

THE NEW EDITION OF THE RULE

Brothers,

I am delighted to present to you a new edition of our Rule. As you know, the current text of the Rule was the result of a long process that culminated in the 41st General Chapter and was approved by the Holy See on January 26th, 1987. This new, limited edition of the text and its approved translations was motivated, first of all, by the minor modifications made in the 42nd and 43rd General Chapters and by a need to make a few minor corrections of the English translation which appear in this edition for the first time. Furthermore, the supply of the 1987 editions in the three official languages of the Institute has been exhausted.

Now we are making only a limited press run keeping in mind, especially, the new Brothers who are joining our Institute. But we are keeping very much in mind Proposition 38 from the 43rd General Chapter, which stated: *That Brother Superior General and his 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.* There-

fore it will be the next General Chapter which will determine the needed changes for our current text. That will also be the appropriate time to review the translations which some have requested.

It seems to me that this new edition is an opportune time to make a brief reflection on our Rule. It strikes me that there is a kind of harmony between number 5 of Vita Consecrata and the Founder's thought taken from Chapter XVI of the Common Rule of 1718. The Pope's text tells us that *consecrated life manifests the organic unity of the commandment of love, in the inseparable link between love of God and love of neighbor*. And the Founder declared, in a text that we have saved as a real treasure in the opening section of our current Rule that *it is necessary that the Brothers take for the foundation and support of their observance of the Rule what Saint Augustine says at the beginning of his Rule: that those who live in community should, before all else, love God and next their neighbor because these are the principal commandments given to us by God...*The Rule, therefore, should be for us an instrument which is at the service of love. Love is its purpose and its end.

Personally, it seems to me that our Rule moves between two coordinates which are marked by its first and last Chapters (1 and 10). On the one hand, the Rule presents to us the objective that we should reach and the spirit that should animate us; on the other hand, we are presented with the secret of our vitality. The objective and the spirit should make a continual reference to the foundational inspiration of Saint John Baptist de La Salle as a way of living out the Gospel, and as the creative fidelity that drives us to incarnate this charism today as we respond to the challenges presented to us by our world. This is a vitality that speaks of life, increase, growth, search, hope, beginning anew...and it is one that invites us to be agents in *the continual challenge to be creative while remaining faithful to the Institute's origins (Rule 149)*.

I ask the Lord to help us bring to life what the Rule presents to us as the ideal of our vocation as Brother. The most important thing is not to

have beautiful documents but to be active witnesses of the values these documents contain. Let us make our own the words that God addressed to the prophet Ezekiel: *O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel (Ezekiel 3: 1)*. May the Rule, once it has been internalized, be for us the spiritual nourishment that becomes a message of life for all those whom God has entrusted to our care.

Fraternally in De La Salle,

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría
Superior General

Rome, April 7th, 2002
283rd anniversary of the death
of the Founder