

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
Circular 464

Announcement of the 45th General Chapter



General Council
Rome, Italy

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Brothers of the Christian Schools

Via Aurelia 476

00165 Rome, Italy

1. Introduction

1.1 “Open Eyes, Burning Hearts.” In 2007 the 44th General Chapter used this expression to help all of us live fully our vocation of “**Being Brothers.**” Five years have now passed and we find ourselves already beginning the preparation phase for the 45th General chapter.

Undoubtedly we have many reasons to give thanks to God for the journey travelled during these years, and at the same time we have continued to discover new challenges that we need to face in the near future.

1.2 As we recall the first assemblies that our Founder had with the first Brothers we all feel called to participate in a new process of evaluation, discernment and prayer, aware that the vitality of the Institute continues to be in the hands of all of us. Each General Chapter is called to shed new light on our lives and mission as Brothers of the Christian Schools. “Together and by association” we discover how God, still today, is leading us step by step, “from commitment to commitment,” to where He expects and needs us.

1.3 Our current Rule expresses these and other ideas in the following words:

- Constituted as an image of the whole Institute, the General Chapter is, since the days of the Founder, the ultimate expression of the communion that exists among all the Brothers. It perpetuates among

them the living fidelity to the special charism of the Institute.¹

- An ordinary General Chapter is held once every seven years. It is normally convoked by the Brother Superior General.²
- About two years before an ordinary General Chapter is to be held, the Brother Superior announces an approximate date for its opening. At the same time, he informs the Institute of the measures being taken to ensure its preparation.³
- For this purpose, the Brother Superior and his Council appoint a Preparatory Commission to study and organize the preparation of the Chapter.⁴

¹ *Rule 103.*

² *Rule 104.*

³ *Rule 105a.*

⁴ *Rule 105a.*

2. Objectives:

2.1. As we make the announcement of the 45th General Chapter, which is “*the ultimate expression of the communion that exists among all the Brothers,*”⁵ we think it is important to remind ourselves of the objectives of this event:

- 2.1.1. To undertake an evaluation of the life of the Institute,
- 2.1.2. To provide for its continuing adaptation and renewal, and
- 2.1.3. To set out the main guidelines for future action.
- 2.1.4. To elect the Brother Superior and the Brother Councilors.

2.2. Another important objective during this coming 45th General Chapter will be to consider the revision of the Rule. It is important that the participants be aware of the following specific objectives:

- 2.2.1 To implement the proposal of the 44th General Chapter with regard to the revision of the *Rule*.⁶
- 2.2.2 To allow ourselves to be challenged by the Gospel, “*our first and principal Rule.*”

⁵ *Rule* 103.

⁶ “That under the authority of the Brother Superior General and his Council, a Commission should lead, in dialogue with the Institute, a revision of the *Rule*. If the Superior General and his Council see it as opportune, they should convene an Extraordinary General Chapter or a special session of the ordinary General Chapter in 2014 in order to submit for consideration the proposed revision of the *Rule*.” (Documents of the 44th General Chapter. Chapter 8, Government and Animation; Section IV, Proposal with regard to the *Rule*.)

- 2.2.3 To study, reflect and meditate on the *Rule*⁷ as individual Brothers and as a community that defines itself as the image of the whole Institute.⁸
- 2.2.4 To determine a decision on the revised *Rule* and its implementation.

⁷ Cf. *Rule* 147: “The Brothers make a serious effort to understand the deeper meaning of their Rule. They study it and meditate on it in order to grasp its richness and its spirit, which they can make practical in their daily lives.”

⁸ *Rule* 103.

3. Important Documents and Events

3.1. The Institute has gone through a series of processes and significant events in recent years. Starting with the “vital” journey which the 44th General Chapter designed, our road has been marked with events, publications and circulars.

3.2 We believe that the following should serve as points of reference for our Chapter work.⁹

Beginning with the publication of this Circular, new documents and materials will be made available to you that will no doubt serve as aids for the preparation of the 45th General Chapter:

3.2.1. **New text of the Rule** (draft version) – September 2012

3.2.2 **Circular of the General Council on Institute Priorities** – November 2012

3.2.3 **Circular of Convocation** – April 2013

3.2.4 **2nd International Assembly** – May 5 - 9, 2013
Report from the Assembly – September 2013

3.2.5 International Meeting of Young Brothers – July 22 - 28, 2013.

Report from the Meeting – September 2013.

3.2.6 Report of Brother Superior General – January 2014.

⁹ These documents will be made available on the Institute web site: www.lasalle.org.

4. Dynamics of the Chapter

4.1 Preparation for the Chapter:

We invite all Brothers in the Institute to pray for the intentions of the Chapter, to reflect upon its agenda and to participate at community, District and Regional levels in the programmes arranged to focus on the issues associated with the Chapter's agenda. Take time to read and reflect upon the documentation provided and to participate fully in pre-Chapter gatherings.

We encourage Brother Visitors to arrange District and community gatherings to reflect upon the recommended documents and submit their notes, if desired, to the Preparatory Commission by 1 January 2014. It may be possible to organize Regional assemblies or even inter-Regional meetings in order that the preparations be as comprehensive as possible.

The *Rule* reminds us that “*all Brothers of the Institute are invited to participate in the work of preparing for an ordinary General Chapter. Each Brother has the right to send to the Brother Superior or to the Secretary General whatever notes or position papers, duly signed, he may judge useful*”.¹⁰ These notes must also be received in Rome by the same date: 1 January 2014.

4.2 Appointment of the Preparatory Commission

- 4.2.1 Foremost among the “*measures*” taken by Brother Superior General to “*ensure (the) preparation*” of the Chapter is the appointment of a Prepara-

¹⁰ *Rule* 110.

tory Commission “to study and organize the preparation of the Chapter”.¹¹

The task of this Commission, working closely with the General Council, is stated precisely both in the *Rule* and in *The Administrator’s Directory*, which describes its role as follows:

- To collect all the information deemed opportune from the Brothers generally and from the various administrative units of the Institute, as well as from study groups or specially appointed commissions.¹²
- To list, classify, and make available the notes and position papers sent by the Brothers to the Chapter; to make suggestions, studies, working schedules, and draft documents that could be useful to Chapter members;
- to draw up provisional rules of procedure for consideration by the Chapter [the Chapter follows these until it approves a definitive set of rules];
- to include in the provisional rules of procedure a list of officers to help in the running of the Chapter, and to indicate how they should be elected.¹³

4.2.2 As we make the announcement of the appointment of this Commission, we express our conviction that we believe that what the Institute needs at this time is an inspiring, invigorating, pas-

¹¹ *Rule* 105a.

¹² *Rule* 105a.

¹³ *The Administrator’s Directory* 2.

toral, and discerning Chapter, as it considers the major item of the revision of the *Rule* and other issues as indicated in the objectives.

From the outset, the Preparatory Commission will be engaged in ongoing dialogue with Brother Superior and the General Council, and with others whom Brother Superior and the General Council might want to have included in that dialogue.

We believe that the members of the Preparatory Commission should, from its initiation, develop a process that enables them to be in ongoing dialogue with Districts and Regions in the process of preparing for the 45th General Chapter.

4.2.3 In formulating the membership of the Preparatory Commission, we endeavored to balance the following criteria:

- familiarization with different styles of meetings,
- experience of previous Chapters,
- age, and
- international representation
- representation of the revision of the Rule Commission.

4.2.4 With this circular letter, we announce the appointment of the Preparatory Commission, composed of one Brother from each Region of the Institute and a representative of the Revision of the Rule Commission. They are, in alphabetical order:

- Br. José **Antolínez** (Secretary General, a member by right)
- Br. Paul **Cornec** (RELEM)

- Br. Pierre **Ouattara** (RELAF)
- Br. Ambrose **Payne** (Revision of the Rule Commission)
- Br. Paulo **Petry** (RELAL)
- Br. Christopher **Soosai** (PARC)
- Br. Robert **Smith** (RELAN)

We thank these Brothers, their Districts, and their educational communities for their availability for this important service to the Institute.

4.2.5 It is our hope that the Report of the work of the International Assembly of 2013 will be in the hands of all by January 2014 so that it might be studied and assimilated prior to the 45th General Chapter. We suggest that the Preparatory Commission for the 45th General Chapter consider devising a process by which this Report will be presented to the Chapter.

4.3. The Circular of Convocation of the 45th General Chapter

“Approximately one year before the date fixed for the opening of an ordinary General Chapter, the Brother Superior, after taking the advice of his Council, sends out the Circular of Convocation”.¹⁴

When published in 2013, the Circular of Convocation will make known “the names of the members by right, as well as the number of delegates to be elected in each of the Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations”.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Rule*, 108.

¹⁵ *Rule*, 108a.

The election of delegates and substitutes will take place only after the publication next year of the Circular of Convocation. At that time, the details of the election process will be addressed. However, the *Rule* establishes the guidelines that will be followed in the preparation of the details of the Circular of Convocation.¹⁶

4.4. Process during the 45th General Chapter

We propose that the Preparatory Commission keeps in mind the process of the 44th General Chapter which invited moments of prayer, discernment, reflection and fraternal dialogue and sharing moving toward decision making, However we are very much aware that the revision of the *Rule* calls for a legislative phase in the Chapter's programme. We urge the Preparatory Commission to develop a methodology appropriate to these elements.

¹⁶ Rule, 106 to 109c.

5. Calendar

5.1. First Meeting of the Preparatory Commission

We propose that the first meeting of the Preparatory Commission take place in Rome in September 2012. The purpose of this meeting would be to initiate the planning for the General Chapter and to determine a plan of action.

5.2. Meetings of the Preparatory Commission

We propose the following dates:

- September 17 to 28, 2012
- February 4 to 15, 2013
- May 5 to 19, 2013¹⁷
- September 16 to 28, 2013
- February 10 to 21, 2014

5.3. Dates of the 45th General Chapter

Experience from recent General Chapters has shown that the period from April to June is the best time for the majority of delegates from both hemispheres. Therefore, we propose the following dates:

- OPENING of CHAPTER: April 22, 2014 (Tuesday)
- CLOSING of CHAPTER: June 8, 2014 (Sunday)

The length of this Chapter is due to the fact that we need to have sufficient time to reflect on and take an in-depth look at the proposed changes to the *Rule*. The preparatory process

¹⁷ It is recommended that this meeting be a longer one, from May 5 to 19, 2013, in order to facilitate the participation of the Commission for the International Assembly during those same dates.

and the work dynamic that the General Chapter itself approves will determine how this time is to be distributed.

6. Conclusion

6.1. In this year of 2012 when we are announcing this 45th General Chapter, His Holiness Benedict XVI has called on the Universal Church to celebrate a Year of Faith which will begin on October 11, 2012 and conclude on November 24, 2013 on the Solemnity of Christ the King. This celebration will also recall the 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican Council II. We invite all to look upon this time as a time of grace that will help all Brothers to look, with faith and zeal, at the road which God is setting before us and on which we travel today, united with all those who share the Lasallian mission.

6.2 In the same way, we want to remind everyone that in 2014 we will celebrate the tercentenary of an event that radically changed the life of our Institute. The principal Brothers of the incipient Society of the Christian Schools sent a letter to our Founder, who was secluded in Parmenie, *begging him and ordering him in the name and on behalf of the body of the Society*, to come home.

This text is filled with valuable references that can serve to enlighten this time in our lives which is not without great challenges. Once again, the search for *God's glory, the greater good of the Church and of our Institute* will be the primordial horizon towards which we have to channel all our efforts.

6.3 We would like each Brother, community, District, Sector, Delegation, and Region in the Institute to be sincerely committed to the process of preparation for the Chapter and the General Chapter itself, so that our In-

stitute can continue to be “Good News” for the world of education of children and young people, always with special preference for those who have most need of us.

Fraternally yours in Christ and in
St. John Baptist de La Salle.

Brother Superior and
the Brothers of the General Council