

LASALLIAN EUROPE AND THE GENERAL CHAPTER

A summary of the discussions that took place during the meeting of the European Capitulants, 29-30 March in Paris.

Brother Joan Carles Vázquez, Co-ordinator

Organization of the General Chapter by the Preparatory Commission

(Brother Stefano Agostini gave the presentation.)

Some questions were asked seeking clarifications on the proposed program. They centred on the validity that can be attached to orientations, if there are no propositions.

How will we know that we have arrived at a consensus on a subject if the Capitulants have not openly expressed their opinions about it? Does the 'newness' of this alternative process lie in the organization? Or is it in the new ideas and reflections on the important matters being studied?

It was also suggested that the Preparatory Commission should give more time to the presentation of the report from the International MEL, and more time for the Capitulants to study its implications.

Report of the meeting of Capitulants from the USA-Toronto Region and RELAL.

(Brother Tom Johnson gave the presentation)

Some explanations were requested concerning expressions which caused some confusion of interpretation, such as the expression "communion of goods" in relation to the Association and the phrase "the attention to the specific itineraries" in relation to the formation of Brothers and Associates.

Subjects the General Chapter needs to study

(Group work led by Br. Nicholas Capelle)

The contributions from the four working groups converged on 7 main areas.

1. - Life in Community as an expression of fraternity, faith in God and the educational service of the poor. In Community each Brother finds support and purpose in his consecrated life, and the vow of Association of each member of the Community becomes a lived and present reality.

The Communities of older Brothers need to be helped in order not to lose the sense of consecration and mission.

The creation of Communities with an international dimension could revitalise the life of the Brothers in some places.

Openness to new forms of community life, shared by Brothers and Associates, could give an impulse to vitality.

2. - The Development of Vocations must explore new ways of announcing the Brothers' form of religious life to young people. This proclamation should make use of structures suited to the new social context in which young people live.

The promotion of Vocations should lead to the development of new forms of religious life.

3. - Association for the Educative Service of the Poor needs to be studied in depth and better understood by Brothers and Associates. Among other things, the very concept of Association needs to be clarified, as does the organisation of the structures for Association and the study of its economic implications.

We also need to review the experiments in Association that have been carried out in the Institute since the year 2000.

The General Chapter should welcome the Orientations proposed by the MEL International Assembly and endorse them as far as possible

4. - Lasallian Education has to find its place in new areas such as work with immigrants, displaced persons, those who are marginalized or suffering from any kind of poverty. A debate on the place of Lasallian Education in the world today would help us realise that the Institute is still greatly needed in order to respond to the needs of children and young people. This debate should also lead the Institute to explore innovative methods of teaching, to undertake research into educational questions and to develop a greater use of communication technology.

This work of debate and reflection should not be left solely to the Lasallian universities around the world.

5. - Training in Lasallian Education should be organised jointly for Brothers and Lay Lasallians. Unified formation programs are needed, and these should be organized at both Institute and Regional levels.

6. - The Rule needs to undergo a revision, but this does not mean that a new Rule has to be drawn up. Some areas that are not included in the present Rule could be incorporated into a Declaration or a similar document. However, such a Declaration needs to



have standing and authority, and it should include items that are considered obligatory.

7. - Economy and Finance have to be governed by the criteria of fraternity and the just distribution of goods, especially between the rich and poor Regions of the Institute.

Institute policies on the management of goods and patrimony need to be established.

8. - Other subjects for the Chapter to consider will be found in the notes and contributions submitted by Districts, Communities and individual Brothers.

A detailed study of the statistics on personnel would provide up-to-date insights into trends and directions for the next 7 years.

Institute Government and Animation

(Chaired by Br. Joan Carles Vázquez)

The observations made regarding this topic arose out of previous questions and comments that centred on the composition of the General Council.

The questions included the following.

- Should the present model of Central Government of the Institute be modified?
- What criteria do we have for designing a new model of government?
- Why does the Institute need to have a new model of government?
- Do we not need to think about the government of the Lasallian Family as a structure differentiated from the Government of the Institute?

General comments on the Government of the Institute included the following.

- It must be an “exemplary Community”.
- It has to ensure smooth communication between the General Council and other parts of central administration.
- The ways of working in Rome have to be brought into line with modern practice (team work, participative management...)

The Roles of the General Councillors and of the Regional Co-ordinators.

These were the subject of many interventions, as was the composition of the General Council. The main points of convergence were the following: Distinguish between two types of Councillors: Specialists in subject areas and Regional Councillors.

The Specialist Councillors would live in Rome and form a Community with the Superior General Brother. They would not have territorial jurisdiction. They would set up working groups composed of Brothers and Lay Lasallians. They would have authority throughout the Institute in the area of their competence. They would be members of the General Council and elected by the General Chapter.

The Regional Counselors would coordinate the life of the Regions. They would not live in Rome but in their Regions. They would have authority in the Regions with the status of “major superiors”. They would be members of the General Council. On a regular basis, they would go to Rome for the meetings of the General Council.

At the end of the meeting, each of the three young Brothers present as Capitulants gave his personal reactions as well as his hopes in relation to the next General Chapter. The points they made were as follows:

- Participation in this meeting has been an important personal enrichment.
- Although this is a difficult time in our Institute history, it is still worthwhile being a Brother today.
- The witness of our life as Brothers can provide an answer to many of the existential questions of young people today.
- Life itself is more important than most of the discussions about it, which are sometimes just boring.
- The vow of Association is a great treasure for our life as Brothers.
- In the Districts of Europe we are talking from different backgrounds and different styles of living, but we can still meet in the common areas that unite us. This is the wealth of our Region (REL) and of the Institute.