

# A Message from the General Chapter



Dear Brothers,  
Dear Friends, Partners and Associates in Lasallian mission,

“Holy Spirit...draw down upon us the wind and fire of a Pentecost for our times.” Like many of you, we prayed over the past few months these words of the prayer of the Institute for the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter. We dared to hope, in the weeks and months before our gathering in Rome, that the Spirit of God might once again light a new fire in us, re-energize and re-ignite the Institute and the Lasallian family, and so better enable us to be one with God’s mysterious and providential action to renew and transform the societies in which we live, the Church to which we belong, and the world of the young and the poor.

However, we never imagined, as the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter opened, that we would have lived such a significant experience here. And, as we write this letter, we cannot

help but wonder if our experience is anything like that of the twelve on that first Pentecost morning when, filled with the Holy Spirit and a certain trepidation, they prepared to leave the Upper Room and to share with the world the experience that they had lived together.

Like the other capitulants, the vast majority of whom had never participated in a General Chapter, we arrived in Rome with our own rather personal perceptions of the Institute and of the international Lasallian mission. Our understanding and appreciation of the diversity and complexity of the Institute’s lived reality was enriched as we listened to each other. We acknowledge to you today that in reflecting on the central theme of the General Chapter, “associated for the educational service of

the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” our lives have been changed and renewed. We express to you our joy, and that of all those gathered here in Rome, as we came to know in a more clear and personal way the great progress of the past seven years. So many bold and decisive actions on behalf of the educational service of the poor have begun and so many inspiring and creative initiatives which give expression to new forms of association have been realized.

We are encouraged by the fraternal communion, animated by the Spirit, which we lived during these weeks in Rome. Young and old, Brother and Partner, north and south...we came together...we renewed friendships...we forged new bonds. We prayed. We listened...we shared...we formed community...we overcame differences...we celebrated our life together. At the same time, we were often painfully aware of the many Brothers and members of our Lasallian family who, even during these very days, find themselves in sectors of our world which are being ravaged by con-

flict and war. Their suffering touched us and allowed us to appreciate, in a more profound way, the goodness of God who blessed us with this experience of peaceful communion.

The Lasallian Partners, who were such a significant part of this experience, permitted us to realize how far we have already come over the past seven years in sharing the Lasallian mission and in strengthening the bonds of association so necessary for its future. The admirable commitment, often at great personal and family sacrifice, of numerous men and women in this immensely challenging work on behalf of the young and the poor in the fields of education, evangelization, and child care work inspires us. The presence of a mother and her child “in our midst” was a graced reminder of the many parents and guardians all around the world who have also forged with us a partnership on behalf of the education and formation of their children. To all of you who desire to identify yourselves more closely with Lasallian mission or spirituality – Christians who seek to give concrete expres-

sion to your own baptismal consecration in the ministry of education, and members of other religions and persons of good will who share in the Lasallian mission – we commit ourselves to take seriously your every effort at association.

We are happy to report that the capitulants of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter have been audacious in the key decisions which they made. New situations ask for new structures. The formation of a “Standing Committee of Brothers and Partners for the Lasallian Mission,” the convocation of an “International General Assembly” of Brothers and Associates – each having voice and vote – prior to the 44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, the promotion of new forms of collaboration and association among Brothers and Partners, the evaluation of all existing Lasallian works and the creation of new initiatives, and the clear and strong re-commitment of the Institute and Lasallian mission on behalf of “the most fragile and vulnerable members of our societies” are only a few of the bold initiatives which will sustain the momentum which

helps the Lasallian family be an even more effective instrument of God and of the Church today.

To achieve this, we are counting on you, the Lasallian Youth. We know that the reason for our vocation, in the words of our Founder, is “to touch hearts” and at the same time we feel that our hearts are touched by all of you. We are certain that with your creativity, drive and enthusiasm and by your commitment to the different youth movements and to the Volunteer program, you will help us reach the goals that the Chapter has proposed to us.

Who would ever have imagined what a profound impact the presence and integral participation of the thirteen young Brothers named as delegates and consultants and another twelve elected by their Districts would have had on the tone and deliberations of the General Chapter and the quality of its community life! From the bottom of our hearts, we want to thank these young Brothers for the great hope in our future that they have inspired in us and desire to communicate to all of you, Brothers

and Partners alike, how great is the confidence we have in our future and in the remarkable young Brothers with whom God continues to bless our Lasallian family.

Our thoughts at this time also turn to those Brothers of the middle years who, in many sectors of the Institute, continue in an heroic manner to shoulder the work of the functioning of Districts (Sub-Districts and Delegations), the vitality of consecrated community living, the care and accompaniment of both young and old Brothers, and the direction of many large and complex educational establishments. Thank you, Brothers, for the good work you do and for the witness of selfless service you offer the whole of the Lasallian family.

Before we conclude these remarks, we want to address, in a very special way, the senior Brothers of the Institute. Know, dear brothers, that you are a gift to our Institute. We wish to acknowledge all that you have done to bring us to this present moment in the history of the Lasallian family and to thank you for all that many of you con-

tinue to do even in your senior years. We thank you for your prayer for us during the General Chapter and for the extraordinary witness of fidelity to consecrated life you have lived during five decades of tremendous change and upheaval. Thank you for the excellent work that you have accomplished, often at great personal sacrifice, with generations of youngsters in our schools and child care agencies. Thank you for being our brothers. Please keep us and the whole of the Institute and its works in your prayers.

Finally, our hope and prayer today is that the reception of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter, in the weeks and months ahead, might be for each of us and for the whole of our Lasallian family a “Pentecost” kind of experience...giving us a renewed hope in our future and the courage and zeal needed to face together and by association the great challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There can be no doubt that the Reign of God, the proclamation of the Good News, the service of the poor, the defense of the rights of children, and ongoing renewal of our Lasallian educational mission

will call for continual conversion. And, yet, what each of us might fear to attempt alone is possible, by God’s grace, when we commit ourselves in faith to do it together.

We have, also, found ourselves particularly mindful this week of the experience lived by St. John Baptist de La Salle and the twelve Brothers gathered with him in prayer and discernment between Pentecost Sunday and Trinity Sunday in 1694. We suspect that, even more than we are, they were anxious about the future of their association and wondered how the news of what they had accomplished together would be received by others in the weeks following this most important moment in the history of the Institute.

Consequently, we unite ourselves with them, with you, and with the twelve in the Upper Room as we once again place our lives, our Institute, and our association on behalf of the Lasallian mission into the hands of divine Providence and, trusting in the compassion and mercy of God, recommit ourselves to “procure the glory of God as far as we might be able and as

God will require of us.”

Fraternally in St. John Baptist de La Salle,

Brother Alvaro Rodríguez  
Echeverría

and the members of the  
General Council:

- Brother William Mann
- Brother Miguel Campos
- Brother Marc Hofer
- Brother Yemanu Jehar
- Brother Juan Pablo Martín
- Brother Claude Reinhardt