



These reflections are the result of the shared experience of the CIL session in Rome, which was held from May 7 to May 20, 2006.

May they serve to encourage your own reflection and prayer and may they enrich your community sharing.

I. Contributions Based On The First Part Of The Document “Being Brothers Today”: Our Context

What are the principal changes that you have experienced in the last twenty years in the realm of socio-economics, the political situation of society, the life of the Church and the Institute?

I.1 The socio-economic and political realm

- Influence of the means of communication and information, a consumer society. The presence of new technology is the source of new types of poverty.
- Financial inequality produces even greater distance between rich and poor. Economic progress generates this inequality.
- Awareness of belonging to the world and an assessment of the immediate as priority.
- We have gone from the culture of saving to that of well-being.
- We live in a consumer, materialistic, and competitive society.
- A “provisional” civilization (of which nothing is long-lasting).
- Globalization gives birth to a society of desire.
- Thinking about education as a consumer product.
- There is an attempt to politicize society.
- Power is sought without regard for the common good.
- There is corruption and a lack of ethics in the world of large corporations.
- Great changes as regards globalization and international affairs.
- Greater intercultural and inter-religious awareness.
- The crash of civilizations makes us discover the phenomenon of immigration which should touch the consciousness of each developed country.
- Evolution of the family structure generated by family crises. Family life has deteriorated. Parents work to maintain a determined status and lifestyle. Parents do not always have control over their children because of their work situation. Kids are “given everything.”
- Emphasis on difficulties makes it difficult for persons to become adults.
- Crisis of meaning with a resulting loss of reference, values, and authority.
- The growing need to be able to adapt to a changing competitive system.
- An ageing European population.
- The process of the European Union provides security

BEING BROTHERS TODAY

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to Europeans.

- In Africa there are still dynamics of maintaining power and neo-colonialism.
- Explosion of a rural exodus in Africa and problems resulting from this.

1.2 The Life of the Church

- Assessment of the reflection and commitment of the laity without an established hierarchical system.
- The creation of new places to form the Church community.
- The value of inculturation, ecumenism, and inter-religious dialogue.
- The impact of John Paul II on young people.
- In Latin America, the Church as an institution is valued for its stand in favor of the poor and against injustice.
- The Africanization of the apostolic mission with its consequences based on the proclamation of the Word: participation of lay Christians in the life of the Church and the role of the deacon.
- Separation between the Church and society.
- The view of young people in their wanting to move away from Church hierarchy.
- There is minority influence and situations of privilege within the Church.
- Very little social credibility.
- The existence of a division between the official Church line and concrete pastoral ministry practice in some dioceses.
- There is an existing dualism between the official, hierarchical Church and the Church of the believers.
- The creation of new Church movements of a conservative nature.
- A pending task is the presence of laity and women in the Church.
- Inflexibility and lack of honesty in certain cases.
- Scandals within the Church (finances, sexual-pedophilia) based on generalized ideas about institutions.

1.3 The Institute

- A greater appreciation for and search for community life based on fraternity.
- Young people are yearning to live their spiritual lives in community.
- Young people are seeking opportunities for sharing on a deep level with someone in community and to deepen their spiritual lives.

- We live in a Spirit-filled time. We value life and community. We think that life is more important than structures in themselves.
- We think that the sociological phenomenon of committed lay persons is a grace from God and a sign of the times.
- The formation of Brothers and lay persons must be given importance.
- Effective responses to the needs in our own situations.
- A trend towards the needy classes, towards the world of the poor.
- Effort to take care of the poor and the needy.
- Assessment of the quality of vocations, rather than the number.
- In educational practice, there is not just one model for teaching. The school is one of the models, but there are other models of non-formal education that promote learning.
- We have a democratic view of the way we run things and in the way we plan but there does exist an individualism in certain places.
- It is difficult to envision the future model that is coming.
- There exists a certain pessimistic view. Instability, perplexity and slowness to change.
- Individualism is influenced by globalization and the propagation of technological knowledge.
- Our conversations, dialogues, and communication of vital experiences and of faith tend to be decreasing. Television, music, and computers have replaced ease of encounter.
- We are complacent. We dare not correct the Brothers.
- How to approach the future of the Brothers given the presence of the laity and committed associates.
- There are Brothers who are recognized as being nothing more than administrators or managers. From this comes a certain "invisibility" from the Brothers and from the community.
- Questions about the role of the community and the role of the Brothers in places where they do not have "power" in the schools.
- The vocational diminishment affects the way the Brothers are organized and how they feel. The Brothers are decreasing while students and works are increasing.
- Ongoing vocation crisis.
- Ageing of the Brothers.
- The need for geographical restructuring in certain Districts.

2. Contributions based on the second part of the document “Being Brothers Today”: Our Present

What most impassions us, the feeling of the original fire, significant experiences and fears in our life journey as Brothers.

2.1 Things that impassion

- The search for God and the recognition of God’s love.
- Being with my Brothers in community.
- Embracing the identity of the Brother based on fraternity.
- The closeness and the understanding of the Brothers.
- The mission; being able to teach and to be a part of a teaching-learning situation.
- Contact with education, the classroom, and catechesis turned on the fire of God’s call.
- The presence of God in educational activities.
- Reference to the poor and needy.
- Being close to the needy.
- Making our lifestyle explicit in the parish.
- Embracing with the Brothers an apostolic and missionary project.
- A joint and shared hope by embracing the Lasallian charism on the part of Brothers and committed laity.
- The generosity of volunteers and other persons who embrace the Lasallian mission with us.
- In the educational relationship with children and young people, teachers and those who work in pastoral ministry...
- Collaborating in awakening vocations and the formation of young Brothers.
- A close relationship with other congregations, sharing different models of being Church.
- Opening a new school.
- Contact with the indigenous world in that it permits the discovery of another type of living.
- Youth meetings, missions.
- The attitude of service on the part of those who assume District administrative positions.
- The wisdom of the senior Brothers.
- The feeling of belonging to an international Institute, exchanges with Brothers from other Regions of the Institute.

2.2 Some fears and concerns

- The disenchantment of some senior Brothers who are no longer involved in the ministry of education.
- Living with Brothers who have lost the original passion of their vocation.
- Discovering Brothers who devote a lot of time to watching television and using the computer.
- The loneliness of certain Brothers.
- The tension of maintaining the institution based on the promotion of evangelization.
- Accepting administrative positions has prevented us from having contact with education. Sometimes administration has occupied our minds but not our hearts.
- Not proposing innovative challenges.
- An unknown future.

2.3 As a community of Brothers, we are motivated and energized by...

- Believing that we are lead by the Spirit of God and that we are gathered under the sign of community.
- Knowing that we doing God’s work.
- Sharing our vocational life journey.
- Feeling part of a project of liberation and transformation.
- The witness of Brothers, partners, and associates.
 - Fraternal relationships.
 - Shared dreams.
- Continuing to be a reference point for young people, adults, and catechists.
 - Fidelity to the poor.
 - The process of discernment.
 - The Institute’s own fragile nature that makes us discover the sense of belonging and the sense of universality.
 - The need to rely on and believe in persons and their abilities.
 - Being Brothers in a Church where there is distance on account of diverse ministries.





- The presence of young people who value our vocations.
- The renewal of the life of prayer.
- Association with lay persons. Institutional processes lived in relation to shared mission and association.
- Working in collaboration with Church, social, and cultural organizations.
- Our openness to pluri-religions and different cultures.
- The creativity necessary to think about new types of presence on other contexts and new ways of living in community.
- Radical openness toward ongoing transformation.
- The vitality of our vocation, boldly taking on the transmission of a renewed evangelizing educational project that can “touch hearts.”
- Reflection on the new ways of drawing closer to God, in prayer and in Lasallian zeal.

2.4 Challenges and opportunities for the future

- To rediscover and revitalize community life and the way we witness to the general public.
- To assess spirituality and prayer as the essence of our consecration.
- To believe in persons, trusting and appreciating their abilities.
- To relativize our numbers: To appreciate the depth of the sign as witnesses. Raise the issue of the significance of quality, being signs of the hereafter based on the effectiveness of our witness.
- To opt for formation.
- To opt for association.
- To integrate and propagate our Evangelizing Educa-

tional Project.

- To maintain unity with the Church.
- To embrace our mission with hope.
- To discover new educational frontiers.
- To respond to the inter-cultural and inter-religious situation..

2.5 Aspects of our vocation that would appropriately be considered by the next General Chapter

Based on the particular reality of your continent, and on your personal convictions, group dialogue, from your general assemblies, and on your reading of parts 1 and 2 of the document, what aspects of our vocation would need to have an in-depth look at the next General Chapter? Explain why you think this is so.

a. United States - Canada

1. Community life:

- the importance of the life of prayer.
- the integral dimension of our consecration.
- the development of spirituality among youth.
- trust in the role of celibacy.
- community innovations.
- the difficulty of a lifestyle that merges with a lack of prophecy.
- the problem of individualism.

2. Vocation ministry:

- To consider vocation ministry as being linked to the community and to the life of the Brothers and not the exclusive domain of those directly in charge of that ministry.
- The possibility of accepting temporary vocations bases on an appraisal of belief among the different ways of belonging.

3. The pastoral care of **senior Brothers** based on mission criteria.

4. To encourage all the Brothers to engage in enriching experiences of **apostolic mission**.

5. To deal with the reality of **service to the poor**, the awareness of it and the intentionality of it in our educational works.

b. PARC

1. The quality of **community life**. Examining our communion as Brothers based on our embracing the idea of “together and by association...” Communion as a sign of life, an expression of service, and a prophetic sign.

2. Attention to vocational aspects of the Brother that require serious consideration, especially:
 - The vocation as lived in diverse situations.
 - Option for the service of the poor, including in totalitarian regimes.
 - The meaning of the vocation lived in diversity, considering it as an opportunity.
 - The tension between the existing commitments of the Brothers and emerging needs.
3. The imperative of **association**: the role of the Brothers in participating in this reality.
4. **Inter-religious dialogue**. The reality of the world in which we live (cultural diversity, pluri-religions, post-modernism, etc.)

c. Latin-America and the Caribbean

1. Community life:

- Involvement of the Brothers in community life.
- Ideas about power, control, and domination in living religious life and in the community.

2. Consecrated life:

- Imagining the life of prayer based on living out the Gospel of on spirituality in our context.
- Giving importance to a more Church-centered experience, not overly centered in the Brothers themselves.
- Reformulating the relationship of the Brothers with the world, with lay persons, and with the Church.
- Redoing and designing the new way of saying what we always express. Taking note of the discrepancy between language and what is actually lived. The language that is used to describe consecrated life is not always questioned sufficiently on the part of the Brothers.

3. Living **association** and **mission**.

- Establishing the Brother's identity in association.

- Collaboration with other institutions which creates for us a richer and deeper understanding of the mission of Jesus Christ and of the Kingdom of God.
- An awareness of a future linked with collaboration with other forces without thinking that we Brothers are the only owners of the mission.
- The new levels of belonging.
- Openness to new language

d. Europe and the Middle East

1. The **association** of Brothers.

- To consider the topic of association among the Brothers from a new definition of consecration and of community in relation to mission.

2. The **association of lay persons**.

- Reflection and discussion on association with lay persons based on educational service to the poor and based on evangelization within a secularized context.

e. Africa.

1. **Problems** to be considered:

- The African diversity and the reality of common elements. Poverty, the lack of freedom of expression, illiteracy, the presence of Islam, the world of sects, unschooled children, unemployment, child workers, alcoholism, prostitution, young people recruited by sects, vandalism, pillaging. The critical impact of poverty.

- On the Church level, the little significance of the Brothers.

- Activism and routine in the life of the Brothers.

2. **Wide-ranging topics** to be considered:

- The identity of the Brother.

- Aspects of consecration: prayer and spiritual life.

- Formation: the value of memory in reference to Lasallian tradition, knowledge of the Institute and specific Lasallian formation.



3. Contributions based on the third part of the “Being Brothers Today” document: Our origins

What are the aspects of the life and mission of De La Salle and his first associates that are important for the life and mission of the Brothers today?

Based on your own reflection and personal conviction, and on your group dialogue, the three presentations, and on part 3 of the document, the annexes and on Part C of the Ad Hoc Commission on the rule, name three aspects of the life and mission of De La Salle that are important for the life and mission of the Brothers today. Indicate also what type of action you suggest for your continent or Region.

a. Africa

Criteria and activities to keep in mind:

1. The life of faith
 - Prayer in the life of the Brothers.
 - Embracing the spirit of faith following the example of De La Salle.
 - A balance between prayer and activity. Prayer should commit us to action.
 - The role of the Brother in community; enabling the community.
2. The vow of association.
 - Primacy of the vow of association.
 - Association with the Brothers.
 - Practical consequences: Living fraternity, sharing, mutual trust, mutual respect.
3. Accompaniment
 - Accompaniment in vocation ministry, initial formation, ongoing formation.
 - Accompaniment which promotes the perseverance of the Brothers and the efficiency of the apostolate. Special accompaniment for young Brothers after the Scholasticate.
 - Creating structures that will allow for the accompaniment of young Brothers and for training them to accompany others.

b. Europe and the Middle East

Criteria:

1. To be impassioned for God and for the poor.
2. The evangelical life journey, such as De La Salle's, going from Exodus to the call to salvation.
3. To be sensitive of the lack of humanity in facing situa-

tions of persons who live in poverty, having an attitude of frailness that orients us toward God.

4. Point of view: The community (the Brothers), association (with lay persons who are committed with us) and in collaboration with those who are attentive to the poor where we are.

Actions:

1. Community:
 - To discover our community as a place where the experience of God is shared.
 - To learn to create links of fraternity starting from our differences.
 - To understand community as a place of fraternal relationships.
 - To appreciate the job of the community Director.
 - To learn to read and to pray together, starting from the Word of God in order to re-read our life as consecrated men
2. Associates and partners:
 - To receive them and to journey together with them from commitment to commitment.
 - To appreciate the community as a point of reference and place of mission..
3. Organization on the Lasallian level in Europe.
 - To learn to leave behind structures that are too burdensome to allow for creativity.
 - To organize on the European Lasallian level. To do this, it is important to review the Rule as regards association, the community and the passion for the poor.

c. Latin-America and the Caribbean

From the life and mission of De La Salle:

1. De La Salle was aware of reality and open to events:
 - He knew how to accept and to confront new challenges with appropriate methods.
 - He sought discernment and he appreciated decision-making from his seeking the divine plan.
2. De La Salle developed a participatory process with those around him.
 - With them, he created a fraternal community: Together they prayed, looked for solutions, made decisions, analyzed and looked at reality with a critical eye.

- He was concerned about the integral formation of the Brothers
- De La Salle knew how to be in dialogue with the Church, with society, and with the Brothers. This enabled him to govern the Institute, and in doing this, the Institute grew based on its mission to teach and to evangelize.

Actions:

- To raise the question of the future based on proactive attitudes.
 - What does it mean to be a Brother today and tomorrow?
 - What is it that we want to be and how do we want to achieve this?
 - Do current government structures help us respond to the above questions?
- To establish coherence between faith, life, and science.
 - Will we have to prepare ourselves for religious life with greater attention to science and to professionalism in order to better deal with intercultural and inter-religious dialogue?
 - We have to be lively in responding to the demands of reality, offering a visible witness.
- To simplify and make more flexible current structures that no longer respond to change, to new challenges from society, the Church, and the Institute.
 - To offer, on the part of the Institute, a study of new alternatives for the government and leadership of religious life.
 - To build community, governing and saying something about minorities, so that all are involved in activities and in decisions.
 - To review the criteria for representative authority: quantitative, qualitative, places for the poor or for others.
 - To opt for a Chapter as an organ for decision-making or for leadership, or for a Chapter that combines both aspects.

d. PARC.

Criteria:

- A convergence of the work to be shared.
- Following the action plan of activities based on long-term strategy

Actions:

- Revitalize community life of the Brother, required in order to embrace our vision of being Brother and to carry out the understanding of shared mission and association.

To do this, it is necessary:

- To put in place structures of accompaniment and leadership.

- To develop trust in community life.
 - To explore concepts of community based on the Trinity (we are called) and communion (united with...)
 - To make possible some conclusions on our personal prayer life.
 - To promote evangelization and catechesis.
 - To be able to continue embracing our identity as Brother.
- To revise personal identity and to abandon to Providence in order to late revise the most important elements of the life itself.
 - To understand better the shared mission and to accept inclusivity in order to appreciate the views of collaborators, to abandon the need to exercise control to accept their witness.
 - To review the degree to which leadership structures and the Rule guarantee the appropriate coherence, vitality, and response to the needs of society and of the poor (structures of accompaniment, formation programs, initial formation of young Brothers, trust in Brother Directors...)

e. United States - Canada

Criteria:

- An ongoing Exodus experience, based on De La Salle and his dedication to the Brothers and, from them, the educational service of the poor.
- To focus on the life of faith, zeal, and the vow of association.
- To fix attention to the most significant icon: the expression of the image of Christ.
- To appreciate the witness of De La Salle:
 - To abandon the barriers of the priesthood and to commit himself to the Brothers.
 - The creativity of his commitment to the community and to the mission.
 - He acted from the creativity of the Spirit and he was not tied to the teaching of the law.
 - He experienced the Exodus of leaving behind his family, money, his canonry, and privilege to commit himself to the Brothers and walk with them toward the poor.
 - In Parmenie, he grew in self-knowledge, in his personal prayer life, and in his commitment to the Brothers.

Actions:

- To consider as transversal axes of the life of consecration, the life in community and the mission.
- To discover and appreciate the role of the associates in the dialogue of being Brothers today from the perspective of consecration and shared mission.

Personal and community notes

