

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.