

The Brother of the Christian Schools
in the World Today
A DECLARATION

1967 / Thirty-ninth General Chapter / Second Session

**- Revised English Translation -
1997**

FOREWORD (to the original English edition)

This declaration on the brother in the modern world is one of the principal documents of our 39th General Chapter.

In the course of the first session it became more and more clear that we were in need of a document that would give a synthesis of the many facets of the brothers' life and mission in the world of today. As it studied the questions of the vows, formation, our life of prayer and of community, the Chapter increasingly sensed the need of an authoritative statement that would serve as foundation and unifying principle of all the Chapter's work.

The notes from brothers in all sectors of the Institute, and the minutes of community studies of the pre-capitular questionnaire and of the successive projects of the Rule, clearly indicated that it was on the fundamental questions of our identity and our purpose that light must be cast. What is the meaning in the light of today's needs of traditional words like "schools" or "the poor"? What are the apostolic works that today's brother can accomplish? Which apostolic forms are compatible with the purpose of the Institute? What is the meaning of religious consecration to today's world? What is the relation of this consecration with the apostolate and the profession of the brother? How shall we preach the good news of Jesus to peoples in various stages of belief or of unbelief? How can we best respond to the appeals of peoples of developing areas, to the needs of the missions?

Moreover, the ordinary chapter of 1966-67 had to respond to the tasks assigned by the Council to the "special chapter" that all Congregations were commanded to convene in the years immediately after the publication of the *Motu Proprio "Ecclesiae Sanctae."* These tasks were summed up in the conciliar expression, "to promote an adapted renewal in the Institute." To accomplish this work meant an investigation of the evangelical principles and of the initial inspirations of the Founder on the one hand, and on the other to investigate the needs and aspirations of the men of our time, in order to be more fully aware of the very *raison d'être* of the Institute.

To say that this Declaration is a true response to these objectives is to recognize by that very assertion its importance and the vital role it must play in the adapted renewal of the Institute. As it stands, it represents the work of the entire General Chapter. It is a document that has developed gradually during the long months of work of the intercession and the second session. By numerous discussions in regional and inter-regional committees, during courageous debates and differences of opinion, through many successive editions, it took shape and the text arrived at its definitive form; and during this time a common understanding of the Institute in the deepest sense developed in the Chapter. Finally, on the 6th of December, 1967, it was the object of an affirmative vote that was practically unanimous.

The Declaration does not provide us with ready-made answers to the questions posed above in the second paragraph; a document of the Chapter, or even the General Chapter itself, must not be confused with the adapted renewal of the Institute. This renewal is something yet to be realized, and its effective realization is confided to the common effort of all the members of the Institute. But the text that is here presented to you will aid the renewal by the light it sheds on the essential aspects of our life, and by the personal and community effort it will arouse.

It is for those reasons that I invite you to read and to meditate this Declaration, which your representatives at the General Chapter have prepared with you in mind and your daily labor in perspective. You understand, moreover, that a text like this is not created just to be read; we must live it. It will be the duty of regional chapters and councils to study the text and to determine the

manner of reducing its theory and principles to practice, but it remains of first importance that each brother realize his role in applying this Declaration to his own life in order to bring about in himself the renewal each of us needs, and even to bring about a veritable conversion of heart and will.

The Declaration does not blame or condemn anything in the past experience of the Institute; its purpose is to invite each of us to resolutely enter upon the path of renewal and adaptation. It appeals to us to renew our patterns of thought, it urges us to a lasting purification, to a continuous revision of our personal synthesis to the end that we may each day respond to the demands of our vocation with fidelity and dynamism. Conversion is always a bit frightening, but let us not be afraid. Let us receive this Declaration as an appeal to rise above our fears and to go forward to the renewal by the light of the great documents of Vatican II. Then we shall understand that this text here presented to you is something other than one document among many. This document imparts the spirit that should animate our renewal and invites us to undertake it.

It is, then, in the light of the Declaration that we must read and understand the other texts of our General Chapter, including the Rule and the Constitutions. It is the basis of the doctrine that you will find in each of them. In its turn, the Declaration will be further appreciated in the light of the developments that will be found in these other documents. The spirit of the Declaration, a spirit that is basic to an understanding of all the capitular texts, is at once a spirit of spiritual renewal and a personal, responsible engagement in the service of Christ; a missionary spirit of dedication to the needs of youth and to the educational service of the poor; a spirit of community which daily nourishes itself on the word of God, heard and served together; the spirit of renewal of our apostolic works, and especially renewal of the school.

Finally, this Declaration should contribute to strengthen further in all our hearts an apostolic virtue par excellence: the *assurance* of him who knows that he has been called by God, sent by him among men to serve them, and who is fully aware that the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit are given him that he may be a better servant of God and of youth.

Brother Charles Henry, FSC
Superior General

AFTER THIRTY YEARS

Foreword to the Revised English Translation

It was just about thirty years ago, on December 6, 1967, that the 39th General Chapter voted at near unanimity to approve and "make its own" the Declaration on the Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today. In an introductory letter, Brother Charles Henry, then Superior General, remarked among other things that it is "in the light of the Declaration that we must read and understand the other texts of our General Chapter, including the Rule and the Constitutions." Ten years later, despite some discouraging developments in the life of the Church and the Institute, the 40th General Chapter in a formal vote reaffirmed "the validity of the Declaration and the Rules in all that concerns the mission of the Brother." In the present Rule, adopted by the 42nd General Chapter in 1986 and approved by the Vatican in 1987, the extensive citations from the Declaration attest that the remark of Brother Charles Henry about the fundamental importance of the document is still valid.

It is to be hoped that the anniversary of the first publication of the Declaration will excite new interest in rediscovering this foundational text or, in some cases, occasion its discovery for the first time. Although the Church, the Institute, and the educational world have all undergone profound changes in the last thirty years, it is heartening to find how well the fundamental thrust of the Declaration has stood the test of time; how far ahead of its own time it was; how much of the agenda it proposed has yet to be realized: with regard to the spiritual renewal of the Institute, the elements to be integrated in the identity of the Brother, and the priorities and policies for the educational mission to the poor and in the schools.

The Declaration was written by and for the Brothers at a time when the direction and the implementation of the mission of the Institute were for the most part in the hands of the Brothers. Even so, the text reflects an awareness of the emerging importance of our lay and clerical partners in accomplishing that mission. Since 1993, when the 42nd General Chapter affirmed the shared mission, not only as a fact but as a "grace," there is all the more reason for the Brothers to share the riches of this document with our partners and to seek together to interpret the text in this new and challenging context.

A word is in order to explain why, after thirty years, a new English translation of the Declaration is called for. The original translation was the work of Brothers Luke Salm and Augustine Loes, delegates to the 39th General Chapter in 1967 and members of the Chapter Commission on Apostolic Finality that produced the official French text. (The history of the text has been described in detail by Luke Salm in *Religious Institute in Transition: the Story of Three General Chapters*.) The two Brothers worked on the translation while the discussions in the commission and in general assembly were in the final stages. Their purpose was to produce a text that would be faithful to the original and at the same time read well in forceful idiomatic English, a rather different style from the prolix and tightly reasoned French text. The work had to be done hurriedly in order to have an English text ready for publication as soon as it was voted by the Chapter. Even so, the result was a lively English text that conveyed the thrust and the radicality of the official text. Brother Charles Henry, the Superior General, agreed to endorse the English text as the "official" translation in that language in order to forestall the multiplication of English versions, or translations by persons not involved in the elaboration of the document and not imbued with the thinking of the Commission and the Chapter. That text has served the English-speaking Brothers well. It generated enthusiasm when it was first published and has served as the basis for fruitful reflection and discussion over the

last thirty years.

In the translation process, however, something was lost. This became evident in 1994 when the Spirituality Seminar, sponsored by the Christian Brothers Conference of the USA/Toronto Region, turned its attention to the Declaration. (The texts of the papers and a summary of the discussions of the 1994 seminar have since been published by the Christian Brothers Conference under the title *The Declaration: Text and Contexts*.) It was in the process of preparing an English translation of the paper submitted by Brother Michel Sauvage that Luke Salm became aware of the extent to which the English translation of the text differed in several significant ways from the French original. In some cases, last minute additions or deletions made toward the end of the Chapter debate were not incorporated into the English text. In other cases, the attempt to keep the English sentences short resulted in the loss of the subordination in the French periodic style that provided the logic and the rationale for what was being proposed. Likewise, too many paraphrases in English sacrificed the characteristic "bite" of the French. A careful comparison with the official French text reveals that now and then words and whole phrases are missing in the English; and there are some places, fortunately few, where the translation is simply inaccurate. Such discrepancies point to the need for a more precise, and perhaps even more literal, translation of the official text. This also provides the opportunity to use more inclusive language wherever possible (recognizing that for the moment at least members of the Institute are all Brothers and all male). This re-translation is here presented in the hope that the Declaration will continue to be an instrument of vision and energy for the Institute, the Brothers, and the shared mission.

A special word of thanks is due to Brother Paul Grass of the Rome Generalate for meticulous copy-editing of the text and for valuable suggestions to improve the accuracy and the clarity of the translation.

Luke Salm, FSC

December 6, 1996

Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Declaration

List of Abbreviations

AA – *Apostolicam Actuositatem*

AG – *Ad Gentes*

GEM – *Gravissimum Educationis Momentum*

GS – *Gaudium et Spes*

LG – *Lumen Gentium*

MM – *Mater et Magistra*

MR – *Meditations for Time of Retreat*

PC – *Perfectae Caritatis*

PP – *Populorum Progressio*

INTRODUCTION

1 Faithful to the spirit of Vatican II which invites religious families to undertake the work of an adapted renewal, the thirty-ninth General Chapter, as an expression of the will of the Institute and the awareness that it now has of its nature and mission, considers it appropriate to formulate this declaration on "The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today."

Adapted Renewal

2 The renewal of religious life implies that certain practices be given new vitality and that certain apostolic works be transformed. More importantly, renewal demands a return to the sources to be found in the Gospel and in the origins of the Institute in order to recover in all its vigor the creative principle that gave birth to the Institute. In this way the Brothers will be able to go beyond mere externals to live effectively the charism of the Founder in the world today.

Personal Spiritual Renewal

3 1 - The adapted renewal of the Institute will become a reality to the extent that each Brother, each community, and all the various councils and chapters give themselves to the work of spiritual renewal. "Even the best adaptations to the needs of our times will fail to produce their effect unless they are motivated by a spiritual renewal" (PC 2e). Accordingly, each Brother is invited to renew himself spiritually.

2 - To renew oneself spiritually means first of all that one must again be aware that it is only the Holy Spirit who brings about the renewal of persons and institutions. There can be no renewal unless it begins in authentic prayer and includes a renewed effort of interior prayer and contemplation.

3 - To renew oneself spiritually means that the Brother can recognize in his personal life as a Brother, in all the demands of human existence, in his vocation to faith and baptism, in his membership in the Church, in his commitment in the Institute, and in the whole complexity of his daily life as a human being, as a Christian and a religious, that there is operating the unceasing initiative and love of the Father who guides, gives himself, and forgives.

4 - To renew oneself spiritually is to understand that the vocation by which one is called is a vocation to love. It is by loving all those with whom he comes in contact that the Brother helps to reveal to them the fact that God loves them and is calling them also to give witness to God's love in all their human contacts.

5 - Finally, throughout the entire process of personal renewal, one must pay constant attention to the real situation in the world and in the Church today. To renew oneself spiritually implies a more intense effort to be present to the people of today, to try sympathetically to discern the individual qualities of each person, to keep abreast of the contemporary human situation, and in a genuine love for the contemporary world, to share one's life with one's contemporaries just as they are. It means also to be in touch with the life of the Church and to make one's own "the enterprises and objectives of the Church in such fields as these: scriptural, liturgical, doctrinal, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary, and social" (PC 2c).

Community Renewal

4 Granted that the effort of each Brother remains basic, dialogue among all the members of the Institute is needed to give vitality to this community undertaking. That is why it will be necessary for the General Chapter, once it has explained the nature and the purpose of the Institute, to suppress "whatever is outmoded" (PC 3; Ecclesiae Sanctae) and to establish appropriate structures for leadership, coordination, adaptation, and ongoing renewal. It is on such vital and communitarian organisms that we must depend if we are to maintain the life of the Institute as it was conceived for us in the Founder's inspiration.

CHAPTER I FIDELITY TO THE FOUNDER

Return to the Sources

5 1 - Responsive to the invitation of the Spirit of God, the Institute needs to return to the sources of its life. First of all, the Gospel is a source in the sense that we put ourselves by faith in the presence of Christ, who calls each Brother to follow him and to serve him in others. Then we return to the sources of the Institute, that is, to the Founder and to his living enterprise. The Brothers are convinced that in the writings, the life, and the work of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, their Father, the Holy Spirit is revealed in a privileged manner and that they ought to draw from these sources the living principle for their guidance today.

2 - The authenticity of this search for fidelity to the Founder should be tested by the use of the scientific methods everywhere available today. An objective study has to be made of the life, the work, and the thought of our holy Founder, as well as the history of the Institute. In this regard, we should recognize the work accomplished, especially since 1956, to promote such study. It is to be hoped that such studies will be intensified in the years to come. More than that, it will be necessary to take into consideration the new light to be thrown on certain aspects of the Founder's thought, thanks to the participation of the Institute in the catechetical and liturgical renewal of the Church, to its concern for the poor, and to the profound insights that come from a theology that affirms this world and its reality.

Letter and Spirit

6 1 - Fidelity to the present and fidelity to the Founder, far from opposing or excluding each other, are mutually related, provided that we do not expect Saint John Baptist de La Salle to have known in advance all our problems and to have provided answers to all our questions. To state this principle is to raise at the same time the problem of how to interpret the writings and the work of the Founder.

2 - The Church itself serves as our guide in this delicate task. In the same breath whereby she invites all the congregations to a profound renewal, which sometimes entails abandoning practices and texts of the Rule that derive from the Founder, she insists on fidelity to the very same Founder, defined as fidelity to his spirit and to his specific goals. This means that our fidelity to the Founder can exist only if we undertake the search in a filial spirit.

Interpretation of his Charism

7 1 - The charism of the Founder involves institutions only through the mediation of persons. From the beginning, Saint John Baptist de La Salle founded a living community of Brothers with whom he shared his apostolic ideal and who in turn passed on this ideal to their successors. Fidelity to the specific goals of the Founder and to the tradition of the Institute is confided to us as the living persons that we are, and it is as such that we have to carry on the search.

2 - This dynamic fidelity to the Founder consistently follows its own internal laws. It is marked first of all by the community character of our search. Although confided to us as persons, the institution and its purpose are not in the hands of individuals. Fidelity to the Founder is entrusted

to the Institute, that is to say, the community of the persons who constitute it. A living community in dialogue is the locus par excellence for the presence and the action of the Holy Spirit. The General Chapter, above all, is the occasion when the Institute as a body, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can become aware of itself and declare to itself what it really is.

3 - The community which undertakes the search must do so in fidelity to an objective historical fact. There can be no question of "refounding" the Institute. This respect for the action of the Holy Spirit will in no way prevent the Brothers from being attentive to the signs of the times.

CHAPTER II THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

8 1 - As members of the Church, the Brothers live in this world and ought to be sensitive to the problems which arise in every period of human history. They share the hopes and anxieties that everyone experiences. The signs of the times alert the Brothers once more to the importance of their mission in today's world, as well as to how urgent it is that they renew their religious life, their apostolic ministry, and their presence among people.

2 - To achieve the adaptation and renewal asked for by the Council, it seems important that the Brothers be ready to heed and to discern the challenges that the Holy Spirit addresses to them through the mediation of their fellow humans. Since they have chosen to work for the salvation that comes from Christ, they should let themselves be led by the Spirit of God. Sometimes the Spirit stirs up in the Brothers the desire for renewal; sometimes the Spirit inspires the contemporary Church to insist on certain aspects of their teaching ministry; sometimes the Spirit communicates in a mysterious fashion through the events that take place in the world and through the aspirations of the world's peoples.

Challenges from the Brothers

9 1 - Whenever the Brothers manifest their apostolic and religious yearnings in a profound union of hearts, the action of the Holy Spirit is involved in the process. This happens particularly on the occasion of a General Chapter when certain challenges make themselves felt with greater urgency through the notes sent to the Chapter. When these notes and these challenges converge, they constitute in reality a collective discernment which militates against too individualistic an interpretation. The Institute has an obligation to sift these observations, to appreciate their value, and to make use of them.

2 - The notes that have come to the thirty-ninth General Chapter have helped the capitulants to perceive that the Brothers want to participate more actively in the life of the world and the Church, and to adapt more effectively to the geographical, social, cultural, political, and religious milieu in which each Brother finds himself. Quite a number of these suggestions manifest the desire for a more authentic religious life while insisting on the need for a more precise understanding of the apostolic mission of the Institute and its missionary character. As a result, there is a need for works that reflect this apostolic and missionary purpose and also a need to provide the Brothers with a formation that will prepare them for the work that awaits them.

3 - There can be culled also from these notes the desire for a greater flexibility in assigning personnel to our institutions so that it will be realistic for us to be available for the most urgent needs in the field of education. In particular, there is widespread insistence that the service of the poor become once again one of the principal characteristics of the Institute.

Challenges from the Church

10 1 - The post-Conciliar Church has also made its voice to be heard appealing to all the workers in the Lord's vineyard to renew their spiritual life and to organize an apostolate that will truly bear fruit for salvation in today's world. The Church stresses the importance of concerted action, of collective pastoral effort, for she achieves her mission only through the diversity and

complementarity of her ministries and charisms.

2 - The Church stresses her character as a community when she presents herself as the People of God. By this title, she proclaims that she is the sacrament of the presence of God in the midst of God's people and so teaches the primacy of witness in the apostolate. The Church for that reason defines herself as missionary, gives priority to those who are far from her, and insists that ardent concern for the salvation of the world is a demand of our baptism. In any case, the invitation to all her members to expand their horizons is a way of recognizing, with respect for the diversity of charisms, that the Holy Spirit dwells in each person.

3 - The Church encourages this apostolate of the faithful, but she wants it to be clarified; she affirms and marvels at the action of the Holy Spirit beyond her visible boundaries, among the separated brethren as well as among those who are not Christians. The Church calls her members to acquire an ecumenical spirit and to collaborate with all persons of good will. On the one hand, she knows that the truth cannot be imposed by force, and she declares that every human person has a right to religious freedom. On the other hand, she regards everything outside herself that is good and true as a preparation for receiving the Gospel and as a gift from the Christ who enlightens every human being.

4 - In this spirit the Church proclaims the value of the things of this world, affirms their lawful autonomy, and teaches that faith and hope engage the Christian to labor more ardently for the well-being of the earthly city. Wishing to be the servant of the people, she declares "that all things on earth should be related to the human as their center and crown" (GS 12). The Church is concerned for the total person and wants people to develop harmoniously in all their potentialities. The Church's mission of evangelization consists in demonstrating to human beings the ultimate meaning of their existence and in clarifying for them the mystery of what it means to be human.

Challenges from the World

11 1 - If the Spirit of God issues challenges through these teachings of the Church, the Spirit is heard also in the hopes and sorrows of the people of today, in the possibilities and the sufferings of our changing world, as recalled to us, for example, in *Gaudium et spes*, *Gravissimum educationis*, *Populorum progressio*.

2 - It is a world marked by human greatness and by scientific, technological, and economic progress; a world more and more desacralized and secularized; a world of social awareness, a more unified humanity, and the development of the means of communication; a world which aspires to make the benefits of an education accessible to all; a world experiencing a population explosion and aware of the ever-increasing importance of youth.

3 - But it is also a world in which life, liberty, and human dignity are more and more threatened; a world of loneliness and despair for many who are crushed by selfishness, greed, indifference, or the will to power; a world of social injustice and an increasing disproportion between the rich and poor nations; a world of illiteracy and ignorance in which the young are neglected; a world of rivalry and wars; a world where God is missing or rejected and where persons, because they close themselves off from what they cannot see, are threatened by the thought of personal extinction.

4 - The world has more need than ever, even at the very center of human and temporal existence, for the witness given by those who are consecrated and who know and love God as a living reality. More than ever, this is the world in which an international Institute ought to live in order to serve and to educate all its many peoples.

CHAPTER III THE CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS OF THE BROTHER'S VOCATION

12 The challenges and the needs in the world today are many and overwhelming. The Brothers, however, cannot disperse their efforts in every area where they might possibly be called upon to be of service. To be effective, the part played by the Institute in the work of the Church and in building up the temporal city has to be coherent and specific. It is necessary, therefore, to define the elements that constitute the Brother's vocation, apart from which he cannot be recognized as a member of the Institute.

13 1 - The General Chapter declares that the Brother is a baptized Christian who responds to a special and mysterious call from God. He consecrates himself totally to God and to God's service by his religious profession, and he works to integrate, in the unity of a lifetime under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the following elements. (The propositions that follow should be read in the light of the development that follows in paragraphs 16 to 22 of the Declaration.)

2 - The Brother gives full and explicit expression to his baptismal consecration (PC 5) by committing himself, through the profession of public vows received by the Church, to an Institute that is exclusively lay.

3 - The Brother specifies his determination to work in the service of persons for the glory of God by giving himself to a community that is totally dedicated to the Kingdom of God: witnessing to its presence in the world, announcing it to people everywhere, serving the cause of its coming, and promoting its growth in the world. By doing the work to which he is assigned, every Brother, no matter what his actual duties, contributes to the communal realization of the unique mission that the Institute receives from the Church.

4 - The Brother assumes in a community context an educational mission which, at the Institute level, by preference is directed to the poor and which engages the individual Brother -- whoever might be the immediate beneficiaries of the enterprises in which he works -- to the service of those whose poverty is an obstacle to their development as human persons or to their ability to receive the message of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ.

5 - The Brother labors to bring into reality the divine plan of salvation, not only when he exercises the ministry of the Word of God, but also by devoting himself, in everything he teaches, to the education of those he helps to arrive at authentic and complete maturity as human persons (GS 53).

6 - The Brother considers the school the preferred but not the exclusive means "to form at the very heart of human history the family of the sons and daughters of God" (GS 40).

CHAPTER IV PERSONAL SYNTHESIS

Unity in a Variety of Gifts

14 1 - These elements taken together give the Brother a unique and proper place within the people of God. What specifies the vocation of the Brother is not any of these elements taken separately, but rather the decision to assume them all in a personal synthesis motivated by love.

2 - Experience shows that the ways of being called and the specific roads taken thereafter to respond to the call are very diverse. The socio-cultural origin, the psychological maturity, and the variety of human and Christian experience differ from one individual to another and in the successive stages of a person's life. These variable factors produce recognizable differences (for example in how one understands the ministry of the Word or the service of the poor) that come from values deeply rooted in a particular culture and the understanding that one gradually acquires of the meaning of religious consecration.

3 - A laudable desire for unity does not imply that we can define a changeless and universal type of Brother to which all should conform. In all the constitutive dimensions received from the Founder, as in all the signs of the times, God challenges each Brother and invites him to a personal response adapted to the needs of today's world.

4 - While the General Chapter wants to maintain the cohesiveness and specific nature of the Institute in fidelity to its origins, it affirms also the interior liberty of each Brother and the benefits that come from different charisms. Unity is not to be found in uniformity, but in harmonious complementarity, according to the words of St. Paul, "There is a diversity of gifts, but it is the same Spirit," and again, "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (I Cor 12, 4-7).

5 - Each Brother, then, will travel his own road in fulfilling his vocation, but always in reference to his Brothers and to the Rule of the Institute, as well as to the challenges from all his fellow human beings. Furthermore, he will be convinced that one of the applications of the principle of subsidiarity consists in taking the initiative to respond personally and to persevere in fidelity to the Holy Spirit. This fidelity to the Holy Spirit, according to Saint John Baptist de La Salle, is the unifying element in the life of the Brother.

A Personalized Formation

15 1 - The personal responsibility of each Brother requires a solid initial formation that is prolonged by continual updating. The General Chapter insists on the importance of a serious preparation for the Brothers, one that is human and spiritual, theological, professional, and pastoral. It ought not to come merely from books, but ought to be joined by action that is then reflected upon so as to foster a sense of initiative and community, as also to awaken a mature apostolic spirit.

2 - Programs for formation, however excellent they may be, can never dispense each Brother from his own responsibility. It is up to each one, in response to the incessant call of the Holy Spirit, to do everything possible to realize his personal vocation. All genuine formation is a discipline: it requires frequent personal re-examination, opening oneself to ever new possibilities, and refusal to become complacent with the mastery of any particular skill. Such is the condition of an authentic educational and spiritual open-mindedness.

CHAPTER V
THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE BROTHER:
AN APOSTOLIC AND COMMUNITY LIFE

16 The religious life of the Brother represents one of the possible ways of living in the Church as a layman. The religious state belongs inseparably to the life and the holiness of the Church, but not to its hierarchical structure (LG 44); "It is not an intermediate state between being a cleric and a lay person; rather, the faithful of Christ are called from both of these states of life so that in the Church they may enjoy this particular gift and each in his or her own way can be of service to the saving mission of the Church" (LG 44).

RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION:
A CONTINUATION OF THE LIFE OF BAPTISM
WITH SPECIFIC NEW ELEMENTS

Rooted in Baptism

17 1 - As with all forms of the Christian life, the religious life is rooted in baptism and the other sacraments of initiation. The call to religious profession invites the Brother, first of all, to deepen in faith his understanding of the richness and the demands of the life of baptism.

2 - There is richness in the free gift of God, who rescues us from the death of sin and introduces us to the new life of the risen Lord, incorporating us into Christ as prophet, priest, and king, and makes us members of the people of the New Covenant, as it journeys toward the new Jerusalem under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3 - The demands of baptism evoke the free response of baptized persons who undertake to build their lives on faith in Jesus Christ and on the hope of his second coming. The baptized person chooses to make adherence in love to the will of the Father the rule of one's own life, and to put one's intelligence, emotional resources, and physical powers at the service of one's brothers and sisters in order to accomplish God's loving plan for them. Thus, as with all forms of the Christian life, the religious life of the Brother is directed by the ideal of the Gospel.

4 - As with all Christian living, the religious life of the Brother is apostolic. The vocation of everyone to the apostolate is rooted in the mission that the Son has received from the Father and that he communicates unceasingly, through the Spirit, to the members of his body. The goal of the apostolate is to bring God to human persons and human persons to God. It requires a profound awareness of our participation in the life of God and our responsibility for the fulfillment of God's plan, together with a realistic sensitivity to the needs of the world, to which all the members of the Church are sent.

New Elements in Religious Life

18 1 - As a consecrated layman in the religious life, the Brother is called, by leading a life more conformed to the risen Christ, to show forth, in complementarity to other states of life, the richness of the new life into which he entered by receiving the sacraments of initiation. The Brothers hear this call with joy and thanksgiving, convinced that this personal invitation is worth the gift of his whole life to God and to God's service. Religious consecration, therefore, implies something that is new.

2 - There is something new in the particular vocation by which the Brother is invited by Christ to follow him in a special way. There is something new in his free response in faith to this call from the Spirit, who is the source of the Brother's vocation and without whom it could not survive.

3 - There is something new in a lifestyle that is visibly fashioned according to the renewed world revealed in Jesus Christ. It is notably through voluntary celibacy, vowed through love, that this lifestyle makes more evident the covenant that unites Jesus Christ and his Church. This implies also a special kind of presence to others, which is defined both by the depth of charity in everything the Brother undertakes and, at the same time, by a certain distance from the things the world holds dear, an attitude dictated not by any contempt for the world, but rather by a desire to remind the world of its transitory character, that this world is not an absolute.

4 - There is something new in the way the Brother exercises the universal priesthood. The public profession of the religious vows, especially the vow of obedience made in union with the dispositions of Christ in his paschal sacrifice, constitutes an act of worship, a special gift to God of all that one is and all that one does.

5 - There is something new in a community life which manifests concretely the universal brotherhood inaugurated by Christ. This community is built not only on natural ties, but also on the power of the Holy Spirit, the living principle of love between human persons.

6 - There is something new in what concerns the mission and the apostolic spirit. The work that the Church entrusts to the Brothers to be carried out in her name (PC 8) motivates them to serve humankind, to construct a world that is more liveable, and so to prepare for building the City of God in its definitive form. Religious consecration frees the Brother to be more totally available for this work; it makes his work more effective, even as it makes greater demands on him in the area of his apostolate.

7 - There is something new in a decisive choice, undertaken without any thought of return, by which the Brother bases his whole existence on Jesus Christ served in his members. In consecrating to Christ all the strength he presently possesses, the Brother abandons himself to Christ for the rest of his earthly life, giving himself up to Christ's love for better or worse. Each day, especially during the eucharistic celebration where the offering of the Lord himself is renewed, the Brother draws therefrom the source of new youth and vigor.

8 - It is necessary therefore to be careful that the consecration of the Brothers to God and to God's people is authentic. In discerning vocations, it is important to be attentive to apostolic criteria. Suitability for the Brother's apostolic vocation demands that the candidate desire to consecrate his life to the service of the young because he has become aware of what is needed for their salvation. It is fitting therefore that we avoid inducements based on emotion or motivation derived solely from an interest in the work alone, a desire for security, or a false idea of the religious life.

THE COMMUNITY ASPECT OF THE BROTHER'S LIFE

Structures Are for Persons

19 1 - The Brother actualizes his total consecration to God and to God's service within the context of the Church when he makes his commitment in the Institute. Thus the Institute becomes the instrument of the religious consecration of its members: the public character of the profession received by the Superior manifests one of the ecclesial dimensions of the religious life. In the unceasing dialogue between the Lord who calls and the person who responds, the Institute holds an

essential place. When the Brother enters religion to seek God and to serve God's Kingdom, he expects that the congregation will aid him in this search and in this service. The Institute then ought to use every effort to help each Brother in his personal journey.

2 - Thus rules and structures are not established simply for their own preservation, but their purpose is the service of persons. They ought to guarantee to each Brother the freedom to live his relationship to God in a vision of faith, hope, and love, continually renewed in an authentic life of personal and community prayer. From this perspective, rules and structures of government ought to serve as reminders, without minimizing them, of the renunciation and forgetfulness of self that community life in fact demands. The Brother in his turn will be concerned for the common good through respect for these rules and structures, convinced that these too are a necessary part of the religious life.

Community Spirit and Community Life

20 1 - In consecrating himself to the service of God in the Institute, the Brother associates himself with other baptized persons who have responded to the same call of Christ; it is in community that he undertakes to live a lifestyle according to the new world announced by Christ. At the beginning of the Institute, the vows pronounced by the Brothers showed that their personal consecration to God was inseparable from their commitment in a community established for a specific service of the Kingdom of God. In our day, the vow formula underscores with special vigor the will to associate together. This invites the Institute to focus more sharply by reflection and to make evident in practice the community character of the religious consecration of its members and of the vows that give it expression.

2 - In community life the Brother can find his personal fulfillment according to the divine plan inherent in human nature, for one can come to self-actualization and completeness only to the extent that one opens oneself to others. Thus "God has willed that all people should constitute one family and treat one another as brothers and sisters" (GS 24).

3 - The community life of the Brothers, each of whom has responded to a special call of the Lord, by its very nature manifests the truth that God chooses persons "not just as individuals but as members of a community, and that it has pleased God to save and to sanctify humans not merely in isolation apart from mutual ties, but to make of them a people which acknowledges God in truth and serves God in holiness" (GS 32; LG 2).

4 - The Brother meets God to whom he has consecrated himself when he opens himself to his Brothers in community. In listening to them in faith, he hears God speaking to him; in loving and serving them, he loves and serves Christ; in seeking the common good and in submitting for this purpose to the superior, whose function is to make clear what is for the good of all, it is really God whom the Brother obeys.

5 - In community the Brothers gather together to listen to God. They help each other to be attentive to the challenges that the Lord addresses to them through the mediation of the succession of daily events. Together they examine the quality of their response and strive to remedy any apparent inadequacies.

6 - In community the Brothers speak together of God and God's Kingdom. True community life gives rise spontaneously to interchanges concerning the One who gives full meaning to the existence of each Brother, as also to the apostolic commitments and educational responsibilities of each one.

7 - Times of work as well as of leisure are occasions when the authenticity of the spirit of the community becomes evident. The apostolic activity of the Brother is not an individual occupation carried on independently of the community. It is through the community that the Brother participates actively, according to his aptitudes, in the human and Christian educational work of the Institute.

8 - For this reason, community dialogue in all its forms emerges as a privileged instrument of individual conversion and fraternal union. Each member ought to contribute to the practical conclusions that will result. The superior here finds one of his important roles, namely, to bring the community to a decision and then to judge the authenticity of the decision in the light of the nature and mission of the Institute.

9 - In community the Brothers pray together to the God to whom they have consecrated themselves. Together they invoke the Spirit to be poured forth, they thank the Father for the love God has manifest in Jesus Christ, and they praise the Father for the greatness and goodness that shines forth in all God's creation, in history, in human achievement, in the life of the Church, in the Virgin Mary, and in the saints.

10 - The Eucharist which the Brothers regularly celebrate together is at once the source and summit, each day renewed, of the community life of consecrated persons, a life that has Christ for its foundation as well as its destiny. Christ is present in the Eucharistic assembly of the Brothers; his word to which they listen together reunites them more intimately in faith. Through him and with him they raise to the Father their thanksgiving and their supplication; in and through Christ's sacrifice, they make an offering of themselves and the work that they carry out for his Kingdom; from communion with his glorified body they draw a renewal of fraternal love as well as a new readiness to serve the youth to whom they are sent.

The Community of the Institute

21 The community of the Brothers extends beyond the limits of the house where they live. The community embraces the District and the whole Institute; the Brothers are aware of their solidarity with those among them who are suffering, who are undergoing persecution, or who are seeing their work destroyed by outside forces.

APOSTOLIC PURPOSE

A Vocation That Is Essentially Apostolic

22 1 - All that has been said so far is not enough to define the religious person that the Brother is. The reason why the Institute exists in the Church is to work for the salvation of persons and in that way procure the glory of God. In a single movement, Saint John Baptist de La Salle established the Brothers as apostles and as religious: by making the schoolteachers aware of the apostolic thrust of their professional work, he led them to offer themselves up totally to the Lord who employed them in his service. The spirit of the Institute is one spirit, although it is translated into practice by a twofold movement: the faith that makes the Brothers attentive to the design of God for the world blossoms into zeal which sustains and continuously rejuvenates the commitment of the Brother to the service of the members of Christ.

2 - The purpose of the Institute is apostolic and, for its members, apostolic activity belongs to the very nature of religious life (PC 8).

3 - The missionary urge and apostolic love, by which the Brothers "strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and to spread the Kingdom of God" (PC 5), is an integral part of the consecration of the Brother to God. The renewal of the Institute requires that all its members reanimate in themselves the spirit of zeal in the light of the Council and the teaching of the Founder, especially in his Meditations for the Time of Retreat.

4 - The reason why the Brother has been the object of a special call from God is that he become a more dedicated worker in God's loving plan to bring back the children of God who have gone astray. The religious consecration of the Brother that associates him more closely with Christ makes him participate more fully in Christ's mission, since "the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost." Entry into the Institute unites the Brother more fully to the Church and so ought to lead him to share more fully in its missionary zeal. The reason why the Brothers associate together and live in community is that they stimulate and help one another to procure the glory of God through the salvation of people.

The Needs of Youth

23 1 - The Institute will find in its attentiveness to the needs of young people with regard to their salvation an indispensable source of the renewal to which the Council invites it.

2 - These needs are not less urgent in our world today than they were at the time of the foundation of the Institute. The youth of today are the hope of the Church, but they are also one of its major sources of concern.

3 - The community effort to identify and understand the challenges of the young people of our time and to respond by generous apostolic commitments ought to be given top priority in the objectives of the Institute.

A Missionary Vocation

24 1 - In order to respond to a major need in our world, the Church is renewing her awareness of her missionary vocation and the ways to accomplish it. She wishes to announce the Gospel to all; she seeks to be present to all civilizations. To affirm today the apostolic purpose of the Institute is also to proclaim its missionary character. The Institute is not, of course, exclusively missionary, but it has been established "to bring the means of salvation within reach" (MTR 193.3) of young people who lack an education and whose evangelization has been neglected.

2 - The original intent that brought the Institute into existence has to be translated today into a generous missionary spirit. The Council invites us to take this direction resolutely (PC 20). As with all other institutes engaged in the active life, now is the time "sincerely to ask ourselves before God whether we cannot broaden our activity with a view to expanding God's Kingdom among the nations," at the expense of "leaving to others certain of our ministries" (AG 40).

INTEGRATION OF RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION, COMMUNITY LIFE, AND APOSTOLIC MISSION

Integration under the Sign of the Apostolate

25 1 - Far from being in opposition to religious life or detrimental to it, the exercise of an

apostolate is for the Brother an expression of his consecration to the Lord and a motive to live it well. The apostolic tasks of the Brother are religious because they are willed by God; in giving of himself courageously to them the Brother accomplishes the will of the Lord who sends him. These tasks are religious because the Brother finds Christ in those to whom he has been sent, above all in the poor; they are religious because they realize the divine plan as they contribute to the betterment of persons and prepare them to receive the Good News of salvation; these tasks are religious because they have for their ultimate purpose to prepare for God a People who will be adorers in spirit and in truth.

2 - The Brother ought to have no fear of losing God when he goes among the young "to serve them" (Mk 10, 45), nor of being estranged from Christ "when he spends himself for others" (2 Cor 12, 15). On the contrary, the exercise of an authentic apostolate is a source for him of spiritual growth; in listening to others, he disposes himself to listen more faithfully to the Word of God; in forgetting himself, he allows Christ to grow in him; in spending himself disinterestedly without counting the cost, he creates in himself the heart of a poor person. When apostolic work degenerates into empty restlessness or into self-seeking, inevitably one loses the ability to see the call of God in the real needs of the world, and there is no longer a reason to give oneself to prayer or to turn constantly to God who alone is able to build God's Kingdom.

3 - Accordingly, throughout the entire period of formation it is of the utmost importance that the apostolic spirit be awakened, discerned, and developed. To this end, an apostolic dimension should be introduced throughout the entire process of formation, whether in formal instruction or in apostolic activities that then become the subject for community review. In like manner, formation to a life of prayer should be such that the thrust toward God be clarified and purified by an apostolic spirit, while at the same time that spirit awakens and sustains the impulse toward God.

4 - Since the Brothers are in association to work together, the community is constituted above all in the pursuit of a common objective, namely the Kingdom of God. Communities are renewed, the sharing of minds and hearts becomes more intimate, the need for prayer and the life of faith takes on new life to the extent that the members become more aware of their apostolic mission. Fidelity to the common search to serve God's plan through the needs of people builds day after day a community capable of responding appropriately. At the same time, this common effort to respond strengthens the community and enables it to see more clearly the signs of God present in the world. Furthermore, when everything is referred back to the common mission, this makes it possible to overcome the risks of the communities becoming closed in on themselves, of suffocating in the pettiness of small internal problems which threaten even the most regular communities when they are not constantly renewed by an apostolic spirit.

Integration in the Renewal of Consecration

26 1 - Conversely, the consecration and the religious life of the Brother stimulate and sustain his apostolate. By his vows, and above all by his celibacy, the Brother becomes more available to serve others better, especially by a more unconditional dedication to the poor. If this detachment is correctly understood and lived out, thanks to a formation that has been open and positive, it will not involve either a lack of realism or affective maturity, neither will it seem in any way to be some sort of self-satisfied complacency or a fearful turning in on oneself. Rather it will assure the possibility of living in a way that is evangelical and community-oriented. Because of this availability and within the limits of his personal talents, the Brother is oriented especially to a leadership role in the service

of the Christian laity, helping them to recognize and to assume their responsibilities, both human and Christian.

2 - Within the People of God, the Brothers are called, as are other religious, to be witnesses in a specific way. They are signs of the action and the presence of the Spirit of God in our history; signs that the new world inaugurated by Christ and announced by the teaching of the Church is a present reality; signs of the power of the risen Christ that grants to sinners the ability to respond to the Lord who calls them. This they do, without destroying their human dignity, their love for life on earth, or their readiness to serve others, by willingly making sacrifices that make them less self-centered in their activities, more all-embracing in their charity, more available in their service (LG 44).

3 - Such a witness is more necessary than ever in our scientific and technological world, where people in some way have to touch a thing in order to believe in its reality. It is advantageous that this witness be given by those who are not estranged by their consecration from participating in the life of the world. In addition, the Brother is called, at the very heart of his educational activity, to bear the witness of his total consecration to God. In this way, far from disparaging the things of this world, the Brother makes clear that their value is founded in their divine origin and their eschatological destiny. The Brother's witness, then, is a kind of invitation to a continual transcending of all that is temporal.

4 - True community life constitutes a living sign of the central reality that it is the mission of the Brothers to announce. The love that God has shown to humanity in Jesus Christ becomes the principle of union among persons: "That they may be one so that the world may believe" (John 17, 21). That is why the Brothers' community ought to be built upon faith, so that its very existence points the way to the God whom the community reveals in its educational mission.

THE MYSTERY OF THE PERSON TRANSCENDS ACTIVITIES AND INSTITUTIONS

27 1 - The service of the Brother in his apostolic mission has a direct bearing on every aspect of his consecration to God. Yet the religious consecration which the Brother lives at the very heart of his apostolic activities is not confined to any one of them, but reaches its full expression in the mystery of the personal relation each Brother has with God. It is a characteristic of the person to transcend the activities in which the person engages. This means that the Brother should be able to rise above his activity and to renew from time to time his awareness of the meaning of his life in the eyes of God.

2 - By the same token, the Institute and every community will consider each Brother in the totality of his person and not simply in terms of the apostolic work he does. The community should therefore appreciate the particular qualities and talents of each of its members, just as it should respect also the spiritual values that each one holds. Each Brother, for his part, ought to strive to give himself entirely to the common mission, convinced that it is in giving that we receive and that we must lose ourselves in order to be saved.

CHAPTER VI SERVICE OF THE POOR THROUGH EDUCATION

28 1 - Solidarity with the people of today, attention to the appeals from the Church, our religious vocation which commits us to follow Christ in a special way, and fidelity to the specific intentions of the Founder -- all clearly indicate to us that it is the poor to whom we are sent by preference.

2 - For that reason the General Chapter reminds us in a forceful way that our orientation toward the poor comprises an integral part of the purpose of the Institute. This orientation should always be kept in mind whenever there is a question of a new foundation, or the evaluation of an enterprise already in existence, as well as in the guidelines for the formation of the young Brothers. Such fidelity to the living spirit of the Founder will stimulate throughout the Institute a purification of the apostolic spirit by emphasizing a sense of unselfish service. It will provide as well a fresh approach to the Christian understanding of poverty.

3 - It is the Institute in its entirety that is directly involved in the service of the poor. It is not, however, the role of the General Chapter to determine in detail the specific needs to which the Brothers should be attentive, nor in what precise manner they should respond. Different historical and sociological contexts require the chapters on the local level to elaborate a clear and appropriate policy that will commit in a practical way personnel and structures to the service of the poor. It is incumbent on each community and each Brother to be able to perceive the needs of the poor and to propose appropriate remedies to the various chapters. This applies not only to the problems in their own Regions, but also to those that exist throughout the world, particularly in the Districts of the Institute that are less well off.

Who Are the Poor?

29 1 - To determine who are the poor for us today, two extreme positions should be avoided:

2 - First, we should avoid a rigid interpretation that defines the poor only from an economic point of view. This casts suspicion on much of the work we are doing and denies the possibility that such works can be of service to the poor. It will not suffice simply to change the field of our apostolate in order to be faithful to what the service of the poor demands of us. Such service requires in the first place a conversion in attitude which will enable us to recognize the poor and their problems in our ordinary classes, for example, or to direct our religion classes in such a way as to sensitize all our students to be concerned about those who are the most disadvantaged.

3 - Second, we should avoid a formula so broad that would encourage us to maintain the status quo with an easy conscience. It is certain that poverty of intelligence, of affection, and of faith all call for our attention and our educational service. But it is not less true that material poverty very often lies at the root of these other forms of poverty, and that there are many of the poorest who have no family, who are in poor health, or who cannot adjust socially.

4 - In order that our orientation toward the poor be free from all ambiguity, it is important to distinguish "poverty as frustration" from a Christian attitude of "spiritual poverty." The word "poverty" has at least these two very different meanings.

5 - Poverty as frustration is born of injustice, physical and social evils, or personal insufficiency and failure. This form of poverty makes it impossible for certain cultures, social groups, or individual persons to attain a standard of living that would allow them real freedom. They live in a kind of slavery from which they cannot free themselves because of the deprivation in which

their material and cultural poverty holds them. Often experienced as a lack of love in one's life, such a situation, by reason of the subservience and the struggle to survive that it engenders, prevents persons from developing in a way that accords with their dignity as human beings.

6 - There is no necessary correspondence between poverty as frustration and a Christian attitude of spiritual poverty, which involves a relationship with God and with other persons. Such poverty consists essentially in an attitude of free and full acceptance of the salvation which is given to us in Jesus Christ.

7 - His religious consecration invites the Brother to enter more deeply into this Christian attitude. Then he should work to inculcate this attitude in others because that is the very meaning of his apostolic mission.

The Struggle against Poverty as Frustration

30 1 - As a witness to this Christian attitude of poverty and in an effort to develop it in others, the Brother is engaged in the struggle against poverty as frustration.

2 - Consequently, the Brother will guard himself against confusing goals. The ultimate purpose of the educational apostolate of the Brother, for the poor as well as for all, is to communicate the Christian spirit. But the poverty of those whom the Brother instructs is not necessarily a favorable situation for announcing the good news of salvation. Jesus Christ is not the solution for material deprivation, however much he may be a source of comfort in such situations through the inspiration that faith brings for action in the temporal order. It would be blameworthy to make of Christianity an endorsement of the established social order, thus dispensing with the need for social protest and efforts to establish social justice.

3 - The service of the poor requires that the Brother, in conformity with his mission, stand in opposition to all forms of poverty as frustration and to have, above all, a special concern for the full human development of persons who are poor, sensitizing them to improve the milieu in which they live. Concern for the needs of individual persons and taking on enterprises in favor of the poor can never dispense with efforts to establish a just social order.

Educating the Poor

31 1 - In the area of our educational endeavors, the concern to return to the poor ought to lead to the gradual modification of some of the works in which we are presently engaged and to the complete transformation of some of the others.

2 - The works in which the Brothers are engaged must frequently be examined to see whether they correspond to real needs. Likewise, within the educational standards and administrative systems to which the Brothers must often conform, we must be careful to give preference to the human development of those to whom the Institute wants to return as a priority. We must be concerned to foster an educational policy centered on the persons we want to educate and not primarily on the prestige of the curriculum or competition for academic honors.

3 - The expansion of the teaching activity of the Brothers into other pastoral or educational contexts will always be done with reference to the poor.

4 - In some countries an effective democratization makes it possible for the most disadvantaged to have access as a matter of course to a human and cultural education. The Brothers ought to be pleased with such a situation and contribute to such a collective sensitivity. But even in

this case, as they collaborate in a public effort, the Brothers will give special attention to those students who have difficulty adjusting to a normal scholastic program, who are not developing as persons, or who have problems at home, in their work, or in adapting socially.

5 - In every situation the Brothers will avoid any external show that would be offensive to the poor. They furnish their establishments to reflect a simple lifestyle and shared poverty and so allow the most disadvantaged to feel at ease there.

6 - The Brothers will work to promote the collective advancement of the poor. This requires the preparation of an elite group who will not dissociate themselves from their people but will remain among them as a ferment and a source of support to help the less favored to evolve together as a community. The Brothers will make a special effort to develop a militant group of lay workers without whom there can be no true advancement in the dignity of laborers, and also to prepare leaders in rural and urban areas to keep alive programs in social justice.

Involvement in Other Social Contexts

32 1 - The preferential orientation of the Institute toward the poor does not exclude the Brothers from involvement with other social contexts. They may even be sometimes obliged to do this type of work either because of pastoral needs or the requirements of good organization. Whatever the commitment, however, the Brothers will want always to be in solidarity with the poor and with the activity of the Institute that favors the poor. In every situation the Brothers will do all they can to awaken social consciousness by teaching social doctrine, leading the students to participate effectively in the struggle for justice and peace to which the Church calls them in the world today. Christian love disregards all social and racial barriers since every human creature is in need of salvation (GS 31).

2 - In their educational activity the Brothers will be careful to help their students become aware of human suffering in its concrete forms. They will strive to awaken in them an increasing sense of universal brotherhood (PP 68); they will do all in their power so that the young who live in favorable circumstances understand that human solidarity and the Christian spirit invite them to share their goods and to serve those who are in need.

Going toward the Poorest of the Poor

33 1 - According to situations and possibilities, there is a need for imaginative effort coupled with a personal and community search to discover new and adaptive forms of education for those who are "the poorest of the poor."

2 - The extent of human need together with the appeals of the Church ought to guide the search and the initiatives to be undertaken. That is why the Brothers confront continually the challenges of our time, translated every day into situations or events that we must learn to understand as a community (PC 2d). Examples can be found in worldwide hunger, racism, the exploitation of human beings by their fellow humans, violence, war, a fragile peace, the liberation of oppressed peoples or those who are suffering from lack of cultural adaptation, juvenile delinquency, infirmity, uprootedness, and dysfunctional families.

3 - At this moment in history all of us must open ourselves in a special way to the needs of the developing nations of the world and unite with the Church which brings "close attention particularly to the development of those peoples who are striving to escape from hunger, misery,

endemic diseases, and ignorance; for those who are looking for a greater share in the benefits of civilization and a more honest appreciation of their human qualities" (PP 1). The Institute ought to be particularly sensitive to the fact that in countries that are suffering from poverty, it is the young who suffer most in their health, their education, and their human development. Dedicated as we are to education and to instruction, we are called to work more and more directly in the service of these peoples, for "a basic education is the primary object of any plan of development. Indeed hunger for an education is no less a deprivation than hunger for food: an illiterate is a person with an undernourished mind" (PP 35).

4 - The General Chapter earnestly desires that from our midst, and everywhere, there will come forth qualified Brothers with a vocation to serve in countries on the way to development. The local needs that are perceived in each District should not prevent the Brothers from realizing that there are more urgent needs in disadvantaged regions. The Chapter further calls on each Brother and each community to participate actively in the service of these poor nations. It is of the utmost importance that at the center of the Institute there be a bold and unselfish response to the immense needs of the world today.

Preparation and Practical Guidelines

34 1 - The effective commitment to the service of the poor requires the kind of competence which will permit the Brother to respond as adequately as possible to the true needs of the persons and social situations which he will take in charge. To opt for this service requires of the Brother a serious study of the social, political, and economic situation which will help him to recognize the full scope of the Christian struggle for human dignity.

2 - It is urgent that every Brother make his own the decision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle to go to the poor "with the heart of a poor person." As he does so, the Brother will discover little by little all that is implied in his consecration to God. The service of the poor cannot be separated from spiritual poverty, from humility, from the love of Christ and one's neighbor. It demands a genuine sharing in the life of the poor, an affective communion with the condition of the poor, going as far as the courageous personal and community practice of an effective poverty, a poverty that is consistent, however, with the practical necessities of professional life.

3 - An authentic service of the poor in the apostolate of education will contribute greatly to integrate at a deeper level the personal life of each Brother, helping him to overcome more easily the difficulties encountered by those who have made Jesus Christ the foundation of their entire life.

4 - All the organs of government, of decision making, or of dialogue in the Institute are equally obligated to enter into this conversion to the poor, in such a way that all the decisions taken and the structures put in place will reflect in fact the truth of our "return to the poor."

CHAPTER VII EDUCATION IN THE FAITH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

35 By calling the Brothers to be consecrated to God, God sends the Brothers into the world to work for the building up of the Kingdom. It is by the service of the Christian education of the young that the Brothers acquit themselves of this mission: "The purpose of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children" (Rule of 1705).

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE APOSTOLATE OF EDUCATION

Contemporary Needs

36 1 - Educating the young is of capital importance today every bit as much as it was at the time the Institute was founded. The population explosion is everywhere increasing the percentage of young people in proportion to the total population. Adolescents, who everywhere have greater opportunities to attend school, likewise constitute a compact sociological group endowed with a collective self-awareness and with its particular ways of judging, feeling, and reacting. Thus adolescents represent a force in modern society with a social, political, and economic influence that increases every day (AA 12). As for the Church, adolescents constitute a mission territory that is fraught with hope and at the same time is a source of anxiety.

2 - The importance that is now accorded to young people only serves to underscore how detrimental is the shortage of educators willing to serve them by manifestations of love, competence, and unselfishness. Without adequate guidance from adults, this world of the young tends to close in on itself, to revolt, to become corrupt, or to fall prey to ideologies that are more interested in exploiting them for partisan purposes rather than aiding the young to come to maturity as adults or to prepare them to be available for the service of others.

3 - It is true that the right to an education is recognized and proclaimed publicly by the international organizations at the highest level. The means for obtaining an education and a degree of culture are many. It is also true, nevertheless, that forty percent of the world's population remains illiterate. That is why Vatican Council II has called upon all Christians to work generously in the various branches of education, to fight with intelligence and courage against illiteracy. The Council also stresses the right of all the baptized to a Christian education. All these factors demonstrate the relevance for today of a society of dedicated men who have joined together to serve their fellow human beings through the Christian education of youth (GEM 1-2).

Apostolic Import

37 1 - This mission of the Institute is apostolic: it is directed to completing the task of bringing salvation to the whole world. In their work of education, the Brothers undertake to bring about the coming of that new kind of world that was begun with the Incarnation and the paschal mystery of the Lord. The Brothers want to contribute to the growth of the people of God.

2 - Such is the central lesson that the Founder addresses to us in his Meditations for the Time of Retreat. As Christian educators, the Brothers are "God's laborers" to realize God's great and loving design, "ambassadors of Jesus Christ" to accomplish his great mystery of salvation, agents of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Kingdom. In the midst of the young to whom they are sent, the

Brothers are the "ministers of God and the dispensers of God's mysteries."

THE PRIMACY OF THE CATECHETICAL MISSION

Purpose and Requirements

38 1 - The Brothers make known the divine mysteries by exercising the ministry of the Word of God. The Brothers are catechists by vocation; this is their "principal function." The Vatican Council also has called attention to the primacy of the ministry of evangelization and catechesis in the apostolic activity of the Church.

2 - To catechize is to help baptized persons to become aware of the reality of the mystery into which they were initiated in baptism. Catechesis provides the opportunity to hear the Word of God, giving persons deeper insight into the meaning of their existence and teaching them to make their whole lives a response to the Christian vocation. Catechesis leads Christians to understand and to build the world and its history in the light of God's unique and loving plan. It challenges people to consecrate themselves in love from now on to the service of their brothers and sisters in order to make the world more liveable and to give reason to hope for its eventual salvation.

To catechize is to introduce Christians to an intelligent and active participation in the mystery celebrated in the liturgy of the Church. It initiates them in a concrete way into a Christ-like life of justice, charity, and liberty activated by the action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people. Catechesis seeks, through a realistic and progressive apprenticeship, to prepare missionaries for God by witness, by instruction, and by prayer in order that the divine life within them will reach its full development and finally overflow into all humankind (GEM 4). Through spiritual direction and a personalized education, catechesis helps all baptized persons find their proper place in the service of the Church and all people, be it as a member of the militant laity, in religious life, or in the priesthood.

3 - The General Chapter calls upon the Brothers to undertake in a very particular way the evangelization and catechetical instruction of the most neglected among the young, especially the adolescents. The Chapter expects the Brothers to collaborate with diocesan and regional catechetical centers as well as with organizations that provide opportunities for catechists to be trained or to have their training brought up to date (AG 17). The Chapter asks the Brothers to continue, and in the process to accentuate, the movement for catechetical renewal that was initiated by the Institute several years ago and to which Circular No. 371 (of February 2, 1962) gave official approval and encouragement.

4 - In the exercise of the ministry of the Word of God, the person of the minister has an important place. By his life, his conduct, his professional competence, his human qualities, and the way he relates to people, the Brother is called to give witness to the reality of the new creation that he announces. In this way the exercise of the catechetical ministry to the young is for the Brother a continuing incentive to live more authentically his religious consecration.

5 - The wealth of the Institute consists in the Brothers who comprise it; its apostolic effectiveness depends on how well prepared they are. For that reason everything ought to be done to enable them to work with confidence and optimism. That means that they must be provided with the training in Scripture and theology that is indispensable for their mission. They should likewise be given a solid preparation in catechesis, including practical training in contemporary methods. Training in methodology ought also to be based on a knowledge of psychology, sociology, and

anthropology; nowadays every catechist must be well versed in the human and social sciences.

Furthermore, catechesis pertains to the broader framework of the Church's pastoral effort. For that to be authentic and effective, the Brothers need to be carefully trained to collaborate with the clergy and the laity in the work of educating young people in the faith. These considerations show the kind of formation that has to be given to the young Brothers, and also how necessary it is to provide for the Brothers who are already engaged in the apostolate ample opportunities and the concrete means to improve and adapt the training they received years ago.

Difficulties in Today's World

39 1 - In practice, however, circumstances in the world today often render the ministry of the Word of God more difficult than in times past. Catechesis as such is even impossible in some of the concrete situations experienced by the Brothers, whether in the so-called mission territories or in Christian countries where many students, even though baptized, have never really come to accept the faith. Christian doctrine is not some purely objective body of knowledge that can be handed on to just anyone: strictly speaking, one can only catechize those who already believe.

2 - It seems that more and more we shall be exercising our apostolate in a milieu that is de facto pluralistic. Not all those who come to the Christian school are looking for an education that is explicitly Christian. A contemporary sensitivity to the demands of religious freedom obliges us not to impose indiscriminately the same catechesis on all of our students, especially when dealing with adolescents.

3 - More fundamentally, the contemporary mentality finds the Christian message irrelevant to the extent that it appears as an abstract ideology, imposed by external authority or by deduction from principles, without any relation to the concrete experience of life and the situation of each person. People today begin with the concrete facts of their own experience. In addition, they are less interested in preserving the past than in building for the future. They are hardly touched at all by a catechesis which appears to them as nothing more than the transmission of a system of thought inherited from the past through the repetition of conventional formulas.

4 - These difficulties invite us to search together for answers in a clear-sighted and courageous fashion. We do not renounce in any way our determination to proclaim Jesus Christ; we believe that young people today need the gospel message and that they are capable of hearing it. In an atmosphere of freedom, and with full respect for the vast differences among the young in their religious development and the way they look upon Christ, it is important that we satisfy the hunger of those believers who want a more profound explanation of their faith, and that we try to answer the questions they are asking about the meaning of their lives.

THE HUMAN CONDITIONING NECESSARY FOR CATECHESIS

Lasallian Insights

40 1 - These difficulties prompt us to review the fundamental insights at the heart of the Lasallian tradition and to make better use of the riches they contain for the apostolic action suitable for our contemporary circumstances.

2 - From its origins, the Institute has recognized the central place that catechesis has in the apostolate of the Brother. This fact, however, has never led the Institute in practice either to

dissociate the catechesis from the rest of education nor to devote itself to catechesis exclusively. Almost by instinct, the living tradition of the Institute has been careful to integrate faith in Jesus Christ with the way young people lead their daily lives. There has always been this determination to tie together the work of evangelization with the effort to develop good citizens and to give them access to a good human education.

3 - Lasallian catechesis is concerned with the whole person; respectful of the individuality of each one, it takes as its starting point the character, the social situation, and the personal vocation of each student. Such catechesis aims to lead young people to take over progressively their own religious development. It seeks to take into account their true interests and to attach more importance to life itself than to programs. It is designed to prepare young people for the kind of life they will lead in the world, to integrate them into human society, and to make them capable of serving the earthly city.

4 - In the words of the Founder, the Brother is with the students from morning to evening; this means that the education he envisioned would be characterized by a fraternal relationship between teacher and student. The Brother is totally immersed in the life of his students: he shares their interests, their worries, and their hopes. He is not so much a schoolmaster pounding truths into their heads as he is an older brother who helps them to discern within themselves the call of the Spirit, to come to a better understanding of what is real, to recognize their own abilities, and thereby to discover progressively their place in the world.

5 - The catechesis given by the Brother is rooted in life and is ordained to life. Before spelling it out in words, the Brother is called to translate into concrete practice the gospel message that is his mission to announce. In effect, Christ is revealed as the savior and servant of human persons by the very fact that the Brother makes himself the servant of young people, preparing them to lead lives more alert, more responsible, more truly human. In a word, the Brother reveals the religion of love to the extent that he leads the young to experience the benefit of the love he offers them, a love that is sensitive, sturdy, and unselfish.

The Word of God does not fall out of the sky as an abstraction on anonymous individuals; it comes rather by way of a human experience to which it is joined, by which it is clarified and deepened. It is not in books or in words that the young first encounter the God who calls them, but rather in the one who catechizes them.

Contemporary Significance

41 1 - The context of the world today makes it possible for us to discover a new significance for these original insights; it allows us to discern some new ways for the Brother to exercise the ministry of the Word of God, even when it is not possible for him to proclaim the Gospel explicitly.

2 - In certain places, the Brother finds that he is constrained to limit his activity, at least in appearance, to the human education of the young, and often for long periods of time. But he should not believe that he is thereby unfaithful to the apostolic mission of the Church. The act of faith is the free response of a person to the Word of God. Working for the education of free persons is already a way of disposing them to faith.

Thus the Brother exercises his apostolic ministry whenever he strives to awaken the young to an awareness that life is to be taken seriously, to a conviction of the greatness of human destiny; when he helps them to be able to experience, with intellectual rigor and a desire to seek the truth, the autonomy of personal thought; when he helps them use their liberty to overcome their ready-

made prejudices and ideas, as well as to overcome social pressures and those that derive from the forces of disintegration within the human person; when he disposes them to use their freedom, their intelligence, and their training in the service of their fellow human beings, to open them to others, to teach them how to listen and try to understand other people, to trust and to love them; when he instills in the young a sense of justice, brotherhood, and fidelity.

3 - The teaching of the Vatican Council encourages the Brother to perceive God's design in the work of humanization and socialization as a good in itself. For it is with a view to Christ and to his Body that God created human nature as well as the entire universe. Opening people to life, to knowledge, and to love is already doing God's work, whose kingdom is not built by the activity of the Church alone, but also by work in the world.

By giving human beings the means to cultivate the earth so that it produces its fruit and becomes a home worthy of the human family, by preparing them to know enough to take part in the activities of social groups, by bringing them to self-knowledge and self-mastery -- in all of these ways the image of God in the human is perfected, and it becomes possible for humans to fulfill their God-given vocation to dominate the earth. To develop in people an awareness of the world and of life, to bring them to marvel at the beauty of creation, the diversity and richness of art, the conquests of science and technology, the depth of human thought and reflection, the varieties of civilizations and cultures, to prepare them to experience the joys of friendship and to give of themselves to others -- such are the ways whereby people are led to recognize "the Word of God who, before he became flesh in order to save all things and to sum them up in himself, was already in the world as the true light that enlightens every one" (GS 57).

Primacy of the Word of God

42 1 - Such a way of looking at things does not in any way minimize the importance of the explicit catechesis that the Brother provides as often as it is possible. It is the Word of God that reveals the ultimate meaning and the infinite value of human existence; by the same token the mystery of what it means to be human is only truly understood in terms of the Word made flesh (GS 22,1). An exclusively human humanism would be an inhuman humanism (PP 42).

2 - In order to accomplish effectively the work of God by his work in the world, the Brother must prepare himself by faith and prayer to listen to the God who is speaking today. Granted that the service of providing a human education for the young is a way of accomplishing God's plan for them, the personal relationship of the educator with God remains a condition of the authenticity of such service.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY OF THE BROTHERS AND ITS RENEWAL

43 From the beginning, the Brothers have worked in a variety of ways for the Christian education of youth. But the school has always been the principal instrument of their apostolate, the educational work in which the greatest number of Brothers has been involved.

THE SCHOOL AND ITS EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

44 1 - The General Chapter affirms that education through the school constitutes the primordial apostolic task of the Brothers: "The end of the Institute is to give a Christian education to children, and it is for this purpose that the Brothers keep schools" (Rule of 1705). If the apostolate of the school still has this same importance for the Brothers today, it is not primarily because of a long-standing tradition, but because of the intrinsic bond which links the school to the purpose of the Institute.

2 - In reality, "it is a characteristic of the human person that one can come to an authentic and full humanity only by formal learning" (GS 53,1). It is because of its importance for learning that the school is a privileged instrument of education. Furthermore, "it is in virtue of nature itself that the human person is a social being, and without relationships with others one can neither live as a human being nor develop one's human qualities" (GS 12,4). Thus the school is one of the principal contexts for children and adolescents to learn how to live in human society.

3 - The Christian school facilitates the exercise and the effectiveness of the explicit catechesis that it normally includes. By everything that it does to foster learning, the school can dispose young people to hear the Word of God. Human experiences and the discovery of the created universe are presented there as values in themselves, but also as a way of raising questions about their ultimate meaning and the hidden challenges they contain but are so often not perceived. Moreover, the Christian school is a fertile ground to put into practice immediately the teachings learned in catechesis. In school, young people can experience something of community life, of prayer, and begin to appreciate the mystery of the liturgy; they can learn something about the concrete implications of the freedom of the children of God and the apostolic responsibilities of the baptized Christian.

4 - It must be recognized that in many places today, both the institutions themselves and the programs offered in the schools are bearing the brunt of various kinds of critiques. Merely to reaffirm the principle that the Christian school has an apostolic dimension is not an adequate reply to the questions that some people, even among those who have consecrated their lives to the school, raise as to how effective is the school or even whether it has any future.

5 - Every period of significant change in our civilization has known similar crises. In every case, the solution consisted not in suppressing the school or abandoning it, but in renewing it. Today there is an opportunity for the Institute to make its contribution to the necessary renewal of the school, to help bring to birth the kind of school that will be capable of preparing people for the twenty-first century.

The General Chapter rejoices in the signs of a pedagogical renewal that are apparent in the Institute. It invites all the Brothers to participate in this movement with hope and courage, without being afraid to go in new directions in order to respond to the needs of young people today. Insofar as such a renewal is undertaken and pursued with clarity and perseverance, the special role of the

school will become more evident than in the past, and the relevance of the education provided in the Christian school will be felt with a more decisive force than ever before. It is important, therefore, to give attention to what would be involved in such a renewal.

THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OF TODAY NEEDS TO BE RENEWED

Authenticity and Contemporary Learning

45 1 - The renewal of the school implies an effort to be authentic and to make the process of learning relevant.

2 - First, it is important that our schools at every level be staffed by Brothers with a quality education and serious training. This shows that we want to be professionally competent and to be at the service of young people and the civic community.

3 - The school has to be aware of the profound changes in the field of education today and consequently to renew itself in its objectives, its curriculum, and its methods. With regard to its objectives, the important thing is not so much imparting to the students mere book knowledge as to develop in them powers of observation, imagination, reasoning, and foresight. With regard to the curriculum, to take into account, for example, the importance in today's world of science and technology, sociology, political science and economics, modern languages and the study of contemporary civilizations, of the instruments of social communication and leisure activities. With regard to methods, by giving priority, for example, to research projects and other vehicles of personal expression rather than to lecture and memorization, using in the process all the resources of audio-visual materials.

In this way the school will play a specific and important role in the process of educating the students by enabling them to profit better from the other sources of information, and by completing and systematizing the knowledge acquired by other means.

4 - One of the fundamental functions of the school is to promote "the vitality and growth of a new body of learning without sacrificing living fidelity to the heritage of tradition," and to foster "multiplied cultural exchanges" in such a way that "it does not undermine ancestral wisdom or jeopardize the unique character of each people" (GS 56 2, 3).

For this purpose schools now emphasize, for example, a more dynamic approach to the teaching of history and the masterpieces of the past. It is in this spirit that the school struggles to develop the power of concentration, the ability to make shrewd judgments, and the kind of critical mind that is so necessary in a world where discretion in the use of the mass-media is required to maintain one's personal freedom in the face of all the propaganda that abounds. The role of the school in forming people who can think is more indispensable than ever. By insisting on attentiveness, thoughtfulness, and study, the school introduces the person to the life of the mind, an intuition and reverence for the inner reality of things, a sense of the sacred and adherence to values, an awareness of human limitations and sinfulness, and a sensitivity to transcendence and the invisible world.

5 - Education in the faith must also be renewed in terms of the contemporary world. In a secularized world, catechesis joined to human learning can provide a needed purification for religious feeling by ridding it of a magical vision of the world and superstitious practices carried over from a primitive time. In a world where people are tempted to confine their vision to this life and to think of Christianity as useless or dangerous because it is dehumanizing, catechesis can point out that

persons find self-realization only by reaching beyond the self and by being open to God. "The Christian message does not discourage people from building up the earthly city, nor does it impel them to neglect the welfare of their fellows. On the contrary, it makes the obligation to do these things all the more pressing" (GS 34, 3).

Concern for Persons and Community Living

46 1 - The renewal of the school requires a stronger effort to be attentive to persons and the life of the community within the institutional structure of the school.

2 - The Lasallian school, then, will be characterized by a concern for each student, using the abundant resources of psychology and pedagogy so that each one will be known and treated according to his individuality as a human being. This concern will encompass the whole person: family background, personal talents, and special interests -- a far cry from seeing the student as nothing more than someone who happens to be in school. By the same token, the Brother will make a conscious effort to discover and develop the special talents of his students, rather than concentrating on their short-comings and defects.

In this way, the school will itself tend to constitute a human community where young people of different ethnic origins, and from different social and family backgrounds, will be able to educate one another to mutual understanding, to have broader perspectives through dialogue, to be realistic in recognizing the uniqueness and limitations of each one, to acquire a spirit of service, a sense of justice and fraternal charity.

3 - To give evidence that it is truly a community, the Lasallian school will strive to foster the freedom of young people, encouraging them little by little to assume responsibility for their own education. Education to freedom is made easier by a cordial relationship between teachers and their students, by the way discipline is handled, and by the very approach to teaching itself. Training in the exercise of freedom is inseparable from training in responsibility: students have to be given an active part in the very life of the school, including its discipline and its functions. Care must be taken that emulation does not turn into rivalry and selfish ambition. To that end, the preferred manner of instruction will be through work in small groups, founded on trust, responsibility, and a spirit of collaboration.

The school will be molded into a community only through a community of teachers rich in diversity and the unity of its members. For this reason the Brothers are happy to collaborate with lay teachers, who bring to the teaching community a contribution that comes from their knowledge of the world, their experience in family life, civic affairs, and labor organizations. The Brothers act in such a way as to guarantee that the lay teachers are involved in the whole life of the school: with the catechesis, apostolic movements, extra-curricular activities, as well as in administration and matters of policy.

Finally, the Brothers will do everything possible to provide the best possible conditions for the priest to exercise his ministry in animating the religious spirit of the educational community and in the Christian education of the students.

4 - More than in any other domain, a pedagogy of freedom is required when there is question of education in the faith. The Christian school aims to impose as little as possible: it proposes, without coercion, the limitless possibilities of life according to Christ; it announces the Gospel to each one insofar as he or she is ready for it, without proselytizing but not defensively, and with absolute respect for the freedom of everyone. To those who have already heard and accepted the call

of Jesus Christ, the teachers explain the Christian mysteries and work to develop in such students their faith and the Christian way of life.

Openness to Life

47 1 - The renewal of the school calls for an effort to be open to the life of the world and the life of the Church.

2 - Aware that the work of education is achieved by many influences over the course of a lifetime, the school is eager to collaborate with all those who contribute to the process of education. The Brothers work closely with the parents, who have the primary responsibility for the education of their children, knowing that they have much to offer, but also that they can learn from them. The Brothers also seek to establish ties of friendship with other educators, particularly those who are concerned with the leisure activities of the young. The school cannot claim to supervise everything by itself, but it ought to be careful to maintain an ongoing liaison with programs for leisure activities that are already in place. In some cases, however, it may be necessary for the teachers themselves to provide for the leisure activities of their students.

The Brothers collaborate with the priests in charge of parishes as well as the chaplains of Catholic action groups, or with activists in apostolic movements or unions that have an influence in the lives of young people. In this way, the school should more and more become a focal point where various educational organizations can meet and engage in dialogue for the greater good of the students. Such openness to the realities of the contemporary world would be made easier if, in certain cases, the school were willing to make its educational facilities available to the local community for adult education programs and for gatherings of young people.

3 - By its program of instruction, its other activities, and by catechesis, the school seeks ways to prepare its students realistically for their professional life, for marriage and family life, all in the service of civil society and the Church. It makes known to them the great needs and the great aspiration of people today; it enables them to act with competence in the world, as well as to dialogue and to collaborate with all persons of good will, especially with unbelievers, for the welfare of all humanity.

4 - One way for the Brothers to get to know better the real situation and the real needs of a world in evolution is to take full advantage of a continuing dialogue with the graduates of the schools, both those who have recently finished school and those who are older and more experienced. Following the recommendation of Vatican II in this matter, the Brothers consider it an integral part of their educational work to be concerned about the human and religious difficulties that their students encounter after they have left school. They will "continue to assist them with advice and friendship, as also through specialized associations imbued with the spirit of the Church" (GEM 8).

Such an ecclesial perspective implies on the part of educators an unselfish dedication that respects the initiative and responsibility of lay people, while generously offering them support in the form of professional competence and spiritual motivation, with special attention to the needs of those among the young who lack material resources, human relationships, and encouragement. The teachers will want to help their graduates to become involved actively in civil society, in the Church, and in movements appropriate to their age and station which foster an informed and responsible laity. Such an important apostolate on behalf of the adults who are graduates of our schools will be perfectly compatible with our ultimate goals; our educational activity will thereby enjoy a greater

efficacy as well.

New Requirements in the Training of Teachers

48 1 - The renewal of the school calls for teachers trained to meet the needs of people today: "It is above all on the teachers that the Catholic school depends if it is to be able to realize its goals and objectives" (GEM 8). An international Institute committed to the education of young people in school will contribute as it should to the renewal of the school only to the degree that it concentrates its efforts to authenticate the vocation of teaching.

2 - The General Chapter notes with satisfaction the strong attachment of the Brothers to the teaching function. That is what gives them their special place in the Church among the laity while, at the same time, it gives their character as religious a unique dimension: for the Brothers, teaching becomes an integral part of their religious consecration. Exercising this function with competence gives them the fundamental assurance that guarantees they are useful to society and makes it possible for them to be at the service of others.

3 - We can never do too much, therefore, to guarantee for all the Brothers the professional training that is indispensable for their work. Religious profession does not excuse us from technical competence. The spirit of faith, far from substituting for educational or pedagogical deficiencies, demands ever more in these areas out of respect for what is human. The realities of this world and those of faith have their origin in the same God.

4 - That is why those in responsible positions must guard against any policies that are stingy or narrowly utilitarian when it is a question of the basic education of the Brothers. Not only will they see to it that all will have the necessary professional certification and university degrees, but they will strive to provide for the Brothers an education as broad as possible, while at the same time creating opportunities for the particular talents of each Brother to be developed to the full. It is important, therefore, that the young Brothers have at their disposal the time and the means necessary to acquire a solid basic education, without which the competence and the effectiveness of their work would risk being compromised for long periods of time.

It is up to the young Brothers to bring all their personal energy, in full awareness of their responsibility, to the work of preparing themselves professionally. Likewise, it is an obligation for those in positions of responsibility to help the Brothers working in the apostolate to continue their education by providing the concrete means, whether by in-service training or by periods of more intensive educational renewal.

5 - To exercise the teaching function requires by its very nature a broad human and social experience. The training of young teachers must not, therefore, cut them off from the life of people in today's world, but rather must have them participate in it at a level that is in accord with their state and their mission. The professional preparation of the Brothers is not reduced simply to the acquisition of diplomas and intellectual development. It must provide "an adequate knowledge of the lifestyle as well as of the patterns of thinking and feeling that prevail in contemporary society" (PC 18, 2).

6 - The community of the Brothers is the soul of the academic institution where the Brothers work so as to provide continual vitality and direction in accordance with the mission of the community. To achieve this, it is important that the community not identify itself with the institution to the point of becoming its prisoner. If the Brother in the school is going to educate his students for life, it is necessary that the school not be the limit of his horizons nor constitute the entirety of his

existence.

It is for that reason that the General Chapter invites superiors and regional and local councils to heed the suggestions of many Brothers on this subject, and to study with prudence ways in which the community can become to some extent independent of the academic institution. This would guarantee a better apostolic service in and through the school. That is why the Chapter also invites all the Brothers' communities to open themselves to other communities in the city and the Church.

7 - The formation and the spirituality of the Brother should enable him to perceive and live his teaching as an expression of his consecration as a lay religious. He will, for example, try to understand and put into practice the significance of his vows for his educational mission. He will activate his faith by "being attentive to the way in which God speaks to the hearts of young people today" (Paul VI, speaking to the Brothers on June 16, 1966). The Brother will draw upon his love for Christ and his students to find the energy he needs to strive incessantly -- for their sake -- to continue his own education, to bring his teaching up to date, and to maintain the interest and joy he finds in life.

Both the formation program and the style of religious life will tend to develop this "constant readiness to begin anew and to adapt" (GEM 5), demanded by the very nature of the teaching vocation. Finally, although it is true that all religious life requires a certain "separation from the world," its meaning and implications have to be reconsidered when it is applied to the specific case of the Brother who is both teacher and educator. It cannot suppress the need for a genuine presence to the world, nor can it justify a lack of interest in the needs, anxieties, and hopes of all humankind.

Reappraisal of our Educational Work

49 1 - The renewal of the Christian school calls for a reappraisal of policies with regard both to new establishments and to their nature. Otherwise, it will be very difficult for the Brothers' community to provide leadership in the school institutions, and difficult as well to plan for initial and continuing formation programs.

2 - It must be recognized that taking on too many commitments and the inevitable overwork frequently means an abbreviated and incomplete formation for the young Brothers; for the Brothers already active in the apostolate, it becomes impossible for them to advance or renew their education; for the communities, dialogue and reflection become more difficult; for certain regions, it means that not enough attention is paid to changing conditions and to new opportunities. That is why the General Chapter invites the Regional and District chapters to undertake a reevaluation of their present commitments and to make the necessary adaptations, always in terms of the purpose of the Institute, which is not simply to keep schools for their own sake, but to work in the apostolate of education with the school as a privileged means.

3 - To undertake this reevaluation, it must be remembered that the influence of the Christian school will come more and more from its quality rather than from how many of them there are. The first objective, then, will not be to preserve existing institutions, but to constitute vibrant communities adequately staffed by personnel of such quality as to be an animating influence in the school institution.

4 - This option will sometimes oblige the Institute to some changes in already established enterprises, and to some necessary realignment so as to enter joint projects with other teaching congregations, with diocesan or regional Catholic education systems, and even to consider the possibility of involvement in public education. The unsatisfied educational needs of the youth of the

world forbid more than ever before any notion of withdrawal into self-sufficiency, much less any attitude of competition.

5 - However that may be, the vitality of an Institute becomes evident and is strengthened by establishing new enterprises, and each District ought to want sincerely to establish one or two of them. Such initiatives ought to respond to the real needs of time and place (for example, technical, professional, and university education, or centers to deal with illiteracy), or otherwise be established in favor of the most disadvantaged. In keeping with the long tradition of the Institute, special care should be taken to extend the work of the Brothers through schools and institutes aimed at the training of teachers and educators.

6 - In every case, the decision to close, to consolidate, or to open new foundations ought to be decided in the light of the total pastoral program of the various countries, and according to a rational plan determined by the real possibilities and needs of a particular time and place. Priority should be given to service in those areas where the shortage of apostolic workers and educators is most strongly felt.

EMPLOYMENT OF BROTHERS IN SCHOOLS NOT UNDER THEIR DIRECTION OR IN WORK OUTSIDE THE SCHOOLS

Brothers Teaching outside Schools of the Institute

50 1 - The Brothers may be called upon to teach in schools that are not under the control of the Institute, in private or state schools and universities where they might work effectively as individual professors with a personal title. Such a Lasallian contribution to an educational community ought to be regarded as completely in accord with the purpose of the Institute. Brothers so engaged, following the norms adopted by the local superiors and chapters, will bring to these schools that are independent of the Institute the witness of the Lasallian pedagogical ideals as already described above. These Brothers maintain membership in a community of the Institute, and it is important that the community support them both in the work they are doing and in their special concerns.

Activities outside the School

51 1 - Alongside the school, or as an extension of it, the Institute has always provided for a variety of educational or apostolic activities. Nevertheless, many Brothers today seem to desire a more determined openness on the part of the Institute to diversification in educational work, and they expect the General Chapter to give specific guidelines in this matter.

2 - The questions put by the Brothers on this subject are not contrived. Often they arise out of hard facts. In some local situations, more or less permanent, the Brothers can no longer hold on to their schools; sometimes they are even prevented from teaching at all.

In many countries, the increasing trend toward nationalization seems to forebode for the near or distant future profound changes in Christian education. In addition, new educational and apostolic needs are making themselves felt in many places. These situations will require new approaches to teaching and to education and new ways by which the Church can make her presence felt among the young. The very fact that millions of adults in developing countries cannot read or write, and millions of their children do not attend school, calls for finding new educational methods different from those that have been used in the developed countries. Likewise, the Church surely cannot

remain uninterested in this ever-increasing number of school-age Catholics who do not attend Catholic schools. It is incontestable that some Brothers are being called, both by external circumstances and by an interior attraction to the work, to exercise the apostolate of education in these particular situations.

3 - It is important not to minimize the dangers that would arise from a thoughtless proliferation of different forms of the apostolate. There is the danger that we might abandon the work of the school, which remains the principal task of the Institute, the importance of which remains essential. There is the danger of scattering our forces, since the Institute cannot do everything, and it is better to have a solid core of activity than to spend energy in every direction. Finally, there is perhaps the danger of illusion and individualism in escaping to an imagined easy alternative.

4 - Nevertheless, the General Chapter judges that the Institute should not get so rooted in a limited understanding of its educational purpose that it would want to proscribe all apostolic activity outside the school situation. Such a narrow point of view would not conform to the tradition of the Institute. It would run the risk of opposing the action of the Holy Spirit among us, and it would paralyze in advance the very innovations that are the most capable of renewing the schools themselves.

5 - For this reason the General Chapter desires to help those in charge at the local and regional level to "discern the Spirit" by formulating certain criteria by which to judge these new enterprises. The Chapter has confidence that the good sense of the Brothers and the wisdom of their leaders will have them understand that there is no intention here of minimizing the importance of the school, nor of drawing up a restrictive list of apostolic activities that are available to the Institute.

Criteria for These Activities

52 1 - It is clear from the outset that all our undertakings should be compatible with the specific purpose of the Institute, that is, be oriented in some way to Christian education, especially of the poor. Such undertakings should also envision a concern for the educational advancement of persons joined to a concern to announce to them the Word of God. In some cases, the catechetical aspect will be the dominant element -- catechesis of the young outside the school, or collaboration with regional catechetical activity or pastoral vocational ministry -- but the Brothers will always have in mind to integrate the daily life of young people with their educational development and with the Word of God.

In other cases, the Brothers might be called instead to take charge of educational developmental activities in a broader sense: training centers, residences for students or young workers, movie clubs, centers for professional or vocational guidance. Care should be taken that such activities have in view the proclamation of the Gospel, with full respect for freedom of conscience.

2 - As is the case with Brothers teaching in schools not directed by the Institute, the Brothers working in educational projects outside the school situation should do so always in reference to their community and in dependence on their superiors. Since they are sent by the Institute, they should think of themselves in this way and realize that they are recognized as members of the Institute and consequently are supported by their Brothers. They should often be present in the community to share its life, there to reflect and to share with their Brothers their special work experiences, and also to manifest their interest in the work of the others. In this way the specific good of the individual contributes to the enrichment of all. Moreover, to the extent that it is possible and prudent, they should try in the places where they work to become known as members of a religious community

and in this way establish a relationship between their Brothers and other workers in the field of education.

3 - In the cause of educating the young, it may often be advantageous for a Brother to hold a key position in educational administration, publishing houses, newspapers, television, or even a trade union. Such responsibilities will never be undertaken to obtain either for the individual or the Institute a position of power or prestige, but only in a spirit of unselfish service.

4 - The superiors and the Brothers will be careful when they take charge of activities apart from the school that this be done for positive reasons, that is to say, in response to specific educational needs and not from a negative view of the educational possibilities of the school, much less from an unfortunate experience in teaching, inadequate preparation, or outdated school organization. Besides, the school itself can often become a center where those who do not attend school would be welcome for evening classes, for cultural activities, for friendly gatherings or discussion groups. Finally the Brothers will remember that instead of doing everything themselves, they might involve their students or their graduates in some of these educational or apostolic activities (AA 12).

5 - In any case, the formation of the Brothers ought to be directed to the fundamental apostolate of the school. If this formation is as authentic and comprehensive as it should be, it will make the Brother available for the different kinds of apostolates that he may be called upon to exercise.

CONCLUSION

53 1 - At the end of this Declaration the General Chapter repeats its invitation to a profound renewal. It addresses this call to the entire Institute, to Regional and District chapters, and to each individual Brother, whatever his assignment.

2 - Societies, like individuals, grow old and die once the habits inherited from the past outweigh the will to renewal in the light of a twofold fidelity both to the intuitions that sparked our origins and the demands of life today. In the long run the future of the Institute is in the hands of the Brothers. They must not wait for ready-made solutions from those in authority for the new problems that come from a world in evolution. It is up to each Brother in the presence of God to start out along the path of spiritual conversion and determine to have a personal share in the communal work of adapted renewal. This is the price to be paid if the Institute is to ward off the threat of stagnation and live again in youth and vigor.

3 - The General Chapter is well aware of the difficulties, both present and future, that lie in the way of the renewal of the Institute. It reaffirms, however, its confidence in the Brothers and in their mission in the world today. It invites all the Brothers to turn with faith, and in a common prayer, to the Holy Spirit, who renews the face of the earth; to the Virgin Mary, who brings the cooperation of her maternal love to generating and educating people of faith; to Saint John Baptist de La Salle, who drew from his faith and charity the basis that made his life and his work humanly efficacious; to Saint Benilde, who, like so many Brothers who have gone before us, reminds us that God loves young people so much that he consecrates his saints to their welfare.