



# News

from the General Council

Brothers of the Christian Schools

March 2016



L-R: Brothers Pierre Ouattara, Tim Coldwell, Gustavo Ramírez, Ricky Laguda, Paulo Petry, Bob Schieler, Jorge Gallardo, Aidan Kilty, Rafa Matas

■ At the beginning of Lent we spent three days together in Grottaferrata (45 minutes away) for recollection, facilitated by Rafa Matas around the theme of vocation. We used the motif of journey and pilgrimage to evoke personal experiences. Our heart-to-heart sharing reminded us of our *Rule*, article 47: "Together they seek and find God." We spent a part of one afternoon visiting the Basilian monastery in town, a Catholic Greek-Byzantine Rite monastery. Following this visit, we were appreciative guests of the local (Angelo Braschi elementary school) community of six Brothers.

■ One of the themes of Brother Superior's recent Christmas Pastoral Letter was networking and the emergence of new structures that enable us to meet present and emerging needs. A number of our encounters in this six-week plenary were collaborations meant to "enable us to realize our Lasallian vocation of collaborative learning outside the camp" (p. 20). Some of the examples we would like to highlight in this newsletter include:

■ We met on February 17 with Mme. Alessandra Aula, Secretary General of BICE (International Catholic Child Bureau), whose mission is to "defend the rights and dignity of the child worldwide." Recalling that the Institute is a founding member (1948), we want to deepen our connections and collaboration. The front and center issue is the plight of refugees and migrants. We identified shared concerns and projects. BICE's work with Syrian refugees in Lebanon, for instance, intersects with the Fratelli Project, the educational outreach we have undertaken in collaboration with the Marists. BICE's strength is their long-term commitment to training of educators and social workers who work directly with children in the camps—an essential contribution, one that complements the educational center we have opened in Beirut.

■ On Thursday, February 25, Brother Superior and the Council received representatives of the U. S. Embassy to the Holy See. We shared an overview of the Institute's activities around the world, and then focused on specific examples where we meet challenges due to economic, political, and cultural hardships. We also highlighted educational initiatives in Thailand, Cameroon, Lebanon, Pakistan and others that show how we respond to the needs even in inhospitable situations. We pointed out that the Lasallian network provides education that reaches people of many religious backgrounds. For their part, they spoke of their efforts to add the voice of the Holy See and related organizations to the policy discussion on global issues. Following this interchange we then enjoyed lunch together in a convivial and warm atmosphere.



■ On February 3 we met with the Confederation of Latin American Religious (CLAR). We spoke about issues of mutual importance and relevance. We find common ground in our Institute with their understanding of "consecrated life as a call to share spirituality, mission and life with lay men and women, from an ecclesiology of communion." We spoke about one of the pressing needs of our time to defend life and to fight human trafficking. We found that the "horizons" they are moving toward are echoes of our own: "Let us go, let us walk in the company of those who fight for a more just and inclusive, more fraternal and more joyful world." As is our custom here, we enjoyed a spirited social and dinner together before parting ways.



■ Another example of our networking is our regular visits with the leadership of the Congregation of Christian Brothers (in some places known as the Irish Christian Brothers). This is the third time that we have gathered for fraternity and sharing. The Brothers



consider Saint La Salle and *The Rule* as foundational to their origins, so we have much more in common than not. We face similar challenges in leadership, such as understanding the international reality well enough to identify the “critical and essential.” We gain a great deal learning about the creative initiatives each is undertaking. One of theirs is the opening of 20 new communities world wide, a bold move meant to re-ignite the spiritual purpose of community life.

■ The “Center” of the Institute is larger than the Superior and Council of course. The services and secretariats are key to the integrity of our international identity. Together we work toward a “synergy” that offers an impact greater than the sum of the parts. We met with the secretaries of Communication & Technology, Research & Resources, Solidarity & Development, Formation, and Association & Mission. They each provided updates in response to the objectives and strategies outlined in Circular 470. Their reports were incisive and detailed. The Superior pointed out that the emergent needs often outpace the time and energy of the people working to meet them. Everyone is committed to addressing the technical and pastoral issues with more efficiency and impact.

■ The new Institute Coordination team for the Pastoral Ministry of Vocations was announced by Brother Rafa Matas. The team includes: Brothers Eder Polido (RELAL), José Manuel Sauras (RELAF), Rey Mejías (PARC), Jacques Vincent Le Dréau (RELEM), and Mr. Chris Swain (RELAN). They will join Rafa and the Secretaries for Formation, Brothers Jesús Rubio and Joseph Felix for the first session, May 16-20, here at the Generalate.

■ The International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU) continues to offer its resources to the Institute in response to the General Chapter and Brother Superior’s call to build “consensus around those Institute priorities that invite collaboration” (p. 18). In response to a request from the Cardinal and Bishops Conference in Ethiopia to consider administering the Ethiopian Catholic University of St. Thomas Aquinas (ECUSTA), IALU is generously assisting with fact-finding steps.



■ We worked on plans for the gathering of Visitors and Auxiliaries with some years of experience in June. The purpose of this gathering is to enter into serious reflection on our current reality and to carefully examine if we are effectively responding to the needs of the Institute today.

■ The 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St. John Baptist de La Salle is in 2019. The objectives for an anniversary preparatory commission and its formation were determined.