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The teaching of the catechism in Lasallian history

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Br. José María Pérez Navarro is in charge of formation in the Spanish Lasallian Centre in Madrid. In 2001 he defended a Doctorate thesis at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome. This thesis studied the catechetical work of the Institute from its origins and especially from the 1950s.

This is a fascinating document. It shows us a teaching Institute constantly facing up to one of its main objectives: procuring a Christian education and "teaching the truths of Christianity and the maxims of the Holy Gospel".

If the Lasallian school is indeed a place of culture, of relationships, of knowledge, of apprenticeship, a place of personal and collective growth, it cannot truly be so except in fidelity to its overall plan which is an opening to the Spirit up to the point of a respectful and free offering of the Gospel.

This MEL booklet has chosen to offer to its readers, part of this study. The choice fell on the period which is closest to us and which best helps us understand what we are living today in the domain of catechesis. It puts things into perspective in a very enlightening way.

- A first chapter shows us the commitment of the Institute between the years 1950 and 1980. Here we find a great political will, the creation of prestigious centres, the emergence of prominent figures in Spain, Italy, France, Australia, Chile, the USA...
- A second chapter places the difficult Lasallian catechesis in the context of the great social and ecclesiastical challenges from the 1980s up to the year 2000.
- A third chapter presents to us the ten challenges which we face today throughout the world.

Here we would like to thank Br. José María Pérez for the excellent contribution which he has made to us in these pages.

They deserve to be read. Furthermore, they are an invitation to our pastoral teams to undertake a serious evaluation of their work in order to take the initiatives best adapted to our era and to our new contexts.

Our history itself invites us to do this.

Br. Nicolas Capelle

General presentation

“The purpose of this Institute is to provide a Christian education to children; and for this end the Brothers maintain schools so that, having the pupils under the direction of their teachers from morning until the evening, they can teach them how to live, instructing them in the mysteries of our holy religion, inspiring them with Christian maxims and thus giving them the education that they need”¹.

With these words the Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, St. John Baptist de La Salle, indicated to his Brothers what the purpose of the newly created Institute was to be: the human and Christian education of children, especially of poor children.

In the original design of the Institute, the teaching of the catechism and religious formation were not, therefore, a secondary element; such teaching is a basic and fundamental element, our “principal function”, as the Founder himself would repeat on so many occasions.

This awareness of the capital importance of catechetical instruction has been present in the thought and action of all the Lasallians who have advanced this program for more than three centuries. Nevertheless, in the rich and fascinating history of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, moments of intense interest with this topic have been interspersed with times of forgetfulness; insights, triumphs and successes, together with some resounding failures and mistakes; periods of renewal with stretches of stagnation. The Institute has boasted of several great catechists in certain periods of its history; it has exercised a notable leadership in catechetical reflection in the Church and has established some outstanding institutions for the formation of catechists but, at the same time, it has undergone periods in which its principal function has been forgotten. The theological and catechetical formation of its members has been neglected when there has been too great a concern for pedagogical successes in detriment of its pastoral work.

¹. Common Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools 1718, 1, 3. Henceforth it will be listed as CR.

A. 1950 – 1980. The active participation and the pioneering work of the institute

The period from 1956 to 1962. On the eve of Vatican Council II.

The General Chapter had sounded a strong call to intensify the formation of the Brothers in a number of areas which would permit them to offer an excellent religious education. Some regions of the Institute, France for example, had authored their own materials and examinations, quite apart from the center of the Institute. They had organized numerous encounters and cursillos. They continued publishing many catechetical revues. In 1960, another of these was born, the *Sinite* journal, linked to the *Instituto San Pio X* of Spain. Several publishing enterprises of the Institute of the Brothers put out catechetical offerings of real worth; among these we can single out: AyC (Italy), Bruño (Spain), St. Mary's Press (United States) and Ligel (France). But we wish to call special attention in this period to two undertakings: the creation of two catechetical institutes of much prestige for the benefit not only of the Brothers of the Christian Schools but also for the Institutes of Religious teaching Brothers and the reflection carried out by the Institute on the educational ministry of the Brother, so much a part of the thought of the Founder and so neglected in these past two centuries.

During this period that concerns us, various graduate centers in catechetics and religious sciences were created in the Church. Among these there were Paris, Nimegen, Lumen Vitae, Louvain, Strasbourg, Graz, the Pontifical Institute of Catechetics of the Salesian Atheneum. Vienna, etc.

The Institute also felt impelled to create Institutes of Higher Formation, destined, first of all, for its own members and secondly, open to other persons, especially lay religious, men and women, who have not had the opportunity for admittance to Faculties of Theology.

Let us speak now of two of these, the "Jesus Magister" Institute of

Rome and the “San Pio X” Institute that had its original site in Salamanca (Spain).

The birth of the “Jesus Magister” Institute

The General Chapter had no sooner ended than the Brother Superior General and his Assistants set to work to fulfill the proposition approved by the Chapter and suggested by the Cardinal Prefect, namely, the creation of the Higher Institute of Religious Culture destined for the formation of lay religious educators. On the 19th of July, 1956, Brother Nicet Joseph wrote a letter to all the Superiors General of Institutes of Religious Teaching Brothers. His purpose was to present the possible creation of this Institute devoted to the formation of lay religious educators, with professors from the Institutes themselves as well as priests of the Roman universities, all of them with the proper degrees that would permit their graduates to teach classes of religion in their scholastic centers. The first course would begin in the 1957-1958 school year.

In the first year a total of 22 students were inscribed. The number would increase until it would pass 100 students by the fourth year, reaching 140 students for the 1962-63 course. This was the high water mark; the numbers began to decrease somewhat from that date.

1. The pioneers of the Catechetical Movement in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

The pressing need for catechetical reform was felt in five distinct places in the Institute. This renewal has always been linked to certain Brothers who saw so clearly what had to be done. Each one of them lived a difficult and complex situation, working tirelessly to bring about change. We are going to pause here to learn something of the development of the events in the five countries where, as I understand it, these efforts for renewal were most noteworthy in the years prior to Vatican Council II: France, Spain, Italy, the United States and Australia.

a. France. Brothers Charles-Bruno Prat and Vincent Ayel. The *Catéchistes* Revue.

In treating the origins of the French catechetical movement of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools we must lay special emphasis on the person of Brother Charles-Bruno Prat, Visitor of the District of La Puy from 1934 to 1947. When he assumed that responsibility he fixed his attention on the formation of young Brothers. The Second World War put a halt to formation as such but once the conflict ended and now being able to count on a core group of highly motivated Brothers for catechetical activity, he sent them to study in the Faculties and Higher Institutes of Lille and Lyon. Here the Brothers came under the powerful influence of the great fathers of the catechetical, Biblical, liturgical and theological renewal. Once they completed these university studies they were assigned to the Scholasticate of Caluire where, besides advancing their knowledge, they were able to form other Brothers in their initial formation.

Not content to work only in the formation of young Brothers, they organized workshops and study weeks aimed at the ongoing formation of all the Brothers of France.

The preparation of these Brothers was rendering its first fruits and the future held much promise with the direction of Brother Charles-Bruno Prat and the efforts of Brothers Vincent Ayel, Louis Falcombello, J. Raynaud and Michel Sauvage.

However the Superiors in Rome did not have the same vision and the discourses of Brother Athanase-Emile held to the hard line of no change, no innovation, remaining faithful to the original Rule and prohibiting any deviation. The situation came to the boiling point at the time of the retreat for superiors in March of 1947 in Rome. The interventions of the Brother Superior General were a litany of prohibitions. Brother Charles-Bruno Prat wrote of letter of resignation to the Superior.

The resignation was accepted. Shortly afterwards a critical event took place with the naming of Brother Charles as Director of Services at the General Procure of Paris. The most important activity of this office was the publication of the school textbooks of the Institute. This General Procure would become in a short while the LIGEL Publications (*Librairie Générale de l'Enseignement Libre*).

The preparation of a group of young Brothers in catechetics with valuable contacts with the world of the French catechetical move-

ment, the leadership of Brother Charles as head of the LIGEL publications and the express desire of the Brother Superior General to have a prestigious revue of the Institute in the catechetical field were favorable factors that gave rise to the birth of the *Catéchistes* revue.

The magazine had an enormous success. It began with a print run of 2,000 copies, eventually covering all of France and the different communities of the Institute throughout the world. It should be remembered that this magazine was not imposed (which was the normal way for the official publications of the Institute), rather that each Brother or each community could freely subscribe to it.

What might explain the success of the revue? It was owing, first of all, to the personality and the good name of its authors, among them many famed workers in the catechetical movement (Quinet, Fargues, Boyer, Colomb, Coudreau, Babin, etc.). Besides these the revue provided a platform for such great figures of the Biblical and liturgical renewal who would come to have such a decisive influence in the Second Vatican Council (Martimort, Gelin, Roguet). Finally, it succeeded due to the quality of the articles of the Brothers themselves (Ayel, Fermet, Piveteau, Sauvage, Fiévet, etc.). All of these contributions brought the revue to a very high intellectual level.

Secondly, the revue was aimed at the formation of catechists. Thus, the interest in a balance between doctrine and practice was a constant theme. The readers were continually called upon to make their own contributions and express their reactions.

Thirdly, the revue maintained close collaboration with the evolution of the catechetical movement. So, when in the early decade of the fifties, there was so much attention to the problem of method, articles appeared on the topic by such renowned and competent catechists as Fargues, Derkenne, Digeon, etc. Later, with the development of the kerygmatic catechesis, we find articles dealing with liturgy and the Bible. Echoes of the famous "crisis of the progressive catechism" are found in 1957. Pages are devoted to the works of the Second Vatican Council. In the decade of the sixties, we encounter the famous anthropological current of catechetics. Then arose the vogue of the so-called political catechetics, a reflection of the catechetical congress of Medellín. The rapidity of the social and cultural changes of the

post-conciliar period found expression in the authors of *Catéchistes* who would nudge the changes of the catechism toward a new language of faith.

In fourth place, the thorny and polemical topics of those days were confronted in depth and without trepidation. These were the themes of morality and dogma, catechetics and earthly values, the final ends, religious freedom and the human person. Special attention in this regard were the articles dedicated to Teilhard de Chardin, the evolution of the school, the attitude of Christians in relation to the Jews or the polemics in the post-conciliar period as to whether there even needed to be catechetical instruction.

By the time the revue reached the number 100, the editors realized that the changes wrought in the areas of catechetics and religious teaching had been so great that it would be necessary to found a new revue that would provide Christians with new ways of pronouncing "Jesus Christ" and "God" in the present day world.

From early 1975 *Temps et Paroles* was born but it only survived five years with 25 numbers. And so ended the catechetical revues of the French Brothers in 1979.

b. Spain. Brother Guillermo Félix. The creation of the San Pio X Institute of Catechetical Sciences. La Salle Catechist.

With the end of the Spanish Civil War (1939) the so-called National Catholicism took hold in Spain. Its basic principle was "Catholicism and Fatherland are co-substantial". The Concordat between the Spanish State and the Church, signed in 1953, legitimized the system. At the start of the period we are studying, 1946, Spain was suffering political and economic isolation because of its dictatorial system and its affinity for the losing nations of the Second World War. This situation limited the communication of the Spanish Church with the theological and human sciences that were developing in the rest of Europe. Catechetics, without Biblical and theological renewal, were stuck in doctrinal and methodological niceties. The new catechetical trends, such as the kerigmatic renewal, were introduced later than in other countries, owing to the priests and religious who were studying in European universities.

As to the Lasallian Institute in Spain, during the decade 1946-1956, the most salient feature was the establishment on the 12th of October, 1955, in Salamanca, of an institution which in its early days was called "Lasallian Studies". Later it would come to be called the Superior Institute of Catechetical Sciences San Pío X. Such was the importance and the worth of this Center that some authors would affirm, "The foundation of this institution meant the initial launch from the shore of inertia and medieval thinking that had permeated the catechetical movement in Spain from the time of the Civil War."²

In a Church and a Society that were so profoundly clerical, it is extraordinary that the first Institute of Catechetics in Spain was founded by an Institute of Lay Religious. How did that come to be?

Just as it took one Brother in France, Charles-Bruno Prat, who had some authority in the Institute, to mobilize and inspire the French Brothers in their catechetical efforts, so too in Spain there was one Brother who had all the influence and responsibility needed to undertake the same challenge. Brother Guillermo Félix (1897-1995) was the Assistant General from 1946 until 1966 and it was he who headed up the institutions and catechetical work of the Spanish Brothers in the years before the Second Vatican Council.

Since 1930 Brother Guillermo Félix had wanted to dedicate himself to the study of theology at the university level but he came up against a complete negative for it was unthinkable at that period for a Brother to do so. After the Civil War however he had a meteoric rise through positions of authority-school director, Visitor of the District of Madrid, capitulant to the General Chapter of 1946 in Rome. It was there that he was elected Assistant General for Spain, Portugal, Panamá and Perú-Bolivia.

From the first moment, Brother Guillermo Félix felt that the complete formation of Brothers should be a fundamental element for the future of the Institute in Spain. He had understood the urgent need to assure a theological, pedagogical and spiritual formation for all the Brothers that would be of the same caliber as their professional preparation.

². J. A. LOPEZ, *Analysis of the Catechetical Movement in Spain before Vatican Council II*. 46.

An educational law, promulgated in 1940 was one factor that, unwittingly, was key for the theological formation of the Brothers. One of the articles of this law, interpreted literally, required that religious education of the older students would be exclusively in the hands of priests, even in the schools of lay religious. In some dioceses this stipulation was given a more ample reading and many Brothers were able to continue competently imparting religion classes to students of the upper grades. But such was not the case in other dioceses and it was here that the problems began. Brother Guillermo Félix thought that the right to give religion classes should not be denied to those Brothers who would follow superior levels of theology. What he would attempt to have then was “a flying group of theologians who would be willing to go wherever the danger was the greatest.”

So it was that he decided to create of core group of well-prepared teachers, and so in 1949 he sent four young Brothers to Rome who represented each one of the four districts of Spain in order to begin their studies at the Gregorian University of Rome. In 1953 a new group arrived bringing to ten the number of Spanish student Brothers.

The Brothers Visitor of Spain, during this time, saw the need to create a national center where the Brothers, before commencing their civil career, could acquire those disciplines that are indispensable for the religious educator. They could already count on Brothers who had been well prepared through their studies in European universities but who lacked a proper place for this formation center. Several sites came under consideration but finally it was decided to establish it in Tejares, a small village close by to Salamanca. On the 12th of October, 1955, this new work was inaugurated with the title of “Lasallian Studies”.

The foundation of the Tejares Center was, without a doubt, the most significant and visible work of the catechetical thrust of the Spanish Brothers but it is also necessary to speak of other concrete accomplishments that are worth mentioning.

The origin of this new launch of the catechetical ministry of the Institute in Spain can be traced to the year 1950, a significant milestone for Lasallians as it marked the 300th anniversary of the birth of the Founder. Among the activities planned by Brother Guillermo Félix were found the “National Catechetical Work-

shops". The Brother Assistant convoked Brothers from the several districts of Spain to gatherings dedicated to the catechism, with competitions, study sessions etc. He had invited the well-known catechist, Brother Leone di María, to be the keynote speaker of the first meeting. The success was tremendous and the workshops would continue year after year until 1963. The minutes and acts of these workshops were printed.

The offshoot in Spain of these catechetical happenings was the creation of a catechetical entity, the "Catequética La Salle", which in time would convert into useable materials all the ideas coming from of the workshops.

Its first activity and the result of what had been elaborated in the "National Catechetical Workshops" was the *Fichero Catequístico*, a collection of catechetical resources, which eventually would reach 12,000 copies. One of these *Fichero* was reprinted up to four editions and spread throughout the Spanish speaking world. It was a practical resource in which ideas, quotations, examples, teaching plans and all that might help to prepare were offered for a catechism class or a conference. This particular *Fichero* ended in 1973, after having published 8,990 copies.

Another activity of the "Catequética La Salle" was the publication of textbooks for the Lasallian Schools. We cannot in fairness say that these materials were particularly innovative for they continued to maintain the perennial scholastic philosophy but they did offer a more attractive presentation and gave greater importance to Scripture, liturgy and moral. The real innovation would come with the methodology that they incorporated, the fruit of a true team effort with frequent revisions of the basic text.

To all these initiatives the different districts added a goodly number of activities, such as catechetical libraries, conferences, courses, etc. Many Brothers came forward to offer to conduct workshops or be present in diocesan catechetical commissions, or writing books, etc.

c. Italy. Brother Leone di María. The Italian Catechetical Commission. The Catechetical Didactic.

In a previous number of the MEL, dedicated to the catechism in Lasallian history, we called special attention to the Italian Brothers

as being the ones who, thanks to the impulse they had from Brother Cándido Chiorra, carried out an excellent work in the field of catechetics in the first half of the 20th century.

This dedicated labor of the Italian Brothers would go on with surprising intensity in the years after the Second World War. In April of 1942 and following the call of the Vicar General, Arese-Casimir, a group of Brothers of the Districts of Rome and of Turin met in Erba and created the Lasallian Catechetical Commission. Three months afterwards they celebrated the "Catechetical Agreement" of Fano, which provided the necessary thrust to the commission to animate, control and regulate the various catechetical efforts being realized in the two districts.

If up to that point the efforts had been abundant, thanks to the impulse of this commission they were able to mount approximately 1,500 annual participations in congresses, conferences, colloquia with priests, religious men and women, catechists, and lay professors of the Brothers' schools who traveled all over the Italian dioceses to explain their catechetical didactical methods.

The *Sussidi Revue*, founded in 1936, was the organ of formation and information of the Brothers of the Lasallian Catechetical Commission. This publication was at first a bi-monthly issue but it came out monthly from 1950 on. It offered, besides its theoretical articles, a large number of catechetical resources for educators in the faith. Thus it was that from the outset it was seen to be a didactic magazine rather than one of catechetical reflection properly speaking, as was, for example, the *Catéchistes revue* in France. Its final pages were always devoted to information about the numerous activities being carried out by the Brothers of the peninsula. The magazine was, doubtless, very important for the catechism in Italy, especially in that pre-conciliar period.

Starting with February of 1962, in each one of its issues, the magazine dealt with a monographic theme; at the same time it fell into a certain decline. The lack of interest on the part of the Brothers, the absence of replacements to shoulder the burden of the founding members and a failure to keep the contents up to date brought about its disappearance in 1977. In 1985, Brother Mario Presciuttini and a group of collaborators from the District of Rome initiated a new period of the magazine with the same title: *Sussidi per la Catechesi*, a bi-monthly publication.

Together with the publication of the revue, the Brothers edited a great quantity of books on catechetical methodology, psychology, biographies of well-known catechists, etc. They made use of their own publishing house ("AyC") to produce their own works.

Within this Lasallian Catechetical Commission, the principal mover was Brother Leone di Maria (1892-1969). He occupied the presidency of the commission from the date of its foundation in 1942 until 1968, just a few months before his death.

Brother Leone di Maria was for years the Professor of Catechetics in the Major Seminary of Turin (1929-1937) as well as in the Pastoral Institute of the Lateran Pontifical University (1963-65). He was the National Inspector of Religious Education for Italian Schools (1943-1960), member of the National Catechetical Council, presenter at many diocesan catechetical congresses, catechetical courses and gatherings. He was a participant in the International Catechetical Congress of Rome in 1950. In the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools he held the post of Postulator General from 1938 until his death, and was Assistant General for the Region of Italy from 1956 until 1966.

All this brilliant curriculum of Brother Leone di Maria speaks of the enormous prestige he enjoyed both in the Institute and in the Italian Church.

His catechetical output was wide-ranging; some weeks before dying Brother Leone di Maria edited and published a short booklet in which he listed the more than 600 of his writings, among them books, tracts, installments, articles, reviews and prefaces.

Brother Leone di Maria wrote catechisms, a course in theology for the young, didactic guides for teachers and catechists, and conferences. His major contribution consisted in being the great defender of active methods in catechetics.

Brother Leone di Maria described the active catechism lesson as one in which, rather than giving explanations in a largely expository way, he would often elicit the ideas of the students in order to arrive at the truth so that they might look for the practical applications for what they were finding. They were invited to find examples that could confirm their arguments and which might express their personal feelings. They were asked to make judgments on events and statements so that they could answer too

facile arguments in practical matters. Thus they could come to some direct action in reference to the topic they were dealing with, etc. The "active school" sought the participation of the student and encouraged the student to develop not only his ability to memorize but all his other potentialities.

In a period in which the traditional Lasallian method had been "canonized", made untouchable, Brother Leone di Maria showed that the method proposed by St. John Baptist de La Salle in the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* was already fully active. De La Salle did not want the catechism teacher to speak too much; he should ask many questions of his students so that they could discover the truth. He should try to ask questions of all of them so that they would all be fully "active" and attentive to the lesson. Besides this, the early Lasallian school engaged the participation of the students in the various "offices" foreseen in the *Conduct*. Brother Leone thus demonstrated that this "new" method was truly the perfecting of the methods of the Founder.

As followers of Brother Leone we find a numerous group of Brothers, among the standouts are Brother Agilberto, Alberto di Maria, Anselmo Balocco, Beniamino, Remo di Gesù... and many others.

When in the thinking of the catechetical movement emphasis was applied to the problem of content, the Italian Brother put all their stress on didactics. The problem that they sought to resolve was the perfection, through the new technologies, as the "task" of the catechism. The content of the catechism was immutable and pre-determined. What they had been trying to do was, while taking into account the psychology of the child, make doctrine more "digestible". If the kerigmatic movement fostered the rediscovery of the Bible and the liturgy in catechesis, the manuals of the Italian Brothers faithfully remained wedded to more traditional texts. The cause, perhaps, of this situation could basically be found in the lack of theological, Biblical and liturgical renewal of the Brothers of the peninsula during these years.

d. The United States. Brothers John Joseph and Alphonsus Pluth. The Saint Mary's College Press.

Just as in the case of Italy, in order to understand the great development of the catechetical movement of the Brothers of the

Christian Schools in the United States, we must fix our attention on earlier times. In the case of the USA, that would be in the decades of the 20s and 30s. The most evident and tangible product of the Brothers there was a catechetical textbook, *Living With Christ*, finalized in 1957. However, to reach that achievement, it had passed through a series of steps which it is interesting to trace.

For many, many years, the perennial catechism used in parishes and Catholic schools in the United States had been the well-known *Baltimore Catechism*, a textbook commissioned by the American Bishops during their Third Plenary Conference in 1884 and published the following year. The text was revised on different occasions and in 1911 was given its definitive title: *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*. It consisted in a series of 499 questions and answers, distributed over 38 lessons and divided into three main parts: creed, commandments and sacraments. It was a traditional manual, scholastic and clear in style, designed to discourage any sort of theological discussion. In the tone of catechetical manuals of the period, it was a dry and arid text, boring, focused exclusively on doctrinal aspects with little evidence of the Word of God and the liturgy and distant from the real life of the children being catechized.

For the more traditional Catholics, it was a good manual that stated clearly the essential knowledge of the faith. Nonetheless, for the larger majority, this catechism did not respond to what Catholics needed for their education in the faith.

The various parishes, dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic movements all realized the urgent need for a renewal of the Catholic catechism for the United States.

As Father Gerald Sloyan, principal renovator of the catechism previous to the Second Vatican Council, recognized, the Brothers of the Christian Schools were the religious who contributed the most to the renewal of the catechism in that country.

The great pioneer of the catechetical movement of the Brothers in the States was Brother John Joseph McMahan (1873-1942). He attained an enormous prestige as a speaker and writer of the Catholic Church in the United States. On many occasions he was called upon to address conferences, encounters and meetings with bishops, priests and religion professors, all of whom expect-

ed a renewed method for catechism from Brother John Joseph. He did publish numerous articles in reviews dedicated to the topic as well as several books.

In the Institute in the United States, he is the father of catechetical renewal. He organized the catechetical office of the District of St. Louis, created the department of religion at St. Mary's College. He was the professor of religion in several schools and imparted many courses to the young Brothers of the district, especially in catechetics. The conferences that he gave awakened such enthusiasm in these young men that, in 1934, they launched the publication of a small catechetical review entitled the *Lasalle Catechist*, the very first catechetical magazine in the history of the Institute.

Brother John Joseph's principal work was his *Religion Outlines*, published in 1932. In this book as in his other articles, he would develop his essential concept: Christ is primordial, the very core of his catechesis. Dry memorization of pat answers of the catechism were to be shelved in favor of fixing our attention on the central message of Christianity which is Christ.

Once the *La Salle Catechist* was begun the young Brothers dedicated themselves to a new project, starting in 1939, under the direction of Brother Alphonsus Pluth (1913-1986). The title of this new material was *The Gospel Units*, consisting in a series of practical plans for religion teachers, based on the ideas of Brother John Joseph.

In 1941, a new phase was initiated. All these combined efforts of the student Brothers of the district led to the creation of the Catechetical Commission whose fundamental purpose was to promote and coordinate the work of religion teachers of the district.

In the meeting of the Catechetical Commission of 1942, Brother Alphonsus Pluth was asked to undertake the work of writing a updated religion textbook for the first year of high school. It was to be the culmination of all the efforts of the recent years and the inspiration of Brother John Joseph. With the help of assistants and volunteers who offered their own materials, practical lesson plans and ideas were offered to launch the arduous task of writing the textbook that would replace the old manual of 1911.

The work was completed in 1943. It bore the title *Living With Christ*, 1st course, intended for the freshmen classes of high school. Brother Joel Stanislaus, at that time president of St. Mary's College, asked that it be published under the aegis of the *St. Mary's College Press*, an enterprise that did not even exist until that moment. Thus was born the press of the Brothers of the Christian Schools dedicated, fundamentally, to the publication of textbooks and materials of the Catholic faith.

This first textbook was tried out in several high schools of the Brothers with great success and then revised and reedited in 1946. The volumes for the second year (1947), the third year (1950) and the hefty textbook of the fourth course (1957) would follow. To the actual text, lesson plans and support materials for the teachers were added. The success of these publications in Catholic circles was quite extraordinary.

These textbooks followed the methodology of an ongoing discourse. At the end of each one of the lessons there would be a series of questions that could provoke reflection and discussion in the classroom, not exclusively material for memorization. The presentation was agreeable, with an abundance of drawings, photographs, and maps. As to the contents, a complete course of religious formation was presented, very clearly imprinted with its Christocentric character.

e. Australia. Brothers Christian Moe and Aloysius Carmody. The *Our Apostolate* magazine. Catechism Workbooks.

The case of Australia is an example of the catechetical efforts of the Brothers that is worthy of mention. The Brothers of the Christian Schools, (called De La Salle Brothers in the country here treated) arrived in Australia in 1906.

In the decade of the 1950s, the Australian Catholics represented a minority (between 25 and 30%) of the population in a nation largely Protestant. The historic commitment of Australian Catholics was: "every Catholic child in a Catholic school". Thus the religious congregations dedicated to education created a great number of schools, very often associated with the parishes. The result of this massive presence of Catholic children was that the evolution of catechetics would be in large measure tied in with Catholic schools and the religious that had founded them.

The Brothers of the Christian Schools were not the most numerous among the congregations devoted to teaching; nonetheless, in spite of the fewness of their number, they wielded a strong influence of leadership in Australian education in those years.

Their first contribution was the creation, in April of 1953, of the *Our Apostolate* revue, conceived from the start as catechetical help for the De La Salle Brothers of the Australian province, which, by the way, included New Zealand and Papua New Guinea as well as Australia. The suggestion for this magazine came from Brother Lawrence O'Toole, Irish Assistant General, who for some twenty years (1946 to 1966) was in charge in the Superior's name of many English speaking sectors of the Institute.

Originally it was thought that the magazine would be just for the congregation to serve as a sounding board of information and experiences on the topic of catechetics. However, owing to the absence of this type of publication in the Australian church, it became the only catechetical journal in the country from 1952 to 1975.

The journal had a two-fold purpose: it sought to inform its readers of the development of the catechetical movement during those years; it also offered some really practical materials that the readers could use in their respective religion classes.

For the first years of the magazine we must highlight the work of two Brothers who served as directors of the publication. They are Brother Christian Moe, from 1953 to 1957 and Brother Aloysius Carmody, from 1957 to 1964. These two men authored a large quantity of articles, establishing the magazine on solid ground. Both were obliged to leave the direction of the publication when they were called to Europe by the Superiors.

The next contribution of the Brothers was in a series of workbooks for the catechism class, called *Catechism Workbooks*; however the preparation in catechetics and theology of the Brothers was not of university standard for such did not exist in the country. Toward the end of the 1950s and especially during the 1960s, a goodly number of Brothers were sent to Europe to take degrees in those disciplines.

2. The genesis of new institutions of theology and catechetics. The disappearance of the “Jesus Magister” institute.

During the post-conciliar period the Institute was enriched in the creation of new institutions dedicated to the formation of catechists. At the same time, one of its institutions created shortly before the Vatican Council II, the “Jesus Magister” Institute began, from 1968 on, a period of crisis that would end with its final closure.

In 1968, the Argentine Brothers established the Pastoral Institute of Adolescence (IPA) in Buenos Aires, answering to the need of catechists for adolescents that found themselves perturbed by the events of the national scene. Traditional catechetics had lost its attraction for these Brothers who felt that they needed a training that could respond more positively to the new challenges of catechetics. Since 1972 it has obtained the official recognition of the hierarchy and continues its work to these days.

The Central American Institute of Religious Sciences (ICCRE) of Guatemala, founded in 1978, is a center of higher religious studies intended for the Brothers of several religious congregations as well as for Sisters and lay people. It offers a plan of studies for catechetical and pastoral formation.

Also on the American continent, mention must be made of the school of educators in the faith of the University of Mexico (ULSA) and the department of Religious Sciences of the Faculty of Sciences of Education of the La Salle Social and Catholic University of Bogotá (Colombia).

In Asia, one of the works that is dear to the heart of the Brothers is the formation center for catechists of Kushpur. The Brothers founded this center in 1964 in collaboration with the bishops of the area, with the purpose of forming lay catechists for the six dioceses of Pakistan. The merit of this work resides fundamentally in the preparation of catechists for an Islamic country in which the Christians are but 1% of the total population and in which the pressure of Islam gives rise to some very difficult life situations.

In Africa, the Brothers have participated actively in collaboration since 1968 in the AMECEA Pastoral Institute of Gabba (Kenya). This is a center of catechetical and pastoral renewal through

courses and publications for religious, priests and lay people. The CELAF (Center of LaSallian Studies of Africa) was founded in Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire) in 1992 for the human, theological and catechetical formation of young men and women religious.

To all these higher centers of catechetical formation we should add other forms of the pastoral ministry of catechetics, such as: the Catechetical Center of Quimper (France); the "campus ministry" movement in the United States, which is a form of chaplaincy for students; the encounters for catechetical updating of the Brothers of the District of Turin; the center of catechetical documentation of the District of Ireland; the direction of groups of catechist mothers in Mexico; the catechumenal formation of adults in Spain; the catechetical efforts of the Brothers in Greece, working in cooperation with Orthodox Christians; the "Saint Cassian Center" for retreats and catechetics of the young in Great Britain; the "Youth Villas" or summer camps, places of encounter, catechetics and religious celebration in Quebec, Canada...

On the negative side, it is necessary to mention the final closure of the "Jesus Magister Institute" in 1971. As was said in the previous issue, this institution that had been so dear to the Institute was designed for the formation of lay religious educators in the several subjects necessary for the realization of their ministry. It was begun in 1957 but had a relatively short existence.

After functioning for some years with a provisional charter, because of not having its definitive Statutes approved, these did receive approbation on the 25th of June, 1965. However, ironically, at the same time the Institute was experiencing a period of crisis that led to the disappearance of Jesus Magister.

3. The "San Pio X" pontifical institute, pioneer and promoter of the catechetical movement in Spain.

In the period for 1962 to 1980, the "San Pio X" Institute occupied an important place in the post-conciliar renewal of the Spanish Church.

The true prestige of the institution in these years was owing basically to the great activity that was taking place in carrying out the

objective of preparing excellent catechists in those times of post-conciliar renewal. The "San Pio X" Institute was seen to be at the forefront of the Spanish Church at the time. Among its most outstanding activities, besides those strictly academic, we can mention: the on-going formation of educators in the faith; the conferences, encounters and workshops, (signaling especially the famous workshops for the pastoral ministry of education); publications (catechetical posters, yearly plans for catechetics, vocational apostolates, *Sínite*, teaching plans for catechists, the "music and liturgy" collection, the catechetical collection, and finally, religion textbooks).

4. Catechetical publications of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, disappearance of the catechetical revues.

It was not only the San Pio X Institute of Salamanca (Spain) that published abundant catechetical material in those post-conciliar years. The publishing houses which at that time the Brothers operated also were engaged in important projects for the presentation of renewed materials.

In France the Ligel Publishing House, under the direction of Brother Charles-Bruno Prat and with the creative talent of Brother Vincent Ayel and some younger Brothers, published between the years 1960 and 1968 a collection entitled, "Horizons de la Catéchèse", (Horizons of Catechetics), which could boast of eight works of such renowned catechists and theologians of the day as Martimort, Gelin, Faynel, Moran, etc.

This same house, with its special attention to school textbooks, continued its work until at the end of the seventies, a financial and editorial crisis struck, bringing about the definitive closure in the early eighties.

The French Brothers were also concerned about the lack of formation and theological and catechetical renewal of Brothers, priests, other religious and Christians after the Second Vatican Council. One group, comprised of Brothers Vincent Ayel, André Fermet, Xavier Mulmann and Robert Comte, during the decade of the seventies, decided to publish dossiers entitled, *Foi et Langues*, (Faith and Languages) with the subtitle, *Dossier Pour*

Repenser Notre Foi Aujourd'hui, (documents to rethink our faith today). These were truly a catechesis for adults. Twenty-two of these numbers were in print, dealing with theological questions like "Crisis of Faith", "God", "Original Sin", "Christology", "The Church", "Ministries" and "Morality". They employed a language adapted to the man of today and his mentality. The first number came out in 1970 and the last one in November of 1981. The reception of these *dossiers* was very positive and some of them had to be re-issued.

The Italian Brothers had been the real specialists and model catechists for the rest of the Institute. In 1969 brother Leone di Maria died, and with his passing the progressive diminution in catechetical work of the Italian Brothers was accentuated, something that had been noted for a number of years. They continued publishing books, organizing conferences and courses, and annually celebrating the meetings of the Lasallian Catechetical Commission. The AyC press continued putting out issues of *Sussidi* but the impetus was waning. What was lacking was a renewal of ideas and key persons.

In the United States the Lasallian St. Mary's College Press had completed its series of religion textbooks for secondary school *Living with Christ* by 1957 (see above). The success achieved with this very innovative series in parishes and schools had the writers beginning a revision as soon as the fourth volume of the series came out; which revision in its turn was followed by a third edition published after Vatican Council II.

But from 1967 the St. Mary's College Press suffered a crisis. After Vatican II a general confusion and lack of certainty permeated the market of the Catholic secondary school. The teachers were not in agreement about what should or what should not be taught in the religion class. The costs of printing increased while the demand became ever less.

In 1975 the Press formulated a clear statement of principles, in which stress was placed on the mission of service to religious educators and students, with special emphasis on the publishing of religion textbooks.

From that moment, thanks to its professional management and the assistance from various quarters, the St. Mary's College Press began a comeback, due mainly to the publication of two works

that met with great success: *Sharing the Christian Message*, religious education for adults in the parishes (from 1976) and *Making Moral Decisions. Living Our Christian Faith*, a textook for secondary education (from 1979). In 1978 the Press made a slight name change; henceforth it would be called "Saint Mary's Press. Christian Brothers Publications", which is its name today. It is considered to be the premier Catholic publisher in the United States of religion textbooks for schools and parishes.

A critical moment for catechetics in the Church and the Institute was clearly marked by the disappearance of three of the five great catechetical revues, founded in diverse parts of the Institute in previous years.

The first of these to go was the very first founded, the *La Salle Catechist* of the United States. It ceased in 1968 after 34 consecutive years of publication. The financial crisis of the Saint Mary's Press and the need to create new materials and adapt resources for the post-conciliar renewal all contributed toward its demise.

In 1977 the *Sussidi* revue of the Italian Brothers ceased publication. Not one of the final numbers of this magazine gives a clue as to why it was terminated. The prestigious *Catéchistes* reached edition number 100 in October of 1974, after twenty-five years of publishing. In the editorial of that number, Didier Piveteau and André Fermet announced the end of that publication and the birth of a new one, *Temps et Paroles*. Changes in the world of catechetics had been so profound that it was no longer feasible to maintain a magazine that was directed principally toward professional catechists. What was sought, with *Temps et Paroles*, was something simpler, less theoretical, that could reach a broader audience.

This revue, unfortunately, never got beyond number twenty-five. A final effort was made to rescue it with a change of the editorial board and a new presentation but the revue, without outside financial backing, never achieved the desired number of subscribers to ensure its publication.

Of the two remaining publications, one of them is *Sinite* of the "San Pío X Institute" in Spain and the other is the Australian revue *Our Apostolate* which came to be called *Word in Life* since 1978.

5. The great proponents of lasallian catechetics

Lasallian catechetics of these decades could boast of certain personages of great prestige in the larger world of catechetics. Among the most important we distinguish:

- *José Juan Rodríguez Medina (1926-1984). Spain*

With his Licentiate in Theology from the Gregorian University, he completed his catechetical studies in the Higher Institute of Pastoral Catechetics of Paris. He obtained his doctorate at the University of Salamanca.

Upon his return from studies he entered the faculty of the San Pío X of Salamanca in which place he exercised his teaching vocation for 21 years. He was President of the "San Pío X Institute" during several periods. He was professor of pastoral theology and fundamental catechetics. His two most important books are: *The Pastoral Theology of the Word of God* (1978) and *the Pedagogy of Faith. Situation and Contents of Catechetics Today* (1971). This work is one of the classics of fundamental catechetics.

Among his most outstanding writings are those he produced in the decade of the 1960s. Having recently arrived from the principal European universities, he penned a series of collaborations on pastoral theology and the liturgy which were innovative in comparison to what was being written in catechetical journals. His preference was for what was practical, rather than for intellectual speculation: to be Christian as a saving reality must be experienced and lived by believers. The liturgy must be alive and participated in.

Rodríguez Medina is especially remembered for being a pioneer in the liturgical renewal of Spain. He was the true promoter of the efforts undertaken by the "San Pío X Institute" in liturgical renewal. At the same time he personally carried on the publication of catechetical plans and materials, songs, religious recordings and celebrations of the Word of God.

- *Jacques-Didier Piveteau (1924-1986). France*

Besides his long career in the schools, Brother J.-D. Piveteau had a university degree in English and had achieved studies in psychology, sociology and had obtained the licentiate in catechetical studies from the Higher Institute of Pastoral Catechetics of Paris.

Professor of the ISPC (Higher Institute of Pastoral Catechetics), where he taught the course of "religious teaching" and of the ISP (Higher Institute of Pedagogy), with the courses of psychology, general pedagogy and educational institutions as his teaching schedule. To this curriculum must be added an enormous number of courses and conferences with teachers, religious and priests from every corner of the globe.

He was the founder of two revues, one of which was devoted to pedagogy: *Orientations. Revue de Pédagogie en Milieu Scolaire* (Orientations. Revue of Pedagogy in the Scholastic Setting). Founded in 1962, he was its director up to the end of its publication in 1975. From 1971, he accepted the direction of the *Catéchistes* magazine, during the time of its final fifteen issues. Starting in 1975 he was the editor of the new *Temps et Paroles* revue up to the time it ceased publication in 1979.

A tireless author in pedagogy and catechetics, he wrote many articles in specialized magazines. He is the author of three books, two of them dealing with the problem of the catechism: *Resurgence of Religious Instruction*, (1977) in collaboration with an American author, J. Dillon, in which they traced the recent past (from 1955), the present and the perspectives for the future of religious education and catechetics in the United States from the perspectives of Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church. He wrote, in 1978, *Comment Ouvrir les Jeunes à la Foi* (How to Guide Youth to the Faith), in which, focusing more on the situation of France, he analyzed the phenomenon of youth in all its complexity.

Besides these catechetical works he added different articles for magazines dedicated to catechesis.

From 1971 when he took over the helm of the *Catéchistes* revue, he wrote all the editorials, especially for numbers 85 to 100. In these, he would repeat time and time again the need for freedom for the catechesis, seriously questioning its language; he spoke of the necessity for a de-clericalization and he presented appropriate places and times. He stressed that the routine and the immobile structures were obstacles to the necessary adaptation, causing us to forget what young people needed. The failure to renew would bring about a disinterest in the school and the catechism.

The *Temps et Paroles* revue was published for five years, with a total of 25 numbers. Brother Didier Piveteau, its director, was the author of the majority of the editorials and he collaborated with the book reviews of pedagogical and catechetical works that he considered to be key.

Brother León Lauraire, in his insightful biography of Brother Didier Piveteau, used the subtitle *Passion for Freedom*. Both in his pedagogical ideas as in his catechesis, he criticized all that which was contrary to human liberty, all oppressive regulations, fossilized customs and petrified systems. He looked for new ways to think, create, and evolve for the service of the teachers and the catechized.

His thought, both in the Church as in the Institute, stirred up controversy; to bring certain structures into question, to propose others, to renovate, was not well understood by many of his confreres.

- *Gabriel Moran (1935). The United States*

After having taught in several schools of the Institute, Gabriel Moran studied philosophy and theology, obtaining his doctorate with his thesis: "Contemporary Theology of Revelation and its Effects Upon Catechetical Theory". It achieved enormous success and was published in various languages. Because of this work, he gained a great prestige in the Institute and was chosen to present a conference at the second session of the General Chapter of 1966-67.

He was the associate professor of theology and catechetics of the Master's Program of Manhattan College of New York. He worked in the preparation of religion teachers.

In 1970, when he was only 35 years old, he was chosen to be Visitor of the LINE District (Long Island and New England). Afterwards, he taught religious education in several universities and theological faculties: New Theological Seminary, Fairfield University and Boston College. Since 1979 he has been the associate professor of religious education at New York University.

In 1985, he left the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

During the period from 1963-1983, he authored a total of twelve books, some of them on the theme of community in religious life:

others were concerned with theological and catechetical questions. He also wrote articles for English language magazines.

Moran was a polemical writer, very controversial in his day because of the novelty of his ideas. His work is quite complex. We can signal some of principal theses: he noted the decline in religious education and arrived at the conclusion the catechism is dead. The reason for this was that catechists were operating with a false concept of Revelation. They were too servile to the Magisterium of the Church and their concept of the history of salvation was as rigid as had been that of the Scholastics. It was necessary to recover the most important element of religious education, the theology of revelation, conceived "as a personal communion of knowledge, an interrelationship between God and the individual within a believing community". Christian theology is much broader than the dogma professed by any one of the traditions of faith. It is in human experience that revelation takes place. In this way, he frequently insists that each person be respected in his or her personal rhythms of growth in the faith, denouncing that the pressures of parents and educators are some of the greatest dangers to menace Christian education.

There are two concepts that are oft repeated in Moran's books: in the first place, "ecumenical education", which insists that religious education and the catechism ought to be more involved in the world in which men and women live and should also take into consideration the breadth and depth of human and religious expressions; and the "primacy of the education of adults". It is necessary to pull up the catechesis of small children by its roots because it has resulted in adult faithful with a childish understanding of their faith. Christianity is a religion that can only be understood and accepted by adult persons.

- **Flavio Pajer (1939) Italy.**

Brother Flavio Pajer is a professor of religious pedagogy in several pontifical universities in Rome and for many years has been director of the *Religione e Scuola* revue. He is a member of the European Catechetical team and of the European Forum of Religious Education.

His thought and investigation have been centered on the quest for an epistemological foundation of religious teaching in the

schools, the didactic innovations in religious pedagogy and the formation of religion teachers (See MEL 6). His school manuals of religion, which are very much valued in Italy, are of religious culture and are designed especially for the students of secondary education in the public schools.

- **Enrique García Ahumada (1935) Chile.**

Brother Enrique García completed his studies in his native land and in Belgium. He is a Doctor in Theology with his thesis: "The Origins of Catechetics in Latin America". He has been a teacher and professor in several schools and universities. For many years he has been the director of the National Office of Catechetics of Chile, director of the Section of Pastoral Catechetics of the Theological and Pastoral Institute of CELAM in Bogotá, Colombia.

He has many publications to his credit in specialized revues dealing with the subject of catechetics. His two most noteworthy contributions in his own country deal with the so-called "Family Catechetics" (a process of evangelization offered by the Christian Community through the families so that they may grow in the faith through the preparation of their children for the sacraments of initiation) and social catechetics (approaches to the people through materials treating various aspects of social and economic morality).

To these names we may add others: Brothers Gerard Rummery (Australia), Genaro Saenz de Ugarte (Argentina), Robert Comte (France), Herman Lombaerts (Belgium), Jeffrey Gros (United States), Israel José Nery (Brazil) and many others.

6. Lasallian catechetics in various parts of the institute

With this last point we will consider "the lights and shadows" of Lasallian catechetics in the different regions of the Institute.

Canada. In the decade of the 1960s, the Brothers in Canada began a process of a gradual abandonment of their schools in order to integrate them into the public system of education. Another "exodus" was the switch from primary schools to secondary schools. The installation of the so-called multi-purpose system of education required that teachers concentrate on one field of specialization. This specialization brought as a consequence the elimination of

the role of the homeroom teacher. Henceforth only professors with the proper academic degree could teach the religion class. For this reason a group of Brothers desisted from teaching religion.

Why didn't the Canadian Brothers choose to obtain the necessary degree in catechetics? According to them, it was because of the difficulties of teaching religion, the secularization of society, the pressures of teachers' unions, the preference they had for administrative posts or the scant social relevance of religious education. In its place the Canadian Brothers developed another type of youth pastoral ministry, that is, Christian Youth Camps, centers of Christian leadership.

The United States. If the Second Vatican Council has its repercussions in the Universal Church, if the rhythm of secularization of the societies was on the increase, and if the vocational crisis was being felt in all the religious congregations of the post-conciliar period, in the United States all of these factors impacted more seriously.

When the 39th General Chapter of 1966-67 was celebrated, the Brothers of North America came very well prepared for this assembly and their influence was key. They could count among their number a group of Brothers who, at that moment, were the best prepared, due to their studies in universities of the United States. After the General Chapter, many Brothers who still needed their degrees in order to teach in Lasallian Universities of the United States, began their studies of Theology, Sacred Scripture, Liturgy and Philosophy in prestigious universities of Rome, Paris, Tübingen, Louvain and Oxford; other young Brothers preferred to study in the United States. Their wish was to form a large number of Brothers who would lead the way in the theological, biblical, catechetical and liturgical renewal of the Institute in the United States. Unfortunately, the majority of these Brothers chose to abandon the Institute during this period, wasting a great opportunity for renewal.

Another phenomenon that occurred at this time, just as in Canada, was the push for specialization in the several disciplines of education. Many Brothers no longer would teach the religion class because they felt that others would be better prepared to respond to the situation of change which, for many of them, seemed so chaotic.

In recent years there have been some interesting initiatives in the field of catechetics, the most notable among them the "Testigos de Esperanza" (Witnesses of Hope) project for the evangelization of Hispanic youngsters in the United States.

Central Europe. In these years secularization, indifference and abandonment of the faith by the young have been a constant in the countries of Central Europe.

The number of Brothers has decreased and the age of those remaining has increased. There is a group of very competent Brothers that have profited by the schools of theological and catechetical formation in the zone of Belgium and Holland. They have cooperated with the dioceses and parishes in the movements of catechetical renewal. Some of them head up these movements.

Besides this, a considerable number of laymen have begun their studies of Religious Sciences and are teaching this specialty abandoned by the Brothers. This point, often repeated in the reports coming from Central Europe, will be a key factor in the coming years.

Italy. During this period the Italian Brothers still felt proud of being considered the real specialists of the catechism in the Institute. They had continued with their Catechetical Commission, with the *Sussidi* revue until 1977 and other local catechetical publications. They were being called by dioceses and parishes to deliver conferences. They continued to write religion textbooks and were participants in ecclesial organizations for the Catholic School.

Nonetheless, the Brothers, almost all of whom were entirely dedicated to schools, felt the change in the religious atmosphere and practice in Italy in the 60s and 70s. Young people expressed more and more indifference to religious matters; the ambience of the schools was more pluralistic, not so strictly Catholic and a considerable number of parents no longer chose a school for religious purposes. On many occasions the Brothers felt discouraged because their methodology was not functioning and the content of their courses did not respond to the needs of the young.

The Brothers in these years responded by forming groups of Christian commitment but outside the normal school hours.

Spain. The country experienced difficult years because the renewal promoted by Vatican Council II combined with the political situation of the final years of Generalísimo Franco and the period of transition to democracy.

In terms of numbers of the Brothers, the decrease was not so noticeable as in other parts of the Institute. In the same way, the process of secularization and abandonment of religious practice came somewhat later than in other countries.

The Brothers of Spain, similar to the Italian Brothers, continued to be almost exclusively devoted to the Christian School with special attention to extra-curricular activities. Both in the schools and in the districts, commissions and seminars of catechetics and pastoral ministry were created for the animation and coordination of religious teaching in the educational centers of the districts.

What was noted was the abandonment of the traditional Christian groups in these years, such as the Marian Congregations and the Crusades.

Renewal experienced a strong impulse in an ambitious catechumenal plan that took shape at the start of the 80s and that has rendered good results over the last two decades.

The San Pío X Institute is a key element in the catechetical development of the region, thanks principally, to the organization of short courses of formation and renewal for educators and the production of religion textbooks to be used in the classroom. Their updated catechetical presentations, based on anthropological catechetics and the catechetics of experience, are punctually put into practice by the Brothers and educators in the schools. The Brothers are seen to be the specialists in catechetics in the Spanish Church.

France. The ever growing lack of faith of the youth of France is great; there is difficulty in finding a common language with young people. In spite of these problems the majority of the Brothers continued to be catechists. Until twelve and thirteen years of age, the catechism was not such a problem because it was still part of the school program. The real problem would come with adolescence and young adulthood. The French Brothers looked for new ways to interest young people in their religion, such as communities of Christian Living, groups of prayer and places to deepen in the faith.

Probably the most noticeable phenomenon of these years was the decrease of the number of Brothers and the increase in the lay teachers. These facts, besides their consequences for the structures of the schools and for the identity of the Brothers, presented challenges for the theological and catechetical education of the teachers who occupied almost the totality of the teaching posts.

The Brothers of France mourned the disappearance of *Catechistes* and of *Temps et Paroles*, publications that were for many years at the forefront of catechetical renewal in the Institute.

England-Ireland. In these two countries the teaching of religion is officially established. The Brothers' efforts are devoted to the schools and, in these schools, to religion classes. The Brothers realized that the impact of the school on the students was negligible and so they created new, extracurricular experiences, such as retreat centers and gatherings of young people.

The difficult work in the classroom is combined with the lack of attachment to any particular church on the part of the young. Many of the Brothers and their colleagues, at a loss as to how to employ the proper methodology for the religion course, end by abandoning it.

Asia. Even though the diversity of this continent presents difficulties in any attempt to offer a global vision of the catechetical scene, we do encounter several general characteristics. The Brothers, constituting a minority of the teachers, attend a very great number of students who are, besides, very different as to their cultures and, especially, their religions. Thus respect and dialogue toward these cultures and religions are predominant elements. Working with the students who are Catholic, most of the Brothers are dedicated to the teaching of religion and the catechism.

Attention should be called to the Philippines because it is an exemption to the rule since almost all of the students are Catholic. Burma (or officially, Myammar), is noteworthy too as the government has banned the Brothers from their schools and so they labor in other forms of the apostolate, such as helpers in the parishes, liturgical animation, instruction in liturgical assemblies and the translation of books.

Africa. This vast continent will be considered as two zones according to the languages used, i.e., English and French. Besides

the changes that occurred in the Church by the conciliar renewal, we must also keep in mind the process of independence happening in many African nations. The greater or less stability and/or the establishment of one political regime or the other would influence the catechetical work of the Brothers.

In almost every case, we find the Brothers working in the schools. Here they were finding many of the same problems to catechize as were found in the countries of the developed world: lack of formation, confusion when faced with the new catechetical trends, the inadequacy of method, etc.

Australia. Catechetical work continued to evolve, thanks to the influence of the *Our Apostolate* and *Word In Life* journals. Two catechetical experiences are worthy of mention during these years. The first, the so-called "Christian Community Living Movement", was a series of youth meetings that took place on the weekends and outside the school in order to continue the catechetical formation that was happening in the schools during the regular week. It was a response of the teachers to the lack of interest of high school students to the formal teaching of religion carried on during school hours. Talks, discussion groups, free time activities and liturgies were organized on these weekends. They were so successful that they were extended to the parents of the students as well.

The second experience involved the work of preparing materials for the classroom by the Brothers. The *Catechism Workbooks* were so successful that they were used even outside the Catholic school.

In the traditional Catholic school the majority of the Brothers continued to teach religion. A number of Brothers obtained their degrees in European universities, given the dearth of schools and centers specialized in catechetics in their own country. Finally, it is necessary to highlight the missionary and apostolic efforts of the Australian Brothers in Papua-New Guinea, since 1946.

Latin America. In the decades of the 60s and 70s, a series of events that reverberated throughout the Universal Church and the Church in Latin America caused the catechesis practiced in these countries to be especially affected. As a follow-up to the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the International Week of Catechetics

in Medellín (1968) and the Second Conference of the Latin American Episcopate (CELAM), also in Medellín in 1968, all played important roles. This last event was a key factor for the renewal of catechetics throughout Latin America. Its most valuable contribution was the anthropological aspect it applied to catechetics. The Gospel message is announced to today's man/woman, a person living in specific situations. The following facets were emphasized in the document: love of the Latin American person, the importance of the aspect of community (small ecclesial base communities), the evangelizing character of catechesis and emphasis placed on the historical and liberating essence of faith, with a sincere interest in the integral promotion of the person.

The overarching influence of the concepts of Medellín, together with the magnificent documents on the *Rule* and the *Declaration* of the recently completed 39th General Chapter of 1966-67, motivated the Brothers Visitor of Latin America to set to work on a document on Lasallian catechetics in Latin America in the new circumstances and situation. They produced two: the *Catechist's Letter of Araruama* (1970) and the *Second Catechist's Letter of the Brothers of Latin America of San Miguel* (Buenos Aires) in 1974.

In 1976 the Latin American Brothers who took part in the 40th General Chapter spoke of the reality that their countries were living through. They mentioned the disappearance of all the traditional apostolic movements but they had not as yet found the new ways to work in catechetics and youth groups. The Latin American Brothers appeared to be more concerned with their professional formation than with that of their catechetical and pastoral mission. They criticized the substitution of the catechism by group meetings dealing with themes of a social and political nature. They praised the work of catechetical renewal of some Brothers and the coordination of catechetical action in the districts.

After the 40th General Chapter, three new events would serve to give a new impulse to Lasallian catechetics in Latin America: the creation of the Second Lasallian International Commission in 1978 in which Brother Israel Nery was chosen as representative for Latin America, the foundation of RELAL (Latin American Lasallian Region) in 1979 and the Latin American Episcopal Conference in Puebla of that same 1979.

At the end of the decade of the 70s, a report was drawn up for the International Catechetical Commission on the situation of catechetics in Latin America in which they highlighted: the commitment of the majority of the Brothers to catechetics, but with a proper preparation; the existence of catechetical formation centers; the existence of fine documents but little praxis; the insufficient contact with the true situation of people because of the exhausting work in the schools; and finally the fact that some Brothers did participate in the Church in Latin America and had made an option for the poor.

In recent years, the number of pastoral initiatives in this “Catholic Continent” is very great: the Radio San Gabriel (Bolivia), the Lasallian Volunteer Movement in El Salto (México), the Family Catechetics (Chile), the Catechist Movement (Brazil) and catechetical materials and religion textbooks (Argentina and Ecuador).

Greece, Turkey and the Near East. A reduced Lasallian presence within a minority Catholic Church is the situation in these countries. On many occasions the preaching of the Gospel is difficult. Most of the schools were created for the service of Catholics, especially those of French origin who happened to live in those zones. The laws of the countries and the very inculturation of the schools obliged the school authorities to open up to non-Catholics who began to register in large numbers in those schools. Ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue became the order of the day.

B. Catechetics and the lasallian christian school during these last years (1981 - 2000).

1. The catechetical trends/policies and the catholic school in recent years.

Making use of the documents that the Church has published in recent years, we are going to examine schools of thought and trends in catechetics during the decades of the 80s and the 90s. We will employ the two most representative: the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), which represents the preoccupation of the hierarchy and a certain group of Christians in recent years, that the "truths of faith" be clearly emphasized, over and above whatever other interest in the meaning of the message and the efficacy of communication. The second is the *General Directory for Catechetics* (1997), which has a more stimulating and positive character, and firmly establishes the principal achievements of the post-conciliar catechetical renewal and constitutes a real forward thrust for the evangelizing catechesis of the future.

We will complete this overview with three documents from the Congregation for Catholic Education on certain aspects of the Catholic school: "*The Lay Catholic, Witness of Faith in the School*" (1982), "*Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School*" (1988) and "*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*" (1997). The inclusion of catechetics in this panorama is justified because the Lasallian Institute has taken it as the principal and privileged means for its apostolate of the schools.

1.1. The concern for the integrity of content. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992).

During the Council and the post-conciliar period the so-called anthropological catechesis was developed. In this phase attention was centered on man, his life and his problems. Here, man is the starting point, the vehicle and the content of catechetics. It is a catechetics of action by means of which a human grouping interprets its situation, lives and expresses it in the light of the Gospel.

In the early 80s the Church worried about some of the risks of this catechesis: the anthropocentrism, which could lead to a horizontal attitude without a dialogue between the human experience and what faith proposes; the difficulty in offering an organic and integral vision of the Christian message; the danger in the instrumental use of the Bible while setting aside dogma and tradition; and the neglect of the catechism as instrument in gaining knowledge of the faith. At the same time the new catechisms and their spin-offs were being sharply criticized by more traditional and conservative groups. According to them, these new books were causing confusion and a crisis in the transmission of the faith. The solution offered these groups was the return to the catechism understood as “knowing” the faith, through the memorization of the questions and answers of the catechism of old.

In response the Church initiated a process that would culminate in the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This was a process that some considered very necessary owing to the “lack of control” that had permeated the Church since the end of the Council and, for others, one more example of the Church's turning in on itself which had begun with the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. For these last mentioned, the return to the traditional catechisms was the undermining of the great work achieved by the catechetical movement. They judged that a return was not necessary.

On the 10th of June, 1986, the Pope name a pontifical commission to oversee the production of the book. A long process of six years ensued, ending with the definitive approbation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on June 25, 1992. The publication of the Catechism had raised much expectation and the number sold of the initial printing was very high. At the same time the authors of the text and the specialists published many, many articles in specialized journals and organized numerous discussion groups and assemblies. The opinions on the Catechism spanned a broad range, with negative comments far outnumbering those that heaped praised.

Among the criticisms most often heard were the following: the questionable structure of the Catechism (Credo, Sacraments, Moral, Prayer); the separation between Sacraments and Prayer; the notional and neo-scholastic theology without up-dating; the abundance of Biblical citations but with an insufficient exegesis;

the absence of the pedagogy proposed in "Gaudium et Spes", see-judge-act; the impression of distance from the needs of today's man/woman; the absence of the historical/critical method in dealing with the Biblical texts. To all of these criticisms, we must add an astonishing lack of exactitude in citing some texts and references.

1.2. The General Directory for Catechetics (1997).

On the 18th of September, 1997, the revised edition of the General Directory for Catechetics of the Congregation of the Clergy made its appearance. Many things in the world of catechetics had happened since the first Directory was published in 1971 and a revision was badly needed. During those twenty-six years a multitude of events had occurred and so many modifications had been published so that the face of catechesis had been considerably altered.

After the Directory of 1971 came the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (1972), the two Synodal Assemblies of 1974 and 1977, and the respective Apostolic Exhortations "Evangelii Nuntiandi" (1975) and "Catechesi Tradendae" (1979). When John Paul II ascended to the Pontificate the majority of this Pope's letters, discourses and instructions had catechetical value. One of these especially must be singled out, "Redemptoris Missio" (1990) for having reaffirmed the permanent validity of the missionary mandate. In 1992, the "*Catechism of the Catholic Church*" was added to the list, marking again a significant moment in the recent history of catechetics in which the Directory must naturally be included. Finally, all the contributions of the great scholars and catechists of these last years and the documents of the various Roman congregations and of the local Churches have made their impact felt.

The work of composition began in 1994 and was extended over three more years. The Pope approved it on the 15th of August of 1997. It was then published in eight different languages.

Quite distinct from the way in which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* had been received, the Directory generally had very positive acceptance by all scholars and catechists. Among the most salient points treated by the commentators we can cite:

- Catechesis as an essential moment of evangelization. Catechesis as "the meaningful announcement of the Word" and the significant history that gives meaning to life.

- The baptismal catechumenate is the inspired model of catechesis. Three forms of catechesis are necessary: catechumenate, the Christian initiation of children and youth and the processes of re-initiation. Among these, the first is the primordial task to be pursued.
- Catechesis as integral formation. Not only in reference to knowledge but also to attitudes and behaviors, prayer and sacraments, social commitment and apostolic spirit.
- A renewed appreciation of tradition. The history of the Christian community, the witness of the saints, the various spiritualities, the diverse theological, liturgical and artistic traditions that are the source of creativity and meaning.
- An appreciation of the generic "catechism". The Catechism of the Catholic Church is taken as the point of reference for local catechisms.
- The primacy of the catechism of adults.
- Catechesis as a factor of inculturation. The need for the faith and the Christian message to be incarnated and expressed in the concrete context of the different places and cultures.
- The important role of the local Churches, especially in the organization of the formation of catechists.

The Catholic school is categorized as THE most relevant place for human and Christian formation. In reference to the catechesis we can put our finger on two situations: students from families that choose the Catholic school for being Catholic and, as a consequence, will be fully in accord with the Ministry of the Word in its several forms through religious education in the school and the catechesis; the second situation arises when the students choose the Catholic school because of its quality education; in this case, catechesis is either suppressed or limited and religious teaching lays stress more on its cultural character.

Owing to the plurality of situations and contexts, the general Directory for Catechesis specifies that the bishops and the Episcopal Conferences should establish the modality of catechesis and the religious teaching that prudence dictates be accomplished in the Catholic schools.

1.3. The documents of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

During the period after the Council, the Congregation for Catholic Education published a series of documents that had their influence with the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It is worthwhile citing them.

- *The Lay Catholic, witness of faith in the school (1982)*

The Congregation for Catholic Education decided to write a document on the lay person in the Catholic School, owing to the importance of the laity as recognized by Vatican Council II. The Congregation saw the enormous possibilities for evangelization that lay persons had through their presence in the school in collaboration with religious and priests. Also, and we must recognize it, this situation came about in many Catholic schools at a time when the religious personnel had diminished, causing a considerable increase in the number of lay teachers.

The document addressed four specific points on the theme of the Christian educator as "religion teacher". The religion class, like the catechism lesson, constitutes a form of the lay apostolate and, owing to these circumstances, points out that the lay persons will be the majority of those who will impart this instruction. The text indicates energetically that they must transmit the teachings of Jesus Christ, always remaining faithful to the magisterium and avoiding, "disturbing the spirit of the children and youth... with strange theories". In order to perform this work competently they will require a good pedagogical, theological and catechetical formation.

- *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School*

This document contains five sections: the youth of today as they encounter the religious dimension of life (a changing world, the situation of youth); the religious dimension of the cultural environment (the Christian, physical, ecclesiastical and open community atmosphere); the religious dimension of life and school work (of life and of the school culture); religion teaching in school and the religious dimension of education (religious teaching in school, suppositions, the coherent presentation of today's events and the Christian message, of the Christian life, the religion teacher); the

religious dimension of the educational process (process of education, program of education).

Perhaps the most interesting section and the one that caused the most comment and controversy in the Institute was the fourth part dealing with religious teaching in the schools and the religious dimension of education in general. Among the most important ideas of this fourth section we find the following: religious teaching must be present in the Christian school; the "civil structure" the common characteristic of scholastic institution should be in harmony with the Christian community which has its foundation in a Christian program of education; the indissoluble link and the clear distinction between religious teaching and catechesis; the specific character of religious teaching in the school; the organic presentation of real life and the Christian message; and finally the organic presentation of Christian life and the religion teacher.

The paragraph that proved the most problematic was point 68 that expressed the following:

"There is an indissoluble connection and a clear distinction between the teaching of religion and catechesis, and it is the transmission of the message, one stage of evangelization. The connection is justified in order for the school to deal with it as a school must do, that is, imparting a complete culture, one that can be integrated in the Christian message. The distinction resides in the fact that catechesis, apart from the religious teaching that takes place in school, presupposes above all the vital acceptance of the message as the saving reality. Besides, the particular place of catechesis is a community that lives the faith in a larger space and for a longer period than the school years, that is to say, for all of a lifetime."

The first part presents no special problem for the Institute since, for a long time, both in the Institute and in the Church, the difference between the teaching of religion and catechesis had been assimilated. In the second part, "that the school treat religion as a school subject, an exercise of intellect", on the one hand and "the proper place for catechesis is a community that lives the faith in a larger space and for a long period than the school years, that is to say, for all of a lifetime." What was demonstrated by this was a clear declaration that the exclusive place for catechesis was the parish. This text did not cause many difficulties in the places of the

Institute where catechetical activity was limited to the religious teaching given in the school; but in other areas where the steps toward the catechumenate had been initiated, where Christian communities were being formed in school, where the Sacraments were being celebrated in school, and where catechism classes were included in the timetable of the school, this part stirred up a storm. The typical case and foremost example of this situation was Spain where, since the early 1980s, an entire pastoral plan, inspired by the catechumenate program, has been started.

Pope John Paul II had begun a plan for the revitalization of parishes, considering them to be the natural place for catechetical instruction without, however, designating them as a monopoly or the only way to go, but rather with the intention of extending and adapting the places for catechism as far as would be possible and useful, frequently mentioning the school as one of those places.

This strengthening of the parishes frequently brought about the diminishment or even the end of other ecclesial communities. In several parishes and even dioceses of Spain the work of catechetics and preparation for the sacraments in many Lasallian schools came up against serious obstacles.

- *The Catholic School on the threshold of the Third Millennium (1997)*

One recently published document of the Congregation for Catholic Education on the Catholic School is "The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium" (1997), only thirteen pages in length, written as part of the immediate preparation for the Grand Jubilee of the year 2000, for the thirtieth anniversary of the creation of the office for the schools and for the twentieth of the publication of the document on "The Catholic School". This document limited itself to recapping the fundamental characteristics of the Catholic School without adding many new ideas.

2. The catechetical reflection of the institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the decades of the 80s and 90s.

In 1980 a period of greater tranquility began for the Institute of the

Brothers of the Christian Schools. The difficult times of the post council had passed and greater clarity was being found to deal with those aspects that had provoked so much polemic during the previous years. There was still a tendency in the Institute for the slow and inexorable loss of new members while, at the same time, the ever growing presence of lay teachers in the schools and centers was ever more manifest.

As for the situation of catechetics, successive encounters and documents, both in the Church and in the Institute, had been elaborated during the decade of the 70s and had been clarifying most of the aspects of the catechetical renewal, such as objectives, processes for growth in the faith, contents and methods. However, at the same time, the situation had become more and more complex: the children and youth to be catechized were becoming ever more diverse in culture and religion, deeply influenced by the means of social communication; there were Catholics in name, but many were not practicing their faith; a greater distance was developing between the catechetics of the dioceses and that of the schools; the catechesis and the religion classes of the upper grades was increasingly more difficult, etc.

The theme of catechetics was a constant concern of the Institute. The problems were varied and all called for a response. Over the recent decades encounters, assemblies, congresses and colloquia had multiplied throughout the world of the Institute. A great number of documents were being published at the level of local communities, districts and regions of the Institute. It would be too extensive to attempt to list all this catechetical documentation but for purposes of our work, we will limit ourselves to describe the principal assemblies and documents emanating from the center of the Institute.

In 1981, the inter-capitular meeting of the Brothers Visitors was held between two General Chapters as mandated by the *Book of Government*. Among the most important themes treated by this assembly, we can mention the following: the pastoral attitude in ministry, the call to work for the poor, the opening upto the laity and the young churches, the crisis of vocations and the search for solutions.

In the last years of the superiorship of Brother José Pablo, the Visitors of the various districts had the opportunity to meet in

Rome in order to inform the Superior General and his Council about the condition of the several regions of the Institute and, in particular, about the pastoral situation. From the first meeting in January of 1983 with the Visitors of Central Europe until the final one with those of France in 1985, the successive encounters make it possible to accurately follow the situation of the Institute, thanks to the documentation at hand.

In 1986, the major event is the 41st General Chapter celebrated in Rome from the 7th of April to the 3rd of June. Doubtless this Chapter will be best remembered for the study and the approbation of the definitive Rule of the Brothers.

Two *Messages* were added to the Rule, directed to all the Brothers of the Institute and to the Members of the Lasallian Family.

The 42nd General Chapter took place in 1993. Among its most prominent features we can cite the invitation by the General Chapter, for the first time in the history of the Institute, to Consultants, that is, non-Brothers. From that moment the expression "Shared Mission" was coined. A second key element was the re-affirmation of the option of the Institute for the educational service of the poor, of which the most striking expression was the so-called "Mission One Hundred Plus", calling upon the regions and districts to free up 100 Brothers and an indeterminate number of Lasallian Partners to undergo formation and then be missioned to works destined for the very poorest.

One of the decisions taken by the General Chapter that affected the subject that concerns us here was the Proposition 2 which reads: "The General Chapter asks the Brother Superior and his Council to name a group of experts in the field of education who will serve as observers of the broad educational concerns throughout the world to enable the Center of the Institute to develop a public policy."

Over an extensive period after the chapter a series of colloquia were organized, as had been proposed, to deal with "the broad educational concerns throughout the world". Distributed as one for each year, the themes of these colloquia were: "The Family of Today and the Mission of the Institute" (Rome 1994), "Globalization in the Diverse Cultures of the World and Lasallian Education" (Colombo 1995), "The Megalopolis as Social Phenomenon and Lasallian Education" (Mexico 1996), "The New

Technologies of Knowledge, Challenges for the Lasallian School" (Barcelona 1997) and "Communicating the Faith" (Rome 1998). Naturally, this last will be what is the most relevant for our study.

3. The present and the future of lasallian catechetics, ten challenges for the future.

The reading, study and classification of the abundant documentation that has been elaborated in the Institute during these last years bring us to this section in order to formulate and lay emphasis on those characteristics that, for me, have been the ten essential elements of Lasallian catechetics.

The Institute came into existence to attend to the needs of children and youth, especially of the poorest, and this continues to be its fundamental priority. All who labor at this task for children and youth form part of the mission of the Church and are true "ambassadors of Jesus Christ". The Lasallian educator, while exercising his ministry of Christian education, blends together the progress of culture and the proclamation of the Gospel; thus he is teacher and catechist. However, in the Lasallian Christian school catechetics occupy a principal place for they continue to be seen as our principal function. To carry out its mission of education and evangelization, the Institute has always considered the school to be the preferred medium and reaffirms the Lasallian Christian school as the privileged instrument of evangelization. This evangelization, within the Lasallian Christian school, can only be possible with the presence of Christian teachers and the creation of communities of faith in the school. All the Lasallian Christian schools must have their plan of Christian education in which the Christian atmosphere and Christian values cannot be absent, the same as religious classroom teaching and explicit catechetics. The Lasallian Christian school is at the service of the Church and therefore must be integrated into the pastoral plan of its locale and diocese. The Church itself affirms that in our very diverse societies a good evangelization requires inculturation and dialogue with those of other Christian denominations and other religions. This has become one of the priorities of recent years. And, finally, in order to effect competently all that has been proposed here, the all-important formation of Christian educators is needed.

1. The needs of children and youth, the fundamental purpose.

The Superior General, Brother John Johnston, in one of his last public discourses in March of 2000, clearly reminded the directors of the Lasallian schools of Europe of what was the fundamental purpose of the Catholic school: "It is that of awakening in youth meaning and hope in a world that often sees religion as something irrational, a vestige of the past which has nothing to do with the basic questions of humankind"³.

This message is present in the first line of the Rule of 1987: "As he became aware, by God's grace, of the human and spiritual distress of the 'children of artisans and the poor' John Baptist de La Salle devoted himself..."

The Institute is, therefore, called in a special way to the service of youth who are the principal focus of its attention. Young people are in need of spiritual guides and these should be the Brothers and Lasallian educators.

"We must respond to their search for meaning. We ought to be capable of standing by their side, as elder Brothers, in their struggle with doubt, fear and frustration. We must be understanding of them in their desire for structures that permit them to follow their ideals and channel their energies. (...) This is precisely the mission to which God, in his loving care for youth, calls us"⁴.

The Brother and the Lasallian educator ought to be, in the first place, witnesses, and in second place, they must be aware of being called to speak of Jesus Christ to youth. Emphatically, the Brother must be "salvation" for youth, a salvation understood "not only as liberation from sin and death and the reward of eternal happiness, but also as freedom from all that impedes the development of their qualities as the human persons that God wants them to be."

2. The ministry of christian education.

Vatican Council II, on defining the Church as mystery of communion, reevaluates the place that each and every one of the faithful occupies in that community. It calls the Church Sacrament

³. Br. John Johnston, "ASSEDIL Encounter", 10 March, 2000, (unpublished text).

⁴. Circular 422. 41st General Chapter: propositions and messages, 40.

of Salvation and with that phrase dignifies the entire body of us who form the Church. In the conciliar decree on the apostolate of the laity we read:

"In the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in his name and by his power. But the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ; they have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God"⁵.

These ministries entrusted to the laity are founded on their Baptism and Confirmation, sacraments which confer full ecclesial responsibility. In spite of the authority of these beautiful documents it appears that the topic of lay ministries has not fulfilled its promise and it is still an open question in the Church.

In the period that concerns us, the Rule of 1987 is the text that repeatedly refers to ministry. Article 3 expresses the following: "The purpose of this Institute is to provide a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor, according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to it." The Church recognizes our charism and entrusts to the Institute the ministry of Christian education.

The awareness that the Brother ought to "be a minister of God" is repeated on several occasions: "The Brothers, in fidelity to the call of the Spirit and the charism of their Founder, consecrate themselves to God in order to exercise, by association, their apostolic ministry of education" (Rule 2); "This zeal, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, inspires their apostolic prayer and all the activities of their apostolic ministry" (Rule 7); "The Brothers consider their work as a ministry" (Rule 13); "The Brothers live their faith as a gift to be used for their ministry of Christian education" (Rule 20); "He consecrates himself entirely to the Holy Trinity to procure the glory of God in the ministry of Christian education" (Rule 22).

Can this title of ministers be applied to the lay persons who work in our schools? For a very high number of the lay teachers who work in our schools, the variety of religious affiliation and practice is extremely diverse, as for example, the percentages presented by Robert Carlier in the EUROCELAS 2000 Encounter: "The

⁵. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2.

totality of the teaching personnel of Catholic schools in French speaking Belgium reports just 5% as practicing Christians, a shade more than 10% who call themselves believers, a bit less than 80% who are non-Christians"⁶ On the other hand, there are teachers who see their work as a profession and others still who understand it to be "something else". It is well to recognize therefore, that many of the lay teachers and Brothers that work in Lasallian schools do not consider their labor to be a ministry and, at the same time, a significant number of Brothers and laymen and women who consciously exercise the ministry of Christian education.

The Rule calls upon the Brothers to promote the ministries with the adults that work with them: "Ever since the time of their foundation, the Brothers have contributed to the promotion of the Christian laity, especially among those educators who want their professional work to be a form of Gospel ministry" (Rule 17).

3. Teachers and catechists. A unity of functions.

Recalling one of the aspects of the tradition of Institute and Rule, we are reminded in these times that our two functions cannot be separated. The Brother, the Lasallian educator, is both teacher and catechist, the two functions joined in the ministry of Christian education.

Even though this reality is so clear and present in the historical tradition of the Institute, in recent years a curious phenomenon has occurred which is difficult to understand in many cases; it is described thusly in the document "Christian School and Catechesis": "It should be pointed out that the professionalization encouraged during the decade of the 60s, even though it produced a positive effect in the specialization in catechetics by a goodly number of Brothers, it also brought about the negative effect of the abandonment of the catechetical duties of many others, with the excuse that they were not prepared for them, or that "their major" was some other subject that they had specialized in. In this way, and rather ironically, but with an enormous confusion of positions, we have come to speak "entre nous" on some occa-

⁶ R. CARLIER, "Perspectives for Building Up Association" in A. Botana (ed), EURO-CELAS 2000 Colloquium, Associated for the Mission, CVS, Valladolid 2000, 131.

sions, of “Brothers of the school” and “Brothers of the pastoral ministry”⁷.

The insistence of the Superiors General for the improvement of the quality of, and the commitment to, our work as catechists, caused certain Brothers to protest that the Institute had forgotten the work of the schools and the teaching of secular subjects, something that was not true. At the same time the work of a small number of Brothers in apostolic activities outside the traditional field of school work increased the resentment of some Brothers who saw this as an abandonment of our tradition. This situation is described for us by Brother José Pablo in one of his letters in 1985: “The Christmas letter of 1979 gathered some brief reflections on our mission. In the *feedback* that followed its publication, something that was revealed was the resentment of certain Brothers who thought that our work in the school was being neglected, or at least under-appreciated, when so many examples of new forms of the apostolate and other initiatives were cited which seemed to distract the Brothers from their total devotion to the school. Most likely, they were not aware that opening up to new educational possibilities ought not to be considered as an escape from the school, but rather an up-dating of the same, with regard to the educational component, the new needs and the changing situations”.

Certainly in these recent years the traditional teaching of the Founder has been reaffirmed, namely that it is indispensable that the profane studies and education in the faith go hand in hand. No school without the catechism and no catechism without the school.

4. The capital importance of catechesis in the lasallian school.

If the Founder clearly expressed the importance of catechesis for the Brother, the Rule of 1987 reaffirmed that importance as had the Declaration twenty years before:

“The Brothers consider that their ‘principal function’ consists in the work of evangelization and catechesis whereby they contribute to growth in faith to those who have been baptized and to the building up of the ecclesial community” (Rule 15).

In the intercapitular meeting of 1981 it had been clearly noted

⁷. Brothers of the Christian Schools, Christian School and Catechesis. 12.

that many Brothers limited themselves to fulfill their professional activities, forgetting the pastoral activities; "This is not enough". The Brother, it goes on to state, "will not be satisfied if he does not spread the Good News, since he has left all things with a view to proclaiming the Gospel".

If Brother José Pablo insisted so frequently on the importance of catechesis, if the Chapters and Assemblies returned so insistently to the theme, it was Brother John Johnston who, throughout his 14 years as Superior, repeated the message time and again. When Brothers, worried about which apostolic activities they should devote themselves to, given the scarcity of vocations, the Superior General answered: "We are not exclusively catechists or youth ministers. I believe that we should continue to occupy positions of authority and to teach any subject in the curriculum. But at the same time we must never forget that our 'principal function' consists in the work of evangelization and catechesis"⁸. To this reply we can add others such as: "The message insists on our role as evangelizers, which is far more than our role as good professionals."⁹; "To omit or minimize the religious dimension of our schools is a grave distortion of the purpose of the Institute."¹⁰; "It is clear, therefore, that the teaching of religion and pastoral activity-in the context of human and Christian education-are a constitutive dimension of our vocation."¹¹. In his last Pastoral Letter, written in 2000, he admits the difficulty of evangelization given the scarcity of means, the indifference of the students and the prevailing secularization but he encourages the Brothers to continue without faltering with this beautiful passage.

"Despite the difficulties in communicating the faith today, 'we do not renounce in any way our determination to proclaim Jesus Christ.' To be a *catechist by vocation* is to love and respect our young people as distinct human persons. It is to accept them 'as they are' and to take them seriously. It is to walk side by side with them, permitting them to share openly their perplexities and questions about the meaning of life and

⁸. Br. John JOHNSTON, "Pastoral Letter. Our Community Life. Some Reflections", (January 1, 1992). Rome 1992. page 33.

⁹. JOHNSTON, "Pastoral Letter. Peace-Identity-Conversion" (January 1, 1987), 19.

¹⁰. JOHNSTON, "Pastoral Letter. Transformation. Reflections on our Future", January 1, 1993. Casa Generalizia, Rome 1993. 36.

¹¹. JOHNSTON, "Pastoral Letter. Living Authentically IN CHRIST JESUS (January 1, 1994, 38.

about religious faith. To be a catechist by vocation is to share with young people what we see, think and believe, without trying to impose our faith on them."¹²

5. The christian school, place of evangelization.

The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools throughout its long history has seen that the best means, the privileged instrument and particular field to impart a human and Christian education is the school. But a school that calls itself Christian must be a place of evangelization. That is to say, "We have to be careful because the school that the Founder intended to be the privileged means is not just 'any' school... the privileged instrument of our apostolic ministry is the Christian school. But even that statement is not complete. The privileged instrument is the Christian school which is accessible to the poor".¹³

An even clearer and more resounding endorsement is the document of the Superior General and his Council to the Lasallian Family in which he says: "If a Lasallian school is introduced into a new culture and becomes just a means of social progress within that culture without enriching it with the values of the Gospel, one would have to question seriously the worth of that school"¹⁴.

The Institute understands that the Church does not wish it to abandon this place of evangelization which, in this present time, is more urgent than ever.

6. The creation of communities of faith in the school.

De La Salle believed that the best manner to carry out the mission that God had entrusted to him was to bring his teachers into community and thus founding with them the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It was the community of Brothers alone that gave life to the Christian school. They formed a community of religious with a school mission.

¹². JOHNSTON, "Pastoral Letter. The Challenge. LIVE TODAY OUR FOUNDING STORY (January 1, 2000)". Casa Generalizia, Rome 2000, 72.

¹³. JOHNSTON, Pastoral Letter. The destiny of the institute: our responsibility (January 1, 1988)", 24.

¹⁴. GENERAL COUNCIL FSC, "The Lasallian Mission: A Human and Christian Education. A shared Mission" Valladolid, 19976, 83.

This situation continued unchanged for many years but, around the middle of the 20th Century, the first lay teachers began to appear in the Lasallian schools. The number of lay teachers would increase markedly once the Second World War ended. Now we can speak of an educational community with diverse members: Brothers, lay people, priests, other religious, etc., all dedicated to the human and Christian formation of children and young people. Since Vatican II and during the post-conciliar period, certain forgotten aspects of the praxis of the Church have been recovered, among them, the value of the Christian laity and of the community as the central core of its pastoral ministry and the nucleus of ecclesial life. This would have its repercussions in the restatement of catechesis and the process of education in the faith, placing them under the sign of community.

In 1975 Paul VI in his "Evangelii Nuntiandi" pointed out that catechesis "is not an individual and isolated act for anyone but is rather profoundly ecclesial".

In 1977 the Synod dedicated to catechesis in our day followed along this same line and defined that "The place or natural home of catechesis is the Christian community. Catechesis is not simply an individual task, but one that should take place in the Christian community"¹⁵. It was in this document that the famous phrase "the community as origin, place and goal of catechesis"¹⁶ was coined.

Assuming the message of the earlier Synod, Paul VI affirmed that "A person who has given adherence to Jesus Christ by faith and is endeavouring to consolidate that faith by catechesis needs to live in communion with those who have taken the same step. Catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren if no community of faith and Christian life takes the catechumen in at a certain stage of his catechesis"¹⁷.

From this date on catechetical literature and the official documents of the local churches would make reference to the theme of community as a key to understanding catechesis (the community is the necessary condition for catechesis, its natural place, as subject of catechesis, target group, objective and goal).

¹⁵. Message of the Synod of Bishops, 13.

¹⁶. Proposition 25, Synod of Bishops. 1977.

¹⁷. Catechesi Tradendae 24.

These ecclesial pronouncements that re-discovered community as “origin, place and goal of catechesis” brought about a new situation in the Lasallian school. Could the whole educational community be seen as a Christian community? The answer was “no”. We began to distinguish between the “educational community” and the “Christian community”. The educational community is the gathering of persons (parents, teachers, students...) joined together to advance a program of education. In this educational community we find persons who have diverse perspectives with regard to the faith: the indifferent ones, those who are searching, the believers. On the other hand, the Christian community would be composed of those members of the educational community who want to live their faith as a commitment of the community. Its central nucleus would be formed by the religious community and the group of adults who have undergone a process of integration to the Christian life and, around this group, would cluster those other groups who are still on the path to community.

In the official literature of the Institute this aspiration to create communities of faith in our schools is repeated constantly. Thus, already in 1981, the Inter-capitular Meeting of Brothers Visitor invited the Brothers to strive that their educational communities evolve toward becoming communities of faith. In the two most important documents of the Superior General and his Council to the members of the Lasallian family, “Letter to the Lasallian Family” (1989) and “The Lasallian Mission: a Human and Christian Education” (1997) this same idea is emphasized:

“Since we come together as believers to share in a common task, let us not fight shy of involving ourselves more fully in the practice of our faith. We will be led to live it more completely, to share it with others and express it with joy. In this way, we will be part of the living Church, a proof of its dynamism, its creativity and its influence. We are of the opinion that all establishments and Lasallian groups should be moving in the direction of becoming such communities of faith, each organizing its own life, its own pace and its own ways of expressing itself, and working closely with the local Church.”¹⁸

Already in 1981 the Brothers Visitor pointed out the problems inherent in the creation of these communities of faith: “The meeting regretted that a large proportion of the lay staff in certain

¹⁸. GENERAL COUNCIL FSC, “Letter to the Lasallian Family, February 2, 1989”, Casa Generalizia, Rome, 1989, 23.

regions takes up teaching posts for the sole purpose of gaining a living and with no reference to Christianity. School legislation sometimes inhibits our employing the kind of staff we would like"¹⁹. It must be recognized that the difficulties are many and the results, rather paltry but it is a fundamental element as we face our future: "Fostering the formation of these groups and helping to animate them (without falling into the pitfall of paternalism or 'clericalism') is clearly an essential dimension of our service in the Church now and in the future"²⁰.

7. The christian educational process of the lasallian christian school.

As we have seen, for many years catechesis in the school was a normal aspect in Christian schools and even in some public schools. The religion class was one more subject to be taught as part of the school curriculum.

Starting with the decade of the 1960s however, with the advances made in pedagogy, theology and particularly, catechesis, certain distinctions began to take place. It was no longer so clear that catechesis should be offered in the school or that all students should be obliged to take the class.

In the 1970s a clear separation was made between religious teaching in school and the catechesis. At the same time, we began to speak of education in values, of the pastoral ministry of youth, of pastoral activities outside the boundaries of the school and school hours.

According to these situations, cultures and countries, a catechetical vocabulary was developing that was more nuanced and, at the same time, more complex: education in values, education in the faith, catechesis, Christian formation, pastoral formation and the formation for youth pastoral ministry, religious pedagogy, pedagogy of the faith, religious education, scholastic religious education, "campus ministry" (United States), "chaplains" (France). All these had the potential to create much confusion.

Both catechists and the Institute itself attempted to put order into

¹⁹. "Circular 415. Perspectives for 1986. Inter-capitular Meeting of 1981 (October 1, 1981)", 19.

²⁰. John JOHNSTON. "The Destiny of the Institute: Our Responsibility", 33.

this hodgepodge of terminology that was swirling around the simple word “catechetics”. We will group them into three concepts: Christian atmosphere and values, religious teaching in school (RTS) and explicit catechesis.

Christian atmosphere and christian values.

The Christian school must have some external signs and symbols that characterize it: prayers, religious celebrations, decorations, etc., but these are not enough. Vatican Council II had already spoken of the specific marks of the Catholic school: “It is, however, the special function of the Catholic school to develop in the school community an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel. (...) Thus the Catholic school, taking into consideration as it should the conditions of an age of progress, prepares its pupils to contribute effectively to the welfare of the world of men and to work for the extension of the kingdom of God”²¹.

Brother John Johnston, Superior General, reminded us in the last of his pastoral letters that “Every Lasallian school and center must be ‘a sign of the Kingdom.’ Its orientations, atmosphere and quality of relationships must ‘signify’ the interpersonal communion that the Reign of God requires”²².

What characteristics ought a Lasallian school have if it is to be “a sign of the Kingdom of God”?

The *witness* and *influence* of the teachers and the Christian community that is “inserted” in the school itself.

Education in values: Directed at all the students, regardless of their own religion and culture.

Education for justice: A world that is marked by injustice, frightful inequalities and lack of peace needs the impact of persons who are not in agreement with the status quo and who will strive to transform it.

Education that is searching: The Christian school is not one that offers many answers; rather it has many questions and invites stu-

²¹. *Gravissimum Educationis Momentum* 8.

²². John JOHNSTON. “Pastoral Letter. The Challenge: Live Today Our Founding Story” January 1, 2000, 68-69.

dents to look for the answers. It works to develop a critical sense and does not align itself with an unjust system. It develops openness to Mystery, the ability to interpret the signs of God that are appear in life.

Religious education in schools.

There can be no doubt that religious teaching in schools is a basic and indispensable element of a Catholic school. In the Lasallian school, following its entire historic tradition, it must always be present: "It would certainly be a serious mistake if the catechetical programs and activities of the school were reduced to the bare minimum because of other demands of the curriculum"²³.

In the last decade, the 1990s, the Brother Superior General repeated with even greater insistence the priority of the religion class in our schools, its necessary academic seriousness and its careful class preparation. In the Pastoral letter of 1991 he warned of the disappearance of the religion class in upper classes of some centers because of the existence of a heavily weighted curriculum or for whatever other reason.

Not only should there always be the religion class in the Christian school but also the Brothers themselves, because of tradition and history, should be specialists in the field. As a fact, there is a group of Brothers who, in these years, has worked on the preparation and publication of complete collections of religion texts for the teaching of religion in the school.

Explicit Catechetics.

When we made reference in the document of the Congregation for Catholic Education on "the religious dimension of the Catholic school", we touched on the problem created as to whether or not catechetics should be given in the Catholic school.

In recent years, the Institute has realized that the religion class alone is not enough; there should exist at the same time a project of the pastoral ministry that will keep alive the spiritual life of the school. Such movements as the youth clubs, reflection groups, retreats and catechists are indispensable. This insistence arises

²³. General Council, FSC, The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education-A Shared Mission, p. 57.

from the regrettable situation of some schools where the pastoral plan of the school is limited to the religion class alone. The other pastoral possibilities are always indispensable in whatever Lasallian school.

8. Integration into the pastoral plan of the church.

As we have seen throughout this historical synthesis, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools has always been at the service of the Church. At the Inter-capitular Meeting of 1981, the Brothers sent out a call for those Brothers responsible for all our catechetical activities to incorporate their work into the "Joint Pastoral Ministry" so that all those new faith communities created in the Catholic schools bear the name of the local Church and be linked to its ministers. The Rule of 1987 invited the Brothers to collaborate with the local Church, either as catechists or as formators and animators of Christians called to the service of catechesis.

It is difficult to strike a balance of the relations between the local Church and the Lasallian school on a worldwide scale. The Report of the General Council and the Superior to the Chapter of 1986 indicated an insufficient participation of the Brothers in the Joint Pastoral Plan.

Together with some wonderful examples of collaboration we also note local situations that are not so positive, owing perhaps to a lack of understanding, an absence of dialogue and/or different ecclesiological conceptions between school and parish. The most common conflict has occurred when the parish sees itself to be the only valid community and the schools look upon the parish as a "community of communities" and so, as a consequence, catechesis ought to be distributed among the various communities of the parish. According to this viewpoint the parish does not monopolize this function but rather is guarantor and coordinator of it. The dialogue of school-catechesis-parish is always a challenge for the future as a testimony of ecclesial unity and pastoral efficiency.

For its part the Church has always asked us to be leaders in the sphere of catechetics and education. Brother José Pablo Basterrechea wrote in his final pastoral letter on December 8, 1985 that the Church needed catechists who would not only be

religious instructors but principally leaders and animators of Christian communities. He asked that the Brothers launch new schools for catechists and programs of formation for animators because this ministry is completely in accord with what the Brothers are and what their mission is in the Church.

Also Brother John Johnston, in his last letter, wondered if we are truly exercising a role of leadership in the field of catechetics that the Church has asked of us: "Some Brothers today provide extraordinary leadership to the Church both locally and nationally. Moreover, we are educating hundreds of "catechists" in our universities and specialized centers around the world. [...] On the other hand some Brothers ask whether we are exercising the leadership that we should exercise. I ask that question myself and hope the General Chapter will consider it"²⁴.

9. Evangelization and catechesis in pluralistic societies. Inculturation, ecumenism and Inter-religious dialogue.

The Institute, spread out over more than 82 countries and as a truly Catholic school for accepting all to come to it, has for many years now been experiencing situations that show themselves in such examples as the following: "We have-often in the same school-youth who are "living" their Catholic faith and those who are not; youth who are Christians but not Catholic; youth who are non-Christian; youth who are indifferent or even hostile towards all "organized" religions"²⁵.

This situation is felt more deeply in countries where the Lasallian school is situated in areas in which Catholics form a minority. The Brothers who represent these regions have seen experienced these problems so that the 42nd General Chapter made the following petition:

"That the Chapter recognize the enormous diversity of cultures and religions in the Pacific/Asia Region and, in particular, the difficulties that our Brothers must confront who work in countries that are not Christian. As a consequence, it becomes necessary: a) To identify the characteristics of the Lasallian School today in a country that is not Christian; b) To insist that in a situation of different types of faiths or cultures, the Lasallian

²⁴. J. Johnston, "Pastoral Letter. The Challenge: Live Today Our Founding Story (January 1, 2000)" 71.

²⁵. J. Johnston, "Pastoral Letter. Living Authentically In Christ Jesus, (January 1, 1994)" 38.

movement ought to lay emphasis in the human and spiritual values, more than centering itself on the Christian ethic"²⁶.

The problematic of inculturation, of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, has presented itself in this manner and the official documents of the Institute have dedicated great importance to it over the past twenty years.

Inculturation. Circular 415, which developed the results of the Inter-capitular Meeting of 1981, says this about inculturation: "The recommendations of the intercapitular meeting seem to us to be most especially urgent-Modify our activities with respect and more marked esteem for each culture. The person we serve, indeed, is immersed in a social milieu where he/she lives and acts"²⁷.

This official declaration, so explicit with regard to the respect and appreciation of each culture, finds its echo in the Rule of 1987: "Each culture needs to be evangelized. The Brothers make every effort to get to know, to respect and to assimilate the positive values of the cultural heritage of the people where they are located and whom they are called to serve. With joy and hope the Brothers discover there the signs of the presence of the Spirit. They ensure that the ferment of the Gospel renews and enriches this cultural heritage"²⁸.

The knowledge, on the part of every student, of his own culture and a sensitivity of respect for other cultures ought to be present in the formation of the students who attend our schools. The Superior General spoke in those terms when he addressed the European Lasallians in Strasbourg in 1994: "Our schools, today, must help young people to discover their own cultural roots so that they have a sense of belonging and, at the same time, to become aware of the richness of other cultures", but not only this, the Superior adds, "(the educator) should help students to recognize the prejudices they may have with regard to other racial, ethnic or religious groups, and to come to terms with those biases. Youth should be encouraged to actively participate in the search

²⁶. Archives of the Casa Generalizia ED 308-11. Rome.

²⁷. Circular 415. Perspectives for 1986. Intercapitular Meeting of 1981. 11.

²⁸. Rule. 18.

for just solutions in the fight for those who suffer discrimination, and to work in their defense"²⁹.

Inter-religious and Ecumenical Dialogue. In this same source, we have already seen how the attention we devote to our students of other non-Catholic Christian denominations and students of non-Christian religions has assumed ever greater importance. In these recent years the presence of non-Catholics is much more frequent, not only in the countries of Asia and Africa, but also in the First World and the countries traditionally considered to be Catholic. In part this is due to the phenomenon of migration as well as the processes of secularization, now so vividly felt and experienced in the First World.

The reflection that the Institute has dedicated to inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue has come into sharper focus. The letter of Brother John Johnston, in 1995, included in the document "The Lasallian Mission: a Human and Christian Education. A Shared Mission", of 1997, and the Circular 443, "Reflection on the Missionary Policy of the Institute", dedicate several pages to the vision of the Institute on this topic.

One of the imperatives of the Synod on the Consecrated Life is to dialogue with other religions. In his letter of 1995 the Superior proposed six ways we can engage our young people in dialogue-whether they are Christians, or non-Christians, believers or non-believers:

- *Fraternal relations.*
- *Human promotion and education:* our commitment to the intellectual, moral psychological and physical development of our students.
- *Promotion of justice:* when we strive to sensitize our students and pupils to questions of social justice and encourage them to commit themselves to the construction of a more just society.
- *Prayer:* the promotion of various forms and celebrations of religious expression.

²⁹. J. Johnston. "Lasalliani senza frontiere: una sfida. Discourse at the conclusion of the Lasallian Congress of Strasbourg", in "Revista Lasalliana". 61 (1994), n. 3. 173-190.

- *Informal “dialogue”*: communication with young people, identifying the school as Catholic while maintaining total respect for them in their beliefs.
- *Formal “dialogue”*: when we organize lectures, seminars, discussion groups on topics relating to our faith as Christians³⁰.

In his reflections, Brother Superior reminds us that this dialogue and respect for the other religions and denominations need not make us forget our missionary awareness and therefore, any Christian educator must proclaim and present the Good News of Jesus Christ, because He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The dwindling percentage of Catholics in our schools, the possible restrictions on religious freedom in others, the discouragement with the secularization of society have led, in many cases, to a complete silence with regard to the proclamation of our faith; an “anti-missionary” tendency that can be found not only in our Institute but also in the Church.

10. The necessary and on-going formation of catechists.

For the competent realization of their work as educators and catechists the Brothers and all Christian educators need a proper formation. It is the permanent insistence of the Institute and the Church. The various changes that have taken place over the recent decades call us to an on-going formation because the responses that are given to youth are insufficient.

The overwhelming arrival of lay people in the Lasallian centers has underscored the need for formation in the most urgent way. Their involvement in pastoral and catechetical work are ever more evident. Some of them have responsibilities that could not be imagined years ago by the Brothers themselves. In these last years, the districts and the Institute have judged that all the efforts for formation are necessary and are the best investment for the future.

³⁰. J.JOHNSTON, “Pastoral Letter. Our Charism in the light of the Synod (January 1, 1995)”. “The Lasallian Mission: a Human and Christian Education. A Shared Mission”.

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