



# REFLECTING ON THE 44<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER

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BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS  
UNITED STATES-TORONTO REGION

## STAGE 1: OPENING ACTIVITY

The Ad Hoc Committee on Pedagogy

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## SUGGESTED AGENDA

- Prayer
- Introduction to the process
  - Explanation of Mutual Invitation (page 4) as a method of facilitating conversation.
  - Optional Icebreaker depending on the context for and composition of the meeting.
- Overview of International Assembly and 44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (slideshow)
- Discussion of the reality of the world, Church and Institute based on Chapter presentations by Mary Robinson, Cardinal Martini, Fr. Carlos Azpiroz Costa and Sr. Sujita Kallapurakkathu.
- Closing activity depending on the context for composition of the meeting.

## MUTUAL INVITATION

The Brother delegates of the 44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter were introduced to the following guidelines for group discussions. It was generally agreed among the Brothers of our Region that they were helpful in facilitating conversation and sharing ideas and experiences throughout the Chapter. We suggest that similar guidelines be used in Districts and communities as we carry on the work of the Chapter and process the information that comes to us throughout the year.

### RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

R=Take RESPONSIBILITY for what you say and feel without blaming others.

E=Use EMPHATIC listening.

S=Be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles.

P=PONDER what you hear and feel before you speak.

E=EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions.

C=Keep CONFIDENTIALITY.

T=TRUST ambiguity because we are NOT here to debate who is right and wrong.

### PROCEDURE

In order to ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak, we will proceed in the following way: The leader or designated person will share first. After that person has spoken, he or she then invites another to share. Who you invite does not need to be the person next to you. After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another to share. If you are not ready to share yet, say "I pass for now" and we will invite you later to share. If you do not want to say anything at all, simply say "pass" and proceed to invite another to share. We will do this until everyone has been invited.

# REDISCOVERING THE MEANING OF THE BROTHER'S VOCATION

## Let us remember...

OPENING SONG: God, Whose Purpose is to Kindle (to tune of Come, O Long Expected Jesus)

God, whose purpose is to kindle;  
Now ignite us with your fire;  
While the earth awaits your burning,  
With your passion us inspire.

Teach us courage as we struggle  
In all liberating strife;  
Lift the smallness of our vision  
By your own abundant life.

## OPENING PRAYER:

Father, through your Spirit,  
you gave to the Church,  
in the person of St. John Baptist de La Salle,  
a charism that even today inspires us.

In your Providence you have transmitted that charism to us,  
charging us to live it, safeguard it, deepen it, and develop it.

United in mind and heart, we express to you our desire  
to rediscover the meaning of our vocation as Brothers.

Help us to embrace the demands of our present,  
to avoid clinging to the past or becoming lost in false dreams.

We offer you our joyful embrace of the Gospel call in  
awareness, sensitivity, creative fidelity, and courage.

We make this prayer, through, with and in Christ Jesus, our Lord.  
Amen.

*(Excerpts from Brother Alvaro's address to the 44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter describing the reality of the Institute)*

**Leader: A first dynamic force propels us to rediscover the meaning of our vocation as Brothers.**

READER 1: *He appointed twelve that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach. (Mark 3: 14)* We cannot deny the reality of the decrease or total lack of Brother vocations in some Regions and, at the same time, there is hope offered to us by sectors that are growing even though real growth is mitigated by a perseverance rate that is not always consistent. Along these lines, I make my own the words of Father Carlos Azpiroz, the Master General of the Dominicans: *In the Old Testament, justice is measured by long life, descendants, and earthly goods. Jesus, in the Gospels, preached something else: he died poor, young, alone, naked, without means...In places where vocations are really scarce and there is a crisis, I think that is exactly what God wants to tell us, because we must not be conceited. But I would never say that we are better where there are vocations and worse where there are not.* (Father Carlos Azpiroz, OP, Vida Nueva, July 2006)

[Reflection]



**Leader: A second dynamic force invites us to not cling to the past, nor to become lost in a false dream, but to embrace the demands of the present.**

Reader 2: *Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he bore. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come.* (Hebrews 13: 12-14)

The future for us is not a question of merit but of hope. It is hope that will enable us to go outside the camp with Jesus and to go forward without fear in seeking God's Will, at this time in our history, carrying our present with all its ambiguity in order to transform it.

[Reflection]

**Leader: A third dynamic force impels us to joyfully embrace the Gospel demands of the charism.**

Reader 3: *No one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ.* (1 Corinthians 3: 11)

The Founder speaks to us of resembling Jesus Christ as the basic condition for our ministry to be effective in the sense of the Gospel. It is about resemblance at a deeper level than merely that of copying an external model (cf. *Meditation 196.3*). This concern for an internal resemblance with Jesus Christ should lead us to feel that we are *sacraments of Christ* for our disciples...

[Reflection]

**Leader: Our life as Brothers has meaning when the Lord's passion for his people runs through our veins and we are able to carry his merciful and saving love in our service to the young, especially those who are poor and those who are at risk,...**

All: When we are bearers of a freely received gift that we cannot attribute to ourselves and which we must share.

[Reflection]

CLOSING SONG: God, Whose Purpose is to Kindle

God, who still as sword delivers  
Rather than a placid peace,  
With your sharpened word disturb us,  
From complacency release!

Save us now from satisfaction,  
When we privately are free,  
Yet are undisturbed in spirit  
By our neighbor's misery.

## CONVERSATION: MARY ROBINSON

From your vantage point as a Brother, what are the biggest challenges in responding to the educational needs of people in today's world?



*In preparation for conversation, read the following excerpt and address the accompanying questions.*

The century began well with the Millenium Declaration, from which the Millenium Development Goals were drawn, namely:

1. eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
2. universal primary education
3. promoting gender equality and empowerment for women
4. reducing child mortality
5. improving maternal health
6. combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. insuring environmental sustainability
8. developing global partnerships for development of nations

When the 9/11 attacks occurred, there was a shift and a narrowing of focus away from tackling poverty and promoting development to security and combating terrorism.

In the years following 9/11, cultural and religious divides opened up so that today intercultural and inter-religious dialogue is needed more than ever.

Our world today needs to recognize values that are shared and international human rights should be one of these values.

What do you find most shocking, moving and challenging in Mary Robinson's presentation?

How does Mary's perspective on the needs of the world confirm or contradict your own experience and view?

## CONVERSATION: CARDINAL CARLO MARTINI

From your vantage point as a Brother, what are the most critical concerns for the Church today and which of these concerns have the greatest impact on you? on us as Brothers?



*In preparation for conversation, read the following excerpt and address the accompanying questions.*

### PEDAGOGICAL TASKS

The work to be done needs especially to be taken to heart with the following attitudes and carried out in the directions which I am now indicating.

Above all the attitude.

1. Don't be surprised by diversity. Don't be frightened by what is different or new, but look upon it as something in which is found a gift from God. Prove that you can listen to things quite different from what we usually think, but without immediately judging the speaker and try to understand what is being said and the basic arguments put forward. Young people are very sensitive about this attitude of non-judgmental listening. This attitude gives them the courage to say what they really feel and to begin to distinguish what is true from what is only true in appearance. As Saint Paul says: "Examine everything with discernment; keep what is good; keep your distance from every trace of evil" (1 Th 5: 21-22).
2. Take risks. Faith is the great risk of life. : "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but the one who loses his life for my sake will save it" (Mt 16: 25). Everything has to be given up for Christ and his Gospel.
3. Put the poor in the centre because they are the friends of Jesus who made himself one of them. Amazement before the Gospel, from Nazareth to Bethlehem, to the Jordan, to the Passion and to such a private resurrection.
4. Nourish yourself with the Gospel, as Jesus tells us in the discourse on the bread of life' "for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6: 33).

How does Cardinal Martini's pedagogical tasks correspond to what you have noted as the most critical concerns?

Is there anything you would add to Cardinal Martini's tasks?

What do you consider as the most important pedagogical task?

## CONVERSATION: SUJITA KALLUPURAKKATHU, SND

What do you believe is the one quality that is fundamental for the living of consecrated life today?



*In preparation for conversation, read the following excerpt and address the accompanying questions.*

I am absolutely convinced that consecrated life will always be relevant, meaningful and prophetic in the present and the future if we dare to live it with a passion for Jesus Christ and a creative compassion for all God's people. We are here today because we carry this future within us!

Our contribution to the transformation of our globalized world is our creative, radical and critical fidelity that is credible and visible . . . What is the alternative future vision that is being born in your heart for the Congregation as consecrated individuals and communities in mission and for mission today? What are the concrete steps we have taken so far in preparing for and moving into a hope-filled future? "I am doing something new (Is. 43: 19). The future of religious life depends on our commitment to the Gospel challenge to BE more and to HAVE less!

The real issue confronting religious life today is above all a spiritual lethargy and lack of faith. No spiritual wisdom or radical inner freedom can come when we neglect contemplation and protect ourselves from all asceticism and a discipline of the heart. When we have a profound and irresistible attraction toward God and experience God's unconditional and constant love in our personal life, we will be filled with a passion for Jesus and his mission.

When the pressure of our ministries build up, when we cannot meet the high expectations of society, when we have no time for solitude and prayer, when we have no time to be in communion with our co-religious, we can be sure that we are blocking the Spirit of God in our life and mission. Today many religious congregations are busy trying to maintain and save their once-upon-a-time wonderful institutions! Mission is not only about what is but about what might be. We have to do some soul-searching to discover to discover how much of our apostolic energies are going for maintenance and how much for mission!

What is the fundamental quality Sr. Sujita suggests, and does this confirm and/or contradict your experience?

What are the implications for our future as Brothers? as district? as Institute?

## CONVERSATION: CARLOS AZPIROZ COSTA, OP

What are the most critical concerns we face in our consecrated life today?

*In preparation for conversation, read the following excerpt and address the accompanying questions.*

Joseph the dreamer had difficulties with his brothers when he tried to recount his dreams to them. This marked his life. But little by little, this same life experience caused him to recognize that others have dreams as well. From that moment on, he listened to others' dreams and desired to interpret them in the name of God. But he never imagined that by patiently listening to the dreams and needs of others, and allowing them into his heart, that God was permitting him to discover his dreams for mankind, "The dreams of salvation and liberation!" for Joseph, his brothers and his people.

If our own dreams reflect our own projects, ideals and hopes, then listening to the dreams of others has the potential of opening our hearts to the projects, hopes, ideals and expectations of others. Each of our vocations is a reflection of God's most profound dream for each one of us. Can we doubt that our vocation is the most concrete expression of God's dream for each one of us? We can say that when God reveals his dreams to us, as he did to Joseph when he had decided to secretly put Mary aside, he reveals to us a vocational call that transcends all the dreams that we may have for ourselves as well as those others have for us.

The story of Joseph ends with one final dream (revelation). One wonders, could it have happened any other way? "Finally Joseph said to his brothers: I am about to die, but God will visit you and lead you from this land to the one he promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Gen. 50:24). This then becomes the prelude of the vocational history not just of a family, but of a people.

Think about a Brother whom you believe exemplifies the collective dream of the Institute today? What are the qualities of that person?

How do I experience my vocation in light of these qualities?



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