

De La Salle Spanish Districts' suggestions for the General Chapter.

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The de La Salle Districts of Spain recently held meetings similar to our own meetings at St. Helens and Clayton Court to formulate suggestions which their delegates might take to the coming General Chapter of May and June of this year 2007.

Those Spanish Districts produced reports of which I was handed three, because I was to be translator at the European meeting of 29-30 March, itself preparatory to this year's General Chapter. The reports were lengthy, so only some of the matters raised are mentioned below, nor are those matters the most important necessarily; they are simply the ones which caught my eye.

Suggestions in the Spanish reports:

A new Rule or Declaration is urgently called for, but the approval by Rome of any new text of our Rule would be a lengthy process, so it is suggested that an unofficial text, a new Declaration for example, be rapidly produced, more in keeping with our actual understanding of the vows; a text which would be more intelligible, and which would translate our decrepit formula of vows into modern, less baroque expression, more in keeping with the way we are supposed to live these days: in keeping with austerity, availability, dialogue, fraternity and incorporating others in our mission, without forgetting the keynote phrase of the old formula: "Most Holy Trinity,in order to procure your glory". A new type of consecration is needed because our present vows have little significance today. Our founder intended in the first place to provide teachers, and only afterwards did he decide on the forming of a community which would ensure a regular supply of teachers.

Has not the recent emphasis on "educational service to the poor" made us forget, made even the centre of the institute forget, the phrase: "to give a Christian Education"?

Unless we are clear as to what should be our main objectives in being members of our institute, all planning of methodologies is a waste of time. We need not spend much time on defining our identity, but we do need to clarify our present relationships, as the disciples walking to Emmaus attempted to do.

Community can be considered from two angles. 1. The Community life of the Brothers. 2. The community as a means of achieving our mission: our objectives. Some Brothers are tempted to think that they are the last of a race, they have low self-esteem, and do not believe that a true conversion of the Brothers is possible. They see a dichotomy between the ideals set out

in our documents and what really takes place in our communities. They say that some communities are such only in name, because the weight of work and activities leave little time to concentrate on what Community should involve. In fact some Brothers take on too many activities, they are workaholics. This results in a lessening of the spiritual aspect of their lives. Fervid activity and planning make us ignore those who actually live around us. Some people think depreciatively of the lay state. In seeing how we have become fewer, some forget that in early periods of our foundation we were fewer still and yet the Brothers forged ahead. But let us not forget that modern day democratic ideas have resulted in most Brothers becoming more human, more normal, more fraternal, who have readier contact with their families and turn more readily to those really in need. It only needs a small contingent, may be an individual in a larger group, to enthuse others in a group.

We should clarify the identity and commitments within the institute of our associates. How do they really fit within our community, our District and our Institute? We are not owners of the mission, we share it. A tendency exists in some places to preserve everything as it always was. Some Brothers make themselves into a kind of prophet who determines what should go and what remain.

Should the General Chapter investigate a closer association with institutes having similar objectives to ours? Should we have greater contact with our local parish and other local religious communities? Should we become more global and more open to others in undertaking the work of our church. The extent however of the possible diminishing of the effectiveness of smaller groupings by over-zealous amalgamations should be carefully weighed; some even expressed doubts about the usefulness of the recent transformation of de La Salle Europe into a single entity. There is a present-day crisis of our religion in Europe, though the attraction of contemplative religions like Buddhism and Hinduism is increasing and can be an obstacle to the pursuit of our own Christian ideals and values.

