

# THE BROTHERS TODAY: IDENTITY AND FORMATION

## I THE IDENTITY OF THE BROTHER

### INTRODUCTION

A number of pre-Chapter Regional meetings recommended that the topic of the identity of the Brother be studied at the Chapter. Some 13 notes under the same heading were sent directly to the Chapter and the question was raised by implication in a number of notes received concerning the Shared Mission.

The Commission report has followed the directives given by the Central Commission by examining four aspects of the overall topic under the heading of OBSERVATIONS:

1. Why is the identity of the Brother being called into question?;
2. Community life and identity;

3. Association and identity;
4. The vocations ministry and Identity. (This aspect was passed on to the Commission on Formation, p. 26)

The work of this Commission does not claim to be exhaustive. It is primarily descriptive and analytical, but in its Recommendations and Propositions, it attempts to offer some practical suggestions which may help to reinforce those aspects of the Brother's life which are particularly important in helping him maintain his identity. In their first Proposition, the members of the Commission expressed their firm conviction that the topic needed to be studied further and in greater detail after the Chapter by a group established by the Brother Superior and his Council.



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## OBSERVATIONS

### 1. WHY IS THE IDENTITY OF THE BROTHER BEING CALLED INTO QUESTION?

#### *Perceptions of identity*

- Sometimes there is confusion between who we are and what we do. Reliance on an exclusively functional identity can create an imbalance between the professional and the vocational aspects of our lives.

- Identity is something built up gradually; it does not depend only on us, but also on the image of ourselves communicated to us by others.

- The perception which each Brother has of his identity seems to be influenced by certain variables, including among others: age, style of formation, ability to relate with Partners, understanding of the Church.

#### *Some elements which reinforce the Brother's identity*

Among others, the following can be mentioned:

- regular participation in the pas-

toral ministry;

- a vibrant and spiritual community life;

- the visibility of being established in poor surroundings.

#### *Insecurity and uncertainties*

Among all the factors that can cause them, we mention the following:

- the difficulties experienced in evangelization and catechesis;

- the devaluation of the role of the teacher in some societies, and the pressures on the school in modern society;

- the loss of control and leadership of schools in many countries;

- the difficulty of preserving the Lasallian characteristics in some schools;

- faith crises or spiritual stagnation among individual Brothers;

- the overall decrease in the number of Brothers;

- the vocations crisis.

### 2. COMMUNITY LIFE AND IDENTITY

#### *Spiritual life*

- There is better participation in

community prayer, but sharing the experience of God remains difficult.

- Some Brothers are not particularly interested in their continuing spiritual formation through spiritual reading, courses in Biblical studies or theology, new forms of prayer, etc.

### *Individualism*

Individualism can be observed in a number of areas:

- Commitment to the mission is sometimes more individual than community-based;

- Leisure and relationships outside the community with family and friends can take precedence over the needs of the community;

- Use of possessions: money, cars, television, computer...can isolate Brothers from one another;

There can be a lack of personal relationships, and little involvement by some Brothers in community life.

### *Difficulties in setting up community structures*

- Sometimes the community programme, intended to be a source

of new energy, is trivialised;

- Small communities require even stronger commitment from their members but often relationships among the members remain poor.

- Sometimes insufficient use is made of the Guide of the Brother Director.

- Evolution within the community can be slowed down by Brothers who have been there for a long time.

For these reasons, it can be difficult for the Brother Director to carry out his leadership role in the community.

## 3. ASSOCIATION AND IDENTITY

### *With the Brothers*

- The vow of association is not very well understood by some Brothers, nor given much importance; sometimes the community does not have a clear perception of its common mission.

- It can be that the feeling of belonging to the District is weak among some Brothers; there is a lack of co-responsibility, mobility, and availability for District service.

- At an Institute level, there has

been significant progress made in interdependence and solidarity between Districts.

### *With Partners*

The association between Brothers and Partners has an ambivalent effect on the identity of the Brother.



Positively:

- Some Partners challenge Brothers to adopt more meaningful commitments.
- Partners appreciate the role of the Brothers in the Lasallian mission, and work in fostering vocations to the Institute.
- A shared formation of Brothers and Partners has helped Brothers to rediscover the person of the

Founder and his charism.

- Some communities are renewed when they are sufficiently open to share their reflection , prayer and their community life with others.

Negatively:

- Some Brothers see Partners as in competition with them.
- Some Brothers feel that when the Shared Mission is mentioned, the Institute gives priority to Partners to the detriment of the Brothers.
- The role of Brothers in the school has changed. The fact that often they are few in number creates a certain insecurity which affects their identity and the fostering of vocations.

## **GUIDELINES**

### 1. GENERAL GUIDELINE

We believe that the identity of the Brother is clearly expressed in the effort to “integrate in his own person the constitutive elements of his vocation:

- consecration to God as a lay religious;
- apostolic ministry of education, especially of the poor;

- and community life” (R 10).  
Very many Brothers fully live out their identity as Brothers; they are at the same time the ‘heart’ and ‘memory’ of the Lasallian charism. We rejoice at this because “the young, the poor, the world and the Church need the ministry of the Brothers.” (R 141)

But, in the climate of uncertainty and insecurity, brought about and sustained by the escalating change, of which globalisation is a manifestation, questions remain about the Brother’s identity. This is particularly true where the loss of some traditional roles, formerly carried out exclusively by Brothers, has taken away what may have been only a functional identity, better expressed in terms of doing rather than of being.

## 2. GUIDELINES REGARDING COMMUNITY LIFE

It is necessary:

- to develop within our personal and community life the Christological dimension of Lasallian spirituality and give preference to the experiences of God which are linked with that spirituality;

- to submit apostolic initiatives and each Brother’s lifestyle to the discernment of the community, so as to overcome the individualism which threatens our identity;
- to take into consideration the existence of Association, and the new role which the Brothers and the Communities need to have in it; in our community programmes;
- to create and encourage, on a community and District level, opportunities and means to express friendship and fraternity, and by this means, develop and encourage the affective life of the Brothers.

## 3. GUIDELINES REGARDING ASSOCIATION

It is necessary:

- to strengthen our identity by attaching more importance to the meaning of the vow of association for the educational service of the poor, at the community, District and international level, and use this as a basis for clarifying our understanding of the other vows;
- to develop awareness of the community’s mission: each community, no matter what its situation, could, for example, be given

a letter of mission by Brother Visitor, defining its activities at a local level, and its contribution to District establishments;

- to induce Brothers to promote association and partnership in a spirit of sharing, and to practice association with Partners, so that we may allow ourselves to be challenged regarding our identity and our commitments.

#### *Recommendation 14*

*That the reception of the General Chapter documents throughout the Institute be accompanied by special pastoral activities - workshops, recollections, gatherings, retreats - which could help individual Brothers, communities and Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations establish and/or reinforce practices which help us to remember and express who we are as Brothers.*

#### *Recommendation 15*

*That each Personal Annual Plan (R 58b) and the Community Annual Plan (R 58a) make use of Chapter Documents to deepen our fidelity to the vow of Association, thereby strengthening our identity as consecrated men, living in com-*

*munity for a mission of educational service to the poor. Likewise, on the occasion of the preparation of the Community Annual Plan, there should be a ceremony in which each community member renews the vow of association, naming the other members of the community.*

#### *Recommendation 16*

*That each Brother participate regularly, preferably in a school, in catechesis, pastoral ministry, or some other service which makes him reflect upon and share his faith, given that the Brother's identity, and "his principal function", are intrinsically linked with evangelization and the educational service to the poor.*

#### *Recommendation 17*

*That we adopt and implement the following criteria with regard to the composition and life of communities:*

- that the community be composed of a sufficient number of Brothers, by preference more than three, so that the vitality of its own life and of its mission as a community is ensured;*
- that the necessary means are*

*made available to improve personal relationships, the affective life of each Brother, and the special attention given to young and to elderly Brothers, so as to make visible one of the most characteristic elements of a community - brotherhood;*

*- that new opportunities for experiencing community life be created for young people and Associates, making it possible to share faith and spirituality.*

#### *Recommendation 18*

*That, each District, when setting up plans for its establishments and administering its goods, upgrade its plan for the educational service of the poor, by creating or promoting communities in very poor areas, with the participation of Lasallian Associates, and in conjunction with other Districts and Regions;*

*That each community examine its own lifestyle and administration to see if its way of living conforms with that of people of ordinary means. (R 32)*

#### *Recommendation 19*

*That together with our Partners, within the framework of a deter-*

*mined policy, each District choose establishments whose priority will be the educational service of the poor, and encourage Brothers and Partners to work in them.*

#### **Proposition 17**

**The General Chapter requests Brother Superior and Council to set up and bring together an intercapitular commission to study completed or current research on the specific identity and role of the Brother as envisaged by the Founder. This commission will study also the results of completed or current research on the specific identity and role of lay religious in the Church. Brother Superior and his Council will communicate the overall results of this study to the whole Institute.**

#### **Proposition 18**

**The General Chapter requests all Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations to devote a year to the renewal of our community life, based on the study of the basic elements of the spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, which will allow us, among other things:**

- to share the experience of God;  
- to be better «expert guides in the spiritual life» (Vita Consecrata 55) in our mission.

### Proposition 19

**That the General Chapter decide that, following the Chapter, a year be devoted to our vow of association for the educational service of the poor. Formation programmes organised by the Centre of the Institute, Regional centres, Brothers' retreats, communities, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations will organise programmes for deepening an understanding of this vow. This will be a priority in personal and community annual programmes.**

## II FACING OUR DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION AND LIVING BY ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF THE POOR

SOME DOCUMENTS FOR REFERENCE:

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- *The Rule: 16d, 56, 74a, 81, 101d,*

*101f, 145;*

- *The Declaration: 4, 13.3, 14.3, 24, 49.5, 53.2, 53.3;*

- *Circular 435: pages 65 to 71 (English edition);*

- *Vita Consecrata: N. 44, N. 63, N. 109;*

- *7 Notes to the Chapter;*

- *The 2nd Letter of the Preparatory Commission.*

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### A PRELIMINARY REMARK

The previous General Chapter (42nd) produced a series of documents, recommendations and propositions concerning “*The Brothers in later years*”, which are still very relevant today. The 43rd General Chapter, having chosen as its central theme “*Associated for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21st century*”, wished to have an overall view of our demographic situation, and its numerical evolution.

### OBSERVATIONS

#### 1. A WORLDWIDE DEMOGRAPHIC PHENOMENON

Some figures will help us to un-

derstand the demographic situation of our Institute better:

- 61% of the Brothers are over 60 years of age,
- In 7 Districts, the average age is over 70. (1,794 Brothers).
- In 8 Districts, the average age is under 45. (375 Brothers).
- By the next General Chapter, we can expect to have 1,000 fewer Brothers in the Institute as a whole.

The fact that the total number of Brothers has decreased is not something that has just occurred; it has been going on for more than thirty years.

The demographic imbalance of the Institute is not peculiar to it alone:

a) In more economically developed countries, many societies are seeing an increase in the number of retired persons, while the number of active persons, in the sociological sense of the term, is decreasing. On the other hand, most other countries have very large numbers of young people.

b) In more economically developed countries, the vocations crisis affects practically all apostolic religious congregations and all the

dioceses. Lay teaching congregations have been particularly affected. We note, however, that new movements and congregations are appearing in the Church, which are attracting young vocations.

## 2. SOME CONSEQUENCES

Some consequences are positive:

- The development of the “shared mission” with its own internal dynamics;
- The apostolic religious life is being challenged and is looking for a new and prophetic reason for its existence in the Church and in the world.
- The availability of Brothers resulting from retirement and longer life expectancy has permitted them:
  1. to discover new ways of contributing to the educational mission, in particular, to that of the



poor,

2. and to provide a fraternal presence for elderly persons.

- The phenomenon of ageing makes us more sensitive to the human aspects of a Brother's life.

- The Institute is now more prepared to work with other congregations and/or organisations in order to pool resources. As a result, the awareness that our mission comes from the Church is reinforced.

- The witness of our older Brothers is often a stimulus for those around them as well as for the pastoral ministry of vocations.

Other consequences are negative:

- For the Brothers, there is a temptation to model their retirement on that of ordinary lay persons, and to forget that our mission does not end when we retire from our professional life.

- Some Brothers feel disorientated and do not understand the changes that are taking place. The result is a loss of identity and doubts regarding the value of their vocation.

- In addition to the fact that, as Brothers grow older they lose much of their energy, there is also a lack of Brothers in Districts to

respond to the always pressing needs of the mission today.

- The Institute, as an ageing social body, may find it difficult to free itself from old patterns of behaviour, especially if the past is remembered with nostalgia.

### 3. IMPACT ON THE FUTURE

In the past, many Districts responded generously by sending missionary Brothers to work in newly-founded Districts. Today, young Districts can no longer depend on such reinforcements, and must assume their own responsibilities regarding the mission.

Ageing Districts must face up to the financial and human requirements of their retirement houses for the older Brothers.

The Institute as a whole will see a decrease in its human and financial potential.

### GUIDELINES

1. Given the situation we have described, the Institute as a whole, and each Brother in particular, is called to be more humble and to

show a greater of poverty. At the same time, we need to give a new impetus to the pastoral ministry of vocations and to the process of association.

2. Just as all human beings have to accept that their life goes through various stages (birth, growth, old age, death), so the Institute also must learn to accept, without despairing, that it is dying out in certain countries, while, at the same time in others, it is being born and growing. The Bible, especially the Gospel, calls upon us to make the connection between ageing and the fulfillment of the Promise, between death and life.

3. As there is a certain perception of the vocation of the Brother, which leads some Brothers to identify it mainly with their work, leaving them at a loss when their professional work ends with retirement, greater care ought to be taken over formation programmes, and by formators, to ensure that the constitutive dimensions of the vocation of the Brother are assimilated properly.



4. Besides the necessary concern for Brothers still in active service, and in particular for the younger members, special attention ought to be paid to the elderly Brothers, to their living conditions, to the leadership of their communities, to their participation in the life of the District and of the Institute, and to the apostolic value of this new stage in their life.

5. Districts, in which a relatively large number of Brothers is approaching the age of retirement from their professional work, should invest resources in the formation and accompaniment of these Brothers, so that they do not lose their enthusiasm for the mission, and find other ways of being associated for the educational service of the poor, in existing establishments or in new ones.

6. It is important to give Brothers all the space they need to develop their creativity in order to respond to the challenges of the educational

service of the poor today. This concerns, in particular, young Brothers in Districts which have a high average age.

Consequently, the commitment of Brothers to establishments requires discernment, so that future needs may be met, by ensuring that existing establishments continue to function, and that the possibility remains of creating others.

7. Differences in age are a challenge to the fraternal life of a community. On the other hand, the successful mixing of generations can be a source of dynamism and richness for community life and for the mission. There is need for discernment which takes into account the situations and persons involved, because nothing can be taken for granted in this matter. It is important for Visitors and all involved in the government and running of the District to give this matter attention.

Joint projects, or at least collaboration between Districts, can prove helpful in preventing younger Brothers from feeling isolated in older communities, and can pro-

vide a stimulus for the pastoral ministry of vocations to the Brothers.

8. The psychological development of persons, their spirituality (orientated either towards human contact and relationships or, on the contrary, more attracted to rituals and exact observance), the course their lives have taken, which may be very different from that of others, their understanding of authority, etc. - these are all factors which make community life and the individual accompaniment of Brothers both complex and difficult. All this calls for training and a great attention to individuals on the part of those who exercise authority at whatever level.

9. At all stages of our lives we feel there is a tension in ourselves between two opposing forces: one which makes us concentrate on ourselves, and the other which draws us towards others. These two forces can have both a positive and a negative effect.

At the end of our lives, when we can no longer be active because we lack the necessary energy, we tend

to turn in on ourselves. It is a time when we look back over our past lives, when the link with our body takes on a particular significance, when the question of the meaning of our life is posed with exceptional clarity.

This stage of life is a trial. It can be also a gift, which enables us to recognise the presence of God in our lives, to thank him for it, and, with love and total confidence, to put ourselves entirely into his hands. Fraternal presence and accompaniment can help us to accept this gift.

#### *Recommendation 20*

*Grateful to the elderly Brothers for the witness they have given to those around them by the spiritual richness of their religious life, the Brothers of the General Chapter encourage them to pursue their mission in an apostolate appropriate to their situation, and by their presence, and their prayer.*

#### *Recommendation 21*

*That, in a spirit of interdependence and to promote the educational service of the poor, Regions suggest to the Centre of the Institute*

*which of their Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations should be merged, or, at least, between which there should be some form of collaboration, so that young Brothers do not feel isolated in communities where the average age is high.*

#### *Recommendation 22*

*We recommend that the Centre of the Institute study the possibility of a special session, with one module open to lay persons as well, for all those who have, or will have, the responsibility in their respective Districts for the accompaniment and the formation of the Brothers who reach the legal age of retirement, and of the old and infirm Brothers. This session ought to take place within the next three years.*

#### **Proposition 20**

**The Visitor will discern with Brothers who have reached legal retirement age, or the end of their professional career, the kind of apostolic activity they should undertake (location, duration, courses...). By preference, this should be one that benefits the educational service of**

the poor, and which responds to requests from the District or the Institute to work in existing establishments or in those still to be created.

#### **Proposition 21**

That, in order to implement our association for the educational service of the poor, Brother Superior and his Council, in consultation with the Regions, draw up a list of places where apostolic work is being done, and where retired Brothers can contribute to the educational service of the poor for a specific time, through a spirit of interdependence and of the 100 plus Mission.

#### **Proposition 22**

In order to enable Brothers, especially the younger Brothers, to choose to work in the educational service of the poor and to lead a meaningful community life, each District, at its next District Chapter:

- will evaluate the present work of the Brothers in the establishments and the governing structures of the District;
- will draw up a plan reflecting

future changes in the deployment of Brothers in existing establishments and in those still to be created;

- will determine what needs changing in the governing structures of the District.

## **III FORMATION OF BROTHERS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

There is a strong relationship between formation, renewal and the mission of the Institute. Formation is an important factor in the renewal of the Institute and in the assimilation of one's identity in a changing world. Quality formation is indispensable for the fulfillment of the mission of the Institute.

As we read in the Guide for Formation (cf. Chapter 5), we need to see formation as a life-long process, that continues through all the stages of development - from initial formation to retirement and beyond. This is the *leitmotiv* of this document.

### **1. STRENGTHENING THE STRUCTURES OF ACCOMPANIMENT**

## OBSERVATIONS

“To accompany a person means being with him in such a way that he finds...light and guidance for his own life. It means joining him on his way” (Guide for Formation 108). Although this refers primarily to the process of initial formation, personal accompaniment must be considered necessary throughout the whole process of initial and continuing formation.

1. In general, Visitors, as “principal animators” of the District (R 132), recognise the need for accompaniment in the life of the Brother even if, at times, both Visitors and the other Brothers resist it in practice.

2. Some Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations have excellent structures and personnel in place to ensure adequate accompaniment throughout the formation process from initial formation to preparation for retirement and beyond.

3. Other Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations, while recognising the need for accompani-

ment, lack the necessary personnel and structures and, in consequence, the results are much less satisfactory.

4. Sometimes accompaniment is



seen as applicable only to initial formation with little attention being given to later stages.

5. The Formation Secretariat has helped to strengthen the organisation of the vocations ministry and of formation programmes in a number of Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations, even if much still remains to be done.

## GUIDELINES

1. The Centre of the Institute needs to ensure that the good accompaniment provided by the Secretariat for Formation continues.

2. The Centre of the Institute needs to ensure effective accompaniment of Visitors.

3. Visitors should give special attention to the accompaniment of Directors, young Brothers, Brothers approaching retirement, and those who are experiencing serious personal or vocational difficulties.

4. Formation of Directors needs to be organised in such a way that they become more able to provide leadership, and to accompany their Brothers in a more personal way.

5. Directors of communities need to promote community discernment as an important element in the accompaniment of Brothers.

*Recommendation 23*

*That the Centre of the Institute maintain two Secretaries of Formation in the general services of the Institute*

**Proposition 23**

**That Brother Superior and his Council make one of their priorities for the next seven years the support and accompaniment**

**of Brothers responsible for Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations, and especially for those lacking the human and financial resources and structures necessary for accompaniment.**

**2. FORMATION STRATEGIES FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF THE POOR**

**OBSERVATIONS**

1. Some Districts have handed over educational establishments to others so as to free Brothers for the educational service of the poor.

2. Some Districts have created new educational establishments and/or transformed existing establishments so as to make them more accessible to the poor.

3. Some Districts have moved their houses of formation to poor areas.

4. Some Districts have helped other parts of the Institute with finances and personnel for formation and the educational service of the poor.

5. Twinning between Lasallian institutions has promoted solidarity and a greater awareness of wider issues.

6. In some parts of the Institute, there is a discrepancy between the style of life in the houses of formation and that of other communities, and between official documents and the lifestyle of the Brothers.

7. In some parts of the Institute, there is a lack of formation and promotion of awareness regarding the causes of social injustice in the world today, phenomena such as secularisation and globalisation, and the mechanisms of economic and commercial exploitation, and of racial and ethnic conflicts.

## GUIDELINES

1. Throughout the process of formation, it should be borne in mind that the educational service of the poor and the promotion of social justice needs to be seen in the context of evangelisation.

2. In order to reinforce formation

for the educational service of the poor, and to provide an opportunity to live out more fully their consecration, Districts should invite more Brothers to take part in an “exodus” and conversion experience, similar to that of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

3. We should take greater advantage of the international dimension of the Institute to provide Brothers with opportunities to be personally involved in the educational service of the poor.

4. New houses of formation, communities and educational estab-



lishments should be established more and more in educationally and economically disadvantaged localities. The Brothers in these new establishments should adopt a modest lifestyle.

*Recommendation 24*

*That Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations ensure that, in formation houses, communities and Lasallian institutions, formation is given in social justice, and that it is accompanied by an analysis that is more critical, and by activities, inspired by the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church, which call for greater commitment.*

**Proposition 24**

**In order to promote a process of conversion to the educational service of the poor, the Centre of the Institute, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations, offer Brothers a personal experience of life and work in areas that are educationally and economically disadvantaged. The Brothers involved in these schemes would be accompanied in such a way that the three constitutive elements of the Brother's vocation (R 10) are respected.**

**(N.B. This opportunity might be offered, for example, during the session for new Visitors, during sessions for new formators in CIL, and in other formation**

**programmes etc.)**

**3. THE FORMATION OF FORMATORS AND FORMATION PROGRAMMES**

**OBSERVATIONS**

1. We note there is more inter-District cooperation and better participation in inter-congregational formation programmes.
2. Good documents have been produced on formation and on the vocations ministry, but in some parts of the Institute an effective methodology to implement these has been lacking. The result has been formation that is fragmented into stages that are unconnected.
3. In some parts of the Institute, formation has tended to be excessively intellectual, giving insufficient attention to aspects of a person which help him to acquire overall maturity as a human being and as a Christian.
4. Also, in the absence of a long-term plan to provide formation courses for formators, the alternative has often been a multiplicity

of short courses and meetings that are no substitute for a solid and prolonged formation.

5. Sometimes, more importance has been attached to professional training than to preparation for the



ministry, and to the nurturing of a desire to proclaim the Gospel.

6. In some parts of the Institute there is a great scarcity of formators.

7. Often there is difficulty in forming cohesive formation teams.

8. We note that few Brothers feel called to work in the ministry of formation, which is a vocation within the vocation of the Brother.

9. Brother Visitors and their Coun-

cils find it difficult to free Brothers so that they can prepare themselves to be formators and to take on leadership roles in the District.

This is mainly due to the lack of Brothers, their age, and pressing apostolic demands. This postpones

the acquisition of skills that are essential for the viability and vitality of the Institute in the medium to long term.

## GUIDELINES

1. The consecration of the Brother should be re-interpreted in terms of its evangelical character, and in the light of the specific vow of “association for the educational service of the poor”.

2. We should prepare Brothers who will be in charge of formation, sufficiently ahead of time.

3. During initial formation, we need to create a favourable attitude towards continuing formation, because this is something that promotes community vitality.

4. We need to improve formation

programmes for Brothers (between the ages of 40 and 55), and set aside sufficient time for this, so that these Brothers can take up with renewed zeal the ever-changing challenges of the mission, and of the various stages of their lives.

5. At a local level, we need to participate more in formation programmes organised by the Church, other religious congregations and new ecclesial movements.

6. We need to urge Brothers to publicise more their formation experiences and documents, and to organise periodical meetings for formators, taking advantage of the services offered by the Formation Secretariat.

#### *Recommendation 25*

*That during the intercapitular period, and as far as this is possible, each District, Sub-District or Delegation free some Brothers to be prepared for formation responsibilities. These responsibilities may be for any stage of formation - from initial formation to preparation for retirement and beyond. The preparation would be systematic and last one or two years.*

#### **Proposition 25**

**That, during their first year in office, the Brother Superior and his Council examine the objectives of the International Lasalian Center (CIL) and establish a plan for new sessions, taking into account the evaluations of the previous sessions as well as the recommendations and propositions of the 43rd General Chapter.**

## **IV THE PROMOTION OF VOCATIONS TO THE BROTHERS**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

1. We live in three different contexts which affect in a particular way the ministry of promoting vocations:

- cultures which support dynamic Christian communities, and which are often economically poor;
- secularised or de-Christianised cultures,
- multi-religious cultures.

2. In certain parts of the Institute, the ageing of the Brothers and the lack of vocations create an attitude of discouragement and resigna-

tion. In these sectors, there is a specific need, to rekindle hope and the willingness to foster vocations to the Brothers.

3. Vocation is a gift from God and a free human response, and that is why there is no single way of promoting vocations which can be applied in a uniform manner in the various contexts in which the Institute is present. There is a strong link between effective pastoral



youth programmes and fostering vocations to the Brothers. Despite great efforts in many parts of the Institute, results do not match expectations.

4. Prayer for vocations in Brothers' communities and in educational establishments is more regu-

lar and more creative than in the past.

5. In many parts of the Institute, there is serious personal accompaniment throughout the process of vocational discernment.

6. Nowadays, vocations to the Brothers' life that come from poorer backgrounds and are marked by experiences which are increasingly varied and complex, call for a more careful and thorough process of discernment.

7. Communities that are welcoming, humanly attractive and are signs of God's kingdom echo the invitation of Christ "to come and see". Some vocations die because of the lack of an explicit invita-

tion.

8. Schemes to evangelise young people and the poor, and to promote justice and peace, are attractive for young people today.

9. In an increasing number of societies, many young people are

afraid of making a permanent commitment.

10. There are many Brothers who see the vocations ministry simply as the role of the 'recruiter' and have not understood that the future of the Institute is now the responsibility of every Brother.

11. Partners appreciate the role of the Brothers in the Lasallian mission, and wish that there were new vocations to the Brothers. Some of these Partners are prepared to help in promoting and fostering vocations to the Brothers.

12. The vocations ministry is sometimes centered more on the Brothers and the continued existence of the Institute, than on young people, their aspirations, and the way to help them discover their vocation.

13. Support for the vocations ministry is most effectively organized at the local or Regional level.

## GUIDELINES

1. The pastoral ministry to promote vocations to the Brothers

should be part of the Church pastoral ministry of vocations.

2. Partners should be encouraged to join the Brothers in promoting all vocations for the Lasallian mission.

3. Every Brother involved in the Church pastoral ministry of vocations should make known the significant value of his lay consecration.

4. Every Brothers' community needs to understand the role it has in the fostering of vocations in the Church and, in particular, to the Brothers. If vocations' promotion is to be effective, Brothers must meet young people, take time to be with them, and tell them about their own faith, their life and their mission.

5. Brothers, including those who work with young people from different ethnic or racial groups, should be encouraged to become involved in awakening and accompanying vocations to the Brothers.

6. During the intercapitular period, Regions, singly or in cooperation

with one another, should organize sessions for those involved in the vocations ministry.

7. Brothers of all ages should have the courage to speak to young people about Jesus Christ and about their own vocation.

#### *Recommendation 26*

*The General Chapter endorses proposition 9 of the 42nd General Chapter which asks “each community to include in its community programme a plan for awakening vocations that is adapted to the local situation”.*

#### *Recommendation 27*

*That Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations take the means to ensure that there are communities which are more clearly recognisable as such, which are signs, and to which young people can be invited.*

#### *Recommendation 28*

*That each District, Sub-District and Delegation, organise, as far as possible, the training of Brothers and/or Lasallian partners, in order to ensure that the vocations ministry offers a high-quality service.*

#### *Recommendation 29*

*That Regions, singly or in co-operation with one another, organise sessions in the intercapitular period in order to:*

- *support those directly involved in the promotion of vocations to the Brothers;*
- *share vocations ministry programmes;*
- *promote the vocations ministry in participating Regions.*

#### **Proposition 26**

**That, in the course of 2003, each Region of the Institute, singly or in co-operation with others, plan and hold a Lasallian workshop on the pastoral ministry of vocations for the purpose of giving fresh impetus to the vocations ministry in Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations. Among others, the principal participants there will be:**

- **Brothers and Associates/Partners responsible for the vocations ministry,**
- **young Brothers,**
- **Associates and Partners interested in the vocations ministry,**
- **those who are preparing to work in this area.**

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