



News

from the General Council

Brothers of the Christian Schools

October 2016

Interview with a General Councilor

Newsletter (N): *The long hallway on the first floor of the Mother House, normally quiet, suddenly began to show more activity in September. Why?*

Councilor (C): The increased activity was the result of the return of the Brother Councilors for their last general session of this year. It began on Monday, August 29th and will be over on Friday, October 7th, 2016.

(N): *Where are the Councilors found when they are not in Rome?*

(C): Ordinarily, Councilors responsible for the Regions come back to Rome from their respective headquarters. The Superior General and the Councilors resident in Rome, come back too if they have been visiting Districts or attending meetings. But this time, all of us come back from



Vietnam where we went to participate in the joint meeting with the Visitors Conference of the Asia-Pacific Region (PARC), from August 15 to 17. This meeting marked the end of the visit of the Brother Superior General to the Region. Prior to the meeting, the Councilors also visited the Region. This visit allowed us to witness the dynamism and commitment of all those involved in the Lasallian Educational Mission (MEL). The joint meeting was fraternal and also very fruitful; it allowed us to analyze the present situation of the Region and, above all, to look with hope into its future.

(N): *It was striking that also suddenly, the hallway turned again to silence and, this time, almost total. Why?*

(C): On Monday, August 29th, at 07h30, the Superior General and all the Councilors, left for Malta to have our annual retreat and to enjoy a few days of relaxation.

(N): *Do you always start off the general sessions that way?*

(C): It is not always that way; this happens only once a year, generally at the last general session.

(N): *How important is it for you the time for retreat and relaxation?*

(C): The retreat, besides being one excellent opportunity for personal inner renewal, helps us to enter into a spirit of discernment. With regard to relaxation, it is also necessary because, like anyone else, we need break time; besides, it allows us to build community by socializing and by sharing our personal and pastoral experiences.



(N): Who led the retreat and what was the theme?



(C): Ordinarily, one of us leads this annual retreat, according to a rota established since the beginning of our term in office. This time, it was the turn of Brother Superior who, incidentally, did an excellent job! He chose several biblical icons to inspire our reflection—the prophets Elijah and Anna, the parable of the sower—as well as that of the soon-to-be canonized Brother Solomon. The presentation of each icon was accompanied by questions intended to motivate and guide our personal reflection that we shared at the end of the afternoon.

(N): Did you have any contact with the Lasallians of Malta during your stay there?

(C): Of course we did. Tuesday, September 6th, was a special day, not only because it marked the end of our community relaxation but also because it ended with an encounter with the Maltese Brothers and with some other Lasallians.

The encounter with the Brothers included a prayer service and an interesting exchange.

Other Lasallians joined us for social and supper; these Lasallians were partners in leadership positions in the two Lasallian local schools. When supper was ended,

Br. Superior addressed them to acknowledge their important contribution to the mission, and to thank everybody, especially Br. Martin, the community Director, and the family who hosted us.



(N): Upon returning from Malta, did you begin your meetings at once?

(C): Indeed, it was that way. It is important to note that the first of these meetings was a meeting with all the Secretaries and Coordinators of Services in the Mother House. Its main purpose is to share with them what goes on in the Regions and that is relevant to the performance of their functions. This time, we shared with them our experiences from our August visits to the Districts of PARC. We emphasized those aspects that might impact the work of each secretariat.

(N): What is like the agenda of your meetings?

(C): It is always varied and, of course, very extensive. The agenda reflects the diversity and vitality of the Institute, but also some of its greatest challenges.

(N): At the meetings, are Br. Superior and the Councilors the only ones present?

(C): It depends on the meeting. At regular meetings, the Council Secretary and the Secretary General are always with us. At administrative meetings, Br. Procurator General is also in attendance when there are matters that require his expert opinion on canonical process. At other times, some secretaries come to the meeting to discuss issues of interest to them or to report on specific tasks entrusted to them. Regularly, we meet with Bursar General, who reports on budget management and presents proposals for a better management of the Stable Patrimony of the Institute. At meetings that require absolute confidentiality only the members of the General Council are present.



(N): While respecting confidentiality, is it possible to comment on the issues that demand most of your attention in the meetings?

(C): In general, our attention focuses on following up the implementation of the Chapter propositions according to the work program established in Circular 470. This time, we discerned some actions to support ageing and fragile Districts and have examined initiatives related to the “Beyond the Borders” project. Certainly, there have been others; for instance, we have dedicated several sessions to discuss the visits of Br. Superior to the Regions. By the way, in 2016-2017, Br. Superior will visit the RELAF Districts and Delegation. We have also invested time to reflect on the leadership needed at this moment to promote the vitality and the future viability to the Institute. An important related topic is the preparation of the inter-capitular meeting in April of 2018. I finish by mentioning the preparation of events to commemorate the tercentenary of the entrance to eternal life of our Founder and the year of Lasallian Vocations in 2019.

(N): Did you discuss the upcoming canonization of Blessed Br. Solomon at any of your sessions?

(C): Of course we did. One session was dedicated to discuss this particular topic. The Br. Postulator General and the Br. Director of the Central Community informed us of the program as well as on the arrangements being made. When they finished, we made some suggestions.

(N): During your time together, besides ordinary sessions, ¿do you meet with other groups?



(C): Yes, for example international commissions and Ad hoc committees. This time, the International Council for Association and Lasallian Educational Mission (CIAMEL) and the Ad Hoc Committee 2019 (CAH 2019) met in Rome. The Commission for Lasallian Vocations also had a meeting to follow up on items of its agenda.

CIAMEL followed up on its priority tasks. Among them, the research project aimed at drawing up the Declaration of the Lasallian Pedagogy for the 21st century as well as the Guide of Formation for all those engaged in the mission. Moreover, this Council provided names to create a special team that will conduct a study on the pastoral ministry carried on in the Lasallian centers. Another topic on the agenda was the preparation of the International Mission Assembly of 2020. Meanwhile, the Ad Hoc Committee 2019 began its work aimed at motivating and coordinating activities to celebrate the tercentenary of the Founder’s death and the Year of the Lasallian Vocations.



There was another meeting of particular importance: the one we had with the Brother Visitors from Italy and the District Bursar. At this meeting, the Brother Visitors shared with us his view of the District and, in particular, the challenges facing both the animation of Brothers’ communities

and the mission. After exchanging insights and making suggestions, the Br. Superior General thanked the Brother Visitors for coming and offered them his personal support, as well as that of the Councilors responsible for the areas that require more attention.

(N): What is the life of the Council like at the General sessions?

(C): With regard to our prayer life, we have two days a week to share our prayer among ourselves. The rest of the week, we share the prayer-life of the Central Community. We celebrate the Institute’s feasts. This time, for instance, there were two Lasallian feasts: that of the Blessed Solomon and of Blessed Scubilion. The Church’s



solemnities did not go unnoticed, in particular the feast of the Nativity of our Blessed Mother.

In respect to community life, we try to take advantage of our time together to build an authentic community spirit. Every day, by the end of the afternoon, we have time to share the experiences of the day. Once a week, on Wednesdays, we dine together in a separate dining room. During each general session, we block an afternoon in our calendars to celebrate our birthdays. By the way, this time we celebrated the birthdays of Brothers Aidan, Paulo, and Tim.

(N): Do the Councilors stay in Rome throughout the general sessions?

(C): The established policy is that we remain in Rome for the whole session. However, sometimes there are other inevitable commitments that cause the temporary absence of some of us. This time, for instance, Brothers Aidan and Rafa went to

Madrid for a weekend to participate in the beginning of the Novitiate for a group of young men from RELEM and Argentina. For his part, Br. Pierre traveled to South Sudan for a week for a pastoral visit to the community. Brothers Gustavo and Rafa were absent from some meetings because they accompanied CIAMEL and the Ad Hoc Committee 2019. It is clear to all of us that, to the extent that it is possible, we must avoid accepting personal commitments during the general sessions, to prioritize the mission that the Institute has entrusted to us.



(N): How do you keep in touch when the Council is scattered?

(C): The technology available nowadays facilitates this. For instance, email is a tool that we use frequently and efficiently. When necessary, we also communicate via teleconferencing or videoconferencing.

(N): When will you meet in Rome again?

(C): Council members living in Rome will have the opportunity to meet often except when they travel to visit Districts or to attend meetings. However, the full Council will not meet again until February 2017. Meanwhile, we entrust ourselves to Our Patroness, the Mother of Good Counsel.

(N): Thank you for sharing your experience with the Lasallian Family!

(C): It has been a pleasure for me.