



Welcome Comments to the International Assembly
Gery Short
Monday 23 October 2006
Following Brother Alvaro

On behalf of the preparatory committee, I would also like to welcome you to the Assembly.

I would like to begin by thanking you for your commitment and for your great effort to be here. I want to thank your families, community members, spouses, children and fellow educators who we know are missing you. Much will be asked of you while you are here; thank you for all you have done to prepare and thank you in advance for your participation in this historic event.

I want to congratulate you for being selected. You represent almost 80,000 educators from over 80 countries around this world.

This is an historic event. Based on our unofficial survey, we do not know of any religious congregation in the world, in the Church, who has convened an Assembly of this magnitude, with the involvement and balance of Brothers and lay partners as full participants. How fortunate we are to be part, to be members of this Lasallian family.

As someone representing the lay partners and associates in this room and the world wide Lasallian family and network, I would like you to join me in recognizing and thanking the Brothers for calling us together. We need to thank the Brothers

For their openness to follow the Holy Spirit even when the direction seems uncharted;
For their confidence and faith in us as colleagues, partners in this shared mission
And for their dedication and stewardship of the Lasallian mission for the past 326 years.

Introduction of the Steering Committee

At this time I want to introduce the Members of the steering committee. (I will ask them to step forward).

The committee members come from two Commissions – one on Mission and the other on Association, which were established by the General Chapter in 2000. You will hear a report on the work of these commissions this Saturday morning.

The preparation of the Assembly began over two years ago and was led by the members of the two Commissions. From the two commissions, the steering committee was formed.

Introduce Steering Committee members by name here:

Gery Short, Chair
Brother Lorenzo Gonzalez Kipper, Secretariat
Brother Michael French, Liturgies and Celebrations
Carmelita Quebengco, Facilitators
Brother John D’Cruz, Listening and Writing Committee
Brother Valere, MEL
Skip Gaus. MEL
Luís Pena, Association
Eveline Geoffroy, Association

Also assisting the Steering Committee are

Brother Paulo Fossati, Facilitator
Brother Fred Mueller
Brother Carlos Gomez

If you need anything or have a suggestion for the Assembly, please contact anyone of these people.

Additionally, the facilitators, group leaders, the moderators, and other leaders during the Assembly, come from these two commissions. You will be meeting them throughout the Assembly. Other support members and leaders are members of the Generalate community. They are listed in a pink sheet in your packet entitled International Assembly 06.

The Purpose of the Assembly

I would like to spend a few moments to review with you the purpose of the Assembly and the schedule for the next two weeks. These were designed by the preparatory committee and approved by the Superior General and the General Council.

The purpose of the Assembly is to describe and reflect upon the history and present situation of our Lasallian Association for Mission in the world today. This reflection will help us to develop a vision and some recommended directions and actions for the future.

One of the focus areas of the Assembly is Mission: to identify and offer responses to new, emerging needs of young people and others for the Lasallian educational mission. We will need to address such topics as service of the poor and the growing culture of poverty in our world, pastoral ministry and needs for spiritual formation and religious education and educational innovation.

A second focus is the evaluation and sharing of our experiences of association, especially from our experiences over the last 6 years or so. In this we are bound to face the challenges of formation and accompaniment, religious pluralism, the spiritual lives of our fellow educators, and issues of identity and language.

A third area involves the examination of our structures – we will need to review the development of the communities of educators, those who may live, serve and pray together;

and our governing and leadership structures that, until recently, were the sole domain of the brothers. How do we imagine structures and leadership that reflect our contemporary experience and spirit of Association?

Our ultimate goal is to present a vision and proposed plans of action around these topics to the Brothers attending the 44th General Chapter in May and June, for their consideration.

Schedule

Please look at the schedule that is in your folder at this time.

The schedule has been designed around four movements, each with a special emphasis.

The first movement is an Orientation and Welcome. On this first day, we want you to begin to become comfortable with this house and begin to meet the people who are here from over 50 countries around the world. So as you see the schedule there is an audio-visual presentation of the Lasallian world to give us a sense of who and where we are; an exercise about “cultural sensitivity” to help us communicate more effectively with one another; then there is a time for some personal introductions in groups that we will be in for the first few days. After the mid day meal we have organized tours of the Generalate so we can find anything from the mail room to the computers; and we will end the afternoon with a Eucharistic celebration in the Main Chapel. After the evening meal we are all invited to the foyer of the house for a social.

We want you to begin to become comfortable with the house and one another.

The second movement is entitled Sharing Experiences and will take place from tomorrow, Tuesday through Thursday. This is a time to listen and learn about the

various Regions in the world, their challenges and hopes, and something very special they would like to share with us around mission and association in their Region. There will be time for us to meet in groups to discuss the presentations – time for clarification, and time to compare the presentations with our own experiences – what we may have in common and what may be unique.

You will notice we have a ½ day off on Thursday afternoon, enjoy it, and then we move into the third movement which we are calling Discernment. This is a time of prayerful consideration of our history, Scripture, Lasallian texts and their application to our present experiences to help us shape our vision. Brother Miguel Campos will lead us during these days beginning with a presentation on Tuesday, “The Steps of Lasallian Discernment,” and with a variety of exercises.

The final movement is the Action phase. This is where we will be sharpening our vision and identifying specific plans of action that will be presented to the General Chapter.

You will receive more detailed instruction about each phase and each day from the moderators as the Assembly unfolds.

The phasing of movements is designed to make the Assembly schedule run smoothly. We also realize that the spirit of the four movements will be experienced throughout the entire Assembly.

We will be getting to know one another throughout our time together. We know it is difficult to meet and converse with others when we cannot speak the same language. As we do back home with our students and colleagues, please go out of your way to help one another feel at home and at ease. In particular, those of you who may know more than one language, the international environment, or this house a bit better than others, please reach out to those who are new to this type of gathering.

We will listen to and learn from one another, share our experiences, and leave here with a much broader understanding of the issues our brothers and sisters face worldwide.

As is our practice, we will discern, pray well, and listen to the Holy Spirit and what the Spirit is saying to us through one another. Please enjoy the silence and time for prayer and reflection, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

We know as Lasallian educators, we cannot help but vision possibilities and anticipate actions throughout the Assembly. We want to encourage you to consider a vision and action that is bold and daring, in the creative, authentic, radical spirit of De La Salle.

This is an historic event.

The Church needs us.

Our brothers and sisters at home are counting on us.

De La Salle and the 1000's of brothers before us, especially the Superiors General who are looking over us in this room, are pulling for us.

And most importantly, the young people who deserve to experience God's love and be given the opportunity to become full human beings, for their salvation and liberation, these young people in our midst and yet to be born, they need us.

To quote our Vicar General, Brother Bill Mann, "When the Church is in crisis, the Holy Spirit has never failed to raise up a people to do God's work". We are these people. Let's get to work.

Again, I welcome you on behalf of the preparatory committee. Let me now introduce the three moderators of the ASSEMBLY for the next two weeks who will take it from here: Carmelita Quebengco, Manila, Philippines; Eveline Geoffroy, Paris, France; and Brother Paulo Fossatti, Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Live Jesus in Our hearts, forever.