

INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Toward the 44th General Chapter

Document Two

**Concerning the Work of
the Ad Hoc Committee
on the *Rule***

GENERALATE

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Introduction

31 October 2005

Dear Brothers,

The 43rd General Chapter mandated that Brother Superior and General Council appoint an ad hoc Committee “to study what implications changes in the Church and in the Institute might have for the present text of the *Rule*.”¹ As we reported to you on 24 June 2005 in *Circular 453: Announcement of the 44th General Chapter (2007)*, this Committee was appointed and began work on this project in February 2004. They met together in Rome, and with Brother Superior and General Council, during the months of March 2004, December 2004, and March 2005.

The members of the Committee on the Rule were the following: Br. José Manuel Agirrezabalaga, District of Bilbao; Br. Fernand Bécret, District of France; Br. Antonio Botana, District of Central Spain; Br. Pierre Ouattara, District of West Africa; Br. Gerard Rummery, District of Australia/New Zealand/PNG; Br. Robert Schieler, District of Baltimore; Br. Leonardo Tejeiro, District of Bogotá; and Br. Michael Valenzuela, District of Philippines.

This present document is intended to present to the Institute the work of this ad hoc Committee on the *Rule*. As promised, we are now making it available to all. We believe that it will provide a rich background not only for the 44th General Chapter to examine whether it is time to consider possible future changes of the *Rule* but also for the preparation of the International Assembly of 2006.

¹ *Circular 447*, (2000), Proposition #38.

A Brief History of the Evolution of the Report Now Presented

The first meeting of the Committee at the Casa Generalizia was from 23 to 27 February 2004. At the start of that first meeting, Committee members envisioned their work as that of simply updating certain sections of the *Rule*; no major revisions were foreseen. However, as discussions on the changes in the Church and the Institute proceeded in Committee, it gradually dawned on the members that they had underestimated the scope of the task at hand. It became clear that the developments in both the Church and the Institute these past few years have been so significant as to bear on the very understanding of what it means to be a Brother in the world today. In particular, the reality of new and evolving forms of association, the development of shared mission, the rapid growth of the Lasallian Family worldwide, and new insights from Lasallian scholarship raised important questions as to the identity and role of the Brothers in a new apostolic context.

This assessment - that a substantial revision of whole sections of the *Rule* was required - was submitted in a report to Brother Superior and General Council toward the end of the first meeting. The members of the Committee proposed four lines of thought as necessary perspectives from which to approach the task of revision:

- The need to read the *Rule* from the perspective of the dynamism of the Institute's origins and the new ecclesial context of our identity as Brothers.
- The need to affirm the centrality of the vow of association for an understanding of the Brothers' consecration and identity.

- The need to understand the Brothers' identity and vocation in the light of a theology and spirituality of communion.
- The need to consistently confirm the view that the Brothers are not exclusive "owners" of the mission but that both Brothers and co-workers participate as partners in the one mission of the Church from the perspective of the Lasallian charism.

The Committee met on 27 February with Brother Superior and General Council to share their initial thoughts on the project that had been confided to them. After having taken some time to reflect upon the report, Brother Superior and General Council met again on 10 March 2004 to discuss what had been proposed. Among the ideas that emerged and were shared with the Committee were the following:

- The proposed emphasis on ecclesial context highlights the role expected of all baptized Christians in communion for the salvation of the world. This has implications for our understanding of association and shared mission.
- Within the Church, both Brothers and Lasallian Partners are called to evangelization in virtue of baptism. This presents certain challenges in some cultural and religious contexts.
- The difficulty of some Brothers with the focus on the vow of association as central to our consecration and identity was noted.
- The contemporary vision of the Church and Religious Life as offered in key documents will guide efforts in amending what the *Rule* should be saying about mission and association. However, is it now time for a major revision?

The second meeting of the Committee at the Casa Generalizia

was from 7 to 15 December 2004. On 13 December, the Committee again met with Brother Superior and General Council. Following this meeting, Brother Superior and General Council offered some guidelines for the continuation of the Committee's work, the most pertinent of which were:

“That the recommendation of the Committee that small changes in the *Rule* would, at this time, be a waste of time was accepted.

“That a major reworking of the *Rule*, along the lines which the Committee has been proceeding, would not be possible to accomplish in a consultative fashion with the whole Institute prior to the 44th General Chapter.

“That a document that articulates the significant developments in recent Institute and Church documents and the implications of these developments for a revision of the *Rule* is what is needed.

As a consequence of clarifications given by Brother Superior and General Council, the Committee entered the second phase of its work. It began, as requested, to prepare a document for presentation in March 2005 that would specify the major areas or lines of thinking found in recent Church and Institute documents and that would provide the basis for the substantial revision of the *Rule* that they proposed.

The third meeting of the Committee at the Casa Generalizia was from 3 to 5 March 2005. On 9 March, the Committee again met with Brother Superior and General Council to present its final report. There was a very positive reception of the report, and Brother Superior and General Council expressed great appreciation for the good and serious work done by the Committee.

As Brother Superior and General Council worked in March and June of 2005 to prepare *Circular 453: Announcement of the 44th General Chapter (2007)*, a decision was made to make this report the second of the series of five documents or reports intended to help the Institute and the Lasallian Family travel together in preparation toward the 44th General Chapter in May 2007.

What follows, then, is the report of the ad hoc Committee on the *Rule* and, in the appendices, some “study guides” that have been prepared by some Brothers at the Casa Generalizia as optional aids to foster personal reflection and communal discussion about the content of the document. While the primary aim of preparing these study guides was to foster reflection and discussion, one or other could obviously be used to help prepare individual or communal notes for the 44th General Chapter.²

An Approach to This Report

The value of this document lies in its attempt to synthesize the major lines of development in Church teaching, Institute realities, and Lasallian tradition and to point the reader to the implications of these lines of development for particular sections of the *Rule*. The usefulness of this document is not, however, limited to providing a rationale for revising sections of the *Rule*. It is an open invitation for Brothers to reflect on what it means to be a Brother and to live the gift of brotherhood in the Church and in the world today. This being the case, one must bear in mind that this document is meant to promote discussion, not to end it.

It would help, then, to read the Committee’s report bearing in mind the three recurring themes that interweave and reinforce

² Cf. *Rule*, (2002), #110.

one another throughout the document: the theology and spirituality of communion, the centrality of association, and the development of shared mission.

The first two major sections of the *Rule* Committee's report³ focus on developments in the Church and in the Institute since 1987. There is value in reading and discussing these sections on their own as they provide rich material for contextualizing reflection on the Brothers' vocation, particularly in relation to the theology and spirituality of communion and the reality of an Institute where one mission is shared by both Brothers and Lasalian partners. One might want to ask the question, "What does this mean for the way we live our vocation as Brothers?"

The third major section of the *Rule* Committee's report⁴ invites the reader to consider specific sections of the *Rule* and offers questions and considerations that might lead to a more adequate interpretation of these texts in the light of new realities.

In order to facilitate the reading of the document, the beginning of each major section contains a brief overview of the dominant themes contained in the succeeding discussion.

Fraternally in Saint John Baptist de La Salle,

*Brother Superior
and Brothers of General Council*

³ Cf. Section A (Changes in the Church) and Section B (Changes in the Institute since 1987).

⁴ Cf. Section C (Implications of the Above Analysis for the 1987 *Rule*).

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the *Rule*

Citations from Documents that Show Mutations in the Thinking of the Church and of the Institute

Following the above directives, there are three sections (A, B and C) in our report:

- first (in A), citations from Church documents since 1987 that have important implications for the identity of the Brother, member of a Religious community, entrusted with a mission within the Church;
- second (in B), citations from official Institute documents of General Chapters and documents of Brother Superior and General Council⁵ and other documents from the Center of the Institute that express new understandings about the Brothers and their community life as they engage in the traditional mission of the Institute as a minority alongside committed lay persons;
- third (in C), some implications drawn from A and B with regard to certain sections of the 1987 *Rule*.

While this division of the material separates developments in Church documents from those coming from the Center of the Institute, the separation is only for clarity. It will become obvious how influential Church documents and directives have been in the emphases of the General Chapters of 1986, 1993, and 2000 and in the implementation of their Chapter Acts and resolutions, as well as in the matters treated by Brothers Superior in

⁵ Cf. *Rule*, #115

their Pastoral Letters.

It should be noted that some points of the following official Church documents with implications for Mission have already been included in the Institute's own document of 1997: *The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission*. Because of this, there will be no repetition of citations already made in this latter document from the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*.⁶ The five colloquia organized, between 1994 and 1998, in response to the 42nd General Chapter also reflect⁷ some of the main concerns of major Church documents with regard to a preferential option for the poor and the marginalized.

A. Changes in the Church

The Second Vatican Council wished to bring the Church through its *aggiornamento*⁸ into closer contact and greater relevance to the common concerns of humanity. The basic principle that this was an ongoing movement and not simply a move from one static position to another was well expressed in the Council document calling on the renewal of Religious Life:

“The up-to-date renewal of Religious Life comprises both a constant return to the sources of Christian life in general and to the primitive inspiration of the Institutes, and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.”⁹

Under the heading “Changes in the Church,” therefore, are presented in outline some new emphases in Church documents

⁶ *Redemptoris Missio* [*The Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*], (1991).

⁷ *Bulletin* 245, (1999).

⁸ Updating or revision.

⁹ *Perfectae Caritatis* (1965) [*Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life*], #2.

since 1987 which have implications for a better understanding of such fundamental themes as *communion*, *communion-mission*, the *community life and mission* of Religious, and the role of *Catholic education*.¹⁰

The different states of life within the Church have been analyzed by three synods.¹¹ The synod on the laity gave birth to the document *Christifideles Laici*¹²; the synod on sacred ministers gave rise to the document *Pastores Dabo Vobis*¹³; and the synod on the consecrated life gave birth to the document *Vita Consecrata*.¹⁴ It is clear that the idea of a Church formed only of sacred ministers and lay people does not correspond with the intentions of its divine Founder.¹⁵ The document, therefore, that best presents our state of life in the Church is undoubtedly *Vita Consecrata*.

Christifideles Laici,¹⁶ one of the most important documents following those of the Second Vatican Council, develops the theme of “the participation of all the faithful in the one mission of the Church,” an idea already proclaimed in the Council document *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.¹⁷

¹⁰ Catholic education, formal and informal, within schools and institutions of higher learning.

¹¹ A synod of the Roman Catholic Church is an assembly of bishops selected from different parts of the world, who meet at specified times, to promote the close relationship between the Pope and the bishops, to consider questions concerning the mission of the Church in the world, and to assist the Pope on matters of faith, morals, and ecclesiastical discipline.

¹² *Christifideles laici [The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful]*, (1988).

¹³ *Pastores Dabo Vobis [The Formation of Priests]*, (1992).

¹⁴ *Vita Consecrata [Consecrated Life]*, (1996).

¹⁵ Cf. *Consecrated Life*, #29.

¹⁶ *The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful*.

¹⁷ *Apostolicam Actuositatem [Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity]*, (1965), #2.

1. The Ecclesiology of Communion following Vatican II

1.1. *The Ecclesiology of Communion*

The concept of “*communio*,” or communion, is the theological theme that integrates the sixteen major documents of the Second Vatican Council and all subsequent official Church documents.

Under the above heading, the document *Christifideles Laici*¹⁸ states: “At the Second Vatican Council the Church again proposes this central idea about itself, as the 1985 Extraordinary Synod recalls, ‘the ecclesiology of *communio* is a central and fundamental concept in the conciliar documents”¹⁹; and it goes on to explain that “the reality of the Church as Communion is, then, the integrating aspect, indeed the central content of the ‘mystery,’ or rather, the divine plan for the salvation of humanity.”²⁰

In its third chapter, the same document under the heading of “co-responsibility of the lay people in the Church as mission” recognizes that “*communio begets mission*”²¹ and continues, “Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, *to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion.*”²² There is an insistence that “it is necessary that the Church recognize all the gifts of men and women for her life and mission, and put them into practice.”²³

¹⁸ The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful.

¹⁹ Ibid. #19.1.

²⁰ Ibid. #19.4.

²¹ Ibid. #32.3.

²² Ibid. #32.4.

²³ Ibid. #49.9.

The broad understanding of the Church in its completeness is that “All the members of the People of God - clergy, men and women Religious, the lay faithful - are laborers in the vineyard. At one and the same time, they are all the goals of Church communion as well as of participation in the mission of salvation. Every one of us, while possessing charisms and ministries that are diverse yet complementary, works in the one and the same vineyard of the Lord.”²⁴ “In Church Communion, the states of life by being ordered one to the other are thus bound together among themselves. They all share in a deeply basic meaning: that of being *the manner of living out the commonly shared Christian dignity and the universal call to holiness in the perfection of love*. They are *different but complementary*, in the sense that each of them has a basic and unmistakable character which sets each apart, while at the same time each of them is seen in relation to the other and placed at each other’s service.”²⁵

A spirituality of communion: “... we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed...,” as the document *Novo Millennio Ineunte* states.²⁶ This theme, also developed in document *Starting Afresh from Christ*,²⁷ is of great importance.

The spirituality of communion needs, first of all, to be lived within each community of consecrated persons.²⁸ In this sense, consecrated persons are invited to return again and again to *Vita Consecrata*²⁹ and *Congregavit Nos In Unum Amor*³⁰ to see their

²⁴ Ibid. #55.1.

²⁵ Ibid. #55.3.

²⁶ *Novo Millennio Ineunte [At the Beginning of the New Millennium]*, (2001), #43.2.

²⁷ *Starting Afresh from Christ*, (2002), #28 to #31.

²⁸ *Vita Consecrata [Consecrated Life]*, #51.

²⁹ *Consecrated Life*.

³⁰ *Congregavit Nos In Unum Amor [Fraternal Life in Community]*, (1994).

personal faith journey and their progress in fraternity. Such a dynamic implies a more intensive sense of communion between communities within the same Institute. But the communion which consecrated persons are invited to live is larger than their own Religious family or Institute. It is open to communion with other Institutes and other forms of consecration. The unity of the Church is not found in uniformity but in the organic integration of legitimate diversity. It is impossible to confront the future in dispersion. The document requires, also, dialogue and communion with new forms of gospel life which are in no way alternative to traditional consecrated life.³¹

Communion and encounter are extended to the charisms of Church movements and lead to a greater openness to other members of the Church. In this way, there can be seen a new type of communion and of collaboration among the various vocations and states of life, particularly between consecrated persons and lay people.³² In the same line, there have emerged new forms of institutional association within Institutes. In all this dynamism, it needs to be remembered that communion in the Church is never a one-way street.

The diversity of vocations: “It is in this context that we see the value of all other vocations, rooted as they are in the new life received in the sacrament of baptism. In a special way it will be necessary to discover ever more fully the specific vocation of the laity... Along these same lines, another important aspect of communion is the promotion of forms of association...”³³

³¹ *Vita Consecrata [Consecrated Life]*, #96.

³² Cf. *Fraternal Life in Community*, #70.

³³ *Novo Millennio Ineunte [At the Beginning of the New Millennium]*, #46.3-4.

1.2. The Role of Lay People: Their Responsibility in Mission and in Their Ministries

The document *Christifideles Laici*³⁴ endorses the mission of the laity in virtue of their baptism and speaks of various ministries which they exercise.

“Lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world ... The Council has written as never before on the nature, dignity, spirituality, mission and responsibility of the lay faithful.”³⁵ “The Pastors, therefore, ought to acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices and the roles of the lay faithful...”³⁶

“In the context of Church mission, then, the Lord entrusts a great part of the responsibility to the lay faithful, in communion with all other members of the People of God.”³⁷ “The lay faithful, precisely because they are members of the Church, have the vocation and mission of proclaiming the Gospel: they are prepared for this work by the sacraments of Christian initiation and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.”³⁸

2. The Community Life and Mission of Religious

2.1. Religious and Community Life

The particular gift of most forms of Religious Life in the Church

³⁴ *The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful.*

³⁵ Ibid. #2; cf. also #8, 9, 14.

³⁶ Ibid. #23

³⁷ Ibid. #32.5.

³⁸ Ibid. #33.1.

is their endeavor to live a community life like that of the first Christians as described in the *Acts of the Apostles*.³⁹

“The Religious community is,” according to the document *Congregavit Nos In Christi Amor*, “both sign and instrument of fraternal communion: in fact, fraternal communion is at both the beginning and the end of apostolate.”⁴⁰ The document restates this idea of communion: “before being a human project, fraternal life in common is part of God’s plan and his wish to share his life of communion.”⁴¹ It further states that “before being a human construction, Religious community is a gift of the Spirit”⁴² and that “as experts in *communion*,⁴³ Religious are, therefore, called to be an ecclesial community in the Church and in the world, witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design.”⁴⁴

This document is of great importance. Given that *Vita Consecrata*⁴⁵ is addressed to consecrated life in its entirety, and only in certain passages speaks in an exclusive and direct way about Religious Life Institutes, and given that fraternal life in common is a particular element of Religious Life in the panorama of consecrated life, the document *Congregavit Nos In Christi Amor*⁴⁶ takes on a great importance. In other words, it is the most specific document on a dimension which is proper to, and characteristic of, Religious Life.

³⁹ Cf. *Acts of the Apostles* 2:42 and 4:32.

⁴⁰ Fraternal Life in Community, #2/d.

⁴¹ Ibid. #7a.

⁴² Ibid. #8.

⁴³ Emphasis added.

⁴⁴ *Fraternal Life in Community*, #10.4 citing the document *Religious and Human Promotion* (1980).

⁴⁵ *Consecrated Life*.

⁴⁶ *Fraternal Life in Community*.

There is clear and consistent emphasis on the fact that community is not static and unchanging because of *Rules* and *Constitutions* but something dynamic and moving, something that has to be formed: “Religious community is the place where the daily and patient passage from ‘me’ to ‘us’ takes place, from my commitment to a commitment entrusted to the community, from seeking ‘my things’ to seeking the ‘things of Christ.’”⁴⁷ The community does not exist only for itself and its particular mission, but it must point beyond itself. “The sign of fraternity is, then, of the greatest importance because it is *the sign*⁴⁸ that points to the divine origin of the Christian message and has the power to open hearts to faith.”⁴⁹ Perhaps the point underlined here is that Religious community is not simply a state but a vocation, a call, always intent on being open to the changes that are part of personal and corporate fidelity to the call.

The key idea of communion is found again and again in the document *Vita Consecrata*,⁵⁰ following the Synod on Consecrated Life of 1994. “Consecrated persons are asked to be true experts of communion and to practice the spirituality of communion as witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design.”⁵¹

A particular task is entrusted to communities in the sharing of the gift of fraternity in a world of division and injustice: “The Church entrusts to communities of consecrated life the particular task of spreading the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its limits...”⁵²

⁴⁷ Ibid. #39.2.

⁴⁸ Emphasis added.

⁴⁹ Ibid. #54.2.

⁵⁰ *Consecrated Life*.

⁵¹ Ibid. #46.1.

⁵² Ibid. #51.1.

As an expression of their identity as consecrated persons and by their association in a fraternal community for a human and Christian education for the poor, the Brothers are called to be counselors who accompany others in their search for their own identity within the Lasallian mission. “In whatever activity or ministry they are involved, consecrated persons should remember that before all else they must be *expert guides in the spiritual life*,⁵³ and in this perspective they should cultivate ‘the most precious gift: the spirit.’ ”⁵⁴

“Religious Life... continues the mission of Christ with another feature specifically its own: *fraternal life in community for the sake of the mission*... Religious will be all the more committed to the apostolate the more personal their dedication to the Lord Jesus is, the more fraternal their community life, and the more ardent their involvement in the Institute’s specific mission.”⁵⁵

In addressing Religious Brothers, the document highlights several facets of the particular identity of Brothers. “The term ‘brother’ suggests a rich spirituality. ‘These Religious are called to be brothers of Christ, deeply united with him... brothers to one another, in mutual love and working together in the Church in the same service of what is good; brothers to everyone, in their witness to Christ’s love for all, especially the lowliest, the neediest; brothers for a greater brotherhood in the Church.’ ”⁵⁶

2.2. Lasallians, Brothers and Lay People, Carry Out the Mission of the Church

The Lasallian mission of human and Christian education is part

⁵³ Emphasis added.

⁵⁴ Ibid. #55.2.

⁵⁵ Ibid. #72.4.

⁵⁶ Ibid. #60.4.

of the one redemptive mission of Jesus Christ, mediated through the formal approval of the Church given through the *Bull of Approbation*.⁵⁷

The practice of the Institute of “exchanging gifts” is made possible thanks to the formation of a community of Brothers and laypersons for a human and Christian educational mission. “Encounter and collaboration among Religious men, Religious women, and lay faithful are seen as an example of ecclesial communion and, at the same time, they strengthen apostolic energies for the evangelization of the world.”⁵⁸ “Collaboration and exchange of gifts become more intense when groups of persons share, by vocation and in the way proper to them, in the heart of the same spiritual family, in the charism and mission of the Institute.”⁵⁹

“In recent years, one of the fruits of the teaching of the Church as communion has been the growing awareness that her members can and must unite their efforts, with a view to cooperation and exchange of gifts, in order to participate more effectively in the Church’s mission... Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that *their charism can be shared with the laity*... A new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.”⁶⁰

This sharing of the charism is not simply noted, but positively encouraged. “These new experiences of communion and cooperation should be encouraged for various reasons. They can in

⁵⁷ The *Bull of Approbation*, the official recognition of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools by the Roman Catholic Church, was promulgated by Pope Benedict XIII on 26 January 1725.

⁵⁸ *Fraternal Life in Community*, #70.1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* #70.3.

⁶⁰ *Consecrated Life*, #54.1; 54.2.

fact give rise to the spread of a fruitful spirituality beyond the confines of the Institute, which will then be in a position to ensure the continuity in the Church of the services⁶¹ typical of the Institute. Another positive consequence will be to facilitate more intensive cooperation between consecrated persons and the laity in view of the Institute's mission..."⁶²

For the past twenty years within the Institute, association as a central idea has strengthened the growth of shared mission through centers and programs of formation. The experience of communion invites laypersons to a deeper commitment to the Lasallian mission by helping them to discover the spiritual dimension of their profession and by new experience of "associated" lay people. "A significant expression of lay people's sharing in the richness of the consecrated life is their participation in various Institutes under the new form of so-called associate members, or, in response to conditions in certain cultures, as people who share fully for a certain period of time the Institute's community life and its particular dedication... to the apostolate."⁶³

The document *Starting Afresh from Christ*⁶⁴ not only attests to the growing participation of lay persons in Religious Institutes and especially their desire to live the spirituality of the mission of these Institutes, but approves it: "The new phenomenon being experienced in these days is that some members of the laity are asking to participate in the charismatic ideals of Institutes... Whereas... collaboration came about as a means of supplementing the decline of consecrated persons..., now it is growing out of the need to share responsibility not only in the

⁶¹ While the English translation reads "of the services," other languages read "of the ministries."

⁶² *Consecrated Life*, #55.1.

⁶³ *Ibid.* #56.1.

⁶⁴ *Starting Afresh from Christ* (2002).

carrying out of the Institute's works but especially in the hope of sharing specific aspects and moments of the spirituality and mission of the Institute. This calls for an adequate formation of both consecrated persons and laity to ensure a collaboration which is mutually enriching.”⁶⁵

2.3. The Mission of Religious and Lay People in the World of Education

Among the major contributions of Religious Congregations of men and women for many centuries has been their specific mission in Christian education.

“The world of education also calls for the qualified presence of consecrated men and women...Consecrated persons are able to develop a particularly incisive ministry in this field, thanks to their experience of the particular gifts of the Spirit, their careful listening to the Word, their constant discernment and their rich heritage of pedagogical traditions amassed since the establishment of their Institutes.”⁶⁶

In the Institute, sharing in the one mission of the Church, we pass from “the mission of the Institute” to the mission of the Church shared among Brothers and lay persons, while respecting their respective status. It is important to distinguish between the different theological underpinnings of such expressions as *mission* received as an *official mandate* from the Church; *mission and ministry*; *collaborating in education* and *carrying out a mission*.

In the document *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in*

⁶⁵ Starting Afresh from Christ, #31.3.

⁶⁶ Ibid. #39.1.

Schools,⁶⁷ there are found basic ideas about Religious Life linked to some of the most important observations on the activity of Religious teaching congregations in the “altered circumstances” in which they carry out their traditional mission today.

The cultural mediation of the faith today: “The necessity for a cultural mediation of the faith is an invitation for consecrated persons to consider the meaning of their presence in schools. The altered circumstances in which they operate, in environments that are often laicized and in reduced numbers in educational communities, make it necessary to clearly express their specific contribution in cooperation with the other vocations present in schools.”⁶⁸

Evangelize while educating: “The Holy Spirit... guides us to rediscover the charism, the roots and the modalities of our presence in schools, concentrating on the essential: the importance of the testimony of Christ, the poor, humble and chaste one; the priority of the person and of relationships based on love; the search for truth; the synthesis between faith, life and culture, and the valid proposal of a view of man that respects God’s plan.”⁶⁹

The church mystery of communion: “It is first and foremost necessary to promote a *spirituality of communion* capable of becoming the educational principle in the various environments in which the human person is formed.”⁷⁰

In schools, educational communities: “There is no need for consecrated persons to reserve exclusive tasks for themselves in educational communities. The specificity of the consecrated life lies

⁶⁷ *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools* (2002).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* #5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* #6.

⁷⁰ *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools* #15.

in its being a sign, a memory, and prophecy of the values of the Gospel.”⁷¹

In schools for educating to silence and to meeting God: “Whatever their specific task, the presence of consecrated persons in schools infects the contemplative glance by educating to a silence that leads to listening to God, to paying attention to others, to the situation that surrounds us, to creation.”⁷²

For living the Gospel to the full: “The first and fundamental contribution to their educational mission in schools by consecrated persons is the evangelical completeness of their lives.”⁷³

The importance of brotherhood as a prophetic sign: “By testifying to Christ and living their typical life of communion, consecrated men and women offer the whole educational community the prophetic sign of brotherhood.”⁷⁴

2.4. Ecumenism

Forty years ago, the Second Vatican Council in *Unitatis Redintegratio*⁷⁵ began by stating that “the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council.”⁷⁶ Since that appeal, there have been meetings at many different levels between members of both Eastern and Western confessions that are not in complete union with the Church of Rome. A fruitful dialogue continues.

⁷¹ Ibid. #20.

⁷² Ibid. #24.

⁷³ Ibid. #25.

⁷⁴ Ibid. #48.

⁷⁵ *Unitatis Redintegratio* [Decree on Ecumenism], (1964).

⁷⁶ Ibid. #1.

Two of these ecumenical documents, *The Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*⁷⁷ and the Encyclical of Pope John Paul II *Ut Unum Sint*⁷⁸ have had important implications for education in schools and tertiary institutions in countries where Christians other than Catholics choose to be educated.

2.5. Inter-Religious Dialogue

The Council document *Nostra Aetate*⁷⁹ marked a new stage in the Church's thinking about non-Christian religions when it began: "In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between people are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely the relationship to non-Christian religions."⁸⁰

The creation of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue by Pope John Paul II to replace the former Council for Non-Believers has resulted in giving greater importance to the publication of such important documents as *Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*,⁸¹ *Dialogue and Proclamation*,⁸² and the Millennium project entitled *Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the "New Age"*.⁸³ In addition, there have been most significant events, such as the presence of Pope John Paul II at Assisi in the "Prayer for Peace" in October 1989 along with representatives from the major reli-

⁷⁷ *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993).

⁷⁸ *Ut Unum Sint [On Christian Unity]*, (1995).

⁷⁹ *Declaration of the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, (1965).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* #1.

⁸¹ *Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*, (1984).

⁸² *Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the "New Age"* (1991).

⁸³ This latter document was a joint publication in 2003 of the Pontifical Councils for Culture and for Inter-Religious Dialogue, along with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

gious traditions of the world.

The presence of the Institute in the Near East and in Asia for well over one hundred fifty years has made education in inter-religious dialogue an essential task in our institutions. The documents *Ecclesia in Africa*⁸⁴, *Ecclesia in Asia*⁸⁵, and *Ecclesia in Oceania*⁸⁶ should touch us deeply.

3. Official Church Documents on Education

In addition to the Encyclicals and Apostolic Exhortations already considered, there have been two documents since 1987 recalling important aspects of the Church's teaching on education in schools as well a statement on the characteristics and principles underlying Catholic Universities.⁸⁷

Reading the emphases of these first two documents one after the other (and they are barely ten years apart!) shows just how much broader and more inclusive the second document is in its perspective than the first. The first document was entitled *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*.⁸⁸ While it continues important traditional emphases such as that the "Catholic school ... is based on an educational philosophy in which *faith, culture, and life*⁸⁹ are brought into harmony"⁹⁰ and mentions that "each Congregation brings the richness of its own educational tradition to the school, found in its original

⁸⁴ *Ecclesia in Africa*, (1995).

⁸⁵ *Ecclesia in Asia*, (1999).

⁸⁶ *Ecclesia in Oceania*. (2001).

⁸⁷ *Ex Corde Ecclesiae [On Catholic Universities]*, (1990).

⁸⁸ Published on 7 April 1988, this document appeared only in the English, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish languages.

⁸⁹ Emphasis added.

⁹⁰ *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, (1988), #34.

charism,”⁹¹ “encourages Religious to implement their educational charism,”⁹² and recognizes (in what now seems a paternalistic way) that “at the side of the priests and Religious, lay teachers contribute their competence and their faith witness to the Catholic school,”⁹³ it does not add much to the document on the Catholic School some eleven years previously.

The Church’s document entitled *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*⁹⁴ expresses many of the traditional emphases but recognizes much more clearly the importance of the founding charisms of Religious Congregations and accepts that Religious and lay people share their apostolates in the same Catholic school.

“It is our duty to express appreciation for ... the strenuous commitment of so many men and women, especially of all those Religious and laity who see their teaching as a mission and true apostolate.”⁹⁵

“The Catholic school participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out... The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school, therefore, is written in the very heart of its identity as a teaching institution. It is a true and proper ecclesial entity by reason of its educational activity ‘in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony.’ ”⁹⁶

“The Catholic school is recognized above all as an expression of those Religious Institutes which, according to their proper

⁹¹ *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, #35.

⁹² *Ibid.* #36.

⁹³ *Ibid.* #37.

⁹⁴ *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, (1997).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* #5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* #11.

charism or specific apostolate, have dedicated themselves generously to education... The present time is not without its difficulties, not only because of the alarming decrease in numbers, but also to a serious misunderstanding which induces some Religious to abandon the teaching apostolate... The presence of men and women Religious, side by side with priests and lay teachers, affords pupils 'a vivid image of the Church and makes recognition of its riches easier.'⁹⁷

The document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*⁹⁸ notes that "many Catholic universities were founded by Religious Congregations, and continue to depend on their support; these Religious Congregations dedicated to the apostolate of higher education are urged to assist these Institutions in the renewal of their commitment, and to continue to prepare Religious men and women who can positively contribute to the mission of a Catholic university";⁹⁹ but in its next paragraph states that "the future of Catholic universities depends to a great extent on the competent and dedicated service of lay Catholics. The Church sees their developing presence in these institutions both as a sign of hope and as a confirmation of the irreplaceable lay vocation in the Church and in the world, confident that lay people will, in the exercise of their own distinctive role, 'illuminate and organize these (temporal) affairs in such a way that they always start out, develop, and continue according to Christ's mind, to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.'"

⁹⁷ Ibid. #13.

⁹⁸ *Ex Corde Ecclesiae [On Catholic Universities]*, (1990).

⁹⁹ Ibid. #25.

B. Changes in the Institute since 1987

During this same period the Institute has undergone substantial changes, especially in the number of its members, as there has been a notable decrease in new members entering and the average age of its members has increased. At the same time, as was noted first in presentations to the 1986 General Chapter, there has been an increase in the number of Lasallian works around the world as more and more lay persons, as well as priests and members of other Religious Congregations, supplement the work originally begun by the Institute.

In the Institute documents now considered, there are four related issues which are closely interrelated because each one has implications for the other three. The following four themes appear gradually throughout the Institute's documents from 1967 to 1987 but take on a growing importance since 1987:

- the *identity* of the Brother.
- the development of the idea of *association*.
- the development of *shared mission*.
- changes in *community living* as communities open themselves to the presence of lay persons.

To appreciate the “growing importance” referred to in the previous paragraph, it has seemed helpful to indicate here the main lines of development in the Institute's documentation of the four issues cited above prior to 1987 in order to have a clearer perspective on their development since the *Rule* of 1987. This is especially important with reference to the discussion of *association*, initiated by the “Report of the Vows Commission” to the 40th General Chapter in 1976.

4. Documents from the Center of the Institute

4.1. Documentation before 1987

The *statement of identity of the Brother* as expressed in the *Declaration*¹⁰⁰ from the 39th General Council in 1967 states that “the Brother is a baptized Christian ... who consecrates himself totally to God and to God’s service by his Religious profession ... commits himself to an Institute that is exclusively lay ... giving himself to a community that is totally dedicated to the Kingdom of God ... assuming in a community context an educational mission.” It was by taking into account these three essential elements of *consecration*, *community*, and *mission* in the post-Vatican II Church, followed by twenty years of the *Rule ad experimentum*, which enabled the Institute to formulate the *Rule* of 1987 in its major direction of what the *Declaration*¹⁰¹ had called “the return to the poor.”

The same Declaration, having clarified the sense of the *identity of the Brother* [sic], now stresses the sense of the *vocation*, the calling, which is in its very nature “essentially apostolic”¹⁰² and “missionary.” These sections demonstrate clearly that the Religious consecration of the Brother is not something static lived out in the *Religious state*, but a consecration expressed through association for the mission.

Already noted in the *Declaration* was that “the Brothers are happy to cooperate with lay teachers,”¹⁰³ as a way of recognizing that the

¹⁰⁰ *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*, (1966), #12-13.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* #9.3.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* #22.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* #46.3.

mission of the Institute was already shared by many laypersons.

The 40th General Chapter of 1976, by highlighting the consecration of some European members of *Signum Fidei*,¹⁰⁴ recognized the wish of some lay people to be more closely associated with the mission of the Institute.

The *Rule* Commission that prepared the draft *Rule* for the 41st General Chapter of 1986, taking into consideration the growing number of lay teachers and the declining numbers of Brothers in Lasallian works, first proposed the title of a “shared mission” as a heading to article 17 of the *Rule*. The 42nd General Chapter of 1993 recognized this in its official Acts: “The modest sub-title - ‘a shared mission’ - in article 17 of the *Rule* is now seen as the bold title of a new chapter in the history of the Institute.”¹⁰⁵

This 41st General Chapter of 1986 sent a special message to the members of the Lasallian Family and by a formal proposition¹⁰⁶ requested the General Council to prepare a Letter to the Lasallian Family “to encourage Brothers’ communities to *share*¹⁰⁷ their Lasallian identity with others ... and to help (those) belonging to Lasallian groups to grow in their awareness of being Lasallian, to being *associated*¹⁰⁸ with the Institute, and of being committed to an apostolate.”¹⁰⁹ The common theme running throughout this whole letter is that of association with specific chapters dealing with the rich diversity of our groups, followed by a chapter on “*Different but Associated.*”

¹⁰⁴ *Signum Fidei* was founded in 1975-1976 and was recognized by the 43rd General Chapter as one of the “intentional Lasallian groups” of associates, cf. *Circular 447*.

¹⁰⁵ *Circular 435*, (1993), p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ *Circular 422*, (1986) Proposition 6, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰⁷ Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸ Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁹ *Circular 422*, p. 7.

4.2. Documentation since 1987

In their official written report to the 42nd General Chapter of 1993, Brother Superior and General Council devoted a complete section to the topic *Shared Mission, Lasallian Family*,¹¹⁰ in which they reported on shared mission and its implications for the Institute: “to know, understand, and live our new collaboration with lay colleagues; to share knowledge of the Founder and of the traditions of the Institute with all those *associated*¹¹¹ with us and to invite them to live as Lasallian educators” and “to offer a more intensified sharing to those who wish to live their faith and zeal in the Lasallian spirit.”

An individual section of the above report included a complete paragraph¹¹² on association for the mission, suggesting that “the meaning of the word ‘*association*’ ... needs to be studied thoroughly at the District level and by the General Chapter.”

In his personal commentary on the same report,¹¹³ Brother Superior devoted a whole section to what he termed “Our Identity in the Lasallian Family,” calling on the General Chapter to be clear that “we live our baptismal consecration in different ways; our lay men and women in the ordinary way: we Brothers in an extraordinary way... We must avoid sliding ... toward some kind of hybrid existence”; and he adds, “that it is lay people themselves who must develop a Lasallian spirituality for the laity.”

Circular 435, the official acts of the 42nd General Chapter, follows its “Message about the shared mission to the Worldwide Lasallian Family,” by a clear statement of its identity as “The In-

¹¹⁰ Report of the Superior to the 42nd General Chapter, (1993), Topic 7, pp. 39-45.

¹¹¹ Emphasis added.

¹¹² Report of the Superior to the 42nd General Chapter, #7.54.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 68-69.

stitute: a Community of Brothers Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor in a Changing World and Church,” citing as its *motif* a citation from *Redemptoris Missio*¹¹⁴: “Nations everywhere, open your doors to Christ.”¹¹⁵ This is followed by a clear exposition on *shared mission*,¹¹⁶ noting that “during the years following the 40th General Chapter of 1976 it became clear that there were two movements which today are coming together. Many teachers in a desire to commit themselves more deeply as they work with the Brothers are learning about the Lasallian spirit and so discover that they are participating in a shared mission. Many lay persons, attracted by the person of John Baptist de La Salle, have enrolled in Lasallian organizations.”¹¹⁷ This is followed by a section on *the theology of shared mission*.

In its treatment of *community*, seen as a *sign of hope and source of life*, the report to the General Chapter expresses eleven convictions about the importance of community. It also notes the impact of aging in certain Districts and recommends “a progressive merging of communities to make them viable.”¹¹⁸ This led the General Chapter in Proposition 6 to state that “In view of our call to live together in charity in community and to love, affirm, and support one another spiritually, psychologically and socially, the General Chapter mandates that each community should be composed of no fewer than three Brothers.”¹¹⁹

Concerning its implementation of Proposition 2 of the 42nd General Chapter, “The General Chapter asks the Brother Superior and his Council to name a group of experts in the field of

¹¹⁴ *Redemptoris Missio* [*The Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*], (1990).

¹¹⁵ *Circular 435*, pp. 17-28.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 29-50.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* #2.32, p. 36.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 13.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* Proposition 6, p. 56.

education who will serve as observers of the broad educational concerns throughout the world to enable the Centre of the Institute to develop a public policy.” Brother Superior and General Council named a Standing Committee to organize five colloquia toward a more informed understanding around five pressing themes of the contemporary world and the impact of each of these themes with regard to the mission of human and Christian education: Changes in the Family, Globalization in a Differentiated World and Lasallian Education, The Megapolis as a Social Phenomenon and Lasallian Education, How New Information Technologies Challenge the Lasallian School, and Communicating the Faith Today. The very titles of each of these colloquia show how the Institute, by looking at the new social context, attempted to shape its traditional mission to what has been its most enduring characteristic: answering the educational needs of youth and the poor in the contemporary world. Under the title *The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and Education Today: Five Colloquia towards a More Informed Understanding*, the Institute offered a summary and working document based on the experience of the five colloquia.

In response to the following recommendation of the 42nd General Chapter which “strongly recommends to Brother Superior General and his Council the drawing up and publication of a study (circular) on the shared mission which contains coherent teaching, guidelines and pastoral orientations,” there was published the document entitled *The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission*. In the official report of Brother Superior General to the 43rd General Chapter of 2000,¹²⁰ it is stated that “in order that the document be adapted to the cultural diversity of Regions, the General Council decided, exceptionally, to entrust the Regions with the publication. It

¹²⁰ *Report of the Brother Superior General to the 43rd General Chapter*, (1999).

was in this way that there appeared thirteen different editions...” The significance of this document cannot be overstated. Here, the Institute incorporates its lived experience of the way in which its historical mission has changed and has been enlarged by the majority presence of lay persons in its shared mission. Moreover, the document - besides citing broadly from many of the Church documents already noted - responds realistically to the international nature of the Institute by including sections on *ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue* as essential to the Lasallian Mission. The official Bulletin of the Institute entitled *The Lasallian Christian School and Its Presence among Other Religions*¹²¹ shows how these principles are respected in different places where the Institute’s Christian schools are a minority presence of the Church’s mission.

The Pastoral Letters addressed by Brothers Superior to the Institute from 1990 to 2005 strongly reflect the growing emphasis of important Church documents of this decade. Among them, there can be found the following emphases:

- the identity of the Brother in the changing circumstances of shared mission;
- the importance of intentional communities founded on our emphasis on association for the educational service of the poor;
- those for whom Lasallian works are principally intended - the poor;
- appropriating and sharing our charism;
- the passage from the Brothers’ school to the Lasallian school;
- the defense of children, the Reign of God, and the Lasallian

¹²¹ *Bulletin 243: The Lasallian Christian School and. Its Presence among Other Religions* (1997).

mission - addressed explicitly to all Lasallians;

- the differentiation of the vocation of the Brother from that of the layperson.

The 43rd General Chapter of 2000, which took as its central axis “associated for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21st century,” explored and elucidated the concept of association in detail, retaining the 42nd General Chapter’s idea of “*partners and partnership*” as a general description of the relationship between those who shared the Lasallian mission of human and Christian education and setting out the particular conditions or guidelines for the official recognition of *associates*.¹²²

An important development with regard to the sharing of the Institute’s mission was the official recognition of the participation of Lasallian associates in decision-making structures concerned with the Lasallian mission: “it is time, therefore, for the Institute, strengthened by these successful examples and sustained by these promptings of the Spirit, to formalize this participation to a greater extent and recognize it both in principle and in fact.”¹²³ Proposition 5 of the 43rd General Chapter, therefore, formalizes this in the following way: “That in Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations, the Brothers and their Associates create a structure responsible for the Lasallian educational mission, in which all participate with a deliberative vote.” Proposition 6 asks each unit “to determine the criteria for the participation of Brothers and their Associates in the structure responsible for the educational mission, and define its relationship with the Visitor ... and (his) Council. This plan will be submitted to Brother Superior General and his Council for ap-

¹²² *Circular 447*, pp. 1-17.

¹²³ *Ibid.* p. 13.

proval.”¹²⁴ Proposition 8 asks the Standing Committee to convoke “an international Assembly on the Educational Mission... at least once before the General Chapter” (of 2007). It is surely important in this regard to note that the important changes as regards Mission of Propositions 5, 6, 7 and 8 were most significant in convincing 120+ Chapter delegates that Proposition 38, the point of the present Committee’s work, was necessary.

C. Implications of the Above Analysis for the 1987 Rule

5. General Observations

The *significant changes* noted above in Church and Institute documents have a double significance. First of all, they put into better perspective certain reference points for a clearer understanding of the identity of the Brother in the Church and in the world of today, providing at the same time a “new” vocabulary for this better understanding. Second, these substantial changes confront the Brother with a number of real-life situations with regard to mission and community (two of the constituent elements of the Brother’s identity) which, in fact, are no longer adequately expressed in the 1987 *Rule* because of the important changes set out above.

While it is essential that the *Rule* be seen and respected as the *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, the nature of the changes is, nevertheless, such that parts of the *Rule* need to be re-expressed in the light of the substantial changes within the

¹²⁴ Ibid. p. 14.

Church and within the Institute precisely because they no longer adequately describe the identity of the Brother today. Perhaps the prolonged discussion on the identity of the Brother has obscured the importance of the vocation of the Brother, particularly in the sense that living out a vocation is dynamic and evolving as the present *Rule* reminds us when it speaks of “the successive moments in the life of the Brother.”¹²⁵ But viewing the changes that have taken place from the perspective of vocation rather than from that of identity has the possibility of moving us forward in making a better distinction between the life choice of the Brother and those of their partners in the same mission.

The central axis of the post-Second Vatican Council documents of the Church, *communion-mission*, as has been already shown, is the historical and theological basis for the existence of the Institute as presently formulated since 1986 in the fourth vow, the vow of association for the educational service of the poor. In the origin of the Institute, this vow associated each Brother only with others who made the same commitment. Today the very formulation of the vow in the light of developments in Church and Institute documents now implicitly, at least, associates the Brother, in his consecrated life lived within a community in view of mission, with all those others who come together through some kind of association to carry out a similar mission. In an increasing number of situations, this association also welcomes persons into sharing some aspects of the life of the community. Since the lifetime consecration of the Brother to this mission as a member of the community formed with others whom he calls by the name of Brother is a statement of his identity,¹²⁶ there is, therefore, in addition to what can be called the transversal axis of communion-mission, the more individual or charismatic axis

¹²⁵ *Rule*, #22.

¹²⁶ *Rule*, #10.

of “votal consecration.”¹²⁷

It is important to note that even though the renewed interest in the vow of association developed through the Institute’s looking back to its “primitive inspiration” and attempting to adapt “to the changed conditions” since the Second Vatican Council and the 39th General Chapter, the idea of association has become a central idea among the very diverse persons who share in some way in the Lasallian mission in varying degrees as associates, partners, or collaborators. It has become, as the 43rd General Chapter showed, a unifying concept that points to a different future, already being realized, for the Lasallian mission.

Some of the significant implications of this overview of Church and Institute documents can best be seen now by considering in turn the following chapters of the 1987 *Rule*.

5.1. Chapter One on the Purpose and Spirit of the Institute

The “purpose and spirit of the Institute” is an historical statement of its spirituality in view of the mission of human and Christian education. Articles 1, 2, and 7 of the 1987 *Rule* have, at least, an inspirational value for all those committed to the Lasallian vision. The spirit of faith and zeal, therefore, are fundamental to those who wish to take part in it.

*5.2. Chapter Two on Mission*¹²⁸

The *Rule* of 1987 was indeed radical in its inclusion of articles on the laity.¹²⁹ The statistics of the Institute today show that

¹²⁷ Consecration by vows.

¹²⁸ Note that the title in English is presently given in the 1987 *Rule* as “The Mission of the Institute.”

¹²⁹ Cf. *Rule*, #17a, b, c, d.

ninety-seven percent of those involved in the Lasallian mission are not vowed members of the Institute. The same statistics indicate that the Brothers are no longer those necessarily placed in the highest posts of responsibility. The chapter should be called “The Mission,” while taking care to define the mission of the Brothers in the new context of the Lasallian mission. In this way, the door is opened for partners and associates to share in the building up of such a mission, while the *Rule* remains a document proper to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. New formulations are needed to define, clarify, and orient the overall Lasallian mission.

In the light of the large numbers of Lasallians who, as the citations from Church and Institute documents have already shown, find their own relationship to the Lasallian mission best expressed through the concept of association, there is an urgent need for the *Rule* to express clearly the identity of the Brother as distinct from those other Lasallians who, in varying *degrees of belonging*, see themselves also *associated* in view of the Lasallian mission.

It is no longer appropriate, therefore, to see the Brothers as protagonists who “gladly associate lay persons with them in their educational mission.”¹³⁰ The Brothers are now “partners” in a minority position who share the one Lasallian mission with others. The mission no longer belongs exclusively to the members of the Institute. The one mission, the *Lasallian mission of human and Christian education*, is shared with other persons - believers and persons of good will - in extremely different circumstances. There needs to be a careful statement of the specific contribution brought by the Brother to the overall shared mission: what

¹³⁰ *Rule*, #17.

is distinctive about the Brother's contribution in terms of who he is as well as what he does.

Perhaps a revision of the *Rule* needs to indicate much more clearly and explicitly that the "first" people for whom the Lasallian mission is intended are poor children and poor young people.

The present article on *inculturation*¹³¹ may need to be re-expressed in broader terms, especially as more than over forty percent of Lasallians engaged in the one mission are women.

The Institute's most recent statistics show that the most rapidly increasing groups within the mission are students in various forms of post-secondary education.

5.3. *Chapter Three on the Consecrated Life*

The present text of the *Rule* offers a generic view of Religious Life, based on the uniform presentation initiated by the *Code of Canon Law* in 1917. But, as has been shown above in the presentation concerning the recommendation of the Commission on Vows,¹³² historical research within the Institute in the spirit of *Perfectae Caritatis*¹³³ has shown¹³⁴ that the *Bull of Approbation*¹³⁵ of the Institute of 1725, granted according to the canonical norms of the time, failed to recognize the theme of *association* as central to the origin and development of the original community and as something that conferred a specific identity on the Brother within the Church.

¹³¹ *Rule*, #18.

¹³² Cf. At the end of the point B, above.

¹³³ *Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life*, #2.

¹³⁴ Cf. *Cahiers lasalliens*, #2 and #3.

¹³⁵ Cf. Footnote #57.

The *vow of association*, therefore, most clearly expresses the Brother's consecration in a global fashion. One of the practical consequences is to take into account the importance that Church documents give to fraternity as sign,¹³⁶ and the challenge for the Brother to be “counselor,” “expert in communion,”¹³⁷ “guide in the spiritual life,”¹³⁸ and promoter “of a spirituality of communion”¹³⁹ in this exchange of gifts¹⁴⁰ with others. These challenges are both internal and external. Gifts traditionally shared within the community are now offered outside the community in the enlarged network of associated persons. It is in relationship to this vow that the other vows, including those conferred by the *Bull of Approbation*, should be understood.

The intent of articles #39 to #41 of this chapter of the *Rule*, under the sub-heading “association for the service of the poor through education,” highlighted the service of the poor¹⁴¹ rather than the deep sense of association in the vow of 1694. Perhaps these articles are better located in the chapter of the *Rule* on mission.

The *identity of the Brother* has to be considered not only in terms of how he sees himself (from within his Religious commitment) but also how he is seen from outside because one aspect of identity is that conferred by the perception of others. How has this identity changed along with changes about Religious Life in the Church and in relationship to shared mission and other kinds of Lasallian vocations? How does the concept of association in its wide range of meanings provide a basis of unity among those

¹³⁶ Cf. section #2.1 above.

¹³⁷ Cf. section #2.1 above.

¹³⁸ Cf. section #2.1 above.

¹³⁹ Cf. section #2.3 above.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. section #2.2 above.

¹⁴¹ Replacing the former “teaching the poor gratuitously.”

who work in the Lasallian mission while respecting the distinctiveness of different vocations?

5.4. *Chapter Four on Community Life*

When the present text of the *Rule* speaks of community, it tends to see the Brother's community life exclusively from within. There is certainly reference to a mission.¹⁴² But the abundant citations given above from Church and Institute documents shows that the task of the community in today's world is to be much more outward looking, a place of communion open to offering its experience of communion to others, sharing the gifts of individual members and being open to this *exchange of gifts*. This is already taking place in various ways, for example by the presence of Lasallian Volunteers of various kinds who share many aspects of community living alongside Brothers. Such communion may take various forms according to the culture and the faith-tradition of those involved. What is no longer relevant for an international Institute comprising members of very different cultures, therefore, is insistence mainly on uniformity and a traditional Religious Life view of an exclusive community as a value in itself or as a major norm for community living.

The new emphasis referred to above on the role of the community as a prophetic sign of its own identity is of particular importance because of the need to be open to others and for the members of the community to be open to carry out their new role as expert guides to others. While the historical origins of the Brothers' fraternity are well stated in the present *Rule*,¹⁴³ the citations from *Vita Consecrata*¹⁴⁴ call for even greater openness and sharing.

¹⁴² Cf. *Rule*, #47, #51, and #52.

¹⁴³ *Rule*, #53.

¹⁴⁴ *Consecrated Life*, #60.4.

5.5. Chapter Five on the Life of Prayer

One of the ways in which Lasallian association is already lived out in a very special way is in the traditional practices of prayer that have been part of the Lasallian heritage such as the recalling of the presence of God and the practice of the daily or weekly reflection. The challenge of being “expert guides in the spiritual life”¹⁴⁵ and promoters of “a spirituality of communion”¹⁴⁶ would seem to suggest that the Brothers *Rule* should contain something about the role of the Brothers’ communities and of individual Brothers as mentors in this essential aspect of the spiritual life.

5.6. Chapter Six on Formation

Changes addressed in the preceding chapters with regard to the understanding of the Brothers’ identity in the context of shared mission and of the existence of other vocations committed to various forms of association in the shared mission need to be considered in this chapter. Certain aspects of the Brothers’ formation have already been suggested in the third section of the 1997 Institute document from Brother Superior General and General Council, *The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission*.

5.7 Chapters 7, 8, & 9 on the Government of the Institute

Propositions #5 through #8 of the 43rd General Chapter with reference to structures set up to establish *Councils for the Mission*¹⁴⁷ have implications at a number of levels - the General Chapter and, above all, the Central Government - depending on

¹⁴⁵ Cf. section #2.1 above.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. section #2.3 above.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *Circular 447*, pp. 14-15.

the way the propositions are implemented.

5.8. Chapter Ten on the Vitality of the Institute

The vitality of the Institute, as such, cannot be isolated from the continuing vitality of its historical mission of offering a human and Christian education for the poor. From this point of view, the changes already suggested with regard to preceding chapters of the *Rule* have implications for the continuing vitality of the Institute.

Appendices

These appendices are not the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the *Rule*. They were prepared by Brothers Antonio Botana, Alain Houry, Aidan Kilty, and William Mann at the Casa Generalizia as optional aids to foster personal reflection and communal discussion about the content of the document.

- Study Guide #1: Some questions for reflection
- Study Guide #2: Questions for the Study of the Report on the Rule
- Study Guide #3: Guide for Personal Reflection and Community Discussion
- Study Guide #4: Guide for Reflection and Discussion

While the primary aim of preparing these study guides was to foster reflection and discussion, one or other could obviously be used to help prepare individual or communal notes for the 44th General Chapter.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *Rule*, #110.

Study Guide #1

With regard to the ad hoc Committee on the Rule

Some questions for reflection

1. The General Council has accepted the following conclusion of the Committee set up following Proposition 38 of the 43rd General Chapter: to proceed to minor changes in the *Rule* would be a waste of time

- Do the changes in the world, in the Church and in the Institute since 1987 seem to you to justify this conviction? On what do you base your point of view?

2. The General Council proposed to the Committee to indicate the most important areas (or the lines of thought) which demand an important re-shaping of the *Rule* and to explain the reasons for such a re-shaping.

- According to you, which are the chapters of the *Rule* which need to be modified in a major way? Which realities, above all, would justify, in your eyes, an important modification of the *Rule*?

3. The Committee picked out, in recent official documents of the Church, the expression of changes in the thinking of the Church - in areas as diverse as the ecclesiology of communion, the mission of lay people and the ministries which they can exercise, community life and the mission of Religious, the world of education - and this concerns the identity of Lasallians, both

Brothers and Lay Lasallians.

- Which are the aspects of the life of the Brothers and their mission which seem to you the most concerned by these changes?

4. In examining recent Institute documents - recent Chapters, Circular 435 (The Shared Mission), pastoral letters of the Superior-General - the Committee highlighted four themes which have taken on a growing importance since 1987.

- In your opinion, what are these major themes which the *Rule* absolutely must come to grips with?

5. The Committee noted that the changes picked out deal with lived situations as well as with the vocabulary used which provides a better understanding of our identity and of the mission which the Church confides to us.

- In your opinion, what are the ways of unifying more, in the *Rule*, the diverse aspects of our life and of our mission?

Study Guide #2

Questions for the Study of the Report on the Rule

1. The “ecclesiology of Communion” and the fruitful relation between Communion and Mission are developed in the reflection of the Church especially based on the document *Christifideles laici* (1988).

- What obvious aspects of this ecclesiology should we take most into account in order to live our identity in the ensemble Church-Communion? (Some of these aspects are indicated in section 1: co-responsibility of lay people, equal Christian dignity, the universal vocation to holiness, the spirituality of communion, communion between the diverse vocations and states of life, the mission belongs to all Christians....)
- Are these aspects sufficiently expressed in our present *Rule*? (see especially Chapter 2.) Do we notice important gaps? Can we see expressions which are in contradiction with key aspects of the ecclesiology of communion?

2. Our original identity of “Brothers of the Christian Schools” finds in present documents on the consecrated life major possibilities for expressing itself and for asserting its originality of ministerial fraternity.

- From the references which are given in Section 2.1, pick out some expressions from these documents which seem to us especially applicable to the Brother (for example “fraternal life in communion for the mission”, “sign of fraternal communion”, “experts in communion”, “guides for the

spiritual life”...).

- Should we include some of these in our *Rule*? Which?

3. The mission of the Church is one and shared by all. This affirmation of Vatican II is the basis for the orientation taken on by the Institute in these terms: “the shared mission” (*Rule*, No.17)

However, the last 20 years have brought us a major clarification based on the Synods on the diverse states of life in the Church, the Pontifical documents and the documents from the Vatican Congregations. Now we understand better what is meant by “sharing the mission”, and the implications which arise from this: sharing the charisms for the mission, discovering new forms of communion, recognizing the specific contribution which we can make from our own identity....

- Which elements from those suggested in Sections 2.2 to 2.5 modify or help in specifying how much is said in the present *Rule* about the shared mission and about what the Brother contributes to the mission?

4. Section B refers to the changes brought about in the Institute since 1987 and highlight four themes in which these changes have had major repercussions: the identity of the Brother, the concept of association, the Shared Mission, the experience of community and the openness of communities to the presence of lay persons.

- Of the contributions cited in this section, which seem to us necessary to take into account in a possible revision of the *Rule*? Can we add other contributions from the central documents of the Institute, which have not been considered here and which also contribute innovations with regard to the present text of the *Rule*?

- Can we suggest some concrete texts from the *Rule* which ought to be revised in the light of the above contributions?

5. The ad hoc Committee on the *Rule* presents its conclusions in Section C

- Of the general observations (5.0), which would we especially underline as being those with which we are most in agreement? Do we disagree with some? Would we add some general observation?
- Which of the observations made by the Committee on each chapter seem to us especially worth taking into account? With which ones are we not in agreement?

Study Guide #3

Guide for Personal Reflection and Community Discussion

Section One - Changes in the Church

1. Quoting from *Christifideles Laici*, the report states that “the reality of the Church as communion is, then, the integrating aspect, indeed the central content of the ‘mystery,’ or rather, the divine plan for the salvation of humanity.”¹⁴⁹

- As a Brother, what has been the ecclesiology out of which you have lived and developed your own understanding of Church?
- In what ways do you experience the *Church as communion*... as the integrating element in the “divine plan for the salvation of humanity”?
- How has the ecclesiology of communion enhanced your understanding of Church?

2. Many of the Church documents, both during and since the Second Vatican Council, emphasize that the Church’s mission is entrusted to the whole people of God sharing “charisms and ministries” that are “diverse yet complementary.”¹⁵⁰

- In what ways have you seen this flowering of charisms and ministries in the Church in your own lifetime?
- What have been some of the difficulties and challenges associated with enabling different vocations to exercise their

¹⁴⁹ Cf. section #1.1 above.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. section #1.1 above.

charisms and ministries?

- In your view, what further steps need to be taken in order to ensure that all states of life exercise their charisms and ministries to the full?

3. “Consecrated persons are asked to be true experts of communion and to practice the spirituality of communion as witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design... Religious community is the place where the daily and patient passage from ‘me’ to ‘us’ takes place, from my commitment to a commitment entrusted to the community, from seeking ‘my things’ to seeking the ‘things of Christ.’ ”¹⁵¹

- In what ways do these statements resonate with your actual experience?
- What would be required of you and of your present community to make your actual experience consistent with the ideal proposed here?

4. “Collaboration and exchange of gifts become more intense when groups of persons share, by vocation and in the way proper to them, in the heart of the same spiritual family, in the charism and mission of the Institute.”¹⁵²

- What has been your actual experience of this “collaboration and exchange of gifts” in recent decades?
- What feelings are evoked in you as you see and read about this “collaboration and exchange of gifts”?

5. “In the Institute, sharing in the one mission of the Church,

¹⁵¹ Cf. section #2.1 above.

¹⁵² Cf. section #2.2 above.

we pass from ‘the mission of the Institute’ to the mission of the Church shared among Brothers and lay persons, while respecting their respective status.”¹⁵³

- In what ways does this statement accurately describe your present understanding of the Institute’s mission?
- In what ways has your own understanding of the Institute’s mission developed since your initial commitment?

Section Two - Changes in the Institute since 1987

6. “During this same period the Institute has undergone substantial changes, especially in the number of its members, as there has been a notable decrease in new members entering and the average age of its members has increased. At the same time, as was noted first in presentations to the 1986 General Chapter, there has been an increase in the number of Lasallian works around the world as more and more lay persons, as well as priests and members of other Religious Congregations, supplement the work originally begun by the Institute.”

- How do you and your community interpret these changes mentioned here?
- How has your understanding of the identity of the Brother changed since 1987?

7. The Report to the 42nd General Chapter of 1993 made the following reference to shared mission and its implications for the Institute: “to know, understand, and live our new collaboration with lay colleagues; to share knowledge of the Founder and of the traditions of the Institute with all those associated with us

¹⁵³ Cf. section #2.3 above.

and to invite them to live as Lasallian educators” and “to offer a more intensified sharing to those who wish to live their faith and zeal in the Lasallian spirit.”¹⁵⁴

- To what extent do you think that these implications have been assimilated on a personal, community, and District level?

8. The document entitled “The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission” incorporates the Institute’s “lived experience of the way in which its historical mission has changed and has been enlarged by the majority presence of lay persons in its historical mission....”¹⁵⁵

- What has been your experience of the way in which the Institute’s “historical mission has changed and has been enlarged by the majority presence of lay persons”?

Section Three - Implications for the 1987 Rule

9. “Perhaps the prolonged discussion on the identity of the Brother has obscured the importance of the vocation of the Brother, particularly in the sense that living out a vocation is dynamic and evolving as the present *Rule* reminds us when it speaks of “the successive moments in the life of the Brother.”¹⁵⁶ But viewing the changes that have taken place from the perspective of vocation rather than from that of identity has the possibility of moving us forward in making a better distinction between the life choice of the Brother and those of their partners in the same mission.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Cf. section #4.2 above.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. section #4.2 above.

¹⁵⁶ *Rule*, #22.

- In what ways do you see it as being helpful to our understanding of the Brother today to focus on the vocation rather than on the identity of the Brother?

10. “In the origin of the Institute, this vow associated each Brother only with others who made the same commitment. Today the very formulation of the vow in the light of developments in Church and Institute documents now implicitly, at least, associates the Brother, in his consecrated life lived within a community in view of mission, with all those others who come together through some kind of association to carry out a similar mission. In an increasing number of situations, this association also welcomes persons into sharing some aspects of the life of the community....”¹⁵⁸

- To what extent do these statements reflect your personal, community, and District experience?

11. “It is important to note that even though the renewed interest in the vow of association developed through the Institute’s looking back to its ‘primitive inspiration’ and attempting to adapt ‘to the changed conditions’ since the Second Vatican Council and the 39th General Chapter, the idea of association has become a central idea among the very diverse persons who share in some way in the Lasallian mission in varying degrees as associates, partners, or collaborators. It has become, as the 43rd General Chapter showed, a unifying concept that points to a different future, already being realized, for the Lasallian mission....”¹⁵⁹

- How comfortable are you with the assertion that “the idea

¹⁵⁷ Cf. section #5 above.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. section #5 above.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. section #5 above.

of association has become a central idea among the very diverse persons who share in some way in the Lasallian mission in varying degrees as associates, partners, or collaborators” and that it is a “unifying concept that points to a different future”?

12. “It is no longer appropriate, therefore, to see the Brothers as protagonists who “gladly associate lay persons with them in their educational mission.”¹⁶⁰ The Brothers are now “partners” in a minority position who share the *one* Lasallian mission with others. The mission no longer belongs exclusively to the members of the Institute. The one mission, the *Lasallian mission of human and Christian education*, is shared with other persons, believers and persons of good will, in extremely different circumstances. There needs to be a careful statement of the specific contribution brought by the Brother to the overall shared mission: what is distinctive about the Brother’s contribution in terms of who he is as well as what he does?”¹⁶¹

- Based on your own experience, how accurate a description is this of the Lasallian mission?
- What would your response be to the question, “What is distinctive about the Brother’s contribution in terms of who he is as well as what he does?”

13. “The vow of association, therefore, most clearly expresses the Brother’s consecration in a global fashion. One of the practical consequences is to take into account the importance that Church documents give to fraternity as sign, and the challenge for the Brother to be ‘counselor,’ ‘expert in communion,’ ‘guide in the spiritual life’ and promoter ‘of a spirituality of commun-

¹⁶⁰ *Rule*, #17.

¹⁶¹ Cf. section #5.2 above.

ion' in this exchange of gifts with others. These challenges are both internal and external. Gifts traditionally shared within the community are now offered outside the community in the enlarged network of associated persons. It is in relationship to this vow that the other vows, including those conferred by the *Bull of Approbation*, should be understood.”¹⁶²

- What is your response to the role that the document attributes to the vow of association in the understanding of the Brother's vocation?
- In what ways might this understanding of the vow of association help to clarify the Brother's identity?

14. “When the present text of the *Rule* speaks of community, it tends to see the Brother's community life exclusively from within. There is certainly reference to a mission.¹⁶³ But the abundant citation given above from Church and Institute documents shows that the task of the community in today's world is to be much more outward looking, a place of communion open to offering its experience of communion to others, sharing the gifts of individual members and being open to this exchange of gifts. This is already taking place in various ways, for example by the presence of Lasallian Volunteers of various kinds who share many aspects of community living alongside Brothers. Such communion may take various forms according to the culture and the faith-tradition of those involved. What is no longer relevant for an international Institute comprising members of very different cultures, therefore, is insistence mainly on uniformity and a traditional Religious Life view of an exclusive community as a value in itself or as a major norm for community living.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Cf. section #5.3 above.

¹⁶³ Cf. *Rule*, #47, #51, and #52.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. section #5.4 above.

- What changes in community life have you experienced over recent decades?
- How does the vision of community presented in the document resonate with your experience?
- What might be required at a personal, community, and District level to make this vision a reality?

Study Guide #4

*Guide for Reflection and Discussion*¹⁶⁵

After having read the booklet, you might want to consider the following questions prior to discussion with the other members of your community.

- What do you think about what you have read?
- What new insights did you find here?
- What new wisdom is emerging for you?
- What does this all mean for you, for us, for now?

To encourage your critical reflection about the content of this booklet, you might want to consider the following questions.

- What might the content of this booklet mean to you or to us?
- Why do you think or feel this way?
- Do you have any reason to question your own perspective?
- What are some of the possibilities being offered here?
- What might need to be changed in the *Rule* and in our understanding of our lives as vowed Religious Brothers?

To assist in your own appropriation of what has been presented in this booklet, you might want to consider the following questions.

¹⁶⁵ These questions are an adaptation of questions taken from *Educating for Life* by Thomas Groome (Texas, U.S.A.: Thomas More Company, 1998).

- What are you going to do with this?
- What decisions do you or do we need to make based upon the insights provided in this booklet?
- What adjustments might need to be done in your ministry, your community, your District, or our Institute for the successful integration or implementation of the ideas contained in this booklet?

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