulty. A bit like in the Church. In its structures of unity, everyone should feel concerned and therefore responsible, making his contribution with diligence and simplicity. This also means, therefore, be ready to sacrifice and for a small District, the "loss" of a Brother for a common service may be strongly felt. The authority therefore promotes **a sense of belonging and unity.**

2. The authority for the effectiveness of the mission.

We receive from the Lord the mission in a great community that provides various services - ministries - the common mission. Our commitment to God is a commitment to our Brothers to live together and by association the same mission. The texts on our vows insist on their community impact, the will to **build a Community for the common mission, whatever the age and function.** This is God's plan: forming a Community Evangelizers who, by conforming to Christ are dedicated heart and soul to children and young people especially the poor. Whoever says community says exercise of communion among all its members, which is the proper exercise of authority.

- *R 132* The District, as the ordinary expression of the communion existing between the communities and the Brothers who compose it, is more than a structure of government. It manifests and supports the fraternal union which enables all, communities and Brothers, to help one another to shoulder together the responsibility for their life and their apostolic work. For this reason, the chief mission of those in charge of the District is to promote the unity, as well as the active participation of the Brothers and communities and, by this means, ensure the value and efficacy of their witness within the local Church.

And for the Brother Regional: *R 136.2 He provides a link between the Region and the General Council and the different services of the Institute.... He fosters also cooperation and interdependence within the Region, as well as between it and other Regions.*

3. Authority : an exercise of obedience

We are not used to seeing it as such. The chapter on the consecration showed how to live obedience as communion to the feelings and attitudes of Christ. Chapters 7-9 and already the introduction in articles 109-110, show us that the exercise of authority is also an exercise of obedience, but on another level

*« At all levels of the Institute, the Brothers exercising authority are **guided by the Holy Spirit in the search and fulfillment of God's will.** » R 109*

The real guide to follow is the Holy Spirit. All we seek to do the will of God. We all have **mediations to discover it.** For the Brothers : Superiors, the Rule itself or the calls of the

Church and of the world are mediations. For those who exercise authority, *"the views of the Brothers"* is also a mediation to *"perceiving together God's plan"* R 110.2

Brother Alvaro said in a meeting of Superior Generals Union (May 2013)

"Our model for us (authority - obedience) is centered on brotherhood that gives preference to fraternal relations based on equality, respect and dialogue. And this is reflected in the binomial authority-obedience, that we must situate not in a vertical dimension with the authority on top and obedience down, but in a horizontal dimension where authority and obedience at the same level, working together to discover and fulfill the Will of God as absolute and final goal of our life. » The Superior does not have all the answers, and thus also have to listen to the Spirit. This humble search together for the Will of God strengthens the sense of authority and avoid arbitrariness. I like to see this in the structure of the Central Community of the Brother Superior and the Brother Councillors forming a community at the Centre of the Institute, giving a fundamental community image as an icon for the whole Institute.

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124. Constituted as a community at the Centre of the Institute, the Brother Superior General and his Councillors are a symbol of unity, and they work to ensure the fidelity of the entire Body to the faith of the Church, the directives of the Holy See, and the living charism of the Founder.

124.1 *The Brother Superior General and his Councillors have as their mission to strengthen communion and interdependence in the Institute. In their efforts to establish and maintain the structures that are needed for the unity of the Institute and the efficacy of what they do, they ensure that concern for the individual remains a priority.*

De La Salle said in his own way when he insisted to his Brothers that what they did was God's work, nobody owns God's plan but however *"the Lord wanted to put in the hands of the Brothers the destiny of the Institute"* R154 and together, united as Lasallians and Brothers that we find inspiration to meet the challenges experienced by the Institute (cf R 154-155). Doing so means implementing the spirit of faith, which is a renunciation school to learn to accept, not our plan, but God's. This requires listening, dialogue, discernment, not only with our Brothers but also with those who share our mission to make it consistent with the Gospel. This is new. The Rule requires it for the various units of authority.

- ✓ for the General Chapter RR 114.2 (« *The General Chapter takes into account reports from various units of the Lasallian mission*) ,
- ✓ for the District Chapter (137.1),
- ✓ for Brother Visitor (132.1). and this requires time and **humility**.

Brother Mauro, Superior General of Capuchin, said in a meeting: "*Often I realize it is very helpful to tell one's Council, Today we only have a first exchange of ideas on a topic and not known to make decisions. Let's Take time to discern!*" at the Union of Superior Generals' meeting October 22, 2013). The urgency must not let us down in a hurry. For those who have the service of authority, the role is often delicate because we tend to easily take as models and "**worldly styles**" in the language of Pope Francis, where appearance and material success often takes over the humble service to the way of Jesus. That is, listening, the humble search for the Will of God requires courage and we are not always the most visible and easiest solution. Sometimes Brother Visitor (and Council) will have to withstand very human pressures, decide on sensitive topics: This school should be closed or not? Accept or not a request. What Brother to send for higher education? with what criteria?

4 – Render service of the decision

The exercise of authority must have an effect of **causing, be a facilitator**. We discussed this at length in the first talk: Brother Instrument of Communion. To animate is to give a soul, an impulse, an incentive that gives strength to the action. But it does also and especially by **the service of the decision** which liberates. Here is what Father Benedict Griège, Superior General of the Augustinian "**Render the service of the decision**. There is an attitude that turns risky and harmful to the religious life: indecision. It is necessary in the words of our Rule of Life, that the Superior "**renders the service of the decision**." There is something eminently liberating when a decision is made. "(after the time for reflection and discernment)

There are big decisions that are the beginning of a great adventure, a great project. They lead and are marked with the sign of courage. It takes as there is in man a great resilience, reaction. Our Malagasy culture is famous about it. One is able to say yes as it takes time, but it does not move. This is the famous "moramora" that amazes many travelers who

arrive to our Island. Brother John Johnston told us in his own way: In our decisions must not be left behind, act in terms of **reaction**, but know ahead by taking the initiative, what he called **pro active**. One who only **reacts** is always a loser because he is defensive. One that is **proactive** is one that is a winner and had a chance to win. ...

They (the superiors) choose leaders and encourage and generate creative initiatives. R 125

One who is vested with authority will prove a real leader when he himself will be with the Founder's charism. So as part of the return to the charism of the Institute, the General Chapter was not afraid to invite District leaders to assess the evolution of their works so that they do "*direct service to the poor effective priority*" R 1987 40, a. The RR has the same objective and opens up new perspectives:

RR 29.1 : « *Regions and Districts draw up plans which enable all their works to be really committed to helping the poor and combating the causes of poverty. These plans, which include cooperation between congregations, develop the community dimension of educational works, and encourage the shared mission to open up more to the service of the poor.* »

It is not simple, especially in our latitudes because there are many requirements to take into account:

- Self sufficiency in our Districts
- Get means in order to help poor schools and make the poor natural leaders in their communities.
- The risk of deviation of our charism if all works are aimed at privileged people or if the only profit is our only criterion.
- The risk of gentrification (or mondanisation) by the easy adoption of the dominant criteria: effectiveness, the search for social recognition, a certain lack of trust in the Lord.

De La Salle followed Father Barre's advice not to "found" schools for the poor because then they "*would melt*," but he founded on the Providence of God who does not neglect his work. How to reconcile trust in Providence without falling into reckless nor culpable in search for purely human support?

5 – The exercise of authority promotes creativity

Some type of *authority-obedience* among the Brothers is more like **managing Director of the State** than to that of an apostle of the Gospel or an entrepreneur. We simply administer, without wetting in delicate solutions or which require risky initiatives. The 1967 Chapter insisted much on creativity in mission in ways to live and witness the Gospel, its inculturation in new people. The breath of the Spirit that blew during the Second Vatican Council was in every mouth. You had to be attentive to the signs of the Spirit which manifested everywhere.

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We have become more vigilant and more conservative and also demanding as we gained experience. The average age of the Brothers has much to say with all that entails, we have also learned from our mistakes and our excess (after 67 there were many experiences that have not been all positive) and life has taught us to be more vigilant, yet the spirit of creativity and renovation is still in our rules:

- ✓ « *After the process of listening, fraternal dialogue and community discernment, it is them to assume their responsibilities and taking decisions by **impulsing the necessary initiatives ... in fidelity to his charism***” R 110.4
- ✓ « *In their way of governing, the Superior General and his Councillors call to the prophetic dynamism ...” They encourage and generate creative initiatives ... They bring hope and they share their conviction with the Brothers*» R 125
- ✓ « *The District Chapter organises its programme of sessions in a way that enables various representatives of the educational mission to address the Chapter*» R 137.1

The Institute has gained embonpoint especially in poor Districts in resources (human, economic) Sometimes we become timid in creativity and confidence in the Spirit... It's time to open ourselves to solidarity among all. In solidarity, we have more creative freedom, witness the project "100+" or the creation of an inter congregational community in South Sudan, but also invitations of Secretariat for Solidarity and Development whereby we are invited to be creative to serve the poor. With everyone's help we can create significant works for them and with them.

Finally the reading of our last General Chapter invites us to live with gratitude to this great gift of God which is the Lasallian family and the association with the laity:

*"With their partners, the brothers joyfully share the same mission. Together, they ensure the vitality of the charism by creating or developing structures of animation, training and research ..."*R19

"The charismatic dynamism (the vow of association) awakens in the Brothers creativity to bring the best possible and sustainable response ..." R 27

Within our Institute God creates an unexpected and new dynamism, work of the Spirit. Through him, God tells us that he never abandons his Work and continues to bless it.

It is the service of authority to support and promote all this dynamism that the Spirit wants to develop in us, leaving the act through our decisions and enterprises.

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APPENDIX 1

I would also like to add some thoughts drawn from conferences given by Brother Álvaro in our District of Madagascar during the first week of our meetings, from 6 to 13 August 2015. The sixth conference focused on authority as service. He takes as a basis the 1714. Here are some extracts.

« Throughout the history of religious life, different models of authority appeared, some more focused on the figure of a father like the priests in monastic orders, some with military characteristics ... and Ours is model based on the Brotherhood that gives preference to fraternal relations based on equality, respect and dialogue. And this is reflected in the binomial authority-obedience, we must situate ourselves not in a vertical dimension with the authority above and obedience below, but in a horizontal dimension where authority and obedience, at the same level working together to discover and fulfill God's Will as absolute and final goal of our lives.”

An evangelical icon

Jesus offers a new style of power. It must pass from the power-domination to power-service ... The service can be transformed and revolutionized internally ... "For you ... that the greatest take the place of the youngest and the principle that the place of one who serves" ... Lk 22: 24-27

As well expressed by Clodovis Boff, Jesus, to indicate the meaning that he gives to power, paradoxically employs an inferiority vocabulary: the child, the servant, the slave. Although we do not believe in it, they should be icons when thinking about our ministry of government. This is an authority-obedience like that of Jesus with his apostles establishing friendly relations rather than government structures ...

This is an authority that proclaims the Good News that God our Father and we are all Brothers, therefore called to love one another as Christ loved us. (1Jn3,21; Ph2,5-9) This is an authority that ends up being the gift of life for those whom the Father has entrusted to us (1 Jn 3:16)

It is important to assume that all ... we are responsible for fraternal life and mission, and all we must seek to obey the ultimate authority of the Will of God discerned in community. If a difference is established, this one is functional order. In fact, no one is greater but assumes higher function. This is a temporary condition that affects a function and not a permanent quality of being.

Our first feeling as animators of our Brothers is that the main thing is to be Brothers and being Superior is an adjective certainly important, but temporary and conditional. Brother is the substantial. Brother that listens, that respects, including that animates that God entrusts to the ministry and the needs of his Brothers, encouraging when discerning the signs of the times, the creative responses, fidelity to the values of the Gospel, open to the cries of the poor and the needs of youth.

I just quoted the principles that should guide the authority as a service it gives us:

- *The person above structures*
- *Openness to reality (look in fidelity to our charism)*
- *Young people's mediation*
- *Listening to the poor*
- *The association with the laity*

APPENDIX 2

As part of creativity here are some proposals of Circular 469 (45th General Chapter) A Circular should be reviewed. The first 32 proposals concern our commitment to the Mission, our life as Brothers and the creativity in union with Lasallians. Mentions on the Association are multiple.

Proposition 4: That the Brothers will actively continue the process of promoting their association within educational communities. The Brothers will be witnesses of faith, promoters of fraternity, and of the gift of freely saying yes, for the educational service with the poor. The Brothers will accompany Partners, and also will allow themselves to be accompanied by them, in their respective journeys as Lasallian educators. The Brothers will encourage and welcome the specific contribution that Partners bring to the Lasallian charism.

Proposition 6: That the Institute support and strengthen a strategic network for association at every level of the Institute. To do this: Each District or Sector will have a person, or team of persons, charged with this mission. This person, or team, will network with the Region and with the center of the Institute. The network of communication will be supported by a Secretariat and by the Communication Service of the Generalate, the objective of which is to share information and best practices on Association.

Proposition 8: That the Institute will ensure support for priority 3.1.1 of the IAMEL 2013, "To assure and accompany meaningful experiences of association in all Lasallian works."

Proposition 10 That the Institute will support the representation of Young Lasallians in Sector, District, and Regional structures.

Proposition 12 : Création of CIMEL (International Mission Council...)

Proposition 14

The Institute...commit to reinforce the commitment of Lasallians, ...

Proposition 16: That initial formation of the Brothers in the Institute will have as a priority their preparation as catechists. In addition, the emphasis on the Brother as catechist will be part of the continuing formation of the Brothers

Proposition 17 That Brother Superior and his Council will work with the CIMEL in drafting a Declaration on Lasallian Education that will reflect on the particular traits of our educational practices in the 21st century

Proposition 18: That Brother Superior will appoint a General Councilor to accompany Lasallian Higher Education and recommend his appointment to the Administrative Council of the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU).

3.27 As a process we suggest the following:

- In the next seven years, each Brother will include in his Personal Annual Program a concrete commitment in relation to the metaphor of “beyond”

Proposition 21: That during the Year of Consecrated Life, each Region will set up a network of Brothers and Partners responsible for vocation ministry, especially for vocations to the Brothers.

Proposition 27: That the Center of the Institute guarantee an international community of Brothers and Volunteers in each Region where vocation ministry and discernment will be offered in the context of a community life dedicated to the service of the poorest.

Proposition 28: That each District will strengthen or create formation programs for the Lasallian mission for formation personnel, Brothers and Partners, for the purpose of building teams of facilitators on the local level that can effectively train and accompany all who work in the mission.

Proposition 29: That each Region, in conjunction with the Center of the Institute, will take charge of the formation of Brothers and Partners who collaborate, now and in the future, in formation programs for the life of the Brother.

Proposition 30:

« Culture of accompaniment » for all lasallians for their entire life.

Wednesday 26th, Thursday 27th August 2015

THE BROTHERS AND THEIR RULE

Brother Alain Houry

When I launched, in the District of Paris, the study of the draft Rule in 1985, I had a reaction of several Brothers: "we received the Rule from our predecessors, and through them from John Baptist de La Salle, and now it has become our work. In what way is it still God given us? "This is to ignore how the Rule how the Rule was written. Let us see how.

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1. **How the conduct of school come up**, Jean Pungier. Rome 1980 — p. 9-13

If we rewrite the Conduct of Schools

"In Blain, there is the description of a meeting (" Conference ") extended over several days, and maintained by John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers. This text reveals a John Baptist de La Salle very different from the image that we have formed of a rigid authoritarian and Founder. He also probably reveals one of the reasons, and among the deepest, attachment of the Brothers to John Baptist de La Salle. And one of the reasons for the "success" of the Founder in the stable establishment of his Institute: **he wanted and knew how to make disciples of men responsible for themselves and the future of their Institute.**

Yes, amazing text, certainly, unusual text: * we are in 1684, under Louis XIV hundred years before the French Revolution and its democratic clamor ... But let us allow Blain to talk - Blain who thinks about itself, the method of authority would have been as indicated ... but who wants to report things as they happened "[without meddling his own comments!] (**Book 2, chap. II, I et II, p. 231-233**): Brother Jean Jacquot, 14 years in 1686, is certainly source of Blain. He was in the community of the Little Brothers and would take the habit in 1688: it was from what he heard from the participants of this meeting that he could tell what it was all about. Is he or Blain who mixed with 1694?

*So it was, to make the assembly of a regular Schools teachers a Community, give them a habit, rules, constitutions and establish in all things perfect and suitable uniformity * to their vocation. The aim was to inspire them all the same spirit, the same feelings, the same provisions, the same views and to make one heart and soul in the example of the first Christians [...].*

*But to succeed in this, he did not think to put nothing of his own. This humble man wanted nothing about him of all that had to be done. [...] In this willingness of death to oneself, the humble Teacher summoned his main disciples, twelve in number * and organized a meeting with them to confer together on ways to give form to the institution, 'to make them faithful and give them stability. The matter could not be more important, and needed further reflections, or rather great light. To attract them, the fervent Superior suggested a retreat, which they agreed to heart.*

*The retreat began on the eve of the Ascension of the year 1684 * to finish at the feast of Pentecost; but was extended to that of the Holy Trinity. De La Salle made a strong and touching opening speech that taught them about their convocation and the reasons of the retreat he had inspired them. [...]*

*In this long stay of prayer and meditation, they had plenty of time to invoke the Holy Spirit and prepare their hearts to his impressions *. In silence, in recollection, as everyone was free to be attentive to his voice and listen to his inspirations, each one was also free to communicate his thoughts and feelings. Without warning them*, without suggesting them his views, without inspiring them his ideas, De La Salle, let them free to think and say what they wanted. No doubt* that the shorter the better* for them and would have been to make him talk himself first and to be as docile children, to the lights of their Father. A man of grace like him was an instrument of the Holy Spirit and pronounced oracles for them.*

*Maybe they did, maybe by showing him again that they were his children, they begged him to govern as Father and make them laws without taking their opinion and without deference to their feelings. But on this point, the way to defeat his humility that left him only the right to listen to them, consider their opinions and to conclude on the plurality? It's not that he did not help them with his advices and that he rectifies their opinions when they did not make sense or were not right; but he did in such a way that his own love does not count, and that their freedom to offer their opinions and to consider them was not more embarrassing. The only right that reserved for himself was to speak much to God, to implore him to speak himself to the his twelve principal disciples * and declare by their mouths his holy wills with such clarity that they only have to abide by the thoughts dictated by the Spirit of God.*

** Giving explanation: 1686 (according to Maillefer) and not in 1684 - which changes the situation of De La Salle: it is from 1685 (Departure of Nyel to Rouen) that he is*

responsible for houses outside Reims (Guise, Rethel and Laon) and he distributed his wealth to the poor.

(See Lasalliana 08-2-O-07: at Reims in 1686: a first essay of the General Chapter)

- **Uniformity:** that of the same principle of action, like the first community of Jerusalem in Acts (cf. "to give form to their school").
- **Twelve:** probable confusion with 1694. The Brothers of Reims and the Brothers Directors of Guise, Rethel and Laon were to be present at this meeting.

- Prepare their hearts to his **impressions:** cf. "*Printing a movement*," Blain (Book 2, chap. II, p. 231-232).
- **Without warning:** to warn is not «to announce something», but speak himself the first "(cf. 'anticipate an objection').
- The shortest and **best** for them: for Blain (... **Book 2, Chapter II, p 231-232**), is the subordination that is the unity of a body; to John Baptist de La Salle, this will be the association.
- **His humility:** his realism, especially in view of the failure of the rule given to 1st Teachers- clear progress at first, then abandonment: after "less than six months, of all former teachers, only 'one or two' remained! (**Book 1, chap. XV, p. 179**)

Notes: We only see here a part of the process. The adoption of regulations comes after a maturation time: the first masters have left and those who replaced them have come by divine vocation to be disciples of De La Salle and of the same movement to achieve together and free Christian education for children of ordinary families.

- **Memorandum on the habit (in 1690-1691)** is a writing of circumstance, probably for the Superior of Saint-Sulpice, to defend the autonomy of the group we call the Institute and is designated at the beginning as Community of Schools Christian. The Rules give a fairly clear appearance with the Community and its purpose for it to oppose the pretensions of a priest to change the habit. However, it is not enclosed into what it is now:

This Community is commonly called the Community of the Christian Schools and at present rests upon—indeed, is rooted in—Providence alone. Those who live in it follow a Rule and are dependent for everything, having no personal possessions, and treat one another as equals.

The members of this Community devote themselves to teaching in tuition-free schools, in towns only, and to giving basic religious instruction¹ every day, including Sundays and holidays;

Provision is also made for training schoolmasters for rural districts in a house, separate from the Community, that we call a normal school. [...]

In this Community we also provide training for young boys who possess basic intelligence and some religious disposition. When we judge them suitable and they themselves apply for admission, we accept them into the Community. (MH 0, 0, 2-7).

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*- **First perpetual vows in 1694** and the association that binds the 12 Brothers and De La Salle allowed to elect Mr. de La Salle as Superior and develop the Rule: this is probably the manuscript said in 1705 from which we got the text. We will see that the essential part of the Rule is already acquired, after 10 years of practice.*

*- The said **Rule of 1705**, drawn from the experiences of Brothers, is the expression of an identity in a route that offers the guarantee of its continuity. It probably reflects what had been written in 1694, De La Salle as more the editor than the author of the Rule.*

Who are the authors of the Rule? asked Brother Michel Sauvage at SIEL 1990 to 1991? Young people, Brothers, De La Salle ... and God also.

But it's his person who composes the Community, not as a charismatic leader but one who teaches more by what he does than by what he says, he is the Superior who helps the Brothers to discover God's call in the needs of young people, causing them to live their association to respond to these calls. They decide not to receive their Superior outside their Body. We will see: the commitment of the Brothers to their Superior is intimately linked to their specific vocation.

*

2. To change the Superior or the form of government of the Institute (Blain Book 2 chap. XIX III-IV, p. 413...419 — Livre 3 chap. XII VI, p. 111)

*[En1704] **De La Salle is condemned unheard; another ecclesiastic is chosen to take his place; Pirot comes to the novitiate house to install the new Superior and encounters invincible opposition from the Brothers...***

[413] ... *Those who had made a vow of obedience to De La Salle considered this vow as a personal one binding them to him; they did not think they were under any obligation to pay the same submission to a chief who was not a member of their organization, whom they had neither selected nor asked for, who did not possess their unique spirit or ways, who was ignorant of their customs and procedures, who was not fit to maintain discipline and the Rule, who could not sustain the austerity required of them or give an example of it. All of them, without having agreed upon any one line of conduct, had resolved to withdraw and to leave the new Superior alone in the house if the deposition of De La Salle was carried out.*

... Mr. Pirot announced the appointment of a new Superior. Hardly had it been pronounced, one of the principal Brothers respectfully approached him and said with modesty that the Brothers had a Superior and they begged him not to speak to give another. [414] [...] All cried out that *they had no other than His Eminence Superior and De La Salle*. "Mr. La Salle is the only Superior we want, we do not want in another." [...] [419] Minutes from the Cardinal of Noailles ... *If all the inferiors were also attached to their Superiors that his Brothers were to De La Salle, communities would be a paradise, and we would only find there saints.*

Book 3 chap. XII : The results from De La Salle's long absence [1713]

[111] A fourth source of trouble was even more dangerous, for it gave rise to another form of government which De La Salle's rival, of whom we have so often spoken, finally managed to introduce into the Society.

The enemy of De La Salle was to retrench in the Institute, amount of usage and practices, and to give it another form of government, with new regulations and new Superiors [...]

According to this so-called system: **1. The Brothers should have outsider Superior to guide them, in the manner of religious, who have an external supervisor. 2. The Paris house was to make a distinguished society [separate, autonomous] and dependent full of this ecclesiastical superior. 3. The novitiate should be suppressed, as unnecessary and too dependent; because it cost a lot to keep and nourish so many novices, besides, we did not need them in Paris, since the Brothers of the Schools should be stable, without being changed. 4. The Brothers should remain all in their places, and be stable without being changed. 5. To repair the loss of those whom death could remove, or those who take leave of themselves, or those that should be returned in the event of a fault, it was proposed to**

have one, two or three novices, more or less, in each house, according to their income and needs. 6. Finally we meditated another form of government which we did not give us knowledge.

We know what follows: The Directors of Paris, Versailles and Saint-Denis, certainly Brother Bartholomew, agree to amend the Rule for approval by Cardinal of Noailles. After only they realize the scope of what they have just done: if the Brothers of Paris can change the Rule without the agreement of the Brothers of other dioceses, that is the end of the association, and therefore the Institute. Only the return to Paris of De La Salle can ward off danger: hence the letter of 1 April 1714. This time, it is not the resistance of the Brothers that prevents modification of the Rule; it is the decision of the Cardinal of Noailles not to change anything without De La Salle's agreement. To Blain, God has something to do here!

*

3. The revision of the Rule concerning recreation (Blain Book 3, chap. XV, p. 143)

At that time, only fourteen years had elapsed since De La Salle had founded his Institute, and already the abuses in recreation had begun to affect its fervor. God, however, did not permit the evil to go any farther but applied a remedy almost without anyone's realizing it. In about 1694, when there were only five houses and not more than thirty Brothers, De La Salle, influenced by an extraordinary movement of fervor, was making a month's retreat at the novitiate in Vaugirard with four of the principal Brothers. He was inspired to seek a means for shutting the door on all false liberty during recreation. [...]

Some years later, the servant of God set down in writing what he had authorized in practice and made it the sixth chapter of his Rule. He considered the chapter so important that he had it read every Sunday during dinner, so that all might pay attention to it and observe it faithfully [...].

He was not disappointed. He had the consolation of bringing back to the recreation of the Brothers the fervor that had originally characterized it. The rule which taught them to sanctify this exercise corrected all the abuses that existed, and the fidelity with which the rule was observed prevented the abuses from ever recurring. The chapter on the manner of behaving in recreation, [...] had been in use among the Brothers for nearly twenty-four years without having met with any serious opposition during all that time.

It was only in the 1717 assembly that three or four Brothers suggested to the others that they should modify a regulation which so constrained nature, even in the very action which was supposed to provide nature with some relaxation. The holy Founder had turned over to the members of the assembly the complete Rule, which had not yet received any approval from the Holy See. He allowed the Brothers full liberty to make whatever changes they desired. The chapter on recreation became the main topic of this examination, at the request of the three or four Brothers who were present.

After much discussion extending over two meetings and after much prayer, it was agreed, to conclude the affair in unanimity, that they would consult superiors of communities who had the highest reputation and the most experience. So that the interested parties could not complain that they had not been allowed to present their points of view, two who advocated changes were delegated to plead their cause before such arbiters. De La Salle was asked if he approved of this, and his prudence could not let him refuse. He quite willingly abandoned his work to revision by others. [...]

After listening attentively to the arguments on both sides, they concluded that the Brothers should continue to spend their recreations as they had been doing for twenty-four years with so many blessings and that they should be careful not to change anything. The opinion was clear and decisive....

The Brother who urged changing the rule appealed from the opinion to the example of the judges themselves, and he pretended to find a contradiction between what these superiors had decided and what took place in their communities. Because finally, he said, that in your own houses, which are so regular, he said, the recreations are not carried on in such a constraining manner. Say tolerated, not permitted, these men of experience replied. Such things were not allowed in the Rule, but these customs have been introduced little by little. We endure them because we cannot do away with them. We can see their unfortunate consequences, but we cannot remedy them. The Brother was reduced to silence and said no more. The others who shared his opinion imitated him, and it was finally decided, with no dissenting voices, that the chapter of the Rule concerning recreation would remain as it was.

Comments on the revision process:

- The recreations were adjusted to allow free spiritual sharing (and educational) under the effective leadership of the Brother Director; with time, they become simple conversations,

without building in the life of the Brothers. De La Salle suffers from this loss of vitality but does not intervene as an authority.

- He decides what he had authorized the practice: it is from that of the most devoted that was spiritual sharing revived and the fruits that come as result give authority to the way of doing the recreation. Therefore, the writing of the Rule may include a chapter ***the way the brothers should behave during recreations*** (chapter to be number 6 in 1718 and 1726). Blain said that the Founder actually recommends reading this chapter every Sunday, but only the 1726 edition says: *We will read the Compendium of things of which the Brothers must do in recreation, the first day of homeleave each month during meal.*

- Back to Practice ("remember the fervor" writes Blain) of ***the manner to pass recreation*** will bring De La Salle to make it the fourth external support of the Institute, in Chapter 16: From the regularity, in Rule 1718.

- However, 3 or 4 Brothers Chapter in 1717 (comprising 16 Brothers) get 2 sessions of discussion and many prayers to consider a relaxation of the established text: it was decided unanimously to choose the arbitration of Superiors of religious Orders ("Community Superiors"). The arbitration, followed by the Brothers of each of the two opposing views, leads to the retention of the text: *keep this virtuous practice that we have lost, alas! Without being able to take it again now.*

The Chapter is unanimous in maintaining.

Somehow, we might say, the use of an external Body for the Institute (*as today the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*), is not necessarily contrary to the full responsibility of a General Chapter!

- The changes at the Chapter in 1717

The Rule concerning the recreations is not changed but after the revision requested by the Capitulants to De La Salle, two important additions appear in the manuscript text signed by Brother Bartholomew, the 01/31/1718.

This importance, for the same understanding of the Rule, was highlighted by the conferences of Brother Maurice-Auguste, then Deputy Director of the Second Novitiate in Rome, published in several articles in ***Entre Nous*** and gathered in a small publication in 1954 ***For better reading of our Common Rules***. We find the text in the CL 5, p. 323-403. I rely here only as regards the chapters on the spirit of faith (2) and regularity (16).

"What is most important and what you should have more respect in a community, is that all who compose have the spirit that is proper to it " (RC 2, 1). Without being astonishment perhaps, this vigor and this emphasis can go unnoticed. [... Our rules should] "settle" the life of community and of each of its members. But "what is more important," it's not just that - and this is the Rule itself assures us with an emphasis that will not take any other prescription - "what to whom one must have more respect in a community, "it is not the details of this observance, but rather that life in the Spirit. [...] Design that definitely repudiates formalism. (p. 333).

The second text statement by Brother Maurice-Auguste concerns writing a new chapter (16) on the Regularity (p. 355S). I quote here only art. 1 (RC 16.1). *It is necessary that the Brothers apply themselves and take to the foundation and to support their regularity that Saint Augustine says at the beginning of his Rule - that those who remain in a community must first of all love God and then the neighbor- because these commandments are those mainly given to us by God (Mt 22.37 to 39) and because the regularity whatsoever if it is separated from the observation of these two commandments, is useless for salvation, because it is only established in the communities to give to those who take things easy to accurately observe God's commandments and that the most of the rules are practices who have something to do with it.*

Since 1967, the Capitulants wanted to reproduce these texts highlighted.

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4. Brother Barthelemy got two Assistants: innovation in the government (Blain, Book 3, chap. XIV, p. 135)

Brother Barthélemy [on May 18, 1717] was elected Superior General of the Institute. [...] the Brothers knelt before him to acknowledge his authority and submit themselves obediently to him, they made him all the more fearful of having to command them, and He regretted all the more the impossibility of no longer being able to obey...He blushed to find himself in De La Salle's place. His sorrow choked back his words. The tears he shed continued to reproach the Brothers with this election, but they would not listen either to his complaints or to his reproaches.

His sighs were no more effective than his pleas, he was obliged to accept through obedience a position which his humility would have refused, but he agreed only on condition that two Brothers, chosen from among the most able, should be given him as his

aides to share with him the weight of his responsibility. That was done. The assembly appointed two of the principal Brothers as his assistants to help him with their advice.

[...]

5 1904-1946 ...is it a big parenthesis?

When the Law of 07/07/1904 prohibits members of congregations in France all forms of education and consequently eliminated all teaching congregations, our Brothers were about 10,600 in France and 4,800 in other countries. What happened then has had a strong impact on the perception that the Brothers had of their own vocation.

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Superiors who could not agree on a unanimous position, the French Brothers were faced with difficult options to take to continue teaching in a christian way: to **go abroad** to preserve their religious life with the habit, community life and relationship with their superiors - or else stay in France by officially stating that they are no longer members of the Institute, "**to secularize oneself**" (hoping for the day when they can become publicly Brothers) avoiding anything that might suggest that they still are in their heart. The secularized often had to organize alone, feeling abandoned by their superiors: they could not legally take care of the secular Brothers. The heroic fidelity of many secularized enabled the Institute, from 1925, to find a visible spot in France, as a teaching Institute.

As for the elderly and sick Brothers, they could stay in France, with the habit and in community but without any school activity: the State provided them with few retirement homes, but paid them no retirement.

The world wars of 14 and 40 brought greater autonomy of Visitors. It seems that after the 1939-1945 war, the 1946 Chapter had wanted to restore the observance, especially under the action of Brother Athanase-Émile who decided personally to approve the Rule by Rome. Brother Michel Sauvage wrote: *Rule and **was taken away** from the Brothers;* Vatican II and will require the preparation of the Chapter of 1966-1967 for the Rule to **be given back** to the Institute.

In Circular No. 318 of 07.10.1946, Brother Athanase-Émile reports the results of the General Chapter. Let's hear it:

The veneration of worship for authority, Lasallian heritage, did not suffer any alteration, despite the ideas currently prevalent in some quarters: mad independence, emancipation,

contempt of the elderly and of authority. Your spirit of faith makes you consider God in your Heads (RC 16), and that singularly notes the character of your submission to powers established by God. [...]

Before the Chapter, it was to be expected, from the Sacred Congregation for Religious, to receive some guidelines to follow, touching, or our various activities, or the projected revision of our Rule, or our government. In fact, such guidelines reached us from the beginning of the Chapter. [...].

The letter recommends reserve and weighting in developing of our Constitutions and Rules, and how it should work, and the whole Chapter, and a post-Chapter Commission and the Government (Superior and Assistants) for the approval of the Sacred Congregation. [...]

Recalling the principles sanctioned in the foundation of Bulle "In apostolicae dignitatis solio" it insists: a) *the preference to be given to poor children*; b) *on the supernatural and apostolic end of the educational work that must take in charge teaching*; c) *on free and disinterested apostolic ministry*. And it adds: "From these principles, we can deduce that, without neglecting the highest forms of education, following the guidelines and approval of the Church (Letter of the Secretariat of State, April 17, 1923) the special predilection of the Institute must go to elementary schools, technical schools, catechetical work, the normal schools for the training of secular teachers, to patronages and after-school groups. "[...] A similar directive, and even more categorical, we had been given some time ago when we asked for guidance on the revision of our Rules (p. 43-45).

Brother T.H. Junien Victor *had established two committees from among the members of the government of the Institute*. One would take care of the Common Rules, the other that of the Government. Many meetings were held during the winters of 1938 and 1939. The 1718 manuscript was the basis for the revision of the Common Rules. [...] A new draft was reviewed by the entire government of the Institute, finally gathered in Rome in March-April 1946...

When asking several Prelates if the General Chapter would have to discuss the Rules, The response was: "A General Chapter of religious is essentially different from parliament, and hence the modalities of action are totally distinct. Moreover, freedom of speech will not be impeded as far as to the revision of the Rules, since every Capitulant must have the ability to transmit in writing his personal observations on the new texts proposed. Towards

the end of its work, the Assembly shall appoint a post-Chapter Commission which will compile these notes and, by keeping what they think it is good, will correct the draft presented at the Chapter.

Finally, the Institute government, after having examined everything, will make its report and sent the text adopted to the Sacred Congregation for Religious, which shall be the final stage. "[...]

From the first days of the Chapter, Capitulants have heard read in the refectory of the new text on the Common Rules prepared by the Institute government; this text was also given to them, with invitation to study it carefully and make any written comments they deem useful. (p. 63-64).

The question was then raised whether a Chapter could discuss the Rule! Such was the mentality of the Curia and many Superiors imbued the book of Father Colin, CSSR, *The cult of the Rule*. The Rule is too holy for us to discuss it, the Chapter as the Body will have no vote to be made about the Rule, but it will elect a Post-Chapter Commission which will filter the individual notes of Capitulants. The review process will seem forever locked with the approval of the Rules in 1947.

The amount of deception among the Brothers, especially among those whom the war had to share the life of mobilized soldiers, prisoners or resistant like them. They had discovered a youth not attending our schools and who had a profound ignorance of religion, or even a strong prejudice against Christianity. It was for these Brothers an urgent call to reorient our apostolate and our way of life. And now Rule practically prohibited to adress the issue!

Scholastic in 1956, I will not perceive instantly this revolutionary attitude of the General Chapter, having elected Brother Nicet Joseph: he raises the Rule review process and decide the creation of *Lasallian Studies*. It will take time for these provisions become for me a journey of hope.

I kept a very bad memory of the 30-day retreat I made in July-August 1963 for perpetual profession. Brother Armand- Matthias who led the retreat gave us a talk each day on the Rule, a conference that I could summarize: *our Rule is impractical today, but it is the Rule so you have to practice it.*

It was quite demoralizing but I was not against this Brother when I knew soon after he felt very uncomfortable in the role he had to play, and that each year he had to ask Brother Nicet Joseph to be replaced in this function, resignation which was regularly

denied. What could be expected of the Institute concerning its rule? Fortunately, I had the joy of participating with all the Brothers in the preparation of Chapter 1966. The Council had allowed a perspective that I never expected.

6. Some aspects from the 1966-1967 General Chapter

I cannot make you a long presentation on the General Chapter and its work spanning over 2 years: I would point out how it *gave back* to the Brothers their Rule. A young student Brother in Theology in Paris in 1964-1968, I lived in Rue de Sèvres community with other students Brothers when the fifth project (P5) for the Chapter of 1966 was submitted to all the Brothers to study. It manifests to them a perspective that showed us it was possible to do much better in the sense of the Council: so we borrowed the good intentions of P5 writers and ... asked to reflect from other bases, integrating the perspective of the Vatican Council.

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There I felt that something was possible and that the Brothers had all the opportunity to bring their contribution in rewriting the Rule that the Council had requested. And we were well supported in this work by the Intersessional booklet, written by the French speaking Brother Assistants to prepare for the 1967 Chapter of renovation.

But I still have to remind first some difficulties that the Chapter encountered, especially regarding the question of the priesthood. You can find in English the story of Brother Luke Salm, *An Institute in Transition*, 1992 (translation available in French), or Spanish, a summary in the first volume of Brother Villalabeitia, *A falso dilema* (Studios Laslianos No. 15) 2008, from the p.92.

If you all have a pretty good knowledge of what happened, let me know: I will address another issue. I was not a member of this Chapter but I received from confidences of several Brothers who allow me to speak with some authority. And as such, brought by an unforeseen effect, a blocking of the Institute Government, the reaction of the 1976 Chapter to explain better about changing the Book of Government (removing Assistants).

he Institute has experienced in 1966 from some officials of the Congregation for Religious, an interference test to monitor the progress of the General Chapter. This point is important: For the Institute, it is not about precedence but its ability to read the signs of times and to respond according to its own identity.

Everything seems to focus on the question of the priesthood. The day of the opening of the Chapter, April 27, 1966, Cardinal Antoniutti, Prefect of the Congregation for Religious, invites the Chapter and there is a conference: *the Council opened the Institute of Religious Brothers the opportunity to decide to order priests some of their members*. It concluded by saying that they are obliged to accept this proposal.

The topic of the introduction of the priesthood was in the agenda of the Chapter, but the intervention of Cardinal, going beyond the wording of the Council, does not play in favor of its position. Brother Nicet Joseph had announced his intention to resign as soon as the election of his successor would be possible. Here comes from the Vatican the order to proceed as soon as possible this election - probably because some felt that Brother Nicet remained in position to block the introduction of the priesthood.

We must therefore stop the work started, revise the *Book of Government* (renouncing to Superior for life, adopting subsidiarity, define two kinds of Assistants) and proceed to the election of Brother Charles-Henry and his assistants. There was no intervention to direct the elections but it turns out that nearly half of those who were elected territorial Assistants at the beginning of the Chapter will be in the minority who refuse the directions taken in 1967 by the Chapter. It would have been normal to make the elections once clarified the broad guidelines of the Chapter.

Therefore, the Institute Government will often be blocked by this internal opposition. A simple example: Brother Michel Sauvage, elected Assistant for formation, part of General Assistants whose responsibility extends to the whole Institute. Now there will be several assistants who refuse him to come in the areas under their responsibility! In a lecture at the SIEL 90-91, Michel said: *"There were 12 institutes between 1966 and 1976"*, Brother Charles-Henry can not intervene for fear of creating a split in the Institute.

If I recall several things that do not work well, it is to emphasize that life is not a bed of roses, and that love also requires the Institute to recognize certain shortcomings to remedy. I would add that we also need strong personalities and well trained for this. I may have to give examples.

Going back to work on the Rule. Brother Nicet Joseph had implemented the decision of the Chapter of 1956. The Council opened the possibility of a new rule: PC 2 asking for the removal of all that is obsolete. It affirmed the need to *keep the spirit of the foundation*,

without the need to focus on the letter. This spirit could not be static and fixed; it was a dynamic, instead, that was called evolution. [...]

Moreover, it tended to better recognize the particular charisms of religious orders and leave them more initiative in their spirituality and their own structure. Finally, by advocating a revision of legislations so as to allow adaptation to current conditions and local data, it necessarily led an international Institute like ours to abandon the perspective of a detailed Rule whose application could not be universal. [...]

But the thought went much further: against legal attitude, authoritarian, moralistic, she wanted to find the living spirit of Christ and the Gospel. Thus some of the members of the Commission who worked with Rule began to understand that this was more so for religious to practice a Rule rather than to live by the spirit. (Jourjon, for spiritual renewal, p.22).

7. The Book of Government at the 1976 Chapter

I have already mentioned that premature election of the Assistants in 1966 had brought an almost a blockage to the central government of the Institute. We also note the blockage of the two international commissions set up to prepare for the next chapter: *the Commission for Catechesis and Vows Commission*. Despite a quality work, their reports will be rejected outright by the Chapter.

The Chapter has nevertheless sought to better take into account the difficulty for many young Brothers, engage and especially by vow to commit to life: the report of the vows of the Commission had pointed out these issues and sought solutions. Thus, Circ. 403, of October 1976, reporting on the 40th General Chapter, talks about the final commitment and degrees of belonging to the Institute. Note that 1986 will talk about it more. Besides everything cannot be taken into account in the Rule.

Final commitment

36. The general rule of the final commitment is maintained.

37. The general rule that the final commitment is expressed through perpetual vows is also maintained.

38. Exceptionally, the judgment of the Brother Visitor and his Council, and with the approval of the Superior, a Brother may be authorized:

a) to choose the time of his final commitment;

b) to express one's commitment by Vows or Promises indefinitely renewed (Proposal No. 38 goes against the provisions of canon law. As it has been adopted only a simple majority, it can not justify a general exemption request. individually, a Brother may, as in the past, seek an indult authorizing him to delay his final commitment.)

Degrees of belonging to the Institute

43. The novice and Brother linked to the Congregation by the Religious Profession are members of the Institute.

44. In addition to the applicants, a young man or a middle-aged man can be associated with the apostolic work and life of the Brothers of the community without making religious profession (The special status and the contract will be specified by the community in agreement with the local District).

45. A person or group of people can be involved in the apostolate of the Brothers and the spiritual life that animates without fully share their community life.

The Circ. 403 gives an idea of the difficulties that the Institute met:

Burning questions were raised about the Consecration and Vows, the Government, the service of the poor. We wondered about the real possibilities to usefully address certain issues, to push them far enough in any case to reach, from now on in satisfactory answers. On many of these reflection points of the Institute should it be extended yet? (p. 30).

I need to report a rumor circulating among the Brothers : there would be Brothers with responsibility who would transform our religious Congregation to Secular Institute - to support these allegations, rumor called into question the work of the Brother Michel Sauvage and Maurice -Auguste. This position probably held a double ignorance: attribute to lay character of the Institute (document of the 39th General Chapter 1966-1967) meaning, wrong, "non-religious" (in the General House in Rome, marriage applications in the mailbox of Brother Michel Sauvage *); and confuse "secular institute" and "*society of apostolic life*" - the importance that the Founder and the Brothers have always recognized in community life and mission together and by association exclude the secular institute if he ever had to change canonical status.

Still, the climate at the opening of the Chapter was not as serene as suggested by the Circ. 403:

The report on the government almost always limited to present suggestions for a new writing of the Book of Government, *which does not however cut short some discussions on*

fairly new ways of conceiving the role of the General Councilors, the form of the Regional grouping or importance to give to certain regional or local units. Despite these differences that nobody would deny nor excuse, the atmosphere of the Chapter remained serene. (p. 33).

Indeed, the removal of the function of Assistant and the creation of General Councillors are not confined to a change of vocabulary: it is a different form of government in a new understanding of the subsidiarity principle. This is collegiality, co-responsibility and communion. The focus is less on the structure than on the person (and its type of operation).

The responsibility of the central government of the Institute is entrusted by the General Chapter to the Brother Superior General. He is assisted by a Permanent Council.

This Council must gather around the Brother Superior a diverse team like the Institute itself, composed of Brothers capable of entering into communion and act collectively, through the complementarity of people, their spirit of selflessness in sharing responsibilities and sharing their experiences, their commitment to service and close collaboration with the primary responsibility of the Institute. (art. 25-26).

The text does not require that each Councilor is a representative of a sector but as a whole is the diversity of the Institute. The modalities of their election, in chapters where I participated as capitulant (1986 and 1993), did not seem to me allow sufficiently to constitute a real community of government (art. 27). However, what happened during the Chapter 2014, with the appointment of new Councilors after a review of work to be done, seems to me a better system.

The government of the Institute, once suppressed the level of Assistants, involves the creation of Regions or voluntary grouping of Districts.

The Region is not a pre-established structure: it must come naturally to facilitate and maintain the unity of the whole Body. (Art. 70.1). [...] The coordinating Body at this level is the Conference of Visitors. (70.3).

Until now, the Rule is still *ad experimentum*, and the deadline for reaching a final text approvable by the Roman Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes will end with the General Chapter of 1986.

In the Circ. 416 of 07/25/1982, Brother José Pablo describes the specific process that will engage and specifies the goals of our common effort.

By using the words "final approbation" [...] we do not lose sight of the criterion that indicates the same Motu Proprio "Ecclesiae Sanctae" that " the adapted renewal can only be achieved once and for all, but must be constantly fueled by religious fervor and by the solicitude of the Chapters and Superiors "

(1). What is said here of the renovation in life also applies to the renovation or change in the texts: there is regularly a certain dialectic between life and standards/norms, both for communities and for individuals. Thus constant adaptation is required for standards to life, and life to the standards that must guide it. [...]

This does not prevent, it even required that the rules of life are given a valuable formulation for long enough, they are worth for a considerable time, and that is excluded prolonged feeling of transitory and permanent instability. (p. 3).

This requires that the 1986 Chapter is devoted primarily to the finalization, uniting in a single volume which was previously the Rule and Book of government. After consultation of the whole Institute, an International Commission of the Rule works in depth: a project is sent to all Districts for an open study to all Brothers and a text is finally sent to the capitulants several months before the Chapter.

Let us note a new element that will intervene in the drafting of the Rule: the enactment in 1983 of the new Code of Canon Law, which will be the basis for the painstaking work of the Congregation for Religious before approving the text of the Rule.

8. The Rule of 1986 was effective on 08.09.1987

Given this preparatory work, the Chapter can support the discussion of the text of the Rule. In the Circ. 422 of 01/07/1986, 41th General Chapter: propositions and messages, Brother John Johnston appreciates the results:

We have finalized a long process of discernment: Who does God want us to be? What does he want us to do? And how he wants us to do it? We have reached a wonderful consensus on all issues and we accepted overwhelmingly a new expression of the fruit of our discernment. Our new Rule will now be presented to the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes for approval. [...] But, in addition to our in-depth study of our vocation, we have focused special attention on certain issues and topics. (p. 39)

I totally agree with this assessment: the Chapter has had time to weigh things in the dialogue. This sometimes asked some vigilance.

We were several Francophone capitulants to be uncomfortable with the translation of the formula of vows in US since 1967, translation we had discovered in a report in English submitted to discussion. I give roughly the equivalent in French, for not having the text before me: I promise to live in community and to exercise apostolic ministry - which would correspond to the traditional French text: ... *to unite myself and to remain in society with the Brothers of the Christian Schools who associate themselves to conduct together and by association gratuitous schools* (RC 33, 1).
There was more than a nuance : Association disappeared at this time

Then, through a coordinated series of interventions on this point, francophones, first, then Hispanics, have managed to go back to the text of the adopted formula of vows in French in 1967, based on the Rule of 1718.

- You will have noted that prior to art. 25, the Revised Rule revised is now talking about formula of consecration, theologically.

There was also a Polish Brother who regretted the repetitions (associated by association) but agreed to maintain by fidelity to the text of the Founder. The Chapter resumed in this place the term and meaning of the association; The following chapters highlight the structuring of our vow of association, in the life of the Brothers and especially in understanding the vows we speak. All this makes me happy.

Note that the 1986 Chapter conducts a synthesis between the vow of association and the educational service of the poor, disjointed almost from the Bull. It is worthwhile to consider the scope of the consolidation (**to the origins, to the person of JBS and Brothers for the existence of the Institute for me in my itinerary and today our Region our institute**).

It should also be noted that the 1987 Rule innovates compared to the 1967 level by addressing the mission before the consecrated life and community life. This has not escaped the Congregation for Religious, who was studying the text adopted:

The Consultant greatly appreciated on this occasion the ecclesial spirit and the will of the Institute for the fidelity to the Founder which manifest. The emphasis is fortunately on the

educational mission of the Institute, adapted to the conditions and requirements of today's world for the sake of evangelization and promotion of human dignity. The editors of this text should therefore be congratulated for the spiritual principles contained therein. (Circ.424, of 30/04/1987, Document 2: Letter of Cardinal Fagiolo, p.20).

Among the specific topics identified by the Brother Johnston in his closing speech, I note

Association and interdependence.

*This Chapter has constantly reminded us that we are one, by inviting us to the association and interdependence, by inviting us to fight against the "**provincialism**". Brothers, we must help our Brothers to realize the power for the assets that we have if we live and really work together and by association as an international religious family. This commitment will force us to know ourselves better each other and to be willing to share our staff, resources, and even we make ourselves personally available to serve in areas in particular need. (p. 40).*

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If you have in your hands the 1987 edition (approval of 26/01/1987) with the analytical index of the Rule, you may think that this term interdependence is found in twenty articles: the idea is present, but the term is used only 3 times! In the Revised Rule, 4 times (he added the role of Adviser region).

You notice that I talked about these issues which before had to do with the Book of Government: that they come automatically in the Rule.

As regards the Region (art. 127) now comes after the District (art. 124-125) for reasons of logic because the Region is not designed as an intermediate structure between the central government of the Institute and the District. Art. 127h explicit, in the Region, what Brother Superior raised on p. 40 (see above): sharing of human, material and spiritual resources.

Note the arrival of an article (125th) considering the case of a District can no longer meet the conditions that were required for its creation (125a): This theme was not included in previous editions of the Book of Government. We find this article in the Revised Rule (133.8). This can be used for the Districts who are aging.

Let us say immediately that apart from the creation of the General Councillor for the Region (136.2) and structures for shared mission, the current framework of the government of the Institute is made up almost in the 1987 Rule. For management of temporal goods (.

art 139-140) in 1986 following the mention of two new standards: the goods of the Institute are church property (cf. canon 635); taking account of the civil laws.

However **the theme of shared mission**, which appears in heading art. 17, will experience a development of which we have already spoken. It is that life goes faster than expected and gradually, we feel the need to update our Rule.

The 42nd General Chapter (Circ. 435 of 24/06/1993) produced a wide reflection on the Shared Mission (p. 30-46) that ends with a theological outline of the shared mission, but no minimal changes Rule decided by the Chapter does relate to the shared mission.

Should we develop this reflection?

The request in 2000 and 2007 of an update of the Rule

Proposal 38 *The Superior General and his Council appoint an ad hoc committee to study the implications of the new realities in the Church and the Institute might have for the present text of the Rule. This Committee presents its work to Brother Superior General and his Council at least two years before the 44th General Chapter. (Circ 447 of 01/10/2000 43rd General Chapter, p. 74).*

9. The application in 2000 and 2007 with an update of the Rule

Proposition 38 The Superior General and his Council appoint an ad hoc committee to study the implications of the new realities in the Church and the Institute might have for the present text of the Rule. This Committee presents its work to Brother Superior General and his Council at least two years before the 44th General Chapter. (Circ 447 of 01/10/2000. 43rd General Chapter, p. 74).

The Chapter in 2007, as I mentioned, granted the request of Brother John Johnston to modify art. Rule 25, first formulated by the approaching of the origins of the Brothers; secondly by putting in first place and ahead of the five vows that of the Association for the educational department of the poor:

"And for this, I ... promise and vow to unite myself ... So I promise and vow association for the educational service of the poor ..." (Circ. 455 of 15/09/2007, Documents of the 44th General Chapter, p. 25-26).

It's on page 55 of this circular as is the proposal concerning Rule: a review: without reporting aspects that would be preferable. Only specified process, in dialogue with

the whole Institute, under the authority of the Superior and his Council, leading to a revised proposal to the General Chapter.

I quoted now what the Circ. 459 of 23/09/2008 says:

The work of the Ad Hoc Committee, which was sent to the entire Institute [...] recorded the common feeling that "minor changes in the Rule would, at this time, a waste of time." [...] At the beginning of Chapter [2007], no one gave up the idea that the theme of the revision of the Rule can be processed at that time, but once started, we saw clearly that there were other important issues that needed to be addressed before.

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For this reason, the 44th General Chapter expressed in the following terms the need to revise the Rule: «That a commission is set up to finalize, after dialogue with the Institute, a revision of the Rule. If the Superior General and his Council consider it necessary, they will call for an extraordinary General Chapter or a session of the ordinary General Chapter of 2014, to submit for consideration a proposed revision of the Rule». (p. 7).

The circular answers the question: **Why revising the Rule? (p. 4-7)**, and remind some **Aspects to consider in the revision of the Rule (p. 8-11)**. Abrégeons :

We must remember that those receiving the Rule are the Brothers and that as such the Rule adheres to three purposes:

- *To express our identity in the Church and society;*
- *Serve as a guide for the life of the Institute and that of each Brother;*
- *Providing guidance for the animation, government and mission of the Institute.*

Significant changes have occurred:

- *We are at the dawn of a new era; seek new paradigms for interpreting and guide our life and mission, without losing the best of our tradition.*
- *The world in which we live is totally different from that in which forged the elements of our identity;*
- *We have deepened the value and centrality of our vow of association;*
- *We have become more aware of the request of the laity: from there comes the need to situate the meaning of life of Brother in this new context; new animation and government structures were created that are not found in the Rule;*
- *Since Vatican II, the Church defines itself from the ecclesiology of the People of God-Communion, which has fundamental consequences for the life of the Church and religious*

life (open to communion and collaboration with other forms of consecrated life and secular evangelical life, especially with those who share the Lasallian charism).

Aspects to consider: a) The Gospel, our First and Principal Rule

- The Gospel first reference to discern our vocation and to make decisions that ensure the best fidelity of the Institute for the reason of its foundation;
- The Rule is an indispensable map of the paths of the Gospel that we must go to meet God personally;
- The interior law of God is love, interior law of those of us who are called to be freely his living images;
- The new version will always stay at the forefront of the radicality of living the Gospel.

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b) In the best spirit of our Lasallian Tradition

- Heirs of a tradition that makes us authentic protagonists of our history;
- In the light of the experience of De La Salle and his Brothers;
- 39th Chapter: unprecedented transformation through the influence of the conciliar documents, the contribution of Lasallian Studies and the notes sent by the communities;
- The most inspired of the Institute documents are the fruit of work: prayer, fraternal dialogue, listening to the Word of God and the voice of the people, especially the poor.

c) A responsibility and privilege of all and every Brother

- Each Brother, regardless of his age, has a role to play in the vitality of the Institute (**cf.145**) ;
- offer the best of ourselves so that the Rule continues to define the meaning of life of the Brothers and translate for our time the same intentions as Jean-Baptiste stated in his Rule (**cf.147**)
- Together and by association, to live the present by looking at the future, look to the future by living the present: the sum of our points of view (diversity and plurality) guarantee success
- It is to live our vow of association: responsibility assumed as a privilege. (**Circ. 459, passim**).

*

Let's look at the pattern of the educational relationship in **Lasallian Themes III No. 70: Conduct, p. 49-50**. The first scheme is linear; the second ternary which better reflects the

way God leads us? What does this impact on the understanding of the Rule? See also the opposition (apparent?) Between "*follow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit*" and "*blindly obey one's superior.*"

God —> Superior—> Brother —> Children

Conduct, according to a linear scheme



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Conduct, according to a ternary scheme

MF 91.1 *The interior conduct of God is not enough to lead you to Him, you need guides that sensibly lead you. It's been for this reason that God has given you Superiors whose duty it is to take the place of God to you, to guide you in the way to Heaven outwardly, inwardly as God does on you.*

But the action of God far beyond the "transmission belts": THE 33.6-7 The main virtue to which you must apply yourself is obedience. Surrender yourself much in prayer for God's guidance and witness him often than you want the fulfillment of His holy will. (To Brother Hubert).

We can also the attitude of Jean-Baptiste de La Salle to his spiritual Directors and to his Bishop, especially at the time to give up his canonry. . ([189s] First Book - CHAPTER XII De La Salle deliberates if leave his canonry: reasons that commit to this generous resolution; it shape, but he dare not run until he sees authorized by his Director.)

The children, as well as you, dedicated to the Holy Trinity from their baptism (MD 46.3) and the Brothers are in the service of their Christian vocation.

Friday 28th August 2015

FINAL INTEGRATION

Brother Jesus Rubio

Objective of the morning: Arrive at a personal synthesis about the content of the entire program and propose a common message from this group to the next regional Assembly.

Session 1 and 2: (8:30 – 10:45)

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1. Individual reflection on the following question:

Which new **ideas**, new **feelings**, new **actions**, new **God's calls** or new **responses** have you found during this third week in order to integrate them into the reflection you had last Friday?

2. Write the final version of your conclusions of this program.

3. Take enough time for a personal prayer. Offer your conclusions to God, thank Him for the gift of this experience, and ask Him the strength to respond to the calls you have perceived.

Session 3:

First part (11:00 – 11:30, by district):

This is a program organized by the Region. The Region will have its assembly next January. Would you want to address a common message to that assembly **about the revision of the Rule**?

If you were willing to do it,

- Would you want to **encourage** the regional assembly in some ways? or
- Would you want to share a **reflection** with the assembly? What reflection? or
- Would you want to present a concrete **proposition** to the assembly? What proposition?

Second part (11:45 – 12:15, in plenary):

Aim: to get consensus on the general content of the message to the regional assembly and to appoint a small commission to write the message.

1. Sharing from the Districts
2. Consensus
3. Volunteers for the writing commission.