

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Circular 457

In Memoriam
Br. Martín Corral Alcalde



General Council
Rome, Italy

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June 20th, 2008

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Dear Brothers,

A few weeks ago we received and shared with you the sorrowful news of the sudden death of Brother Martín Corral. Now, in a more calm manner, we want to express our joy and gratitude to God the Father, the giver of life, who in his son Martín, found a beautiful, fruitful, and exemplary welcome. We offer to the Institute, in this report, a simple homage as we recall his life. A life which serves as an encouragement on our journey of total response to our vocation in service of the mission which God has entrusted to us.

The news of his sudden death was a shock to everyone: To the young novices and Brothers with whom he shared day by day activities in Cochabamba (Bolivia), to those who live in the Generalate in Rome and to the many who remember him as being full of vitality, human warmth, and deep faith.

Brother Juan Carlos, Visitor of Bolivia, wrote this letter to Brother Jesús Miguel, Visitor of Valladolid, Spain: *"Yesterday, April 14, as was customary, the novitiate community was doing some manual labor in the afternoon. Brother Martín was working in the novitiate garden when he fainted. He was immediately attended to by the Brothers and taken to the Father Andrés Cuschieri Hospital in the city of Colcapirhua. Despite medical intervention, nothing could be done to save him. Death came quickly at 6:00 PM, according to the medical records"*.

Thus, the Lord called him suddenly and found him filled with the fruit of his life and said to him, *"Come, blessed Martín, and enjoy the house of the Lord and find rest here."*

So, too, for those of us who knew him and of his prolific life. We would have wanted to enjoy him for many more years, to share his rich experience and to participate in the spirit with which the Lord had blessed him abundantly. We were, therefore, surprised at his departure.

Brother Martín Corral was 65 years old

His story begins in a town in the province of Burgos in Spain, in the Castille-Leon region. The town was Belorado and it was inhabited in prehistoric times. It was repopulated around the time of the first millennium, as the Reconquest advanced. The town thrived at various times in rhythm with the ups and downs of royal houses. Nowadays it continues to be a point of reference for other nearby smaller towns. Geographically located in the crossing between the natural region of the Rioja and that of La Bureba and Burgos, in the basin between the Ebro and Duero rivers. It was strategically located. It remains an important point in the path from the Pyrenees of Navarra to the Castillian capital of Burgos on the way to Santiago de Compostela.

Martín was born in this town on November 11, 1942. His parents were Benito and Saturnina and they had two children, Martín and Millán. Martín's mother passed away when he was just two years old and his sibling was just a few months old. Benito would marry again later on and his wife's name was Damiana. Damiana and Benito had two more children, Fidel and Pilar. Martín had great affection for his new mother and for his siblings. Fidel regarded his father as *"someone ahead of his time who created one of the first (perhaps the very first) family agricultural cooperatives in the region. He sacrificed a lot of time and money for this venture and devoted his efforts, with an admirable honesty, in treating the members well. When the cooperative was dissolved, all had benefitted and such was the appreciation and trust for him that the members wanted to continue to be united to him. He was in charge of the*

Workers' Union when the cooperative was broken up" (F. C.). He was a true patriarch in the best sense of that work. A man of good judgment, deliberation, and principles. A father who left a big imprint in the life and mind of Martín.

The town of Belorado was near the town of Bujedo, which had been the traditional place for the location of the house of formation for the District of Valladolid. The Burgos area, prodigious in vocations at that time, was also fertile ground for vocations to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. From there many young Brothers went to many areas in Spain. The proximity of nearby towns to this house of vocation favored initiation into the religious life.

Martín was very young, thirteen years old, when he entered the Juniorate in Bujedo.

There he began high school, up until four years later, when he was of age to enter the Novitiate. His director during those years was Brother Segismundo León, who was involved in the formation of generations of young men, as he was stationed there for twenty years. The mixture of cordiality and encouragement of this man, his faith and devotion that he shared in his reflections and interviews and his love for the Brother's vocation, all had a very positive effect on the young Martín.

Those who lived with Martín during those years remember him as an exemplary aspirant, sincerely pious and who always devoted himself entirely to the task at hand; traits which he continued to possess later in life as he matured. He lived out life's challenges decisively, and he described these challenges as something good, pleasing to God. Even back in those days he encouraged, guided, and advised his compan-

ions. *"We should be an example to others in the chapel, at manual labor, and we should be disciplined and serious about our studies. His spirituality was well known at that age, and it was contagious and exemplary in external practices (posture in prayer and during the rosary, visits to the chapel). Later on in life he continued to be a great companion and animator, exuding spirituality, enthusiasm, and encouragement"* (T.M.).

He began his life journey with a life of faith that would continue to be woven of coherence, sincerity, simplicity, robustness, and radical dedication to God's will as a Brother of the Christian Schools. This process was enlightened for him by the exemplary response of Mary to God's will, the silent availability of Saint Joseph, and by an attitude of docility to God's plan which he learned about in Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Of all these ingredients, he valued the Lord's Spirit to plan and to make his life and mission prolific.

When he was 16, as was the custom at the time, he entered the novitiate. Brother Adrián Alfonso (Germán González), another patriarch in formation, was in charge of instilling within him the values of religious life and the Lasallian charism. After four months of postulancy, he received the habit and the name Brother Martín Antonio on December 7, 1958. At that time the centennial of the apparitions of Our Lady in Lourdes was being celebrated. This group of novices was dedicated to her. Just now, in 2008, this group that had begun its religious life was preparing, along with Martín, to celebrate its golden anniversary. Together they were to recall the stories of their lives, and they were to make a pilgrimage to the grotto at Mas-savielle, putting themselves in the hands of Mary.

The novitiate experience concluded in 1960. On July 16

Martín made his first profession of vows, annual ones, but with full commitment, as would be seen day after day.

Bujedo was where three years of study in the Scholasticate were spent in pedagogical, theological, and scientific training. In the area of academics, this period culminated in magisterium validation and the corresponding official recognition. In the area of theology and catechesis, these were years of living renewal. Pope John XXIII had opened the "windows" of the Church. He proclaimed and opened the Second Vatican Council. He published the encyclical "*Pacem in Terris*". Paul VI continued the impetus of the Spirit. This ecclesial dynamic enlightened the principals of the new religious at the time when the eyes of youth were being opened to culture and faith. Martín would continue encouraging the concerns of his formation and his criteria for life. "*The Scholasticate years remind me of a person who is tenacious, always hard at work and having sentiments and religious experience that was sincere and profound, that led us to look upon him (Martín) as a model Brother and companion.*" (M.C.).

He began his apostolic life in Portugal.

In August 1963 he received his obedience to go to the house in Barcelos, a city in the northern part of the country. A new language, a new culture awaited him at the house of formation for Aspirants. Brother Visitor responded to Brother Martín desire to go to a mission country. The physical distance away did not matter. To go to Portugal was to leave one's own country and to be involved in some Institute works that were beginning to take root in that country. All this required an investment of effort. The Brothers were in charge of two social works in Braga and Porto and they were

involved in beginning an Aspirancy and Novitiate program as a seedbed of operators for the educational mission in the country next door and, perhaps, in the future, for African Portuguese-speaking lands – Mozambique and Angola. Hopes, ideals, dreams...

Barcelos was the beginning of long and intense period of service to the Portuguese people. First, the Aspirancy in Barcelos. *"They were years of very scarce economic resources but of extraordinary spiritual experience for all the Brothers in the community. Martín lived the Lasallian life as few other did and with an uncommon sense of abnegation. Others were always first and then him."* (A.F.). *"He gave his heart and soul and even his youth, not only to the task of forming aspirants, but also to catechesis in the parish. Along with Brother Emilio Mazariegos, they both did great work so much so that their memory still perdures among a large group of persons, mature men today, who decided to call themselves 'Friends of La Salle.' Their open, enthusiastic, and enterprising character won them the sympathy of so many who knew them or collaborated with them. Martín was a Brother who was always available and warm and you could always count on him no matter what"* (F.I.).

This was his first stay in Barcelos, in the Aspirancy program as a staff member; he spent three years there as a teacher and two more as sub-Director, until 1968.

Then he was transferred to Porto, where he devoted himself formally to university studies in philosophy. He was a member of the community of Brothers who took care of the "Office of Saint Joseph."

This "Office" was a social center where 85 boarders lived. In general these boys were from families with problems and the

community of Brothers there served as teachers, older brothers, almost fathers and mothers for these boys. The base community was made up of five Brothers and during those years they would be joined by a group of young student Brothers, perhaps three or four of them. Some Brother Scholastics also joined the community at one point. All of these Brothers contributed their support and their efforts to the work of the Brothers and the parish work. The Brothers immensely appreciated this support and Martín was the animator of this small group of students. These were good times for the vocation movement in Portugal. There was a new work, Colegio de Abrantes, that needed Brothers who were prepared. The current animators of the school are Spaniards. They must train the Brothers in the country, who in turn will enculturate the Lasallian charism in Portugal.

His university experience was intense. He capped his licentiate with the highest results in 1971. Along the way, he participated in university pastoral ministry activities and he took leading positions in defending values of justice and of Christian commitment. In his encounters with young people he exhorted them to be brave and clear in their personal commitments and in their faith in the Lord Jesus and in values which give meaning to life.

His next assignment was to Braga. The "Colégio dos Orfãos de São Caetano" was the first work opened by the Brothers in Portugal, in 1933. It served the very poor. It was founded at the end of the eighteenth century by Bishop Caetano Brandão, the zealous primate of Braga, a Franciscan, who wanted to offer a home and education to so many poor orphans and to children with serious family problems. Martín would work here for the next eight years. For his first year there he worked in this

house and he taught in an "official" school, known as the "*es-tágio*" or "practice-teaching" school. *"Both for teachers and students, Martín was remembered for his great intellectual preparation and for his kindness as a person."* (F.I.)

In 1972 Martín took over the administration of the house. This was during the "Carnation Revolution" which ended dictatorship and triggered the disappearance of our works in Abrantes and Oporto. In Braga, the poor conditions of the house were dealt with, such as the Brothers' living conditions in their almost forty years of service to the orphans. The work involving the looms, carpentry, cultivating the orchard and the farm and the musical band all needed support from the very little money available from the school and from the community.

But these shortages were a problem for Martín. One of the most important objectives for him in those years, after caring for the health and education of the children, was to find funding that would allow for the work to be made even better. His friends at the university and his work in schools involved in the social services would be beneficial and allowed for the updating and improvement of the institution and made it more functional. In spite of the "*economic chaos of the time, he persuaded the government to provide a monthly subsidy on a per-student basis which increased each year. Little by little, the financial difficulties were resolved. What we have today comes from those beginnings*" (F.I.).

Martín always had the good of those children in his mind and on his lips. He loved them and was completely devoted to them. As he himself would proclaim as General Councillor later on to teachers, he lived to love them and to dedicate himself to them as "*very beloved children of God the Father.*"

In 1979 he had the opportunity for some very interesting and beneficial continuing formation. He participated in the second CIL session, which was focused on initial formation. Besides this deepening of Lasallian roots, he participated for a few months in a *Focolare* experience in Lopiano, close to the city of Florence, before the CIL session. *"At CIL, he shared his reflections on this valuable experience, first with the Spanish-speaking group, and then later on with the entire group by using the simultaneous translation equipment in the Chapter Hall"* (G.R.).

When he returned to Portugal after that year, a new work was opened in Lamego and Martín was put in charge of it. Along with Brothers Emilio Mazariegos and Joaquín Ferreira, excellent work was done for the girls in the school, young people in the city and for seminarians in the Diocese. The life of that community was very brief. The departure of the Brothers from there was very much felt by the Bishop and diocesan officials.

In the 1980s Lasallian vocations in Portugal, once very hopeful, were very scarce after the "Carnation Revolution" of 1974. The majority of young Brothers had left institutions, without really knowing why they did so, as they themselves would admit later. These were agitated times for the country, as democracy was debuting, colonial independence was happening, and reduction in the dangerousness of military service was on the rise. The result was that the approximately 23 young Portuguese Brothers were reduced to just three.

Given the political and social climate, there was need to have a work outside the Lasallian educational school mission which, at the time, would serve as a kind of mirror that would facilitate the work of vocations. A plan to restructure the house in

Barcelos was adopted, the house that had served as the Aspirancy and which, at that time, was reduced to a farm, and the new facilities would become a new Colegio de La Salle.

"It was up to Brother Martín, who acted as the Delegate for the Portuguese area, to deal with the necessary procedures before the Ministry, so that the Colegio de La Salle could get up and running, be subsidized totally by the government, and be integrated on the basis of Private and Cooperative Instruction." He contacted authorities, acquaintances, and he dealt with legislation. He restructured the facilities so that they met the minimum requirements to receive students. The school year began in 1981 - 1982. With all the fervor and outcome of the new work and new workers, a very motivated educational community and students enjoyed an enviable family pattern. It was an ideal beginning. *"Martín was the first Director, but not for long. In the middle of the second quarter he was tapped by the District to be the Visitor and this was confirmed by the Superior General, in spite of the appeal made by the Brothers in the area, seeing what would be lost..and the fact that the work had just begun"* (F.I.).

The Brothers knew of his human and religious values and about his religious leadership.

In spite of the fact of his having lived his entire apostolic life in Portugal, far geographically and politically from the life of the center of the District of Valladolid, the Brothers wanted to entrust him with the people and the ministries of the District by choosing him as the Provincial Visitor of the District of Valladolid.

Now Brother Martín had to leave the land that had adopted him and go out again in exodus to the land of the District. "I

remember the tears he shed as he said his goodbyes in Portugal. But he continued to love Portugal and he continued to help us, either from afar or with his many visits, so that the new creature would gain strength and grow strong in the right way. Today, with nearly 600 students, all of them attending gratuitously, Colegio de La Salle can well be considered as the work of Brother Martín. From heaven, he will continue watching over us and Portugal, which he left very sadly" (F.I.).

This was a time of uncertainty but it was also a time for much trust in and love for the Brothers. It was a time for great hope and a great spirit of work. Martín had always wanted to be a faithful follower of De La Salle. Like the Founder, at difficult times in life, Martín devoted himself to his Brothers: *"Here I am, for you called me."* In faith, he accepted District leadership as the clear will of God. His great concern was for the Brothers, and he appreciated and encouraged them, he dedicated himself to serve them in their growth, in helping them to overcome difficulty and in helping them to seek God's will. He was convinced that he was a tool in God's hands. That was why when he meditated about a situation, he considered his decision to be not his, but the Spirit's and the will of God. He offered these decisions to the Brothers and he encouraged them to accept them as such. *"He was aware of his possibilities and his worth and he placed both in service of the task at hand and of persons, as far as they were needed or requested. He was very discreet in everything that was deeply personal, especially if people were involved. His principal concern in District leadership was the community, spiritual, and religious facets of our life and he always seemed to be the first in carrying out those lines of spirituality that he sketched for the team and for the District."*

"I do not recall bitter complaints nor any hint of despair during his years as Visitor, in spite of difficulties and plans that he had to deal with. Usually, he accepted things in silence and with his favorite expression: May God be blessed!" (G. F.)

He committed himself, together with his province leadership team, very strongly to two specific tasks: to applying the Pastoral Ministry program, which was drawn up just before his mandate, and to the educational program and keeping the Brothers united and informed as well as to the schools at these critical times when the new Law of Education (LODE) was approved by the socialist government.

"When I went to Guatemala in 1985, I was the Visitor of Valladolid. I was brought to Madrid to catch the plane. As I was saying goodbye to Brother Guillermo Félix, I remember that he spoke to me of the gift of mission that God had given to me. He told Martín: 'Yours, Martín, is the gift of government.' He was right" (E. M.).

In 1986 he completed his four-year mandate as Visitor and he renewed for a second term, with overwhelming support from the Brothers in his District.

A few months later, he participated in the General Chapter as an elected capitulant.

Brother John Johnston had been elected Superior General and the way was open for him, providentially, to be a candidate for General Councillor. In a very short span of time he needed to take on this new course in his life and mission. Again, he accepted this new call and this new exodus as having come from God. He put his person and his knowledge in service of the Council community, in support of the leadership of Brother John Johnston.

The next 14 years were ones of service to the Institute as Councillor, with special responsibility for Spanish-speaking, Italian-speaking, and French-speaking countries and communities. He had this responsibility until the year 2000. *"His principal responsibilities in the Council were in the areas of spiritual life and community life in the Institute. He was the link between the Council and the communications service, especially in the publications of Institute Bulletins. He accompanied Brother John Johnston on his pastoral visits to Latin America and to Spain; Brother Genaro on his visits to Spain, Canada, and Latin America; Brother Eugène Bodel to France.*

In his second mandate as Councillor, he served as the link between the Council and the Regions in Italy and ARLEP (Spain and Portugal). He participated in the Shared Mission Commission and he was President of the Government Commission. He accompanied Brother Superior on his visits to ARLEP, Latin America and Italy. He was one of the principal authors of the document on "Shared Mission" (G. R.).

He lived entirely for the mission he had received: To support the community of the General Council and to work for the good governance of the Institute. *"I never heard him utter a critical word against anything or anyone. In his 14 years as Councillor he only spoke of his mission. He was very prudent in his speech and reserved in his responsibility" (E. M.).*

After the General Chapter of 2000, he returned to his District of Valladolid.

The previous twenty years in his career were very prolific, they included accompaniment and encouragement for Brothers and lay partners, young people and adults. He travelled exten-

sively throughout the Lasallian world, giving talks and offering words of encouragement, giving new direction to processes and channeling difficult situations in the Institute.

This new phase for him would take him to Colegio de Lourdes in the city of Valladolid. Colegio de Nuestra Señora de Lourdes is an institution with more than one-hundred years of history. Its reputation is great and well-deserved. It is a very popular place among the citizens of Valladolid. Martín was to spend five years in this school. His first year was a sabbatical year which included updating since he had been away from the academic world for 14 years. He had never taught in Spain since his entire teaching career had been spent in Portugal. Valladolid offered him the opportunity for updating. He earned a licentiate in theology, he supported the school and the community and, since he was now in Spain, he was able to be closer to his father, now well up in years and with very limited mobility. He had been taken care of by his brother who, in turn, also needed physical and moral support.

- For teachers, Martín was a Lasallian animator, respectful and at the same time a bold promoter of the Shared Mission: *"The teachers considered him, beyond his responsibility, as an authentic representative of the Institution, the living incarnation of what he preached and proposed"* (G. F.).
- For students, he constantly challenged them by his words and witness. *"He was very much involved in the school's pastoral ministry program, and as an animator of high school Christian groups. He attended countless meetings which he had planned with the young people. He was very much loved by all of them"* (R. A.)
- For the community, he was a constructive member. *"He tried to always see the good side of the Brothers in the com-*

munity; I never heard him utter anything negative about a Brother" (R. A.). Everyone found him to be a very important and significant point of reference.

Martín was very close to people and paid them a lot of attention, in their particular circumstances, he was optimistic and of good humor. He was always on top of difficulties, even serious ones, especially at critical times of legislative change. He knew how to accept reality with silence and reflection and to seek alternative ways for doors that had been closed in negotiations or in projects.

During the period of his administration, his father passed away. Martín had spent a lot of time with him in recent years, given the fact that his health had been deteriorating, and in order to relieve his brother Millán who had been looking after him.

As his three-year term as Director of the Colegio de Lourdes came to an end, Martín felt there was no longer any moral imperative to keep him there, and so he offered himself to the Superior General, he made himself available for any task that was necessary. Older now, he still felt the missionary call which, in his youth, had brought him to Portugal and would now lead him to anywhere he could be of use.

Initial Brother formation was Brother Martín's final mission.

Brother Superior wanted to take advantage of the depth of his spiritual and Lasallian life and his human qualities and to place these at the disposal of young people who were preparing to be Brothers. The presence and the witness of Martín, the Superior thought, would be a wonderful point of refer-

ence for those wishing to live the Lasallian ideal. His preparation in philosophy, theology, and Lasallian studies, on top of his Institute experience, would make him an ideal candidate to initiate novices in their knowledge of De La Salle, the history of the Institute, and Lasallian spirituality.

So it happened that Martín was asked to set out on a new exodus, to cross the Atlantic and to settle in Costa Rica, as an assistant to the master of novices at the San Miguel Febres Cordero novitiate in San Jerónimo de Moravia. The year was 2005 and his work in this novitiate and with these novices would serve as a prelude to his work at another novitiate that was about to open in the southern part of Latin America, in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

"From my point of view, Martín had two of the most wonderful qualities for work in formation. First, he always offered a view of faith and a positive reading of what was happening. A positive reading, not through ingenuousness, but through free will and conviction. He was able to keep a negative view of happenings and persons to himself and to always express the best interpretation, the most comprehensive one, and the most merciful, that would ennoble the spirit of people. Secondly, in his role as sub-Director of the novitiate, he was always willing to lend support. He left the initiative up to the Brother from the District itself who was younger. Under his guidance and trusting in him, he would offer his opinion when asked for it and he would keep it to himself when it was not required. These are wonderful qualities for someone working in formation and for a man who was filled with the Spirit. He insisted clearly and precisely on some basic points to improve the District, from his perspective: viable communities for young Brothers, a quality and intense vocation ministry program, solid formation for lay partners and training for formation

staff" (J. R.).

During these years he was very generous in his availability for the novitiate, giving retreats for the Brothers, and for training teaching staff. *"Many remember him for the series of conferences he gave when he was with us,"* says Brother Juan Carlos Maldonado. *"The Lasallian community of Bolivia is dismayed at his having left us. Day by day he generously and selflessly gave of himself in training novices for Bolivia, first as a member of the novitiate team in Costa Rica, and then more recently in the novitiate at Cochabamba, as sub-Director. At the beginning of the school year he gave a talk on teacher training for the teachers in the District, using 'The Conduct of Schools' and the 'Lasallian Educational Program' as a point of departure. It was a time for getting to know the teachers and sharing with them. Some schools asked him to speak and he always did so with his usual dedication.*

In the midst of sadness, we manifest our hope that today we have yet another intercessor before the Lord; Brother Martín's life was an ongoing testament of love for the vocation of the Brother of the Christian Schools; his love for the Institute was impressive and he stirred the hearts of those in formation as he shared with them the history of the Institute and the life of the Founder" (J. C. M.).

According to the Brother Director of the Novitiate and another very close friend, Brother Martín had opted to settle in Bolivia permanently and to complete his days there. He had begun the procedure to become a permanent resident. Because of that fact, the Brother Visitors of Bolivia and his relatives decided that he would be given a Christian burial in Bolivia. His remains are in the Brothers' mausoleum in the General Cemetery in Cochabamba.

We who knew him remember cordially and with great admiration the singular and communicative way he lived, fraternally and religiously, and the way he expressed himself, sharing his warmth spontaneously in his own special way which became, naturally, a type of encouragement for life.

- A man of faith, always facing up to the event of his life from a providential point of view and with notable generosity and courage.
- A man of community, those of us who lived with him enjoyed his attention, his services, and his fraternal affection.
- A man burning with zeal, who left an indelible memory wherever he was and on the persons who had the good fortune to know him well.

Brother Martín as seen by his Brothers and friends.

Messages of affection have arrived from various parts of the world as people remembered Martín, his person, his activity, the way he lived, from Bolivia and the USA, Argentina, England, Madrid, Rome, Bilbao, Lebanon.

Many messages spoke of "*...his enthusiasm, his generosity...one of the most authentic Brothers I have ever met.*"

Other messages emphasized "*his fidelity and generous dedication to others.*" Still others, "*his sensitive and delicate character, his attention to persons, his enviable generosity in service of the Lasallian mission, wherever it was needed by the District or by the Institute.*" Brothers who lived with him described him as "*a good friend and Brother and an extraordinary person...For us, those who remain, perhaps a special call so that his being a Brother and person may not die neither in memory nor in life.*" "A man of

strong conviction and, at the same time, very fraternal, who devoted a lot of years to the needy in Portugal where young people and Brothers were able to see in him a faithful servant of Jesus."

Brother Emilio Mazareigos was a companion of his when he was in Portugal. He writes: *"I remember him as an 'excellent' Brother. He himself knew his own worth and value. I admired the harmony of his person. He had a clear and well-focused mind. He was prudent and sure in his statements. His own thinking and motivation were marked by his life and his faith. He loved Jesus and he made the Gospel his way of life. He was familiar with the Founder and he knew 'he knew how to get around.' He was human but he was marked by God's will, it was the soul of his being a Brother.*

Martín was happy, tenacious, prudent, and sensitive. His feelings were strong but at the same time they were controlled and focused on ministry. He had a good, noble, true and steadfast heart. His friendship was solid and sure. He knew how to listen and, in the end, he spoke skillfully. I appreciated his will. Persevering in what he undertook, he was marked by that phrase from Saint Paul: 'Because God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but of courage, good judgment and love'; he liked to repeat that citation.

I felt he was a religious and a spiritual man. He was deeply convinced that faith was the atmosphere of life. Although prayer marked his life, LOVE and devotion to others was his natural 'atmosphere.' He knew how to give of himself and he did it with joy and happiness. His was a determined and joyful dedication. Happy and affectionate with the young, he knew how to approach them as a true Brother. He spoke with words, but even more so with his life and actions. He was passionate about the Founder. He often quoted Saint Teresa of Jesus. His love for

Mary was evident. He was, both transparent and restrained at the same time when he spoke about his spirituality."

Brother Gregorio de Frutos was his Auxiliary Visitor and a close friend when he led the District. *"His dedication to tasks was total but, in those tasks, his declared and real priority was persons. They were, for him, above any other consideration. He was affable, but not weak. He was demanding, but not harsh. That is how he was known and that is why the people with whom he worked were grateful for knowing him. He believed in what he was doing and he gave himself to it unreservedly both during his work in Portugal and when he was exercising his mission as Visitor. All his time was devoted to what he understood to be his duty. Even in exercising this duty he found a little time for attention to his family, to attending to his father's delicate situation and to support his brother. The immediate impression one would get, both for those who knew him and for complete strangers, was that he was a deeply religious person. He had achieved, at least I interpret it this way, a synthesis of having a robust personality and being sincerely religious, along the austere line we had all received in formation, except that in him this was the guideline for his action and the balance of his strong character."*

"From all the Brothers I have spoken with," said a classmate of his, *"and who knew Martín, I can reach only one conclusion, which may at first sight seem exaggerated: 'He was a saint today.' Believe me, that is my conclusion. All I spoke with highlighted as his outstanding qualities:*

- His approachability as regards everyone and his desire to understand the personal situation of each one. A man who lived simply and fraternally, which made him approachable and not in any way conceited; he was always willing to say yes to what was asked of him and for which he was responsible.*

- *A religious, deep man, who prayed constantly: trusting in Providence and totally abandoned to it. At difficult times in life, he found a trace of hope and he knew how to pass it on to others."*

Dear Brothers,

Our Brother Martín left us a testimony worthy of a great disciple of Jesus and of a true son of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. At the same time that we pray for his eternal repose next to the Founder and the Brothers who have preceded us, we trust that his memory and intercession will strengthen the faith and the zeal we need to carry forward in the ministry to which he devoted his entire life and which we continue to carry out.

