

## The Declaration: Re-foundation or Renewal?

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### Introduction

My personal annual project for the present year did not include a trip to the United States, nor did I anticipate the writing of an article on the *Declaration*. But, when I received Brother Luke Salm's invitation, I did not hesitate. My response was positive and immediate. I was deeply moved to be a part of your seminar, and I thank you all for your generous invitation. I found this year's theme most rewarding, and I looked forward to the opportunity to take part in your exchanges on the *Declaration*. I knew I would learn much from your discussions, get a new impetus in my research and reflections, and be able to envisage the text in a new light.

Needless to say, I was quite disappointed when my doctor advised me not to travel to California. I was looking forward to seeing many of you again, meeting new friends, and I was delighted to have a chance of reviving warm relationships which I have maintained with so many American Brothers – Luke Salm whom I have known since 1966, Michael Meister since 1975 and CIL, not to mention that these two Brothers sent me the official invitation to travel to California. I first visited the United States 30 years ago, in April 1964. My longest visit to your country was in 1974 when I stayed from early October to the end of December. I remember spending Thanksgiving in November of that year in San Francisco. These two visits were arranged through the foresight and kindness of Brother Charles Henry. I dedicate this article to his memory. He was a Brother with whom I had the rare privilege of spending ten years of my life; those years were definitely the most difficult and at the same time among the most rewarding of my life.

After some hesitation, which dissipated quickly with Luke's help, I chose the theme of my article which focuses on this question: Should the *Declaration* be brought up to date or "re-founded"? Thus my title: "The *Declaration*: Re-foundation or Renewal?" It seems to me that this title corresponds to three questions that I have been asking myself at various levels of intellectual and religious consciousness and emotional commitment. They are associated in my mind with three names. 1) I have often wondered what impact Father Arbuckle's speech had on the "renewal" effected by the 1984 General Chapter. I remark that the word has not been much used since then.<sup>2</sup> 2) At a deeper level, I have been obsessed since 1964 by the fundamental questions that Luther asked about religious life in *De Votis Monasticis Judicium*. Among these questions, I single out the legitimacy of a reference to a foundation and a founder since the Holy Spirit is acting here and now.<sup>3</sup> 3) I am also preoccupied by an idea developed by Brother John Johnston: "If the present trend is not stopped and reversed, the Institute will completely disappear or be stricken with 'minimal survival' in a number of countries in the next 25 to 40 years."<sup>4</sup>

These three questions are related, though in different ways, to the ideas that I plan to develop here. They will undoubtedly be repeatedly formulated in this article as well as in the seminar as a whole. Though I had not read

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the *Declaration* for some time, I have re-read it with great care, convinced that it is still fraught with inspiration. A close reading of Luke's masterly study was also of great benefit to me<sup>5</sup> as well as the texts of the latest General Chapter, especially the note and report of Brother Superior.

The thoughts that I present here are not new. I have organized them in three parts. 1) In its literal meaning, the *Declaration* is not the re-foundation of the Institute. 2) Whatever the phrasing, it seems to me that the new approach that it has provided is related to a re-founding dynamism more than to mere adjustments for a better adaptation (this is in complete agreement with the appeal formulated in the Second Vatican Council's decree *Perfectae Caritatis* and Pope Paul VI's *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae*). 3) With the passing of time, have we not been led to perceive the realism of Pope Paul VI's formula in *Ecclesiae Sanctae* 3 about the renewal of religious institutes? From now on, renewal must become a permanent feature of the Institute. These points undoubtedly reflect an uneasy realism which, somewhat in the dark, can be lived positively only as hope.

I admit that writing this article was hard work, and I am afraid that it is going to be a bit too long. Please forgive me. I missed the friendly help of Luke who has always been such a fine editor of my writings.

## **Section I**

### **Renewal Not Re-foundation**

It is the community itself, faithful to an "objective norm,"<sup>6</sup> that must be in search of its own renewal. There can be no question of "re-founding" the Institute.<sup>7</sup>

This remark is so obvious that it has become a kind of truism. Yet a brief explanation may help us keep in mind the importance and power of this objective norm which is a reality and which makes it impossible to speak of re-foundation in the literal meaning of the word. We do not have to start from scratch or out of nothing. The *Declaration* itself mentions three aspects of this objective norm which cannot be bypassed and which differentiate the renewal which it invites us to undertake from a re-foundation. Brother Charles Henry's preface mentions a fourth aspect which is also quite important.

*Paying attention to the appeal of the Holy Spirit, the Institute must return to its origins.* First, it must return to the Gospel. But it must also return to the circumstances which gave birth to the Institute, that is, its Founder and the Institute which he founded but as it exists today.

The first fact that must be taken into account and which precludes the use of the word "re-foundation" in its literal meaning is that today, as in the past, the Institute cannot live if it is not explicitly related to its Founder. The *Declaration* devotes its first chapter to the definition of a renewed approach to what our fidelity to Saint John Baptist de La Salle implies. We all have in mind sections 5, 6, and 7 of this text. As the Council did, the General Chapter opposes a literal fidelity to Saint John Baptist de La Salle in favor of a dynamic one. I will insist upon it in Section II of this article. Let me just remark here that, when *Perfectae Caritatis* alludes to the spirit and specific aims of the Founder, these two words must be duly understood. I propose a few considerations about the objective datum or norm which these words imply.

*To be faithful to the Spirit and the specific aims of the Founder.* These words do not mean that the reference to Saint John Baptist de La Salle should be abandoned to the fluctuating fashions or to the subjective arbitrariness of individual interpretation. The literal meaning of the Founder's writings cannot be given up. On the contrary,

it is highly desirable that this work be further intensified in the years to come. Certain dimensions of the thought of the Founder are also brought to light by the active participation of the Institute in the catechetical and liturgical renewal of the church, by the recent attention given to the poor, and by the development of a theology of this world and its real values.<sup>8</sup>

When the members of the Chapter wrote the *Declaration*, they were well aware that the renewal enterprise requested by the Council in 1965 would not have been possible if the Institute had not made the first move ten years earlier. One of the major decisions made by the 1956 Chapter was the revival of Lasallian studies. This contributed to bringing together the Founder and his Brothers in light of the initiative taken by Brother Maurice Auguste, who was both a very strict man and a visionary.

*To be faithful to the specific aims of the Founder* implies paying attention to the very concrete content which originally manifested these aims, some elements of which remain essential today. The *Declaration* mentions three of them:

- The priority given to the educational service rendered to the poor:

The service of the poor through education is a work of preference for us as Brothers of the Christian Schools. This is made clear by the sense of unity among men in the world today, by the appeals that have been made by the Second Vatican Council and recent popes, by the fact of our religious vocation which dedicates us in a special manner to the imitation of Christ, and by fidelity to the specific intentions of our Founder.<sup>9</sup>

- The apostolic mission of the Institute and the ministerial vocation of the Brothers:

As Christian educators, the Brothers are "God's laborers" who are working out his great plan of love; "ambassadors of Jesus Christ" for the fulfillment of his great mystery; the "agents of the Holy Spirit" who build up his kingdom. For the students to whom they are sent, the Brothers are "the ministers of God and the dispensers of his mysteries." The Brothers make known the divine mysteries by exercising the ministry of the Word of God. The Brothers are catechists by vocation; this is their "principal function."<sup>10</sup>

- The original link established between catechesis and education:

Almost by instinct, the living tradition of the Institute has integrated faith in Jesus Christ into the daily lives of the students. There has always been this concern to tie together the work of evangelization with growth in education.<sup>11</sup>

## Concrete Elements of Our Vocation

It is necessary to define the constituent dimensions of the Brother's vocation without which he cannot be recognized as a member of the Institute.<sup>12</sup>

It is the second aspect of this objective datum or reality which makes it impossible to speak of re-foundation in the literal meaning of the word. We do not start from scratch, with a *tabula rasa*. Section 13 defines these constituent dimensions. This item was discussed at great length both in committee and in the general assembly. Indeed it was the first section to be studied in the detailed analysis of the *Declaration* project after the Chapter adopted the text prepared by the committee as a basis for discussion. It is clearly significant of the importance of section 13. As for section 14, it says that the constituent dimensions come from the Founder, which prompts me to make three remarks about it.

The three constituent elements can be related to characteristics which have just been mentioned about the content of the spirit and specific aims of the Founder, namely, the priority given to the educational service rendered to the poor;<sup>13</sup> the apostolic mission of the Institute and the ministerial vocation of the Brothers; and the original link established between catechesis and education.<sup>14</sup>

Two other elements are obviously related to the way in which the specific aim of the Founder was given a concrete expression as far as the nature of the Institute is concerned and also the modes in which its mission is exercised. I am thinking here of the lay character of the Institute and the importance of the school. "The Brother chooses the school as the preferred but not the only means to form the family of God's children during the present history of the human race."<sup>15</sup> The *Declaration* speaks of this lay character several times, but in the manner of mere allusions, though significant ones.<sup>16</sup> This is not unexpected; after all, the Chapter debated hotly and at great length on the lay character of the Institute in its first sessions, a proposal of the same committee which presented the *Declaration* project. As for the Lasallian school, it is brought up to date and given a dynamic treatment in the next pages of the *Declaration*.

I have not yet mentioned section 13:2 which is thus formulated: "The Brother gives full and explicit expression to his baptismal consecration<sup>17</sup> by making a public profession of vows which are received by the church. He assumes this engagement in an exclusively lay Institute." It seems to me that, in strict canonical terms, this constituent element cannot be related as objectively and obviously to the specific aim of the Founder. This does not mean that it is in opposition to this aim. Some of the Brothers who lived with John Baptist de La Salle were the first to interpret the Bull of Approbation of the Institute in this manner, not to mention an order coming from Rome about the profession of the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Besides, the Institute has always claimed that it considered itself a Religious Congregation. Yet, it is possible to think that another canonical statute would have been more in accordance with the aim of the Founder. This is definitely my opinion.

Moreover, I believe that there is too often some hesitation about the two ways in which the consecration of the Brother should be envisaged. On the one hand, it is sometimes presented as the implementation of the three classical vows,<sup>18</sup> on the other hand, it can also be presented as directly related to Lasallian dynamisms.<sup>19</sup> I understand that this duality is a consequence of the definition of our being an Institute of pontifical right.<sup>20</sup> Yet I am afraid that this dichotomy weakens the unique evangelical plainness of the consecration that is expressed in the words of the professions used in 1691, in 1694, and on until 1725. But I also think that I am free to

relativize the structural or legal problems in order to concentrate on the broader issues implicit in the Chapter's decisions,<sup>21</sup> at least under some conditions which I will develop farther on.

### **The Institute in the Hands of the Brothers**

The richness of the Institute is the Brothers who compose it. Fidelity to the Founder is entrusted to the Institute, that is, the community of its members.<sup>22</sup>

This is obviously part of what I called the objective datum or reality, but it may often be omitted in the enumeration of the constituent elements. I will return to that topic in Section III of this article. Let me offer just a few remarks here.

The *Declaration* is itself the result of a new attention paid to the Brothers, of a readiness to listen to their voices. The first signs of change which the Chapter members detected were the calls coming from the Brothers. But this attention was made possible only because the Brothers had been invited to express their views to the General Chapter. I have mentioned above that the 1956 Chapter was clear-minded enough to bring together the Founder and his Brothers. It also made two other decisions essential for the future. It gave the written *Rule* back to the living Institute. Less than ten years after the papal approval of the *Rule* of 1947 which was unfortunately granted by the Congregation for Religious, the Chapter was bold enough to recommend a radical revision of the *Rule*, giving the General Council the faculty to write a text which would be different from the words devised by the Founder, and the possibility of seeking advice from the Brothers. This was done after the Chapter of 1956 (between 1956 and 1965). The living Institute was thus able to recover its mastery over a *Rule* which had enslaved it until then.

Besides, the 1956 Chapter returned the Institute to the Brothers. This is the meaning which should be given to the encouragement addressed to them to send collective notes in preparation for the next Chapter. Moreover, again in preparation for the 1966 Chapter, Brother Nicet sent a questionnaire to all Brothers, inviting them to express their views about the questions which were to be debated in the General Assembly. This decision had the desired effect and then some, since the period which immediately preceded this Chapter coincided with Vatican II. With Brother Clodoald, who was then Director of the Second Novitiate, I was asked by Brother Nicet to write up the questionnaire which was distributed early in 1964. One of the living memories that I keep of my first stay in the United States in April 1964 is the response of the American communities to that initiative. Two or three times a week, the communities met and devoted several hours to preparing their answers to the questionnaire. I remember Brother Leo Kirby, who was Director of the Scholasticate in Washington, DC, passionately addressing all the members of the several communities of that institution gathered in the chapel, attempting to convince the young Brothers that their views were important for the future of the Institute and that they should not think that they were wasting their time when they devoted it to exchanges about the questionnaire.

At that time, the Brothers generally wondered not only about the way in which they lived, but also about the reasons why they were asked to live as Brothers, and about their very identity. The analysis of their answers to the questionnaire was one of the motivations for the working out of the *Declaration*, viewed as a document on the life of the Brother in the world. Besides, its preparation and writing were another opportunity to listen with respect, great care, and also uneasy tension to the members of the Chapter who represented the Brothers and carried their expectations. Thus, from the beginning to the end of its development, the *Declaration* was born of the Brothers who composed the living Institute.

Secondly, I want to insist on one of the major features of the *Declaration*, one of its most impressive aspects which is the respectful care, consideration, and invitation granted to the person of each Brother.

It is impossible to separate the *constituent elements* of section 13 from a *living, personalized synthesis* of section 14.

The Brother specifies his decision to work for the glory of God through the service of men by giving himself to a community that is totally dedicated to the kingdom of God: witnessing to its reality, announcing it to men, serving the kingdom to come and promoting its growth in this world. Every Brother, no matter what his actual assignment may be, makes a personal contribution to the common realization of this special mission which the Institute receives from the church.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, the living unity of free persons should not be confused with a restricting uniformity.

The diversity of gifts granted to each Brother<sup>24</sup> should be acknowledged as well as the unique originality of his personal history.<sup>25</sup> Each Brother must enjoy the necessary inner freedom without which he cannot take the initiative for a personal response and remain faithful to the Spirit, the unifying element of his life as a Brother.<sup>26</sup>

Even more, we must recognize that persons cannot be reduced to their apostolic commitments; every person is sacred, a mystery in his unique relation to a God of Love.

Yet the religious consecration which the Brother lives at the very heart of his apostolic activities is not confined to any one of them. Consecration reaches its full expression in the mystery of the personal relation each one has with God. It is, after all, a characteristic of the person to transcend his activity.<sup>27</sup>

These strong words are not outdated. Our recent *Rule* mentions the *Declaration* in article 81a (about formation). I have found more than sixty marginal references to this document: section 14 is acknowledged.<sup>28</sup> This insistence of the *Declaration* upon the Brother viewed as a person is the logical consequence of the acceptance of the principle of subsidiarity by the Chapter.<sup>29</sup> The present *Rule* makes use of this word,<sup>30</sup> and one can assume that what is essential in the *Declaration* has been preserved. One might, perhaps, have wished that it had been more explicitly, more frequently, more boldly, more vehemently developed. The freedom of the person is never sufficiently trusted; it is never wrong to appeal to its creative power.

Finally, the *Declaration* underlines the mutual relations between Brothers and community, persons and Institute:

- a person is completed only in his invitation into the community;<sup>31</sup>
- the community serves the persons and endeavors to enhance their gifts according to their originality;<sup>32</sup>
- the (administrative?) structures and the rules are also designed to serve the persons.<sup>33</sup>

### **Maintaining a Clear Vision**

The *Declaration* as a document issued by the Chapter and the General Chapter itself should not be confused with the renewal of the Institute.<sup>34</sup>

This was already obvious 26 years ago. It is even more so today. Again, this means that the *Declaration* is not a re-foundation. A foundation, like that of the Institute, finds its origin in persons, recognized needs, and responses tried in concrete circumstances. It is first of all an action before it finds, if need be, the written formulations which structure it and facilitate its transmission. The writings of the Founder must be understood in the light of an itinerary which was part of his life. In the case of the *Declaration*, the text, though it springs from the experience and the words of Brothers, preceded the renewal as it was implemented. Indeed, it contributed strongly to this renewal. But after the 1966-1967 Chapter, much if not everything remained to be done. It was another adventure, and it is not yet completed.

## **Section II**

### **Restoring in All Its Vigor the Creative Principle that Gave Birth to the Institute**

In his recent writings,<sup>35</sup> Brother John Johnston lists chronologically the terms used in the official documents of the Institute for the last 25 years to call the Brothers to effect change in their personal, community, and apostolic life: “adapted renewal” in 1966-1967, “revitalization” in 1976, “conversion” in 1986, “transformation” beginning in 1993, and now “closing the gap.” It seems to me that the diversity in these expressions, and their successive replacements, indicates a twofold awareness. First, there is an awareness of the radical nature of the change introduced into the Institute ever since the Chapter of 1966-1967. Second, there is an awareness of the difficulty of translating this change into the real world of the Brothers – their behavior, mindset, options, activities, apostolic enterprises, and the very way they speak. As far as I am concerned, I rejoice, to use the words of the Superior, that we have in no way abandoned the struggle for an authentic renewal of the Institute.<sup>36</sup> Since I am speaking here of the *Declaration*, I will use the term adapted renewal (or renovation; the *Declaration* uses these two terms almost interchangeably, it seems to me).

This term is the one used in *Perfectae Caritatis* to require that all institutes commit themselves to act for change. The expression itself is the terminal point of an evolution that could be traced through the successive drafts of that conciliar decree. Between 1962 and 1965, there were five official published drafts. The title was changed from *De Statibus Perfectionis Acquirendae*<sup>37</sup> to *De Accommodate Renovationae Vitae Religiosae*.<sup>38</sup> This evolution in the title corresponds to what could be called a Copernican revolution in the understanding of religious life, which was the subject matter of the conciliar decree. Space does not permit me to delve into the significance of this change in terminology nor relate it to what has actually taken place.

However, once I had read the *Instrumentum Laboris* prepared for the Synod in 1994, I had the depressing feeling that on a great many points we were moving backwards ... But that is another question.

In speaking of adapted renewal, the authors of the *Declaration* – that is, the members of the General Chapter – were well aware that they were calling the Brothers to a radical change. The authors resolutely committed the Institute to travel along new paths. (Brother Charles Henry centered his famous conferences of 1968-1969 on the radical nature of this change.<sup>39</sup>) The objective of the *Declaration* was to restore in all its vigor the creative principle that gave birth to the Institute. This creative principle is nothing other . . . than the Holy Spirit. Also, the *Declaration* begins with a passage on spiritual renewal which can still be a source of inspiration provided it is read in its entirety.<sup>40</sup> Following Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the *Declaration* itself states that fidelity to the Holy Spirit is the unifying element in the life of the Brother.<sup>41</sup> On that basis, the newness of the *Declaration*

seems to me to be threefold: it presents a new approach in the relation of the Institute to its Founder;<sup>42</sup> it offers a *new and completely different vision of the religious life of the Brother*;<sup>43</sup> it calls for a *fundamental revision of our apostolic works*.<sup>44</sup>

### **Series of Tensions**

In the writings, the life, and the work of Saint John Baptist de La Salle the Holy Spirit is revealed in a privileged manner and today [the Brothers] ought to draw from that source the living principle for their conduct.<sup>45</sup>

The Institute would not have been able to remain alive for three centuries, and to extend itself throughout 80 countries, without evolving, principally but not exclusively, in the field of education. Like all religious orders, however, as well as the church itself, the Institute has had difficulty living with the tension between its relationship to the Founder and its adaptation to social change. This tension in the Institute has been concretized, for a long time, over the question of the *Rule*.<sup>46</sup> In this long and difficult history, the papal approval of the *Rule* in 1947 was felt by the Brothers of my generation as a canonization of the letter of the Founder's text. From then on the *Rule* of 1947 was scarcely attractive to us any longer. Was it not looked upon rather as an iron yoke to restrain all creativity? The way the *Declaration* presents fidelity to the Founder brings us back closer to him. It can become a springboard for the renewal of the Institute.

The difficulty has not been completely resolved, at least in the language. Today we speak of transmitting the charism of the Founder. The *Declaration* itself uses the expression "to live effectively the charism of the Founder."<sup>47</sup> Without pressing the point, I would say that these formulations are not entirely satisfying to me. They seem to me to continue to treat charism as a thing. A different expression in the *Declaration* sounds more accurate:

God calls each Brother to make a personal response to the constitutive elements of this vocation as received from the Founder, and to adapt his response to the signs of the times as they are manifest in the needs of the world today.<sup>48</sup>

Reference to the Founder entails multiplying questions, not getting answers for what we should do today. We alone can find the answers. Pushing the contrast further, I would say that the *Declaration* invites us to move from the Founder as model (or idol) to the Founder as witness to the Spirit; from the Founder as oracle to the Founder as prophet of the Spirit; and from the Founder as remote to the Founder as our travelling companion.

### **From the Founder as Model (Idol?) to the Founder as Witness to the Spirit**

The *Declaration* acknowledges the work accomplished during the previous ten years to make the Founder better known; and it hopes that the work will be even more intensified.<sup>49</sup> By 1966, several fundamental positions had been established. The historical approach to the *Rule* undertaken by Brother Maurice Hermans desacralized the text at the very moment when it had only recently been officially canonized.<sup>50</sup> Already the works of Brother Léon Aroz and Brother Yves Poutet had helped to put the real humanity of De La Salle in better perspective, in contradistinction to the uniformly hagiographic presentation inspired by Blain. Finally, the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* had been rediscovered and, with them, the central importance of the apostolic finality of the Institute.



The Holy Spirit is revealed not only in the writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, but also in his life and in his work.<sup>51</sup> But this life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit was a process conditioned by a program for the future, rather than by the habitual patterns of the past. The Founder's vocation to be a founder began with a rather explosive break with his original vocation as a priest and canon. His new vocation was pursued as a journey, with progress along the road. It involved laborious searching which, at times, was hesitant and tentative, susceptible to errors, crises, and blind alleys.

Today we live our vocation as a history. Yesterday's answers are no longer adequate for today. It is often necessary to change one's outlook, to be open to ever new perspectives, and never become bogged down in the complacent possession of some technique.<sup>52</sup> Continual recourse to the Founder does not bring with it an answer to our quest for the ways of the Spirit. But deepening our understanding of the Founder's journey – such as Brother Miguel Campos, for example, has done – shows John Baptist de La Salle to be a witness of how to live one's life according to the Spirit. His is the witness of a servant of God committed to following Jesus Christ in the search for and acceptance of the Father's will, abandoned to his guidance, and collaborating in his work.

### **From the Founder as Oracle to the Founder as Prophet of the Spirit**

Brothers who entered the Institute after the 1970s can scarcely imagine the extent to which concern for literal fidelity to the *Rule* derived from the Founder prevailed in the Institute for two centuries. At one time, a work by a Redemptorist entitled *The Cult of the Rule* enjoyed a considerable popularity among us. Without being dramatic, but with precision, the *Declaration* broke with such literalism. The renewal called for by the Council sometimes requires that some of the practices and texts of the *Rule* coming from the Founder be abandoned.<sup>53</sup> More radically, the Founder is not an oracle. We do not expect Saint John Baptist de La Salle to have known in advance all our problems and the answers to all our questions.<sup>54</sup>

I have frequently had occasion to read through all the writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Recently, I have contributed to an edition of his complete works in a single volume. But the more I labor over his writings, the more I am tempted to a radical interpretation of that proposition in the *Declaration*. John Baptist de La Salle gives *no concrete answers* to the questions which we face in a context situated light years away from his. That goes without saying. Nevertheless, the temptation to transpose too literally, to recover too easily, significant Lasallian expressions seems to me to continue to be a problem today. I will give two examples, without developing them here (I have done so elsewhere). One example is the way people use the expression “together and by association,” which ends up as a facile slogan of sorts. Although the experience between 1691 and 1694 which gave birth to this expression was powerful and expressive, it was *situated in a particular context*. Another example: the needs of young people today are not less than they were at the time of the Founder, and in that understanding the vocation of the Brother certainly retains all of its meaning. I believe this profoundly. When De La Salle wrote in his original *Rule* that the need for *this* Institute is very great, he was making a statement of fact that, in the circumstances, his foundation had brought an *answer* to the urgent and enormous needs of the young people *of his day*. The formulation he uses is a *statement of fact*. If we use that formulation today it seems to me that it can be nothing more than a *spur* to stimulate the renewal of the Institute. It is in this way that I interpret the fact that in the present *Rule* this expression appears, no longer in Chapter 1, but in the last chapter on the vitality of the Institute.<sup>55</sup>

However that may be, the fidelity to which the *Declaration* invites us is a fidelity in dialogue: fidelity to the present moment of history and fidelity to the Founder. Far from opposing or excluding one another, they are

mutually interdependent.<sup>56</sup> We have to be attentive to the fact that certain dimensions of the Founder's thought are seen in a new light by the active participation of the Institute in the catechetical and liturgical renewal of the church, by our concern for the poor, and a deeper theology of the reality of this world.<sup>57</sup> Rediscovered thus in this dialogue, John Baptist de La Salle is revealed to us as a *prophet of the Spirit*. In addition to innumerable isolated formulations, he has allowed to enter into his writings something of the vision that led him on, of the creative breath that gave him life, of the hope which never ceased to keep him moving ahead beyond his fears. He was a visionary prophet, with his eyes raised to heaven, no doubt. But first of all his eyes were fixed on poor children to see in them the Son of God, and to help give them access to the dignity and freedom of such a vocation, invisible to the eyes of most people. He was a *committed prophet* who, in his concrete activity as the reformer of schools for the lower classes and founder of a new kind of society, was willing to destroy in order to build up, and to root out in order to plant. He was also a courageous prophet who was willing to struggle for justice and, in order to contribute to the coming of a new world order, to endure persecution by those who were the defenders of the ancient established order.

A prophet for us today, John Baptist de La Salle raises questions for us about the *meaning and direction* of our vocation and our mission;<sup>58</sup> about the *living spirit* which animates us;<sup>59</sup> about the *evangelical style* in which we live and act; about the service of the poor;<sup>60</sup> and above all about our approach to education<sup>61</sup> and fraternal relationships.<sup>62</sup>

### **From the Founder as Remote to the Founder as Our Travelling Companion**

The charism of the Founder involves institutions only through the mediation of people. From the beginning, John Baptist de La Salle founded a living community of Brothers. Fidelity to the specific intentions of the Founder and to the tradition of the Institute is confided to us as living persons, that is, to all of us. This dynamic fidelity to the Founder will be marked first of all by the community character of the search.<sup>63</sup>

*Fidelity in communion with our travelling companion.* The response of the Founder in his own day cannot serve as an excuse to dispense us from finding something different today. There can be nothing that is taboo, nothing interdicted *a priori*. It is true that the debate on the lay character of the Institute during the first session of the Chapter of 1966 was based on the clearly stated desire of the Founder and the first Brothers. But the strong and living consensus shown by the General Chapter – and by the Institute – blossomed forth just as much from the signs of the times in the contemporary world. The Brothers gather to listen to God in community. They help each other to understand what God addresses to them through the mediation of daily events.<sup>64</sup> The community effort to recognize and understand the problems of the youth of our time and to respond by a generous commitment is among the first objectives of the Institute.<sup>65</sup> Even if this search remains entirely our own responsibility, the Founder is still discreetly present at our community dialogues.

It was only in company with his Brothers that the Founder himself moved forward, introduced by them to the Gospel of the service of the Kingdom of God, beginning here below, by taking on the cause of young people far from salvation. He lived in open brotherhood as a priest freed from his ties to a clerical society, an established society turned in on itself, hardened into an exclusive hierarchical system, a society cut off from the real world and its interests. The Founder lived in creative brotherhood as a minister of the Gospel, discovering with his travelling companions a church of the Exodus, a church with a mission in the world, a church

of fraternal communion, a church of service to people while respecting their liberty, without self-interest or concern for financial gain. Our own search to be incarnate and to be present to the world, our search for another form of church life, will find support in the Founder if we are careful to understand John Baptist de La Salle from the point of view of his break with his past. He becomes our travelling companion to the extent that we are willing, when necessary, to leave the well-marked routes and to travel forward on routes that we have to trace out for ourselves day after day.

In this sense the *Declaration* brings to light the *fundamental insights* of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. They remain of contemporary significance for catechetics,<sup>66</sup> as well as for finding educational initiatives different from the school.

The Institute ought not to limit the interpretation of its educational apostolate so as to refuse all apostolic activity unrelated to the school ... Such a narrow point of view ... would run the risk of placing an obstacle to the action of the Holy Spirit among us.<sup>67</sup>

### Strikingly New Visions

Within the people of God the Brothers are called ... to a specific witness. They are signs of the action of the Holy Spirit in our own day.<sup>68</sup>

The *Declaration* presents a vision of the life of the Brother that is strikingly new. For many in today's world, such a perspective would seem perfectly normal. But for the Brothers trained in a totally different and sometimes opposite way of thinking, the reversal that the *Declaration* called for was considerable. It could imply the overturning of the very "foundations" of their "religious life." To the extent, however, that this new vision corresponded to hopes that were often unexpressed, or even unconscious, and where this vision fitted into developments already taking place in daily life, developments that were inevitably bound to take place but were not yet established, the *Declaration* was able to contribute to a "re-foundation," a new thrust to their religious life as Brothers.<sup>69</sup>

I shall try to recapture this newness from the point of view of three dynamic elements highlighted by the *Declaration*: Consecration (vocation), Mission (ministry), Communion (community-association). Such an analysis, though useful, ought not to obscure that fact that each one of these terms implies the other two: *consecrated/sent/united together: by (the God of Jesus Christ) ... for a purpose (to announce the Gospel to the poor) ... together with (the Brothers).*

Before addressing each one of these three dynamic elements in turn, I think three remarks are necessary. These dynamisms are intended to underline the fact that one aspect of the *Declaration* that is new is *the presentation of the religious life of the Brother from the point of view of its specificity*, and not at all from the point of view of religious life in general. In this, the *Declaration* recaptures the inspiration of the Founder.

*An apostolic specificity.* The chapter on the religious life of the Brother begins with consecration. But, from its roots in baptism, as well as in what it adds that is new, it is clear that this consecration is apostolic.<sup>70</sup> The same is true for the community dimension.<sup>71</sup> The paragraph on the apostolic purpose of the Institute obviously insists on this aspect.<sup>72</sup>

*A lay or secular specificity of the Brothers life.* The Brother is a human being<sup>73</sup> who lives in the world and shares in the hopes and anxieties of human beings.<sup>74</sup> The Institute was born by listening to the needs of people, of the world; its renewal ought to take place as well by starting with the needs of people crying out today.<sup>75</sup> (Unfortunately, during the discussion in the assembly, an amendment was voted which very much weakened this part of the text. The Commission had written that attentiveness to the needs of youth was *the indispensable source* of renewal. It now reads *an indispensable source*. Changing the definite to the indefinite article changes the meaning.) It is necessary therefore to confront these needs of today.<sup>76</sup> In addition, the consecration of the Brother involves him in the world; it is expressed and lived in the exercise of a particular expertise;<sup>77</sup> consecration must be oriented toward the service of people.<sup>78</sup> I believe personally that we should probe deeply into this original and prophetic dimension of the religious life of the Brother.<sup>79</sup> Finally the *Declaration* even recognizes the juridical or canonical specificity of the life of the Brother. More on this will follow.<sup>80</sup>

### **A New Vision of the Religious Life of the Brother: Consecration (Vocation), from the Religious State to the Brother's Life according to the Gospel**

Three rough sketches for reflection:

*From profession of the vows of religion to consecration of the person to God.* The rediscovery at the Council of the primacy of consecration ties in very nicely with the very terms used in the formula of vows since its origin.<sup>81</sup>

*From perpetual profession (or consecration of one's life) to consecration by one's life.* It is not a matter of calling into question the decisive importance of the act of perpetual profession and the motive that inspires it. But the *Declaration* suggests a reflection more profound and more realistic. The consecration of a person becomes worth more, is carried out in practice, it progresses, and its meaning becomes clear as one lives out one's life. I consecrate myself for life, but it is my life that consecrates me.<sup>82</sup>

*From separation from the world to presence in the world so as to participate in the offering of the world in Jesus Christ, the only consecrated one.* Here again, from the beginning such was the itinerary of John Baptist de La Salle, a priest – reducing himself in a certain sense to the lay state – not only by living with his Brothers, but by investing his energy in secular tasks. Read the following passages again with this idea of secularity as a key to their interpretation: *Declaration* 3:5 (presence to the world demands a spiritual renewal); *Declaration* 8:1 (insistence on attention to the signs of the times); *Declaration* 11:4 (the witness of a consecrated life at the very center of the world); and *Declaration* 41:2-3 and 48:2, 7 (the secularity of certain tasks and their meaning for the consecration of the world). This presence is not immersion in the world. It implies, on the one hand, the depth of the charity of its commitment and, on the other, a certain separation from the world.<sup>83</sup> This is a spiritual attitude that is altogether positive. It does not mean either rejecting or combatting this world. Rather, being seized by Christ and as a member of Christ, the Brother lives his human condition as a citizen of the new world inaugurated by Jesus Christ. Like leaven in the dough, the Brother wants to contribute little by little to the transformation of this world here and now.<sup>84</sup> Read in this sense the beautiful passage on the significance of the Eucharist.<sup>85</sup>

### **A New Vision of the Religious Life of the Brother: the Brother's Mission, from Duality to Unity**

Three brief remarks on this subject:

*Unity between consecration and apostolate.* This has already been addressed.

*Unity achieved through those to whom the Brother is sent on his mission: the poor.* The Brother consecrates himself to God in order to announce the Gospel to the poor. There has sometimes been a tendency to sweeten something that seems rather bitter in the *Declaration* by saying that the Brother is sent to all young people with preference for the poor. It seems to me that the *Declaration* is more radical and more explicit, and that in this matter it fits better with the Lasallian experience. The chapter on the service of the poor still seems to me to be central in the *Declaration*.<sup>86</sup> Service of the poor cannot be reduced to charitable assistance; rather, it implies the struggle for social justice.<sup>87</sup> Announcing the Gospel to the poor is indeed the apostolic priority of the Institute. This priority ought to be lived also by those who are not engaged directly in the service of the poor.<sup>88</sup> This is not meant merely as a concession. Announcing the truth of the Gospel is turned into a joke depending on the starting point, whether it is all people or the poor. In truth, if the Gospel is not first announced to the poor, then we are not announcing the good news of the Gospel to all people.<sup>89</sup>

*Unity achieved through announcing the Gospel by all the Brother's activities.* Without doubt the Brother is a catechist by vocation, and the explicit announcement of the good news of the Gospel is important in his life. The pages in the *Declaration* on this point are forceful and classic without being outmoded.<sup>90</sup> What seems to me quite new, both in 1967 and still today, is the recognition that all the tasks that a Brother performs have an apostolic character. The Gospel announcement, before it is a message or a word, is an action, a transformation, a healing for the reality of the present world: the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.<sup>91</sup>

### **A New Vision of the Religious Life of the Brother: A Community according to the Spirit. From a Uniformity of Individuals to a Unity of Persons**

To save time, and since I have already spoken of this above, I will limit myself here simply to stating three contrasting situations: 1) from a community centered on observance to a community centered on relationships;<sup>92</sup> 2) from a community rooted in established traditions to a community with a project for the future;<sup>93</sup> 3) from a priority given to structures as things to a primacy of personal structures, based on sharing, dialogue, and working together.<sup>94</sup>

### **Moving toward Renewal**

They [the Brothers] must not expect those in authority to give ready-made solutions to the new problems that come from a world in evolution. It is up to each Brother in the presence of God to start out along the path of spiritual conversion and determine to have a personal share in the great community work of renewal and adaptation.<sup>95</sup>

The *Declaration* opened the road for an efficacious renewal by the new light which it cast on fidelity to the Founder and the religious life of the Brother. The thrust of the Chapter had brought the production of this document to completion in a way that would not have been expected at the beginning. Those who lived through the difficult and sometimes painful period of gestation, up to the final explosion of a definitive vote that was all but unanimous, had the experience of a veritable Pentecost, an in-breaking of the Spirit who renews the face of the earth.<sup>96</sup> In its turn, the text has the potential for the Brothers to become the spirit that should animate

our renewal.<sup>97</sup> But the *Declaration* intended to go farther than that. It points out to the Institute the objectives of renewal; it suggests some strategies for a policy of action for renewal; it defines the role of the agents who are to put it into practice and urges them to commit themselves to it with determination and perseverance. I will limit myself here to citing several texts corresponding to each of these levels, although it is often difficult to disengage them from their context in the chapter document.

### **The Objectives of the Renewal, the Goals to Bring about Change, Are Precisely and Sometimes Forcibly Indicated by the Declaration**

The strongest is without doubt the objective of converting the Institute to the service of the poor. It is to them that we are sent by preference.<sup>98</sup> All the organisms of government, of decision-making, and of dialogue in the Institute must pursue this conversion to the poor, so that all the decisions taken and the structures that are put in place will reflect the truth of our return to the poor.<sup>99</sup>

Also expressed very forcibly is the objective to renew some of our apostolic works, especially the school. The purpose of the Institute is not simply to maintain schools as such, but to work in the apostolate of education with the school as a privileged means.<sup>100</sup> In addition – and this is an objective – the educational purpose of the Institute ought to be widened fearlessly to include activities apart from the school.

The new vision of the religious life presented in section 22 evidently implies some objectives for action: spiritual renewal,<sup>101</sup> renewal of the spirit of zeal;<sup>102</sup> the freedom of the person so that freedom dominates one's action;<sup>103</sup> community renewal through and by personal development, and by sharing together to listen to what the Spirit is telling us in Scripture and in the needs of the world. The community effort to recognize and understand the problems of the youth of our time and to respond by a generous commitment is among the first of the objectives of the Institute.<sup>104</sup>

### **Strategies for a Policy of Renewal**

- The word is used in reference to the service of the poor.
- Different historical and sociological contexts require that Chapters on the local level establish a clear and suitable policy to commit personnel and structures to the service of the poor.<sup>105</sup>
- A strategy to review and to question existing apostolic works. All this is demanded by the return to the poor, the catechetical renewal, the renewal of the school, and the opening to other fields of apostolic work.<sup>106</sup>
- A strategy of creativity and mobility. The changes in the world and new opportunities require a policy for new enterprises. There is also need for both individual and community effort, based on imagination and openness, to discover new and adapted ways to be present among the poor who are most neglected.<sup>107</sup> That cannot happen without greater mobility. New and creative enterprises will not be possible so long as we fear for situations already in place.<sup>108</sup>
- A strategy for formation. It is not surprising that the *Declaration* in all of its chapters comes back again and again to the formation of the Brothers. The *Declaration* speaks of formation in vigorous

terms: its characteristics, its dimensions, its stages, its style. It is enough here to refer to the index under the word “formation.”

### **Agents of Renewal: These Are Essentially Persons**

The future of the Institute in the long run is in the hands of the Brothers.<sup>109</sup> With regard to each Brother, it is necessary here to follow the texts where the tension between freedom and responsibility is underlined; between the need to develop personal talents and the need to go out of oneself to be open to the service of others; between a person’s interior life before God and the living and constant attention to the challenges that life brings; between personal uniqueness or personal gifts and respect for others and for the community; between personal initiative and the common good.

The community of Brothers in dialogue is the physical space for all action leading to renewal; community dialogue is its condition and instrument. It is evident that community dialogue in all its forms is a privileged instrument of individual conversion and fraternal union. Each one should contribute to its issue in practical conclusions. Here the superior finds one of his important roles.<sup>110</sup> The Chapters, and the agents of government, by listening to the Brothers and to the appeals from the world, are in a state of ongoing renewal.<sup>111</sup> Societies, like individuals, grow old and die once the habits inherited from the past outweigh the will to renewal in a twofold fidelity to the intuitions that sparked our origins and the requirements of life today.<sup>112</sup>

### **Section III**

#### **Conclusions**

The General Chapter, well aware of the present and future difficulties in the implementation of the renovation of the Institute . . . invites all Brothers to turn faithfully to the Holy Spirit who can renew the face of the world.<sup>113</sup>

In the form of an extended conclusion, I would like to return to this statement in three of its aspects: 1) the purpose of the *Declaration*; 2) the results it has obtained; and 3) the topicality of the *Declaration*.

#### **Renewal or Re-foundation? The Purpose of the Declaration**

With the passage of time and taking everything into account, it seems to me that in its fundamental purpose, the *Declaration* envisaged the renewal of the Institute in the perspective of a re-foundation or re-creation dynamism. The Institute which it anticipated was an Institute which would be different, if not another Institute.

If we look more closely into it, the *Declaration* sees the Brothers as founders of the Institute, following the example of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

- As founders, they are required to break down or call into question activities, and institutions, as well as the way we live in the church and even religious life itself. Is this not, after all, the very meaning of the word “conversion?”

- As founders, they are required to be more attentive to new calls of duty, without being afraid of devising new responses; they are invited to renew and create.
- Again as founders, they are called to follow the will of God in their personal initiatives and also in their readiness to accept debate and discussion with others.

The *Declaration* views the Institute less as an established structure than as a living community in a permanent process of creation or re-creation. What I have just said seems to correspond to the second part of this article. What remains to be studied is the limits of the process of renewal or re-foundation. The General Chapter was clearly aware of the difficulties which would be met in this process. It had premonitions of other difficulties that might arise without being able to name them yet, which takes us back to the first part of this article, but with new data.

All things considered, it is no longer the Founder who appears as an obstacle to a re-foundation. On the contrary, the new way in which the *Declaration* envisages his role makes the close study of his life and writings a source of creative dynamism and rejuvenation. The same can be said about the constituent elements defined in *Declaration* 13, and the next sections make it obvious that each person is expected to integrate these elements into his own dynamism. The structures that are mentioned are living ones, founded on mutual relationships and permanent dialogue. The very content of these constituent elements is to be constantly renewed.

The limit of this re-foundation process is not to be found in the vision that it envisages, but in the concrete reality which cannot be ignored. It must be approached from two angles: the weight of existing institutions on the one hand, and the weight of personal habits, attitudes, and behaviors on the other. These two realities reinforce each other. At this point, I cannot resist retelling a joke I made between the two sessions of the 1966-1967 Chapter. I developed a fanciful hypothesis and then concluded with a proposal which was accepted and had successful effects.

It happened during a recess in which I was conversing with some Assistants – and I clearly remember the precise location of the park in Rome where we were that particular day. I said that “confronted with the radical changes that were expected, we should, after the second session of the Chapter, offer all Brothers still in active service a kind of sabbatical year which would be something like a second novitiate, since they were supposed to enter a new Institute.”

Then I formulated a fanciful hypothesis: “It would be desirable,” I said, “that we, the Assistants who had just been elected in the first session of the Chapter, offer our resignation at the beginning of the second session, thus giving the Superior General the possibility of working with a team which would be well knit together because they would share the same vision and the same determination to rejuvenate the Institute.” (I hasten to add, by the way, that the General Chapter which wrote the *Declaration* was also responsible for the creation of a central government whose members did *not* all share the same views on the necessity of a renewal. Some of them were openly in opposition to this renewal. The collegial body which was eventually set up in 1976 should have been put together as early as 1967. Some of us thought this necessary and expressed it in writing even before the first session in 1966. To some extent, one might say that we lost ten years. But one cannot change history.)



As for my proposal and its successful outcome, I made it during a retreat in October 1966 and sent it to Brother Charles Henry. I proposed that we replace the Second Novitiate with the CIL, and invite to Rome for the first two sessions of this new institution<sup>114</sup> all Directors of Novitiates and Scholasticates. The reason I put forward was that it was urgent following the Chapter – which was not yet completed at the time of my letter – to have all persons responsible for the formation of Brothers to awaken to, and become aware of, the implications of the radical changes looming ahead.

It is one thing to recognize the existence of a tension, if not a contradiction, between the radical purpose of the *Declaration* and the concrete reality of the Institute and its institutions. It is another thing to interpret it, and this has been done in different ways.

Some of us may have been tempted to iconoclastically reject all that existed in the past. I think of the frenetic behavior of Brothers who mistook renewal for rejection of all rules and necessary restraints demanded by community life.<sup>115</sup> A number of Brothers left the Institute, and I remember that many requests for dispensation of vows reached Rome with motivations of the “*I am confused*” type. It would be unfair, however, to attribute this situation to the *Declaration*. The causes of this crisis were much more complex. About rejection and iconoclasm, I simply remark that among those who left the Institute I know some who did it out of a feeling of helplessness. The more they tried to adhere to the *Declaration* project, the more they were tempted to consider that it was impossible to do so in the actual Institute. “New wine cannot be kept in skins that are thought to be too old.” Fortunately, this was not the solution chosen by most Brothers. The *Declaration*, Brother Charles Henry wrote, does not condemn anybody. To call for a change, even a radical one, does not mean that the past should be rejected. It simply means that the consequences of the tremendous mutation of the world must be drawn. The Brothers were not to be put on trial. On the contrary, was not the decision taken by the Chapter to propose to the Brothers the utopia of the *Declaration* the very manifestation of a complete confidence in their open-mindedness, in their ability to adapt, to change, and to take the initiative for creative action?

In many cases, resistance to the *Declaration* was caused by indifference or ignorance. Luke Salm remarks that after the 1967 Chapter, many of its members had not enough time or were not clear-sighted enough to devise the appropriate way to explain to the Brothers the main changes that they were requested to actively adopt.<sup>116</sup> The same remarks might be made about Vatican II.

In a few cases, Brothers who had carefully analyzed and probably well understood the *Declaration* opposed it, sometimes with great violence. Some of them held important offices in the Institute. This opposition cannot be fully justified by the awkward presentation of some decisions of the *Declaration* and of the Chapter. It was often the result of a fundamental resistance to any change, and no amount of skill would have been able to overcome this block. The most irreducible manifestations of this opposition coalesced into a charge made in September 1967 against those who wrote the *Declaration*, indicting them for trying to turn a religious congregation into a Secular Institute. The fight did not stop with the strong statement issued by the unanimous members of the second committee.<sup>117</sup> It went on until 1976. It even raged within the General Council itself between 1967 and 1976. Its most sensational manifestations were the storm of protest aroused by Brother Charles Henry’s lectures,<sup>118</sup> by a stubborn opposition to the research done by the *International Vow Commission* which was created in 1971, and by the systematic refusal to accept debate upon the issue.

The most frequent response to the *Declaration* was not an active resistance but a kind of weary passivity. The text was well-received and its inspiration was even recognized, but its aptitude to become a concrete reality was

doubted, at least the reality as it was lived by the individuals. It might be feasible, but somewhere else, perhaps. Actually, it was not so much the passivity of the individuals as the weight of the existing institutions that had a paralyzing, undermining effect. The analysis of the *Declaration* itself was thus verified:

It must be recognized that taking on too many commitments may result in an abbreviated or incomplete preparation for the young. For the Brothers already teaching, such over-extension of our apostolic work means the impossibility of deepening and renewing the intellectual life; for the communities it causes difficulty in creating dialogue and reflection; for certain areas it results in the impossibility of giving sufficient attention to changing conditions and new opportunities.<sup>119</sup>

As long as this situation lasted, one may wonder whether it was possible to listen to the second part of the paragraph which appealed to the Regional and District Chapters and requested them to examine their activities.<sup>120</sup> Then, in a number of cases, the veritable allergy to any change concentrated on the issue of serving the poor. Many Brothers had grown very touchy about this. Some said that the poor were numerous in their schools – which was sometimes quite true; others wanted the Institute to cease making an issue of it as it was completely unrealistic in the concrete context in which they lived.

Again, I would like to make a few remarks about this question of the purpose of the *Declaration*. First, those who wrote the *Declaration* were aware of the tension that would be generated. For that reason, they did not advocate a total, immediate change, such as a magician could effect with the wave of a wand. They did not favor a practical status quo, either. They knew that renewal depended upon the free commitment of persons and that, consequently, it could not be decided in an authoritarian way. They were convinced that the Brothers themselves were capable of effecting a renewal, and they invited them to begin walking on new paths.

Second, the writers knew that renewal could only be a slow process. The *Declaration* initiated it; it showed the major directions, and individuals were allowed to go forward freely. The writers knew that the process would be long, and that it was not supposed to come to a stop as if it were a simple transition from one rigid state to another status quo, though a different one, through a temporary season of storms. As Paul VI had said in *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, renewal had to become permanent. A fixed Institute had to turn into an Institute in a process of constant re-creation, permanently re-born and open to the unknown of a future which does not yet exist: *The Spirit who breathes where the Spirit will may be driving the Institute into waves where it would not otherwise have the courage to go.*<sup>121</sup>

Third, Luke's words sound familiar to my ears. "Did not John Baptist de La Salle say that he had been driven where he himself did not want to go?" Re-foundation of the Institute? The phrase would not be so offensive if our image of the Institute's foundation were less idealized and more real, if we could remember that it was a long process. We have been accustomed to consider the foundation in its final realization, but when exactly was it completed? In 1682, or 1691, or 1694, or 1717, or 1725? The process definitely began with the sensational decision of Monsieur de La Salle to break off with his previous life. It went on through trial and error, often in a state of extreme frailty, to use the words of Blain.

In 1725, some Brothers were convinced that the Pope's Bull had actually founded the Institute which, from then on, would be firmly established and publicly recognized. It possessed a sort of official identification card since it had become a Congregation of Pontifical Right. The state of the Institute seemed to be clarified, and the Bull even mentioned the three religious vows. The small company of Brothers painstakingly established by Monsieur

de La Salle was canonically founded and could join the great Religious Orders. Some Brothers, and Blain himself, misinterpreted the Bull, wrongly thinking that the Brothers' vows were solemn ones.

I consider that the Preface to the 1726 *Rule* is a monumental misinterpretation about the process of the foundation of the Institute. It did not provide an interpretation of the purpose, the spirit, or even the literal meaning of the life and writings of Monsieur de La Salle, but it was the radical contradiction of his whole action. The members of the 1900 Chapter realized it, since they discarded this text in the revised *Rule*. But they did not eradicate the fundamental dichotomy which had been introduced and was constantly strengthened in the literature, the practice, and the mental attitude of the Institute.

On the one hand, the Brother defined his identity in the light of the original *Rule* and chapters 1 and 2 clearly established the apostolic purpose, the evangelical spirit of faith and zeal, the priority given to the Holy Scripture, and the openness to events.<sup>122</sup> The Founder's *Meditations* constantly invited the Brother to better perceive and live his concrete life as the place where he must grow spiritually and religiously. He manifested and discovered his identity as a consecrated man in the living tissue of his concrete history – seeking God, following Jesus Christ, fulfilling his mission as a teacher, a catechist, serving poor children, working for the development of the world as well as for the propagation of the Gospel among nations, and being also the active member of a community.

On the other hand, the Brother also defined his identity in the context of canon law which made him a religious whose consecration was precisely expressed in the three religious vows. He had to live his identity on the basis of values and duties which remained outside the reality which provided his inner motivation and daily progress. Many times I have read formation programs which juxtaposed the study of the nature and duties of religious life in general<sup>123</sup> and a study of the life of the Brother as it is described in the *Rule* or the *Declaration*. At best, it is a waste of time; in many cases, it contributes to confusing the identity of the Brother. At worst, it may be a cause of deviancy.

In the official language of the Institute as well as in its institutions, the canonical interpretation of the Brother's religious life prevailed. An understanding of his identity was founded, not on his lived specificity but on an image of religious life in general, one that was imposed from outside. It clearly appears that the most fundamental purpose of the *Declaration* was to initiate a dynamism and a re-founding because it was conceived as a way of breaking off this harmful dichotomy. It invites the Brothers to define and understand themselves from the charismatic origin of the Institute, its apostolic purpose, its evangelical spirit, its immersion in the life of the world, to serve the liberation of and communion between men.

With the passing of time, it seems to me that it is this historical, specific approach to the Brother's life that was so hotly attacked in the name of another view of the essence of religious life – consecration, importance granted to the three vows, relationship with the world. As far as I am concerned, I think I can say that between 1954 and 1966, I grew progressively aware of the dichotomy officially accepted and, though I could not have foreseen it at the beginning, I was driven to consider the religious life of the Brother in its specificity and not at all in its canonical aspects. In spite of numerous difficulties and some unfortunate compromises, the text of the *Declaration* as it now exists is the actualization of this fundamental purpose.

At a deeper level, the issue at stake is the theology of Revelation, a theology that *Dei Verbum* so extensively renovated. Gabriel Moran presented it to the members of the Chapter at the beginning of the second session.<sup>124</sup> Are we called upon to live in the Institute so that it helps us to go forward, moved by the Spirit, or are we not? What can an external, canonical decree or even an official approval do to hold us together?

Is our fidelity to the spirit and aims of the Founder guaranteed because the Decree for the Congregation for Religious dated 26 January 1987 has recognized in the texts (of the *Rule*) the faithful expression of Saint John Baptist de La Salle's charism? Would it not be closer to reality to say that the value of our *Rule* is the fruit of a long process of discrimination in the living Institute in search of the best expression for its specific identity? This is what we have been doing even if we had to make some concessions to Canon Law, concessions that can be traced in the chapter on Consecration and strongly contrast with the paragraphs of item 2 in our *Rule*. Thus, we are drawn back to Luther's questions to which I alluded at the beginning of this article. Is not the Council's teaching on Revelation closer to Luther than to the post-tridentine hardening of the theology of the two sources?

### **Renewal or Re-foundation: "Results" of the Declaration**

It might be of interest for someone to do a kind of assessment of the situation these last 20 years; however, I have neither the ability nor the means to do it. Yet a recent study comes close to that kind of assessment, though it does not deal directly with the *Declaration*. I think of the *Report of the Superior General to the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Chapter*<sup>125</sup> and *Personal Commentary on the Report of Brother Superior to the General Chapter*.<sup>126</sup> I will single out in these documents four images which might sustain four interpretations of the situation of the Institute 27 years after the *Declaration*. Then I will conclude with a more personal reflection. Please let me remind you that I ask questions more than I make assertions.

*The Institute: ship in distress?* "If the present trend is not stopped and reversed, the Institute will completely disappear or be stricken with 'minimal survival' in a number of countries in the next 25 to 40 years."<sup>127</sup> It seems to me that in his analysis, Brother John does not suggest in any way that there exists a causal link between the 1966-1967 Chapter and the length of a crisis which decreased the number of Brothers from 15,000 in 1965 to 7,728 at the end of 1992, with an average loss of 173 Brothers a year for the last 7 years and an average age of over 60!

Clearly, such a statistic bans any form of triumphalism in the assessment of the results of the *Declaration* about the issue of renewal. All the more so as these figures raise serious problems not only about the future of the Institute, but also about its existential reason for being. I know that optimistic statistics are not necessarily the signs of evangelical authenticity, nor can these figures be read as a condemnation of the generations that are plagued with them. Nevertheless, they can undermine, if not the theological hope of the Brothers, at least their optimism about the future of the Institute and their confidence in the historical value of their way of life – not to mention its authenticity. Is not then the very relevance of such a document as the *Declaration* to be questioned? Is it possible to ignore the marked contrast between the impetus which this text gave to renewal and the statistical situation of the Institute in 1993?

*An unforeseen Institute ...* which the *Declaration* could not imagine? The example of *shared mission* is aptly chosen to underline the extension of a renewal which could not be predicted in 1967. The passage in the *Declaration* on collaboration with laymen<sup>128</sup> is to be credited for its positive aspects (consistent with the necessary opening onto the world and the importance of secularity in our occupation). But it is difficult to read in the text the prefiguration of what would later happen, and that the Superior's *Report* analyzes at great length<sup>129</sup> – not without some qualifications and interrogations – it seems to me.<sup>130</sup>

This unforeseen development is undoubtedly quite positive, and I fully agree with those who read it as a sign of renewal in the Institute under the action of the Spirit. I have little personal experience of this partnership, and it is with great modesty that I venture a simple question. Would there be any alternative for the specific vocation of the Brother in the future other than a partnership of the “*shared mission*” type as it is presently lived and defined? Would it be looked upon as a sacred withdrawal to the Brothers’ ghetto? In other words, should not the question raised by the *Declaration* (which borrowed it from *Ad Gentes*) be more often, more systematically, more profoundly asked?

As with all other congregations engaged in the active life, now is the time “sincerely to ask ourselves in the presence of God whether we cannot broaden our activity in favor of expanding God’s kingdom among the nations” at the expense of “leaving to others certain ministries.”<sup>131</sup>

It seems to me that some of the reflections made by Brother Superior in his latest writings could be understood in this light. I would personally like to explore this alternative and debate it more. I consider it probably essential for the future of the Institute; certainly and obviously for the authenticity of its present existence. (“Alternative,” by the way, does not mean that one direction should replace the other one; both might definitely co-exist.<sup>132</sup>)

*A renewed Institute?* At the end of a transitional period, the text of the reformed *Rule* has been unanimously accepted as excellent and it has been recognized as *the present expression of the Lasallian charism*. We are justified in thinking that one of the positive results of the *Declaration* (not just the result of the *Declaration* alone, of course) are the abundant references to and quotes in the *Rule* from this document. It is a fact that those in authority in the Institute have often quoted the *Rule* since 1987, fulfilling one of the objectives of the 1986 Chapter: to circulate its text among the Brothers. The *Rule* may even have been too repetitively insistent; at least this is how I felt it.

I do not think the *Rule* should be ignored, nor do I advocate a multiplication of quotations from the *Declaration*. The renewal of the Institute should not be confused with a document, either the 1987 *Rule* or the *Declaration*. What is of importance is the impetus given to renewal which originated in this text and which can be an instrument of change. But the text alone can never make up for not bringing about renewal. “*Au commencement n’était pas la Règle.*” I remember, during a CIL session, that this phrase was the subject of my reflections. “At the origin of a foundation or a re-foundation, it is essential to start with persons, to listen to the appeals and needs of the world, to remain open to the inspiration of the Spirit as it is shared by a community.” It seemed to me that the dynamism of Brother Superior’s *Report* and the kind of *proposals* adopted by the 1993 Chapter aimed in this direction. I must add that I would like to have more often and more strongly repeated that the first *Rule* of the Brother is the Gospel. The title of Brother John Johnston’s latest letter is already an inspiration, which the comments of Brother Superior develop. Better than simply “*a la suite du Christ, vivre authentiquement dans le Christ Jésus.*” It echoes the Lasallian meditations in *Mystères de Jésus-Christ: dans son histoire, dans notre vie aujourd’hui*.<sup>133</sup>

*An Institute on its way to renewal (or re-foundation)?* Thus, the last image that I retain from Brother Superior’s *Report*. Of all the aspects of the lives of the Brothers and the existence of the Institute, he stresses some positive and also some negative points. In many respects the drive initiated by the *Declaration* has been translated into positive action, even if this process should continue.

One cannot claim that the *Declaration* has transformed the Institute. But it is a fact that the renewal drive which it set in motion has resulted in actual achievements. Let me mention only the return to the service of the poor. According to Brother Superior's words, we are now growing more mentally ready to accept the actual implications of this renewal/re-foundation.<sup>134</sup> The time has not come for us to lapse into self-satisfaction but, even if we cannot ignore the first image of the ship in distress mentioned above, we can at least admit that the Institute is still quite alive, that it is growing more creative, and that the *Declaration* impetus is still at work, and is the appreciable result of this document. It is mainly the manifestation of the Spirit's action among the members of the Institute which, and we must admit it, is still in a state of great weakness and frailty.

### **If the Living Reality of the Institute Today Is Assessed, I Am Led to Believe that the Declaration Fulfilled Its Purpose to the Best of Its Ability**

Of course, those of us who expected a rapid radical change of an almost military type may be disappointed. Such a change would have been in open contradiction with the new image of the Institute that the *Declaration* offers: a living reality composed of persons, established in a pluralistic world, which cannot be ruled from an authoritarian center, and whose structure cannot be inferred from simple principles easily imposed on the community. The acceptance of subsidiarity was an essential step, and, whatever clarifications may have been needed (interdependence, for instance), its practice remains a fundamental force. I know many Brothers who deplore the fact that the Institute has not turned more radically to the service of the poor. They often bitterly resent a sort of divorce between discourse and practice (in the same meaning as the remark made in the United States about the gap between the words of the Brothers and their actions).<sup>135</sup> But when it acknowledges that the future of the Institute depends upon its members, the *Declaration* admits that the gap cannot be avoided and that it will always be necessary to work hard to fill this gap. Let me say that it would be dangerous to limit the present discourse to today's reality. This would mean that we think reality is not close enough to our discourse.

On the other hand, if the perspective of the *Declaration* is rightly perceived, we must admit that it has significantly contributed not only to liberate individuals from some unneeded restraints (and this definitely had to be done) but also to ready them for a more resolute form of service to the poor. The *Declaration* has given the possibility to or made it easier for some Brothers to become actual "founders" who are more often closely linked with the living Institute than what is sometimes said about them. Was it not the main and priceless result of this document to free the persons so that the Spirit may also be free?

### **Renewal or Re-foundation: Topicality of the Declaration**

Three orientations for more reflection.

*Topicality of the text:* I have been surprised, and so have some Brothers, by the insistence with which Brother John has been quoting the *Declaration*. A few of them have told me that it looked new to them. I think that they forget the memorable speech delivered by Brother John during the 1976 Chapter.<sup>136</sup> I do agree with what Brother John wrote in his Letter: "*Chaque fois que je relis la Déclaration – et c'est souvent – je suis de plus en plus étonné par sa richesse.*"<sup>137</sup> I confess that I have not often re-read the *Declaration* since 1967. I have just read it again, and this article shows that I have rediscovered it and that it seems to me to remain topical, even in its wording.

I can also hear some Brothers who warmly approve of the *Declaration* and tell me that we should undertake to bring it up to date. I know that some passages have surely aged, and I do not dispute that several developments

have become anachronic. It was written in a socio-economic context which is very different from the present one. It was written – though not exclusively – by Brothers coming from the First World. However, they were certainly ready to listen to what was called the Third World represented in the Committee and the Chapter by a few members who were already sensitive to a number of questions that were going to spring up very soon, for instance at Medellin. The world described in the *Declaration* was not an idyllic one;<sup>138</sup> the situation of the young was not either,<sup>139</sup> but the *Declaration* could hardly deal with present issues of unemployment, drug addiction, AIDS, and bio-ethics. The list could go on and on. . . .

I am personally skeptical about the feasibility and advisability of such an updating. Those who undertook it would soon realize that more changes than initially planned would be needed. The *Declaration* would have to be rewritten, and it would therefore be necessary to recover the fundamental inspiration which produced it. As it is, the present text remains an inspiration on fundamental points. What is urgent is to continue to implement it in our practical lives.

It is undoubtedly a good thing to go on quoting the *Declaration*, as Brother Superior does. My re-reading of it has convinced me that it remains a source of inspiration. It is a good thing for another reason. It reminds us that we can remain the Institute of the *Rule* which is ours only if we are Brothers whom the *Declaration* stimulates, inviting us to remain in permanent renewal. Finally, I might add that my re-reading helped me to understand what seemed to me definitely new in the Congress on religious life held in Rome in November 1993, and also to understand why that meeting left me unsatisfied.

A question remains unanswered. How does the *Declaration* question the Brothers who are between 30 and 40 years old, or between 40 and 50? It was written by a group of Brothers who were between 45 and 50 years old; it was recognized and positively received by a number of Brothers who were then well aware – and interpreted it as a grace – of the contrast between the projected Institute and the one in which they had grown. Is it still true for the generation of those who, as it is written in the first chapter of Exodus, had met neither Joseph, nor his brothers, nor any member of that generation?<sup>140</sup>

*Topicality of the impetus given by the Declaration:* My first remark is borrowed from Brother John in his latest *Pastoral Letter*: “*Il m’est apparu plusieurs fois au cours de ce Chapitre que l’Institut semble plus disposé que par le passé à s’engager dans l’action décisive et effective qui sera reprise si nous voulons réduire le fossé d’une façon significative avant l’année 2000.*”<sup>141</sup> If this observation is true, I think that this decisive and effective action strongly stressed by the *Declaration* and reformulated in recent documents must be made in three domains:

- the reality of serving the poor, which implies a creative dynamism and a reflection of the economic situation, both local and global;
- a catechetical renewal adapted to a world which has become secular and multi-cultural. (I think here of considerations heard in the Congress on religious life. They underlined the necessity of a genuine commitment and an actual dialogue with Asian religions, considering that this was the main challenge for the church of the new millennium.);
- in depth, and springing from our sources, a spiritual renewal, faithful to all the dimensions enumerated in *Declaration 3*.

*Topicality of the impetus given by the Declaration: its conditions:* I may surprise you, but this is what I believe and I say it at once, regretting that it is not often enough mentioned (is it more lived?). For an apostolic Institute whose commitments are in education and cultural life in this present world, this movement of renewal or re-foundation must be sustained by a determination to initiate a dialogue between culture and faith, between the Founder and the present world. I have now retired, and I must be humble and modest. I have always gratefully recognized that the renewal movement present in the *Declaration* sprang out of the inner vitality of an Institute committed to educational, catechetical, and cultural activities. It was not generated by theologians or specialists on the Founder's writings. But one can doubt that the *Declaration* might have been written without the involvement, the commitment, and the exchanges – at times uneasy – of experts who were or were not members of the Chapter but who debated with the Assembly, and also with one another, for their positions were diverse and sometimes opposed. Today, I think that it is urgent and important to have another debate of that kind which should deepen the concepts of “secular specificity,” the meaning of “association,” and the very notion of an Institute. But I have no time to develop these ideas.

It is also necessary to think of the Institute in another way. The *Declaration* was produced in an Institute which was still relatively strong, highly centralized (even if it was present in the whole world), dynamic, and young. It still counted many strong communities in charge of educational institutions. This is no longer true. The Institute is frail; its members are scattered; many Brothers can no longer enjoy the institutional support of a community whose activity is well-defined. It is this frail Institute which must effect its renewal or re-foundation. It seems to me that the role of the Councils, Chapters, and Superiors should be to further the effective vitality of the Institute: encourage the creativity of its members, invigorate their awareness of belonging to an Institute by fortifying the evangelical and Lasallian inspiration of what is created as well as what is renewed, and also by prompting them to share their experiences in more and more diversified situations as they continue to listen to the Spirit.

Let us dare to hope. I do not think of hope as just a word, but as my daily challenge which is to be received as a gift, to be lived in practical commitment, to be expected (looked forward to?) in “abandonment.” God is the master of all things through his Spirit. We do not know whence he comes nor where he goes, but we do know that he is with us. He is our hope, and every day this hope is new.

## Notes

1. Michel Sauvage, FSC, S.T.D., entered the Brothers of the Christian Schools in September of 1939 and made his final profession of vows in 1948. He holds a Licentiate in Classical Letters and a Doctorate in Theology from the University of Lille. From 1941 through 1957, he taught in schools in Lille, Villeneuve d'Ascq, and Rome; and from 1961 through 1976, he was professor of Theology of Religious Life at the Lateran University (Jesus Magister) in Rome. He was a member of the General Council of the Institute from 1966 to 1976; Director of the International Lasallian Center (CIL) in Rome from 1971 to 1976; Regional Superior for France from 1978 to 1982; and Director of Lasallian Studies in Rome from 1987 to 1991. During his career, Brother Michel has also directed numerous workshops, programs of study, and retreats for men and women religious focused on the various aspects of religious life. Though he was retired at the time of the writing of this essay, the “Lasallian enterprise” still occupied a great deal of his time. Brother Michel died in 2001.



2. Luke Salm, FSC, partially answers this question in *A Religious Institute in Transition* (Romeoville, IL: Christian Brothers Publications, 1992), 226.

3. See Michel Sauvage, FSC, “Les fondements évangéliques de la vie religieuse,” in *Lasallianum* 16 (May 1973), 75.

4. Personal comment on the *Report of the Superior General to the 42nd General Chapter*, 66.

5. See his excellent pages on the history of the *Declaration*; his pointed notes should not be skipped either, 115-131; and also his brief, yet essential development about three decisive contributions of the 1956 Chapter, 17-19.

6. Editor: Another way of thinking of this term is to consider the factual reality of the Founder and the experience of the early Brothers.

7. *Declaration* 7:3.

8. *Declaration* 5:2.

9. *Declaration* 28:1.

10. *Declaration* 37:2; 38:1.

11. *Declaration* 40:2.

12. *Declaration* 12.

13. *Declaration* 13:4.

14. *Declaration* 13:3, 5.

15. *Declaration* 13:6. See also *Gaudium et Spes*, 40.

16. *Declaration* 16; 18:1; 48:2, 7.

17. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 5.

18. See *Rule*, articles 24, 27-38.

19. In the same chapter of the *Rule*, articles 22, 23, 39-42.

20. *Rule*, article 2.

21. See Salm, *Religious Institute in Transition*, 17, note 2.

22. *Declaration* 7:2.

23. *Declaration* 14:3.

24. *Declaration* 14:5.
25. *Declaration* 14:2.
26. *Declaration* 14:5.
27. *Declaration* 27:1.
28. *Rule*, articles 81, 86.
29. *Acts of the 1966-1967 Chapter*, no. 6.
30. *Acts of the 1966-1967 Chapter*, no. 102.
31. *Declaration* 20:2; 27:2.
32. *Declaration* 19, 1.
33. *Declaration* 19:2.
34. Brother Charles Henry, preface to the *Declaration*, 16 December 1967.
35. See *Pastoral Letter* of 1 January 1994.
36. *Pastoral Letter* of 1 January 1994, 14.
37. The pre-conciliar schema of 1962 and the draft presented to the Council in 1963.
38. 29 October 1964, definitively voted in November 1965.
39. See Salm, *Religious Institute in Transition*, 149; and also *Circular 391* of 15 November 1971.
40. *Declaration* 3:1-5; see also the number of explicit references to the Holy Spirit in the *Declaration*: at least 25.
41. *Declaration* 14:5.
42. *Declaration* 21.
43. *Declaration* 22.
44. *Declaration* 23.
45. *Declaration* 1:5.
46. See *Cahiers lasalliens* 5, 318-321.

47. *Declaration 2.*
48. *Declaration 14:3.*
49. *Declaration 5:2.*
50. 1947.
51. *Declaration 5:1.*
52. *Declaration 15:2.*
53. *Declaration 6:2.*
54. *Declaration 6:1.*
55. Article 141.
56. *Declaration 6:1.*
57. *Declaration 5:2.*
58. See *Declaration 37:2; 22:3.*
59. *Declaration 22: 1.*
60. *Declaration 28; 31:5.*
61. *Declaration 25:2; 40:4-5.*
62. *Declaration 20:4.*
63. *Declaration 7:1-2.*
64. *Declaration 20:5.*
65. *Declaration 23:3.*
66. *Declaration 40.*
67. *Declaration 51.4.*
68. *Declaration 26:2.*
69. See Salm, *Religious Institute in Transition*, 139.
70. *Declaration 17:4; 18:6, 8.*
71. *Declaration 20:1, 5, 7, 10.*

72. *Declaration* 22:1, 22-24.

73. *Declaration* 3:3.

74. *Declaration* 8:1.

75. *Declaration* 23:1.

76. *Declaration* 33:2-3; 36:1-3.

77. *Declaration* 48:2.

78. *Declaration* 10:4.

79. See Schillebeeckx, *L'histoire des hommes, récit de Dieu*.

80. See Salm, *Religious Institute in Transition*, 100.

81. *Declaration* 17:3; 18:4-7. Also, see Salm, *Religious Institute in Transition*, 157. It will be seen that this perspective is far from having been accepted. Is it accepted today?

82. See *Declaration* 14:2; 25:1-2; 34:2; 38:4.

83. *Declaration* 18:3.

84. *Declaration* 26:2-3.

85. *Declaration* 20:10.

86. *Declaration* 28-34. Also, see Salm, *Religious Institute in Transition*, 143, note 52.

87. *Declaration* 29:5; 30:2-3.

88. *Declaration* 32:1-2.

89. Durand, *La cause des pauvres*, 55.

90. *Declaration* 38-39.

91. *Declaration* 10:4; 38:4; 41:1-3; 42:3; and all of 45, 46, and 47.

92. *Declaration* 19:2; 20:8; 7:2; 14:5.

93. *Declaration* 25:4; 48:6; 46:3; 33:2; 39:4; 52:2.

94. *Declaration* 3:1; 4; 28:4; 34:4.

95. *Declaration* 53:2.

96. See *Declaration* 53:3 and De La Salle's *Meditation* #42.3.

97. Introduction by Brother Charles Henry.

98. *Declaration* 28:1.

99. *Declaration* 34:4.

100. *Declaration* 49:2.

101. *Declaration* 3.

102. *Declaration* 22:3.

103. *Declaration* 27:1.

104. *Declaration* 23:3.

105. *Declaration* 28:3.

106. *Declaration* 28:2; 31:1-2; 38:3; 49:2-3.

107. *Declaration* 33:1-3. Compare *Declaration* 49:5; 50-52.

108. See especially *Declaration*, 33:4; 24:2.

109. *Declaration* 53:2.

110. *Declaration* 20:8. See *Declaration* 20:4-5.

111. *Declaration* 28:3; 49:2.

112. *Declaration* 53:2.

113. *Declaration* 53:3.

114. Fall 1968 and Spring 1969.

115. See the distinction established by Brother John Johnston between "*libres*" and "*libres pour*" ("free" and "free to undertake") in his *Report to the General Chapter*, 72.

116. See *The Impact of the 39th General Chapter*, 147-150.

117. See Salm, *Religious Institute in Transition*, 123.

118. See *Communication aux frères*.
119. *Declaration 49:2*.
120. *Declaration 49:2*.
121. See Salm, *Religious Institute in Transition*, 262.
122. See the three effects of the spirit of faith.
123. See *Le Petit traité de l'état religieux*, even in its revised edition.
124. See Salm, *Religious Institute in Transition*, 112.
125. Pages 1-61; *RS* in my notes.
126. Pages 65-79; *JJ* in my notes.
127. *Personal Commentary on the Report of the Brother Superior to the 42nd General Chapter*, 66.
128. *Declaration 46:3*.
129. *RS*, 39-45; and also *JJ*, 68-70.
130. See also the *Pastoral Letter* dated 1 January 1994, 46-53 on “our specific role” and also *Circular 453: 42nd General Chapter*, 30-51.
131. *Declaration 24*; see also *Ad Gentes*, 40.
132. See Salm, *Religious Institute in Transition*, 11, 42.
133. See *Cahiers lasalliens 50*, 385-390, 585-590, “It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” *Meditation 22.2*, quoting Galatians 2:20.
134. See *RS*, 30-31; no. 5, 4; *JJ*, 72-73.
135. See Brother Superior’s *Report*.
136. John Johnston, “The Challenge of Saint John Baptist de La Salle to the Brothers Today” in *The Acts of the 40th General Chapter* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1976), 119-142.
137. *Report of the Superior General to the 42nd General Chapter*, 24.
138. *Declaration 11:3*.

139. *Declaration* 36:1-2; 39.

140. Exodus 1:5-6.

141. *Report of the Superior General to the 42nd General Chapter*, 16.