

A hand is shown sorting through a pile of small, light-colored wooden sticks. In the background, there is a pile of smooth, light-colored stones, some of which are painted with colorful designs, including what appears to be a rooster. The scene is set on a light-colored surface.

# ONE CALL, MANY VOICES

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PASTORAL LETTER TO THE BROTHERS

**Brothers of the Christian Schools**

December 25, 2016

PASTORAL LETTER TO THE BROTHERS

# **One call, many voices**

Brother Robert Schieler, FSC  
Brother Superior  
December 25, 2016

*You must give up your old way of life;  
you must put aside your old self,  
which gets corrupted by following illusory desires.  
Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution  
so that you can put on the new self  
that has been created in God's way,  
in the goodness and holiness of truth. (Eph. 4: 22-24)*

## The Spirit Whispers

Dear Brothers,

John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers, open to the grace bestowed on them through baptism, experienced a spiritual revolution caused by a progressive series of concrete responses to successive promptings of the Holy Spirit transmitted through “many voices” and events. This spiritual revolution led the Founder and his disciples to give up their old ways of life and, as a result, the Institute was born. The Holy Spirit continues to speak to us and urges us to put on the new self and announce the Good News to those who are far from salvation. Our concrete responses to the Spirit are giving birth to a renewed Institute.

Salvation – whole, safe, healthy – is God’s desire for the children and young people entrusted to our care. We Brothers are specifically called to bring to fullness our baptismal commitment through dedicating our entire lives to procure the glory of God by insuring the wellbeing of our students: “You must not doubt that it is a great gift of God, this grace he has given you to be entrusted with the instruction of children, to announce the Gospel to them and to bring them up in the spirit of religion”.<sup>1</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the source of the “one call” (to procure the glory of God) of de La Salle and his companions. The

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<sup>1</sup>: Meditation 201.1.



awareness of the call was neither loud, nor direct nor sudden. Many voices – Adrian Nyel, Nicolas Roland, Nicolas Barré, Madame Maillefer – and many events – the plight of the sons of the artisans and the poor, the need to train the teachers, the rendezvous at Parménie - imperceptibly guided the Founder from one commitment to another. “In the early days in Rheims, it was Père Barré

who played the part of provocateur, in Parménie, it was a humble shepherdess. But in either case, both Père Barré and Soeur Louise were the voices by which the Holy Spirit made Himself known to and recognized by Jean-Baptiste de La Salle.”<sup>2</sup>

Today, the Spirit’s “one call” to us Brothers who live in fraternal association for the purpose of responding joyfully, creatively and courageously to the human and Christian educational desires of poor, vulnerable and excluded young people is comparable to the foundational invitation: “Deeply moved by the human and spiritual distress ‘of the children of artisans and the poor,’ and in response to the

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<sup>2</sup> Schneider, FSC, Jean-Louis. *The Rendez-Vous on the Hill: Parménie 1714 – 2014*, Navis, France, 2014, p. 88.

call of God, John Baptist de La Salle and his first Brothers made a lifelong commitment to God to provide these children with a human and Christian education, and so extend the glory of God on earth.”<sup>3</sup>

Brothers, we are ministers of God; we are ambassadors of Jesus Christ. *For what purpose are we here? What whispered message is the Spirit sending us? Whose voices are calling us? What events are summoning us? How can we, through the apostolic ministry of human and Christian education, best extend the glory of God on earth?*



We know, of course, that “Those who instruct others...are only the voice of the One who disposes hearts to accept Jesus Christ and his holy teaching. The one who disposes them, according to Saint Paul, can only be God, who imparts to humans the gift of speaking of him”.<sup>4</sup> We also

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<sup>3</sup> Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Rule*, Rome, 2015, Art. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Meditation 3.1.

know that it is up to us to constantly adapt, improve and enrich the way we announce the Gospel to our students. We must commit to a never-ending process of openness to the Holy Spirit breaking into our lives.

The Spirit subtly breaks into our lives through “many voices” and events. The Gospel, our first and principal rule, the Church, our students, the cry of the poor, the culture of violence, the ministerial co-responsibility of our Partners, and the generosity of young people are transmitters of the invitation to be disturbed and to change for the sake of the Kingdom.

We Brothers are leaders in sharing with the entire educational community the Christian duty of announcing the Gospel to the poor.

Our religious consecration leads us to support our Partners with whom we work in the mission so that they become authentic protagonists in the Lasallian mission. In this communion of Brothers and Partners, there is an inspiring pivotal point: the Lasallian charism. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. As Pope Francis notes, charisms “are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather, they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the center which is Christ, and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse.”<sup>5</sup>

Brothers, we recognize the various Lasallian vocations, each

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<sup>5</sup> Circular 469, *The Documents of the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter*, 30 November 2014, 2.4.

with a specific identity, and, at the same time, we are consciously aware that we are at the heart of the Lasallian Family, the first guardians of the Lasallian charism, a source of inspiration for all Lasallians and especially responsible for sharing our pedagogical and spiritual heritage with all those with whom we work (cf. *The Rule* 154, 157). We are convinced that the Lord still calls young men to be Brothers and so we consider our active involvement in the pastoral ministry of vocations to be a source of vitality and a pledge for the future (cf. *The Rule* 159). *How are you and your community responding, actively and concretely, to the revitalization of the Institute? How do you mediate God's invitation to young men to serve the poor as Brothers of the Christian Schools?*

## **The Poor Cry**

The cry of the poor jolted the young John Baptist de La Salle and woke him up to their need for a practical, Gospel-centered education. The faith-driven dynamic that socially and spiritually transported him to a new way of bringing the Good News to those on the margin found its inspiration in the life of Jesus himself – he who was born on the periphery and lived his entire life as an outsider and in a constant state of social ambiguity. Like Jesus, de La Salle often found himself in trouble with the religious authorities because he put himself on the side of the sons of the underdog and the exploited.<sup>6</sup> *Are you and your*

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<sup>6</sup> Inspired by Gittins, CSSp, Anthony. *A Presence that Disturbs*, Liguori/Triumph, 2002 and Luke 9: 58.



*community willing to takes such risks for the sake of the Kingdom?*

Today, the Gospel, the pressing needs of poor children and the urgings of the Church clearly indicate that we are “are absolutely obliged to pursue the common good, because faith in God demands a fundamental investment of each one in the well-being of the other.”<sup>7</sup>

Brothers, we and our Partners “cannot sit idly and remain on the sidelines. There is an urgent need to find new roadmaps that encourage creativity and innovation in pursuit of the common good. The common good we are pursuing is an inclusive and sustainable growth and development in economic, political, social and spiritual spheres. This common good requires participatory processes, shared responsibilities, and accountabilities by all Regions, Districts and Sectors.”<sup>8</sup>



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<sup>7</sup> Grey, Carmody. *The Tablet*, 2 July 2016, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Circular 470, *Toward the Year 2020-2021*, Rome, 24 March, 2015, p. 11.

Our Lasallian commitment to the common good, with a preferential and practical focus on the vulnerable and the poor, is a Gospel-driven movement of going “beyond borders”. From the outset we must acknowledge that the dynamic of “beyond borders” is complex, labor intensive, upsetting and Christ-centered. It is also an inherent element of the dynamic of Christian conversion. *Can you describe experiences in your personal life and in the life of your community of getting up and going “beyond borders”?*

“Beyond borders” is a complex, and at times, a frightening dynamic because it involves our human condition with its entire splendor and with all its shame. To think that poor people are extraordinarily happy, innocent and free of malice is to dangerously contradict our Christian belief that all men and women are in need of Christ’s saving actions. It is equally important to know that *“outside of the poor there is no salvation”*.<sup>9</sup> A quick read of Matthew’s account of the Last Judgment clearly makes the point (MT 25:31-46).

We do not go to the poor to save them; we go to the poor so that they may save us. Again, I urge you to take some time to reflect on St. Matthew’s explicit account of Jesus’ command to provide practical responses to the concrete basic needs of poor people. A Christian’s proactive involvement in providing for the basic needs of poor people is nonnegotiable; in fact, our salvation depends on our personal relationship with the hungry, the sick, the

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<sup>9</sup> Sobrino, SJ, Jon. *No Salvation outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays*, Orbis Books, 2008.

homeless, the imprisoned, the outsider, the immigrant, and the refugee.

Lord, when did I see you illiterate and teach you to read? Bullied by mean spirited classmates and protect you? Hyperactive and disruptive and treat you patiently and kindly? Trapped in a vicious circle of poverty and ignorance and provide you with a human and Christian education? Denied an education because you are an immigrant or a refugee and welcomed you to my school?

Before you continue to read this letter, I invite you to take some time with Matthew's text. Can you identify specific poor people with whom you have a personal relationship? In the depths of your heart, can you truly identify with the sheep? Are you often ambivalent in your dealings with poor people? What more can you do to insure that poor children and young people have the opportunity to hear the Gospel announced in a Lasallian setting?

The “life or death” necessity of Christian conversion was the driving force behind John Baptist de La Salle’s intuition to found the Christian Schools. His constant contact with the Word of God and the world of the poor convinced him that God “wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth” (1 Tm 2:4). That is why he gathered and formed a group of teachers who, quite surprisingly and over time, became the Brothers of the Christian Schools. *What is the life and death necessity today*

*that you hear in the voices of the vulnerable and poor? What are your personal and communal responses?*



Christian conversion and going “beyond borders” are upsetting movements. For many, border crossings can also be social, cultural and geographic. Right now, the Church and the Institute are urging

us to get up and walk with the outsiders. Pope Francis tells us to go out into the field to be with, and take on, the smell of the sheep. To those of us – Brothers and Partners – who are ministers of God and ambassadors of Jesus Christ - our Holy Father’s words are more than subtle invitations; they are orders from the Pontiff, the “Bridge Builder”. Our own 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter enjoins us “to respond boldly and creatively to the urgent needs of the vulnerable (immigrants, refugees, the homeless, unemployed youth, etc.).”<sup>10</sup>

Personal, cultural, social and geographic border crossings are upsetting. Our comfort zones are disturbed; personal abilities are stretched; cultural and religious values and traditions are upended; academic and social prestige is threatened. The lives of John Baptist de La Salle, Mother Theresa, Oscar Romero and so many others paint vivid

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<sup>10</sup> Circular 469, *The Documents of the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter*, 30 November 2014, 3.26.

pictures of heroic sacrifices, lots of disappointments and over-turned presuppositions.

Such models of Christian behavior are all around us – Brothers and Lasallian women and men who evidence joy, not because what they do is easy or free of stress and anxiety, but because they see with the eyes of faith, consider people and events in the light of the Gospel and commit to improving the lot of the poor.<sup>11</sup>

In our own Institute we see a clear trend of collaboration between Districts, Regions and other religious orders: Brothers and Partners providing educational opportunities to children with severe emotional problems, offering a safe and welcoming scholastic environment to refugees fleeing violence and oppression, giving hope to people in war torn countries through training programs for teachers, midwives and nurses.

Brothers, echoing Pope Francis, I want to call your attention to the danger of being blinded by self-absorption. Concern about maintaining institutions that give us a sense of security and prestige can hold us back from being risk-takers for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Staying focused exclusively on our own mission, of conserving the past, protecting our institutions and legitimizing the present can blind us to Jesus' mission of bringing the Good News to the afflicted.<sup>12</sup> Issues such as these can provoke

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<sup>11</sup>. Cf. Mannath, SDB, Joseph. A Closer Look, 2001, pp. 32 - 33.

<sup>12</sup>. Inspired by Sujita, Sister Mary, SND. "Solidarity for Life on the Periphery". USIG Assembly, Rome, May 9 – 13, 2016.

defensiveness; however, considered through the eyes of faith, they can suddenly wake us up to exciting initiatives for bringing Christian hope to neglected and desperate young people.

In your community's conversations, meetings with Partners and other Lasallian gatherings it is important to listen attentively to one another, to hear the cry of the poor and, once again, to the voice of the capitulants to the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter: "We want to respond boldly and creatively to the urgent needs of the vulnerable who are found "on the borders."<sup>13</sup>



At community, District and regional meetings and assemblies, I ask you to consciously recall God's presence

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<sup>13</sup>. Circular 469, *The Documents of the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter*, 30 November 2014, 3.26.

and to invoke the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that gathered together in one place and with a common objective, like the disciples on Pentecost, you and your Partners can prayerfully examine your present ministries and boldly consider new initiatives. I ask you to do this for the purpose of insuring that what you are presently doing is the best avenue for announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the poor. It is my hope that all Brothers and Partners, with our shared wisdom and enlightened by the Gospel, might be guided to see that, in some cases, there really could be a better way to bring salvation to those on the outside.

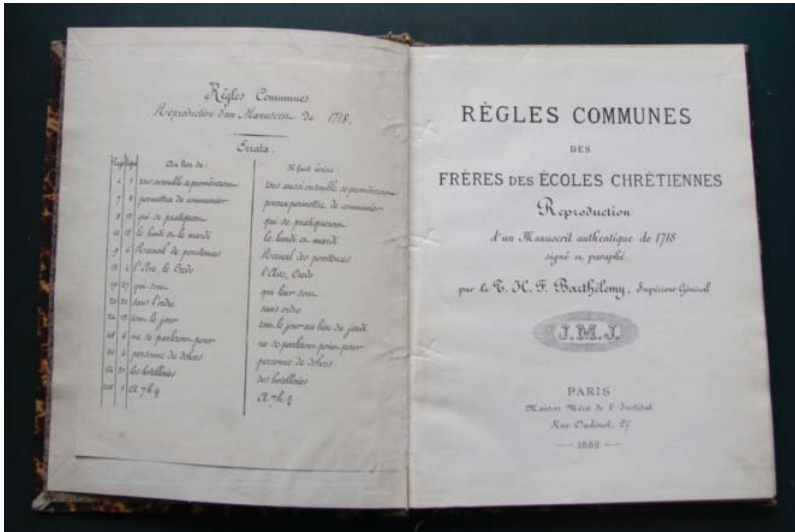
## **Our Partners Speak**

Today, the Brothers pursue the Lasallian mission in partnership with men and women who recognize the relevance of the Lasallian charism. Our Partners are also invited to carry out their mission as a witness, a service and a communion. (cf. *The Rule* 13)

The *Rule* not only recognizes co-responsibility for the mission but also asserts that Brothers and Partners “ensure the vitality of this charism by creating or developing organizational, formation and research structures, in which each one can deepen their understanding of their own vocation and of the Lasallian mission.”<sup>14</sup> *Are you familiar with these new opportunities? Have you personally participated in any of these exciting endeavors?*

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<sup>14</sup> Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Rule*, Rome, 2015, Art. 19.



When your community, District or Delegation are organizing strategies for vocation promotion in service with the poor, I ask that you encourage your Partners to join you in inviting young men to seriously consider our way of life. The collaboration and insights of our Partners will help all of us to continue to respond with burning zeal to the calls of the Lord, the Church and the world for the purpose of giving glory to God. (cf. *The Rule* 159, 160).

Brothers, we are convinced that the witness of our consecrated life in community is a sign and an instrument of God’s plan. By being Brothers among ourselves, with our Partners, students and our sisters and brothers everywhere, we make the Reign of God visible. (Cf. *The Rule* 15)

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century Institute, the “many voices” of our Partners are an essential component of our listening to the



signs of the times and discerning the will of God for the Lasallian mission. Consequently, the women and men with whom we work should be invited to see their educational service as an expression of a vocation for the ministry of human and Christian education. A senior Brother recently wrote the following to me:

The living Institute of today gives witness to the prominence of the lay vocation in ministry, a better educated membership in the Church, an influx of colleagues and volunteers who share our enthusiasm for mission. Brotherhood and sisterhood have been proclaimed as the social foundation of the Christian community. The wisdom of our Founder is now seen as prescient in the lay ministry of education and catechetics through baptism and confirmation, to represent the leading evangelical edge of the total Church. For this we must pledge our support to re-found the Institute in the realities of today. It is to this cause that senior Brothers and their younger confreres must dedicate themselves through prayer and discernment toward the future God wishes his Church and Institute to take.<sup>15</sup>

I realize that the effective incorporation of Partners into all levels of our ministry of human and Christian education is conditioned by social, religious and political realities. Whatever those realities are in your District or Delegation, our Partners are clearly indispensable for the Lasallian mission today.

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<sup>15</sup> Coogan, FSC, Colman, District of Eastern North America.

It is enlightening, Brothers, to consider the development of our Lasallian understanding of shared mission. Thirty years ago a modest sub-title in *The Rule* (1987) – “A Shared Mission” – became a bold initiative in the life of the Institute. A new subtitle in the current *Rule* (2015) – “Inspired by the same charism” – continues carrying us forward with greater intentionality. During the last three decades, new organizational structures have come into being: District mission councils and assemblies; two international mission assemblies; Lasallian formation programs for Brothers and Partners; research opportunities; and, the International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU). In addition, a variety of publications help to sharpen our understanding of the contemporary Lasallian reality, for example: *The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission* (1997), *Being Brothers Today* (2004); *Associated for the Lasallian Mission... An Act of Hope* (2011); *They Will Call Themselves Brothers* (2013); and the collection of *MEL Bulletins*.

The reflection on *The Rule*, organized opportunities for sharing and planning and the various Institute publications are some of the “many voices” through which the Holy Spirit today continues to inspire and guide both Brothers and Partners. *How do you and your community make use of these opportunities as starting points for reflection and conversation about our common life and our shared ministry?*

## The Gospel Shouts

Bearing in mind that our first vow is that of association for the educational service of the poor, we must remember that the source and foundation of this primary vow is the person of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Our belief in the Gospel and our progressive conversion to Christ impel us to the poor. The call of the 41<sup>st</sup> General Chapter reminded us that “our conversion will not be true if we do not commit ourselves more to the poor. In this realm it will not suffice for us encourage works which welcome all types of marginalized and delinquent populations. In addition to the imperative need to expand this kind of work to the limit of our possibilities, the Institute’s first obligation continues to be to invent a new type of school for the growing number of abandoned young people.”<sup>16</sup>

It is my conviction, Brothers, that our affirmation of the universal call to holiness, the formation of our Partners in Lasallian spirituality and pedagogy, the recovery of the centrality of our vow of association and the practical consequence of a renewed commitment to the educational service with the poor are directly linked to our own personal and communal conversion to Jesus Christ and the Gospel. These transformative movements are born of the Holy Spirit and are potentially preparing the way to a revitalized Institute. *Are you and your community realizing this potential on the local level?*

The Founder insists, Brothers, that in order for the

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<sup>16</sup> Circular 422, *The Documents of the 41<sup>st</sup> General Chapter*, 1 July, 1986, p. 26.

Institute to experience new life, “the change which must be wrought in our case is an internal one. We must be completely transformed by the light and fullness of grace, and by the possession of God’s Holy Spirit.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, when I speak of transforming structures, creating new strategies and going beyond borders, I not only refer to geography and institutions, but also, and primarily, to the “restructuring” of human beings; the “restructuring of our hearts”. I am talking about my transformation and your transformation.

The quality and effectiveness of our personal and communal responses to Jesus’ proclamation- *Repent and believe in the Gospel* (Mk 1:14) – will determine the extent to which the Institute is truly revitalized. In other words, Brothers, you and I are responsible for the life or decline of the Institute. *How are you and your community consciously engaged in the dynamic of spiritual revolution? How are you proactively working to infuse the Institute with new life?*

There is evidence that many of us are indeed moving in the right direction. A noted Jesuit scholar shares his insights with us:

My own sense is that the entire Lasallian Family has done a remarkable job in the past four decades.... The return to the original impulses of your founding revived a concerned for the education of the economically marginalized, as well as new concerns for the poor in the southern Hemisphere....

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<sup>17</sup> Meditation 152.2.



Arguably the most impressive of the many ways in which the Lasallian community took stock of itself and “adapted to the times” ... was the expansion of precisely who was included in the community itself. The proportion of Brothers involved in running the Lasallian schools dramatically shifted, with a much higher percentage of lay colleagues in the classroom and administration.

And he concludes by saying:

My best advice is that the Lasallian community emulates the leadership of its Founder. The Lasallian community is primed to take a leading role in the prophetic return [to its sources]: Why? Because you are a tradition built on a non-hierarchical understanding of Church witness.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Massa, SJ, Robert. “The Lasallian Tradition and American Culture: What is to be done?” Keynote address, 2016 LASSCA Conference, pp. 13 – 14.

Yes, we are primed to assume our prophetic role. John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers introduced a new way of being Church. We Brothers and our Partners continue that legacy today.

Furthermore, we read in *The Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church Today*:

Religious Brothers, in facing the present, have to risk asking the same question as Paul: “What should I do Lord?” but this question is only sincere when preceded by the willingness to “get up”, because that is the first response required (cf. Acts 22:10.16). In other words, fidelity to the present time requires personal willingness to change and to be disturbed. Without it, there is little value in renewing structures.<sup>19</sup>



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<sup>19</sup> CICLSAL, *The Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città Vaticano, 2015, p. 46.

So, Brothers, each and every one of us must continue to be willing to “get up”, change and be disturbed. Like, John Baptist de La Salle we must be attentive to receiving successive messages from God (cf. *The Rule*, 32.1, 65.2,78). Today, Jesus, the Gospel, our students, the poor and our Partners are among the “many voices” through which God is inviting us to revisit our “one call” to procure, in association, his glory through the apostolic ministry of human and Christian education.

Today, our personal, communal and institutional responses can give birth to a renewed Institute. *How are you and your community fostering new life? How do you and your community clearly manifest the joy of the Gospel to your students, Partners and all whom you encounter?*

Before continuing with this letter, I invite you to pause and pray with me:

*The cry of the poor, your cry, resounds through the ages:*

*“Will you let me in?”*

*Give us hearts that break open*

*When our brothers and sisters turn to us for a human and  
Christian education*

*With that same cry.*

*Then surely all these things will follow:*

*Our communities and ministries will not be deaf to their  
voices.*

*Our eyes will see grace instead of a threat.*

*Our tongues will not be silenced but will instead advocate.*

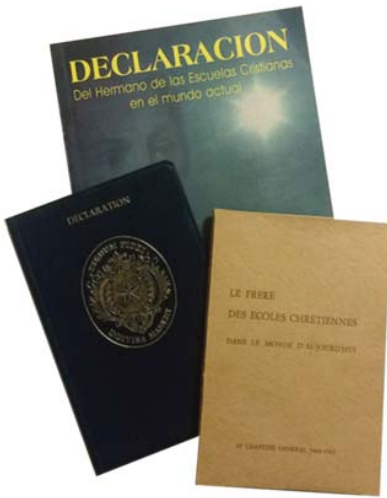
*And hands will reach out-*

*Announcing the Gospel to the poor,*

*Welcoming the vulnerable and excluded,  
And we, slowly and imperceptibly,  
Will find ourselves transformed and revitalized,  
Having put on the new self created in God's way.*

(Adapted from A prayer for Refugees, Catholic Relief Services)

## **We listen attentively**



So “many voices” require that we tune our ears to wisdom and our hearts to understanding so that we may clearly perceive what God is communicating to us. (cf. Pr 2:2-3) Constant contact with the Word of God sharpens our hearing and enables our hearts and minds to test everything and hold on to what is good (1 Th 5:19). The

Word is what enables us to understand people, events and the “many voices” in relation to Jesus’ salvific plan. *Do you spend sufficient time each day with the Word of God? How does your community provide opportunity for sharing the experience of God?* (cf. The Rule, 46).

In second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, John Baptist de La Salle listened attentively and discerned God’s will for him. Fifty



years ago, the capitulants to the 39<sup>th</sup> General Chapter attentively listened to the voice of the Second Vatican Council and gave us *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*. I invite you, Brothers, to return to the Declaration's introductory statement:

To renew oneself spiritually means that the Brother can recognize in his personal life as a Brother, in all the demands of human existence, in his vocation to faith and baptism, in his membership in the Church, in his commitment to the Institute, and in the whole complexity of his daily life as a human being, as a Christian and as a religious, that there is operating the unceasing initiative and love of the Father who guides, gives himself, and forgives.<sup>20</sup>

A reflective reading of the preceding paragraph could reignite in you the desire to bring new life to your community and the Institute. Brothers, while we are committed to welcome and accompany those who wish to share the Lasallian charism, we, through our consecration lived out in community; make a specific contribution to the mission. We witness to God's preference for the poor, to Christian fraternity and to fidelity (cf. *The Rule*, 11).

I believe that our witness is more necessary than ever; it is a kind of invitation to our students and Partners to a continual transcending of all that is temporal (cf. *A Declaration*, 26.3). An appropriate way to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*, 1967, 3.3.

anniversary of the prophetic voice of the Declaration would be to intensify your efforts for personal and community renewal and your work in the pastoral ministry of vocations.

This year, I concluded the pastoral visit to PARC, and I have been blessed to see that the renewing spirit of this *Declaration* is still bearing fruit in many Districts. As an example, I would like to highlight my visit to Vietnam for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the District. In 1866, Brother Jamie and five other Brothers embarked at Toulon for the journey to Saigon. The seeds sown by these first missionaries instilled a deep spirit of faith and zeal in the Vietnamese Brothers. This spirit carried them through tragic and brutal years of war and the ensuing reunification in 1975.

Our Vietnamese Brothers exhibited heroic virtues during the long years of nationalization and reorganization. Eventually, a profound union of hearts filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. *A Declaration*, 9.1), paved the way for the reopening of the juniorate, postulancy, novitiate and scholasticate. In 2006, in collaboration with the Vietnamese Brothers of San José, California (USA), the Lasallian presence was reestablished in Cambodia.

Our Vietnamese Brothers, their ears tuned to wisdom and their hearts to understanding, are able to adapt and renew because they are ready to heed and to discern the challenges that the Holy Spirit addresses to them through the mediation of “many voices” and events. (cf. *A Declaration*, 8.2) I believe that the fidelity, steadfastness, creativity and



obvious apostolic zeal of our Vietnamese Brothers can speak to all of us. Their experiences can help us to put into perspective our own challenges and difficulties and be a source of inspiration as we search for new ways to announce the Gospel to the poor.

In addition to celebrating with the Brothers and Lasallian Family in Vietnam, our “one call” also took the Brothers General Councilor and me to other areas in the Pacific Asian Region (PARC) during the pastoral visit. We indeed listened to “many voices”. I am quick to point out, however, that rather than cacophony, we discovered Lasallian harmony. In the Region’s Districts and Delegation – Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan & Papua New Guinea, Colombo, India, Vietnam, and Lasallian East Asia – the purpose and spirit of the Institute are audible and flourishing.

I was encouraged to see that in all levels of decision-making these Districts are returning to the poor (A Declaration, 34.4). The motivation of this return is clearly rooted in the Gospel; however, the practicalities are necessarily conditioned by sociopolitical realities. I was reminded, too, that the effective partnership with men and women who recognize the relevance of the Lasallian charism (The Rule 13) has many varied expressions.

The “many voices” of the Visitors (the Founder would perhaps refer to them as “the principal Brothers”) and their attentive listening also significantly contribute to our contemporary response borne of our “one call”. In June, responding to my personal invitation, the experienced Visitors, Auxiliary Visitors, Delegates and Presidents gathered in Rome (New Visitors met with the General Council and me in 2015). The conversations with the Visitors are helping the Council and me prepare for the 2018 Intercapitular Assembly.

The Visitors, as guarantors of the unity and vitality of the Districts, have an awesome responsibility. They are charged with guaranteeing to each Brother the freedom to live his relationship to God in a vision of faith, hope and love, continuously renewed by an authentic life of personal and community prayer. (cf. *A Declaration*, 19.2)

The Visitors, with all of us, are engaged in the spiritual revolution of putting aside the old self so as to put on the new self. They, like you, need the support and accompaniment of their Brothers. Your “many voices”

assist your Visitor as he discerns the best way to serve you, your communities and ministries.

Finally, I remind you of the words that our recently canonized Saint Brother Solomon addressed to his sister a few days before his martyrdom:

*Let us endure with joy and thanksgiving the crosses and afflictions that he will send us.*

*As for myself, I am not worthy to suffer for him,  
For I have not yet encountered any problems,  
And yet there are so many others who are suffering.*

Brother Solomon adds his voice to the many others that are calling us to joyful and grateful fidelity to the demands of the Gospel and our commitment to live our entire lives as Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Brothers, my intention is that this letter encourages you and your community in your progressive conversion to Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Every day, conscious of the holy presence of God and enlightened by the Word, I hope that you attentively, and with discernment, listen to the “many voices” coming your way and joyfully and enthusiastically respond to our “one call”.

“To procure the glory of God as far as I shall be able and as you will require of me” (The *Rule* 25): the “one call” to live our lives as Brothers of the Christian Schools. “Many voices” – the Gospel, the poor, our students, The Rule, our Partners, *A Declaration*, community meetings, District and



*Pierre Salomon*

Regional assemblies, Chapters, local and world events, the liturgy and so many others – through which the Holy Spirit, who renews the face of the earth, is speaking to us.

This symphony of “many voices”, listened to with the spirit of faith and zeal, with our ears tuned to wisdom and our hearts to understanding, directs us to the path of spiritual conversion. It is up to us, Brothers, to embark on the journey and determine to have a share in the personal and communal work of putting on the new self.

Together let us pray that our response to the “one call” to procure the glory of God in association and through the apostolic ministry of Christian education might continue

to be enriched by our attentive listening to the “many voices” through which God’s Holy Spirit speaks to us:

*Come, Holy Spirit, Creator blest,  
and in our souls take up Thy rest;  
come with Thy grace and heavenly aid  
to fill the hearts which Thou hast made.*

*Oh, may Thy grace on us bestow  
the Father and the Son to know;  
and Thee, through endless times confessed,  
of both the eternal Spirit blest.*



*Bro. Robert Schieler*

Brother Robert Schieler  
*Brother Superior*

