

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

IN MEMORIAM

Br. Pedro Ruedell, F.S.C.



SIGNUM FIDEI



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Brother Pedro Ruedell, F.S.C. (Florentino Martinho)

Teacher, Educator, Catechist, Director, Visitor and General Councilor
in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools



A life lived in the footsteps of the Lord 1927 – 2018

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
General Council
Rome, Italy



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Introduction

On September 11, 2018, Brother Pedro Ruedell passed away in the Mother of God hospital in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil at the age of 90. The purpose of this circular letter is to get to know him better and, at the same time, to express thanks to God for the gift of his life which was lived in service of the District, the Institute, Consecrated Religious Life and the Church.

Brother Pedro was born on December 28, 1927 in Santo Cristo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. He professed his first vows as a Brother of the Christian Schools on March 19, 1945 and his final vows on January 17, 1952.

As a De La Salle Brother he took on diverse responsibilities: teacher, catechist, musician, he worked with young Brothers in formation, he was a researcher, writer and Director both in religious communities as well as in educational communities. He was Visitor of the District of Porto Alegre, Brazil, from 1972 to 1976, and he was a General Councilor in the Institute from 1976 to 1986.

Brother Pedro was one of those persons who leave their mark wherever they go. His simple, affable, introverted, thoughtful and insightful manner helped him to win over the Brothers, Lasallian partners, other religious and members of the Church in general. Through his living out of the Gospel, he showed God's love by means of the Lasallian charism.

Brother Pedro understood the profound changes in the Church which came about as a result of the Second Vatican Council which the Church asked of religious life and the Institute and he took on the risk of living them out deeply. He also knew how to take the pulse of the signs of the times of an epoch that was experiencing its deep contradictions, tensions and ambiguities. During those times of change and searching he was delighted to be the *heart, memory and guarantor* of the charism received from Saint John Baptist de La Salle. In our own times – as restless as were his – his life invites us to give witness to and to make manifest the importance and the value of the Lasallian charism for new generations.

My special thanks to Brothers Israel José Nery and Edgar Genuino Nicodem as well as to all those who shared their experiences about Brother Pedro in the drafting of this circular letter.

Brother Robert Schieler, FSC
Superior General

1. The European origin of the family

Like many other Brazilian families, Brother Pedro Ruedell's family was part of the great migration that occurred mainly during the second half of the 19th century. His grandparents were originally from the region of Hunsrück in the area known as Prussia.¹

In 1865 his paternal grandfather, Jacob Ruedell, when he was only 20 years of age, left his parents, siblings and native land, and set out in search of a new life in the southern region of Brazil. Once there, Jacob went to Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul (RS) where he registered as a migrant and received some directions which led him to a property where he would work and reside: Dois Irmãos, located some 60 kilometers from Porto Alegre.

As is natural for migrants, particularly those who come to Brazil, once they find themselves in a new country, they establish contacts between themselves and support one another. It was during this process of socialization that

¹ A good part of the data regarding Brother Pedro Ruedell's family cited in this Circular was taken from the book of Father Aloisio Ruedell, *History and Genealogy of a Family: Jacob Ruedell and Helena Horn*, and from the biographies of other De La Salle Brothers who were also members of the Ruedell family: Otto and Bruno. PARMAGNANI, Jacob José: *Irmão Bruno Ruedell (1920 - 1998)*, *A De La Salle Religious, an example of simplicity, apostolic zeal and piety*. Lasallian Life Collection, 59 – Gráfica and La Salle Publishers, Canoas-RS, 1999; KIRCH, José Odillo: *Brother Otto Ruedell (1916 - 2011)*, *De La Salle Religious, Lasallian Life Collection*, 64 -Gráfica and La Salle Publishers, Canoas, RS, 2002.

Jacob met young Helena Horn who, like himself, had been born in Prussia. The two were engaged and they married on July 27, 1865, the same year in which Jacob arrived in Brazil. Their first child was born shortly afterwards and she was named Elizabeth. The family decided to move to Arrojo do Meio in the interior of the same state of Rio Grande do Sul. In Arrojo do Meio they had eleven more children, the sixth of which was Theodoro Ruedell who was to become the father of our Brother Pedro.

On his mother's side, Brother Pedro's origins also can be traced back to Prussia. His grandparents Joseph Brod and Anna Maria Wagner emigrated to Brazil as a family. They settled in Rio Grande do Sul and were farmers. In addition, they managed the mill that provided milling services to other farmers. It is in these circumstances that the second child, Pedro Brod, met Augusta Behnen, both Prussians by birth, and they decided to marry. That marriage produced nine children, and the first-born, Anna Bernardina, would become the mother of Brother Pedro.

2. A Christian family, a cradle for vocations

Religious life in Brazil was to welcome four of the nine children from the *Ruedell-Brod* marriage. *Otto, Bruno and Pedro* entered the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. *Hilda*, the fifth child of Otto and Bruno, entered the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate. She passed away the day after her perpetual profession on January 26, 1945, due to typhus which she contracted through her tireless dedication to the sick.

This family generosity of the *Ruedell-Brod* marriage which dedicated three young men to the Lord, would be recognized by Brother Superior General Denis-de-Jesus who, in 1953, awarded a certificate of Benefaction to Theodoro Ruedell, the father of Brother Pedro.

The three Ruedell Brothers distinguished themselves by their total dedication to their vocation and to the mission of the De La Salle Brothers, demonstrating in their religious lives the integration of their communal fraternity as they carried out their educational mission. They did this without neglecting their personal talents and abilities which they put at the service of the mission, especially their talents in music and theater.

3. The path of the Lasallian vocation

The first Lasallian vocation “recruiter” in Brazil was one of the pioneer Brothers who arrived in 1907, Brother Bernardo Bunne.² Those who remember him describe him as being tall, strong and he got along well with people. Dressed in his religious habit and mounted on a spirited horse, he would visit the neighborhoods of German immigrants to promote the vocation of the religious educator in the style of John Baptist de La Salle.

His arrival in the various schools did not go unnoticed; on the contrary, he impressed the children and young people in the area. He would visit classes and present the story of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers. He would present the story again at the end of Sunday Mass. Brother was a bearer of God's call for those adolescents; some of them were moved by God to follow His Son Jesus as religious educators,

² Brother Bernardo or Martyr-Bernard: (Bernhardt Bunne: born in Germany in 1879 and died in Brazil in 1966) was the youngest of the first group of European Brothers sent to begin the Lasallian mission in Brazil in 1907. He became a Brazilian citizen in 1931. He participated in the General Chapters of 1928 and 1934. He was a teacher, Director, writer and he worked in formation. He was Visitor from 1925 to 1936. In 1957, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Lasallian presence in Brazil he received, along with Brother Marcel Silvain, the award of the Order of the Southern Cross from the Brazilian government, for services rendered in favor of Lasallian education. Vocational pastoral ministry for Brazilians of Italian origin was carried out by Brother Anastase Paschale, a Frenchman who lived for a time in Italy. He resided at the Our Lady of Carmel School in Caxias do Sul, RS.

devoted to the very poor and needy. The energy which Brother Bernardo put into his work in Lasallian vocations made possible the spread of the knowledge of who the De La Salle Brothers were in this area of Brazil.

In 1925 Brother Bernardo Bunne was appointed Visitor of the District of Brazil and that meant that he had to leave his vocation promotion work. He was replaced by Brother Buenaventura de Jesús,³ a former Prussian soldier during the First World War. Following the lead of his predecessor, he visited the schools in various towns. In one of his trips to Santo Cristo in 1927 he met Otto Ruedell, who was barely fifteen years old when he expressed interest in the Brothers' vocation. Brother Buenaventura visited the family and spoke with the boy's parents. He congratulated them for the religious fervor that he witnessed in the family and for the support they were giving to this vocation. They all decided to wait another year before taking the next step.

In 1929, after a difficult farewell at home, Theodoro, along with his beloved son, made the complicated trip to Porto Alegre, Canoas, RS, where he entered the Aspirancy

³ Brother Buenaventura de Jesús, whose real name was Heinrich von Stein, came from a Prussian royal family that had fallen into poverty. In his youth he decided to join the army during the First World War (1914 - 1918). Traumatized by the horrors of war that he witnessed, he decided to embrace the religious life in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He was a man of very strong character, authoritarian, tough on himself and with others in terms of discipline, order, hygiene and cleanliness. He had a dominating air about him and a resounding voice that was able to frighten people. But he had a kind heart and he became upset when he was unable to control himself when dealing with people. He returned to Europe and decided to become a priest. He worked with great apostolic zeal in Ilhéus, BA, Brazil, and he kept in contact with the Brothers in Rio Grande do Sul.

program. When he returned home and related the adventure of this trip and what he saw in Canoas, he made it clear that he was certain that Otto was in good hands.

Bruno, the sixth child of the Ruedells, stayed in Santo Cristo with the entire family but over the course of the next two years he became very attentive to the visits of the Brothers to his home. His interest in the welfare of his brother gave rise to a real friendship with them. At the same time the conviction of going to Canoas to become, like his older brother, a De Salle Brother, began to grow within him. On May 29, 1931. Theodoro again made the journey to Canoas, now bringing Bruno to the Aspirancy program.

Three years went by, on August 15, 1934, Theodoro returned to Canoas, this time accompanied by his wife Ana Bernardina and some of their children. They came to participate in the Eucharistic celebration for the Feast of the Assumption where Otto was to profess his first vows. Their child had changed his name to *Estanislao Marcos* and he wore the habit of the Brothers, two important signs that indicated that he belonged to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. There is no doubt that these were unforgettable moments that would forever mark the lives of Brother Estanislao (Otto), the aspirant Bruno, their parents and siblings. Two years later, on July 1, 1936, the Ruedell family would meet again in Canoas for the habit-taking of Bruno who received the religious name *Brother Guillermo María*.

4. The last child of a fertile family

There is no doubt that the vocation of Brother Pedro Ruedell, besides being a divine grace, was also the result of a family and social atmosphere which favored it. In addition to his older siblings, other young people in his neighborhood also shared in this blessing. This was the case for the Brod family, whose children Juan, Sebaldo and Bruno,⁴ cousins of Brother Pedro, had also opted for following in the footsteps of De La Salle; and the Chardon family, whose child Cipriano joined the Franciscans.

During one of the visits that the young Brod brothers made to their parents in Santo Cristo, they brought with them a note in which Brother Otto Ruedell wrote to his younger brother Pedro: *Now that you have completed primary school, you can come to study to become a De La Salle Brother here at the Aspirancy program in Canoas, RS.*

Young teenager Pedro was very interested in knowing more about the life of a Brother. He asked his cousins about it and their answers greatly encouraged him, which caused him to say: *Okay. I'll go with you. I'll see about the issue of clothing to bring and I will go with you to Canoas.*

⁴ PARMAGNANI, Jacob José: *Irmão Bruno Miguel (João Brod) – Religioso Lassalista*. Col. Lassalistas, 32. Graphics and La Salle Publishers, Canoas, RS, 1987. PARMAGNANI: Jacob José: *Irmão Eusébio Alberto (Sebaldo Brod) – Exemplo de dedicação e serviço*. Coleção Vidas Lassalistas, 53. Graphica and La Salle Publishers, Canoas, RS, 1996.

At the age of 13, on January 8, 1940, young Pedro Ruedell began the journey to Canoas to become a member of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, just as his siblings and cousins had done. In this very important decision, he was not alone. He was accompanied by Hugo Rempel⁵ and Alipio Führ, two other boys from Santo Cristo who would become De La Salle Brothers. Another brother of Alipio, Oscar Führ, would decide to become a priest.

The new aspirants were received by kind Brother Ignacio Gabriel (Alberto Fernando Weber Filho), who was at the time the Director of the house of formation. Pedro had no difficulty in adapting to his new life – he completely devoted himself to the long road that would lead him to become a De La Salle Brother. This is very clear in his response to his cousin Fray Cipriano Chardon months later when he was asked if he would prefer to prepare himself to be a Franciscan or if he would prefer to be a Brother. Pedro's response was unequivocal: his decision was that he wanted to be a De La Salle Brother.

On March 18, 1944, having completed his secondary school studies, Pedro took the religious habit and he received the name *Brother Florentino Martinho*. One year later, on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph on March 19, 1945, Pedro, now Brother Florentino Martinho, made his first profession. He continued his formation as he prepared himself to be a teacher. He was sent to the La Salle Teacher Training College in Canoas, RS, where he received a degree in Primary Education in December 1948.

⁵ Kirch, José Odillo: *Irmão Hogo Rempel (Martinho Bento). Religioso Lassalista. Coleção Vidas Lassalistas*, 76. Graphics and La Salle Publishers, Canoas, 2006.

5. Preparation to be a teacher and a catechist

At the end of the novitiate his educational responsibilities were quite diverse. As a young scholastic he helped out in the La Salle Aspirancy program in Canoas (1947). Later on, he worked as a teacher in the *O Pão dos Pobre de Santo Antônio Orphanage in Porto Alegre* (1948). In 1950 he was transferred to the Our Lady of Lourdes Aspirancy program to work as a teacher. At that time, it was located in Carazinho, RS. This entire time was an opportunity to prepare himself for the great moment of his definitive commitment, his Perpetual Profession which he made on January 17, 1952.

His concern for being well-trained for the educational mission he had embraced grew within him. He requested and received authorization to enroll in the Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUC/RS) where he would graduate with a degree in education. In 1960 he was appointed Director of the Colegio Santo Antonio in Porto Alegre, a job he would hold until 1964 when he was sent to the Second Novitiate in Rome. When his time at the Second Novitiate was completed, he was sent to Brussels, Belgium, in 1965 where he received formation in Catholic Pedagogy at the *Luman Vitae International Institute*.

After this period of his life he returned to Brazil where he devoted himself to catechesis inside and outside the District. He was appointed Coordinator of Catechesis for the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) at Rio Grande do Sul.

In this work he showed his openness to catechetical and religious instruction renewal that had been requested by the Second Vatican Council. At the same time as promoting renewal in these areas he promoted the idea of teamwork among catechists and teachers. He did all this without turning away from the needed renewal among his Brothers both in their religious life and their theological preparation. This was his way of showing his appreciation for his vocation as a consecrated religious.

6. Leadership in service of the District, the country and the Institute

His leadership in the area of Catechesis and Religious School Teaching, recognized by the Conference of Religious of Rio Grande do Sul, was also perceived by his Brothers, whose esteem and appreciation he enjoyed.

Appreciation for him on the part of the Brothers was made explicit in the survey carried out at the end of 1971 for the purpose of proposing names to the Superior General for the position of Brother Visitor. Brother Pedro's name topped the list. The proposal of the Brothers of the District was confirmed by the Superior General and his Council; consequently, Brother Pedro assumed this position for a period of three years, starting in January 1972.

He took on the leadership of the District at a difficult time for the Church and for religious life: he had to confront the problems and the resistance which the Church and religious life were facing during the period after the Second Vatican Council. With his affable character, he learned to administer well during various conflicts and he did this without abandoning his own convictions. He persistently insisted that the Brothers improve themselves in the theological and human sciences. To this end, he established courses for the Brothers during the vacation period. There are many who still remember the meetings of Theological Experience held in Araruama, RJ, in Morro das Pedras, SC, and in Monte

Alverne, São Leopoldo, RS. The coordinator for all these meetings was Brother Paulo Lari Dullius, who always received support from Brother Pedro from his position as Visitor. Not content with only this initiative, Brother Pedro himself organized several courses on catechesis, evangelization and religious school teaching aimed at the Brothers.

Also, during his mandate, he was concerned about extending Lasallian activity to other geographic areas, so he gave his full support to opening a new community in the prelature of Xingú in the Department of Pará in the Amazon region. This ministry was established on March 3, 1975, when 3 Lasallians, Brothers Adelino Ferranti and Pedro Bohnenberger, accompanied by Vanderlei Maróstica, a young volunteer who was a former student from La Salle in Canoas, RS, established themselves in Altamira. They set up a mission for supporting evangelization in the Diocese. This fruitful work caused the Bishop of the Prelature, the Austrian missionary to say: *I do not know how to thank Brother Pedro Ruedell for providing for us the precious gift of evangelization for the immense area of Xingú.*

His pastoral and administrative abilities as Visitor were recognized by his peers who proposed his name to the Superior General for a second term as Visitor of the District, which began in January 1975.

As De La Salle had discovered many years before, Brother Pedro's experience was similar: that God's ways are unfathomable and that it is God himself who leads people along his ways. The Institute had been preparing for its 40th General Chapter. Brother Pedro was nominated by the

Brothers in his District to participate in the Chapter which would be framed in the context of renewal that was initiated during the 39th General Chapter of 1966 - 1967. The 40th General Chapter took place in the spring of 1976 at the Generalate in Rome where 157 delegates from the world over attended. Among the attendees were Brother Visitor Domingos Celeste Vieceli (Brother Gregorio Afonso) from the District of São Paulo, Brazil. One of the mandates for the Brother Capitulants, among many others, was to nominate those who would assume the direction of the Institute for the next ten years. On June 6, Brother José Pablo Basterrechea Ichaso, a Spaniard, was elected Superior General. Brother John Johnston, an American, was elected Vicar General. The following General Councilors were also elected: Brothers José Cervantes from Mexico; Benildo Feliciano from the Philippines; Patrice Marey from France; Vincent Rabemahafaly from Madagascar; and Pedro Ruedell from Brazil.

As a General Councilor, it was Brother Pedro's duty to accompany the Lasallian Districts of Latin America and the Caribbean (RELAL) and the German-speaking Brothers. This election caused him to have to leave Brazil and to reside in the General Council community in Rome, Italy.

His presence in this community, to quote Brother Paulo Lari Dullius, *“was always discreet and fraternal. With his calming and detailed spirit, he was prudent in his decisions. He was known throughout his life for his insistence on the life of prayer, community and the mission.”*

During his time in Rome there were many special events and occurrences that Brother Pedro experienced with regard to

the universal Church and the Institute: in 1980 the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools celebrated the 300th anniversary of its founding; on May 13, 1981 there was the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II in Saint Peter's Square, which caused the Pope to have to postpone his scheduled visit to the Generalate; there was the 8th Congress of the World Union of Lasallian Former Students (UMAEL) in 1984 in Mexico; the canonization of Saint Brother Miguel Febres Cordero took place on October 21, 1984. On that day Brother Pedro also was able to enjoy an organ concert given by Brother Renato Koch, a Brazilian, in the Church of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

The Brothers who visited the Generalate community during those years remember the warm reception that was afforded them by Brother Pedro, especially those who came from Brazil and RELAL and who were, for one reason or another, residing in Rome.⁶ On these occasions, Brother Pedro spent time with them in conversation while sharing a chimarrão, or a sweet caipirinha (typical South American drinks).

Without abandoning the work that the Institute had entrusted to him, during those ten years he did not forget about his concern for catechetical renewal. This is what was remembered by Brother Enrique García Ahumada, from Chile, who informed Brother Pedro about social catechesis

⁶ These moments were confirmed by Br. Paulo Lari Dullius, who was following a course in Psychology at the Gregorian University and Brother Edgar Habb, who worked at the Generalate. In 1981 some Brothers arrived for specialization courses in Europe, among whom were Brothers Ivo Bertilo Ames and Israel José Nery who came to participate in the Lasallian Spirituality Course at the International Lasallian Center (CIL); and the blood brother of Brother Pedro, Brother Otto Ruedell, who participated in a Spirituality Course of the Focolari movement next to Lake Albano.

during the three years that he was involved in the National Catechetical Office. This matter was not exempt from controversy during the difficult social and political times of the period. He traveled throughout the country (this was the time of the military government), and he showed his appreciation for catechetics, calling it an important and timely initiative.⁷ For Brother Enrique, this was a gesture that showed him the understanding that Brother Pedro had for those who carried out with difficulty the work of renewal and who struggled for a catechetical formation that was more rooted in the Gospel.

One of the issues that most concerned Brother Pedro during this time was the rapid decline of Brothers in the Institute.⁸ The natural demise of some of them was joined by the abandonment of religious consecration by others, and what was more worrying was the progressive decline of candidates to take on the consecrated Lasallian life. As the one in charge for accompanying, guiding and advising the Lasallian world in Latin America, the so-called Continent of Hope,⁹ Brother Pedro promoted in RELAL the formative aspects and the projects of new missions in the field of Christian education involving both Brothers as well as lay people. An important

⁷ GARCÍA A., F.S.C. Enrique. *Una catequesis social incisiva*, “Medellín” 136 (2008) 649-668.

⁸ In 10 years, the number of Brothers in the Institute went from 11,230 to 8,720.

⁹ This term was coined in the face of the crisis experienced by the Church and Religious Life in Europe and in the United States of America at the end of the 1970's. Latin America, with its enormous number of children, adolescents and young people, and with families still firm in the faith, was seen as a place of hope, where it was opportune and wise to fully engage in vocational promotion, in initial formation and in the multiplication of colleges and universities.

document from RELAL, that Brother Pedro supported, was the 1981 document *The Lasallian Charism in Latin America*. This document was published after many drafts and it included a participatory type of methodology. This document framed the era and it greatly helped in the renewal of various Districts in the Region. Indeed, from 1976 to 1986, despite suffering also the post-conciliar crisis, there was growth and expansion in the Districts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Another noteworthy aspect of Brother Pedro's stay in Rome was his contact with the Guadalupana Sisters of De La Salle, a Religious Institute founded in Mexico, in 1946, by the French Brother, Jean Fromental Cayroche, who at that time had a community of Sisters in the Generalate. Taking advantage of the visit made by the Superior General, Sr. Celia María Rodríguez, to the Brother Capitulants,¹⁰ Brother Pedro, together with Brother Domingos Vieceli, initiated the dialogue leading to establish a community of Sisters in Brazil. This contact was maintained in the visits he made as General Councilor to the two Lasallian Districts of Mexico, where the Guadalupana Congregation had its headquarters until then. The proposal to establish a community of Guadalupana Sisters in Brazil was slowly happening, with the firm support of Brother Pedro. Finally, he made this a common agenda item for the District Councils of Porto Alegre and São Paulo. The process culminated on December 12, 1991, when Sisters Esther Herrera and Oralia Ornelas

¹⁰ The reason for the visit of the Sister Superior General to the General Chapter was motivated by the official approval, by the Holy See, of her Congregation as one of Pontifical Right. For this reason, the General Chapter paid tribute to the new Congregation.

inaugurated the first community of Guadalupe Sisters in the Pinheirinho neighborhood, Curitiba, PR. In these beginnings, they had the full support of the Lasallian Districts of Brazil.

This is what emerges from the testimony of the Guadalupe Sisters, Ana Claudia Barbosa and Teresa María Giacomini, where they highlight the significant importance that Brother Pedro had in the installation of their Congregation in Brazil:

“...Brother Pedro Ruedell left us a spiritual legacy that we relive at every moment in our prayer, especially when we pray with De La Salle's Method of Prayer. Some aspects that are found in the history of the Guadalupe Sisters in Brazil testify to the various procedures that Brother Pedro carried out for the Sisters to come to the country. Brother Pedro helped in the organization of the communities, and he guided the formation program and the community annual program. Every month he came to Curitiba to advise the Sisters on various topics: organization of the formation program, spiritual life, knowledge of De La Salle and the method of prayer. For us, Brazilian Guadalupe Sisters, Brother Pedro was an extremely humble man, simple, but immensely wise in all aspects. Of all those memories we have of him, one significant phrase that he often repeated stands out: “Live joyfully.” His life was a very important witness for the Sisters here in Brazil...”

7. To live humbly

His ten years spent as General Councilor passed and it was now time to return. At the end of June 1986, Brother Pedro returned to Brazil. He returned to a country in transformation, where the political climate was a reflection of a country that went from a military dictatorship, in 1964, to democracy, all of which provoked a kind of social euphoria.

He returned, at the age of 59, having been enriched by international experience, he enjoyed good health and a better disposition to put himself at the service of the Educational Mission. For this reason, he gratefully accepted the proposal of the Brother Visitor at the time, to have further formation in Rio de Janeiro. He participated in the course organized by the Conference of Religious of Brazil through the Center for the Study of Theology and Spirituality (CETESP). This experience led him to the firm decision to resume academic studies as a way to increase his commitment to Religious and Catechetical teaching.

His decision gradually became a reality. Between 1997 and 1999, he returned to the university classrooms and followed courses at the Jesuit University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS), in São Leopoldo, RS, leading to a Master's Degree in Education. His graduation thesis, entitled *Evolution of Religious Education in the official schools of Rio*

Grande do Sul between 1970 and 1998,¹¹ answered the question: *What has been, and what is, the school practice of the identity of Religious Teaching in public schools of Rio Grande do Sul?* When reading this thesis what is evident is the wide and strict research that was made of the variations of civil legislation, as well as the orientations of the Church that affected religious education. It highlighted the participation of the promoters of Religious Education: teachers and supervisors. Since Religious Education was part of the school curriculum, he was interested in investigating the influence of the socioeconomic-political context of the time, providing a significant collection of data on Religious Education in the context of school education.

His studies and his experience are reflected in the high esteem he enjoyed, on a national level, as a scholar in the field of Religious Teaching. The books and articles he wrote, the lectures he gave and the advice he offered are proof of this erudition. So, it is not surprising that he was called to coordinate the Interfaith Team of Religious Education of the Secretariat of Education of Rio Grande do Sul. While a member of this organization he proposed the Interconfessional Project that was established in 1997. His presence in other institutions included the following: he was a member of the first Directory of the Council of Religious Education of Rio Grande do Sul (CONER/RS) and he participated in the founding of the Permanent National Forum of Religious Education (FONAPER), in 1995.¹²

¹¹ RUEDELL, Pedro: *Evolução do Ensino Religioso nas escolas oficiais do Rio Grande do Sul, de 1970 a 1998*. Editora Unilasalle-Canoas, RS, 1999.

¹² Cf. <http://www.fonaper.com.br>

Brother Pedro continued to demonstrate how he loved his vocation as he sought ways to improve his service. He enrolled in the same university where he had already obtained his master's degree: the UNISINOS, of São Leopoldo, to earn a doctorate in his specialty. He concluded these studies with the defense of his doctoral thesis on January 16, 2006. The theme was inspired by the theology of Paul Tillich, entitled *Religious Education - anthropological - cultural foundation of religion according to Paul Tillich. Pedagogical perspectives open to current legal provisions*.¹³ The conclusion of a doctorate is always cause for joy, even more so in this case since there was cause for frank admiration and example for many, since the new doctor was at that time 76 years of age.

The thesis published by Ediciones Paulinas in 2007 was an opportunity to once again highlight the great esteem that Brother Pedro generated in the ecclesial world of Brazil. The publication was presented by the well-known Brazilian theologian Fray Luís Carlos Susin, O.F.M.Cap.¹⁴ In the review by the publishing house, we find the following:

“...In Brazil there are few people like Brother Pedro Ruedell, a De La Salle Brother, from Rio Grande do Sul, who made a critical study of the evolution of Religious Teaching in schools, both private and denominational and public. He was always open to the new and, at the same time, he continued to

¹³ Doctoral thesis examiners included Doctors Lucio Kreutz and Beno João Lermen. Brother Paulo Dullius had the privilege of being part of the examining jury.

¹⁴ RUEDELL, Pedro: *Educação religiosa - Fundamentação antropológico-cultural da religião segundo Paul Tillich* – Edições Paulinas, São Paulo. 2007.

discern, always capable of recognizing the positive features of what happened in the recent decades, without renouncing the values of the oldest pedagogical practices...”.

This recognition was confirmed by the testimony of Brother Paulo Fossatti, Rector of La Salle University in Canoas, RS:

“...Brother Pedro Ruedell was an example of an academic and a researcher. Both in theory and in practice, he left a beautiful legacy through his writings and advisory work in the educational, ecclesial and interreligious Brazilian scenario. His profound and serene reflection on Religious Teaching in a reality of constant changes gave him credibility and authority throughout Brazil...”.

8. Commitment to his fraternal community

Brother Paulo Dullius testified to the fraternal religious who deeply lived out his community life.

“...As a Brother I always found him to be happy, available and fraternal. He really had many God-like qualities and all of this influenced the efficacy of his mission...”

Upon returning from Rome to Brazil, where he used to be in charge, he took up his new role very simply and he put himself completely at the disposition of the District. Shortly after his return he was appointed Director of the religious community and of the Lasallian Brother Miguel School in 1987. This school was located in the Niterói neighborhood of the municipality of Canoas, RS. He would carry out this responsibility until the end of 1988.

In 1989 he was sent as Director to the religious community of Nossa Senhora das Dores College, located in the center of Porto Alegre, RS. He was also Director of the Santo Antônio School, in the Parthenon neighborhood of the same city. At the Nossa Senhora das Dores School, Brother Pedro clearly showed his qualities as a fine musician.¹⁵

¹⁵ Brother Pedro appreciated the Cantatas of the Belgian composer Brother Marcelo Silvain, who was one of the pioneering Brothers that arrived in Brazil in 1907: the Ave Maria; Oceano Terrível; Põe na Virtude todo o Primor, Cantata to La Salle and Cantata to São José. Simultaneously, at the La Salle de Dores School, Brother Pedro directed a choir of about 50 students, with whom he prepared the cantata Ave Maria. These were accompanied by the Porto Alegre Symphony Orchestra. The presentation was made in the covered area of

Every event was for Brother Pedro an opportunity to show the delicate and wonderful integration of his daily life with the constitutive dimensions of religious life. This was observed by several Brothers:

Brother Jardelino Menegat, Visitor of the District of Porto Alegre on two occasions: from 1996 to 2001 and from 2010 to 2011; and Visitor of the Lasallian District of Brazil-Chile from 2012 to 2014 writes:

“...I met Brother Pedro Ruedell in the early stages of my initial formation. Since that time, I have always admired him as an educator and as an outstanding religious for his cheerful and friendly presence in religious and educational communities. He knew how to welcome and how to listen to, and care, for people. Above all, he observed and listened and then gave his opinion and prepared some remark, always in a way which suggested or recommended. As an educator, he sought to study, read, inform and update himself. He was an educator who impressed people, and he left a legacy especially for Catechesis and Religious Education, both in the District and at the regional and national levels of Conferences of Religious and Bishops. Also, by means of this dedication, his life continues to be present in my memory and, certainly, in the life of all those who had the privilege to know and to live with Brother Pedro, who was a teacher and religious worthy of imitation...”

This impression of Brother Pedro was also confirmed by Brother Ivo Ulrich, Secretary for Formation for the Institute

the school. There was a large audience and it was a huge success. The next day the comments in the local newspapers showed the high appreciation for the presentation, and the article congratulated Brother Pedro, the choristers and the musicians for such a beautiful event.

from 1994 to 2000 and who has been involved in formation work for the District for many years. He writes:

“...Since I met him in 1964, he was a balanced person, a mature Christian and a resolute religious. He had a profound knowledge of Scripture, and in his day to day life there was coherence between the how he lived and what he said. The first reference for the guidelines he gave was the Gospel. He always had a word of hope, and he manifested a kind of human and spiritual finesse. He looked upon all things from God's point of view, a habit that certainly came about from his spirit of faith and apostolic zeal with which he was imbued. As a De La Salle Brother he left an important legacy in the formation of the Brothers, catechists, religious teachers and educators...”

9. Preparing for *The Great Encounter*

Beginning in 2004 Brother Pedro took on less and less apostolic activity. At that time, he was living in Porto Alegre, RS, and he served as Sub-Director of the community at Colegio São João. In 2006, his situation required that he move to the La Salle Scholasticate community in Sapucaia do Sul, also as Sub-Director of the community. He mentored young Brothers until 2009. During this time, he never abandoned his typical way of being: he was communicative, discreet, helpful, prayerful and took great care of the community life but various health issues, especially difficulty in walking, were becoming more evident.

In 2010 Brother Visitor Jardelino Menegat, Visitor, in dialogue with the Director of the Scholasticate, Brother José Ivo Ullerich, decided to transfer Brother Pedro to the Our Lady of the Star community in Porto Alegre, RS. This was so that he could receive more specialized attention. This change of community was not a crisis for Brother Pedro. On the contrary, he soon adapted to his new routine and the limits that had to be imposed upon him. The nursing home was also a home where he shared with his Brothers. This attitude earned him the sympathy and support of the house personnel. Once again, his simplicity, finesse and high regard for others earned him the love of those around him.

His room, the corridors, the chapel, the dining room, the community room, therapy rooms, and the garden become an

integral part of his daily life. He occupied his time every day with various activities: he listened to music, he watched Mass on television or he shared with his Brothers in the community room. He did not neglect his reading which he continued as long as his health would allow, and he spent his days by reading newspapers and magazines as well as Church and Institute documents and books about formation. He read all the materials that had to do with the District, the Institute, the Church, the country and the world that interested him.

His illness brought him to the point of not being able to move very much. Those who visited him admired the lucidity he maintained until the end of his life. Whoever approached his bed enjoyed long and pleasant conversations, and he remembered the names of those he had not seen for a long time. He even spoke to people in their own language as he was able to practice many languages throughout his life. On each occasion his broad culture, his appreciation for people, his ability to listen and his profound knowledge of the interplay between the world of religion and civil life, as well as his ability to converse and take a position regarding various issues, were always evident.

He was a man of reflection and dialogue, who showed in all his relationships the capacity for inclusion, facing challenges with a general view that avoided falling into generalizations that could lead to injustice. Until the end of his days, his presence continued to be a positive and participatory contribution to community life, giving each one an encouraging word, manifesting a spirit of prayer that drew upon his continuous prayerful reading of the Word of God. In short, those who visited him experienced the joy of having

shared with one who lived in harmony and peace with a sense of the future.

His sharing did not stay on only the personal level. Whenever he could, he participated with joy in the prayers, religious celebrations and community events which included anniversaries and social gatherings. He did the same by participating in the various therapy activities that the health community offered him.

On December 28, 2017, he celebrated his 90th birthday with joy, manifested in the smile he gave everyone who approached for a hug, to shake his hand or to sing the traditional “Happy Birthday.” That occasion was a reason for thanksgiving for him and for the assisted living facility, and the presence of his family marked the importance of the day; especially the presence of his nephew Father Aloisio Ruedell, who came to preside at the Eucharistic celebration of thanksgiving for his 90 years of life and for his perseverance as a Brother.

Leaving aside all the discomforts of his illness, Pedro was very well prepared for the new year of 2018. He had to follow his health regimen rigorously, preparing himself for the coming months, since the winter climate had been a serious threat to his health for several years. But, at the beginning of September, his body pain increased. This resulted in problems with his heart and kidneys. In dialogue with his doctor, the community Director decided to admit him to Mother of God Hospital in Porto Alegre, RS, so that he could receive more specialized attention.

Brother Pedro passed away as he had lived: in silence he slowly faded away like the Paschal candle that delivers its

pristine light, preserving the lucidity that accompanied him all his life until he died. It was 10:00 pm on September 11th. That same night, Brother Visitor Edgar Genuino Nicodem, who had accompanied him on his final journey, communicated to the Brothers his death and the details of his funeral.

One of the nurses who cared for Brother Pedro for many years recalled how having to say goodbye to Brother Pedro had impacted her:

“...There are moments in life when words lose their meaning or appear to be useless, and even though people think of some beautiful way of using them, they do not seem to serve. So people do not say anything. They just feel...”

The summary of Brother Pedro’s life, surrendered to the Lord through his Brothers and students, can be found in the note published on the District's website:

...With sadness, the La Salle District of Brazil-Chile communicates the death of Brother Pedro Ruedell (...) Brother Visitor Edgar Nicodem, in his affectionate and heartfelt greeting to those who participated in the Mass of Christian Burial, commented: Our District has lost one of its most illustrious members. We thank God for the gift that Brother Pedro Ruedell was in our midst. He fought the good fight (Cf. 2 Timothy 4:7) and his fight came to an end. Beginning today we have, with God, an intercessor who will continue to look upon us with so much love and affection, just as he did throughout his life. Thank you very much, Brother Pedro! May you rest in peace!

We give thanks to God for the presence of Brother Pedro in our lives, while giving us his testimony as a religious Brother, and our being enriched by his way of being and acting.

Knowing him made it is easier to understand what it is to live according to the Gospel in the Lasallian charism. That is why he will always be in everyone's heart. Certainly, upon arriving before God, Brother Pedro will be able to present a heart *full of the names* of the people who helped him reach heaven and be saved through education and formation in his journey as a De La Salle Brother. And he will be able to validate the following words before his God and Lord:

“...At the end of my journey you will say to me: “Have you lived? Have you loved?” And I, without saying anything, will open my heart full of names...” (Dom Pedro Casaldáliga).

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