



**Brothers of  
the Christian  
Schools**

**La  Salle**

# **IN MEMORIAM**

***Brother Miguel Adolfo  
Campos Mariño, FSC***

**(1938–2024)**



**CIRCULAR**

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# **Brother Miguel Adolfo Campos Mariño, FSC**

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BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS  
**General Council**  
Rome, Italy

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# 1. CHILDHOOD AND VOCATIONAL JOURNEY (1938-1959)

*God, who conducts all things with wisdom and patience, knew how to speak to my restless heart.*

Miguel Adolfo Campos Mariño was born on June 17, 1938, in El Central San Antonio de Guantánamo, to Miguel Campos Castillo and Angela Mariño Alonso. Miguel was the first of three boys, his younger brothers Pedro and Freyde would soon follow.

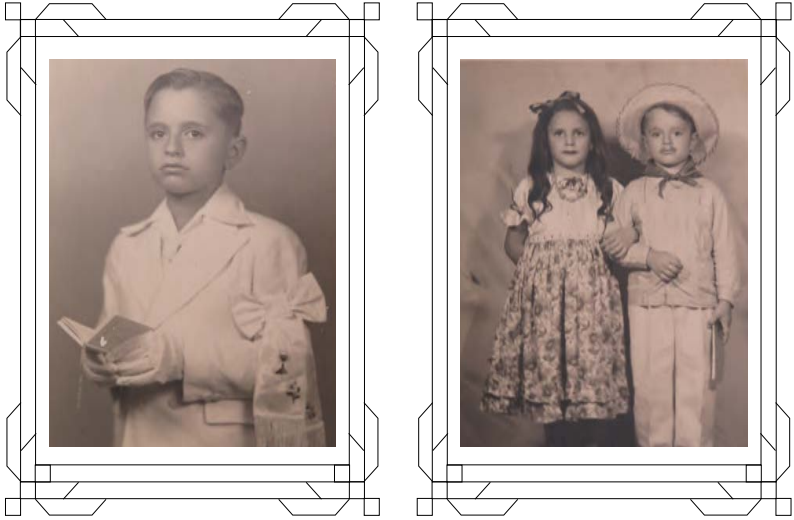


San Antonio was a *central*, or sugar mill town, in Oriente, then a province on the far eastern end of Cuba. Oriente's economy was based on sugar, coffee, and cattle. Miguel's father owned a store in San Antonio, along with a ranch in the countryside. The family's origins were primarily Spanish, his mother's side came from Asturias, while

his father's side was from Castilla. Miguel recalled that this made the two families quite different from each other. Where the Castellians were serious and quiet, he remembers his mother's side as fun and lively. In San Antonio, they lived near his maternal grandmother who had her last two daughters at about the same time that Miguel's two younger brothers were born. The three boys grew up with these aunts who were nearly their same age. There were other relatives, too, and Miguel remembers a close-knit childhood surrounded by extended family. One of his earliest, most cherished memories was of the mangrove trees at the beach of Puerto Escondido, on Guantanamo Bay. Even late in life, thinking of the intense blue of the water and the birds flying around the trees brought him feelings of serenity.

When he and his younger brothers approached school age, the family moved to the city of Guantanamo. The boys would attend Colegio Sagrado Corazón, the school run by the De La Salle Brothers. Miguel excelled as a student in every area, with the minor exception of physical education. He was devout as well. His younger brother Freyde recalls joining Catholic youth clubs in imitation of Miguel who had espoused a deep faith from an early age. By the 1940s, the work that Brother Victorino had done to develop a Catholic Action movement in Cuba had come to fruition in the form of organizations for all age and social groups.





While Miguel had many happy memories of his childhood, he observed later in life that he and others in his social class were living in a kind of bubble, protected from the social realities of widespread poverty and inequality in Cuba. As a child, he was haunted by the memory of going with an Afro-Cuban woman who worked in his family's house to the funeral of a child from a poor family. He was nearly overcome by his terror of death and its incomprehensibility. Later, as part of his developing spirituality, he would come to understand why it mattered to have faith.

By the time Miguel reached high school, he had begun to think seriously that he might have a vocation as a De La Salle Brother. His mother's side of the family was particularly devout, and they supported the idea of entering a religious order or congregation. Miguel's cousin,

José Pal, would enter the Novitiate at the same time as Miguel. His father had a different view. He expected Miguel to go on to university to study engineering and become the head of the family. When his father realized how serious Miguel was about joining the Brothers, he withdrew Miguel from Sagrado Corazón and sent him to the city's public high school. Miguel explained that his father believed his interest in joining the Brothers came out of his overly sheltered view of the world from a private, Catholic school. He believed that Miguel needed to learn about the realities of life in Cuba. Miguel recalled that his year at the public high school was difficult but ultimately important. He had contact with a group of students who were socially and racially diverse compared to the students at the De La Salle school who were all boys from mostly privileged, white families. The following year, his parents sent him back to Sagrado Corazón out of concern for the volatile political situation that had developed.

By the time Miguel and his siblings were adolescents, Cuba's political troubles became apparent to them. Miguel recalls that neither he nor his youngest brother Freyde had much of a political consciousness. Only the middle son, Pedro, would take an active role in the events that would become known as the Cuban Revolution. But by the late 1950s, resistance to the dictatorship of President Fulgencio Batista had become a widespread, armed insurrection that was particularly intense in Oriente and affected daily life. Rebels led by Fidel Castro as part of the 26th of July Movement were in the mountains above Santiago de Cuba and would occasionally engage the army. In cities, organized

groups of university students and other young people, some of whom were associated with Catholic Action, helped to supply the rebels, or engaged in their own acts of resistance. Miguel's parents worried, as did many families, that their sons might be at risk, whether by participating or simply by being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Miguel's cousin, Brother José Pal, recalled that it was dangerous to be young and outside the house during those years as the risk of being arrested on suspicion of being a rebel was high. While Castro's *barbudos* who came down from the mountains toward the end of the struggle would later become the face of the revolution, the cities experienced frequent violence. An example that touched the De La Salle Brothers was the arrest and murder of Luis Morales Mustelier. He was the younger brother of Brothers Osvaldo and Alfredo Morales Mustelier. Luis had been a president of the Federation of Cuban Catholic Youth and was a well-known figure within Cuban Catholic Action. In the aftermath of a failed general strike in protest of Batista in the spring of 1958, Luis was abducted, tortured, and killed by state security forces who later dumped his body alongside a road for his family to retrieve.

In view of situations such as these, Miguel's parents decided that it was too risky for Miguel to attend university in Santiago as he had planned. Instead, they sent him to the United States to continue his education at Georgia Technical College. While influenced by their fears about political volatility at Cuban universities,

his parents were also in line with a common tendency among more affluent Cuban families—attending an American university was seen as prestigious and a good stepping stone to a career. Cuba's economy was tightly linked to that of the United States and the ability to speak English well and to understand American culture were significant advantages for young Cubans. Miguel was just one of a group of Cubans, some of whom he already knew from Guantanamo, when he got to college.

It was a disorienting and crucial moment in Miguel's life. Surrounded by other young Cubans, away from the problems of Cuba, Miguel got himself into enough trouble that he was sent back home. His flight was to Havana. The country was in a state of siege, the rebels were burning fields and beginning to press in on Batista's forces. Brother Pablo Pizarro, who was serving as Vocational Director, picked up Miguel from the airport. He later took Miguel along on a visit to a very poor family. Afterwards, as they were returning to the school where Miguel would stay for a day or two before traveling back to Oriente, Brother Pablo asked him directly what he planned to do with his life. Miguel recognized this as a profound existential question. While Brother Pablo did not ask for an immediate answer, it was ultimately what led Miguel to decide to enter the Novitiate.

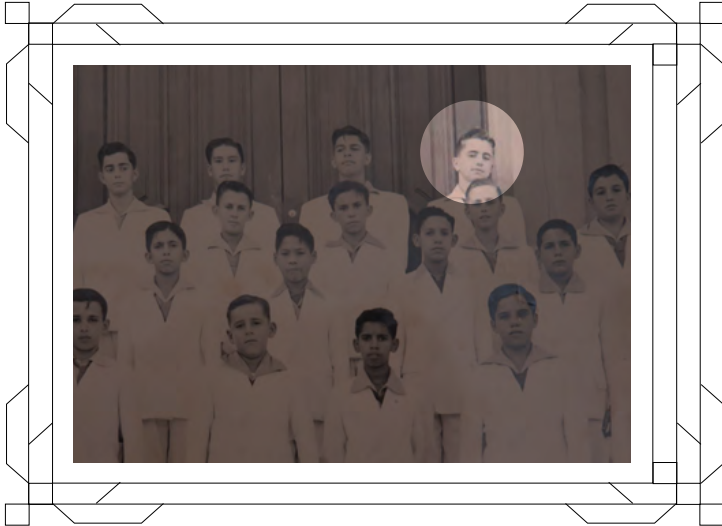
Miguel, along with his cousin José Pal, and five other young men, entered the Novitiate in July of 1959. By this time, Fulgencio Batista had fled the country and a provisional revolutionary government had taken power as of January 1, 1959. Sweeping reform plans intended

to transform the country were being put forward. The country was still largely optimistic about the direction and scope of change.

The young novices were at Santa Maria del Rosario, a relatively new complex the Brothers had built to serve as a retirement community and Novitiate. Once they entered to begin their studies and period of reflection, they were entirely cut off from news of what was happening on the outside. They were unaware of the changing composition of the government, or the growing power of Fidel Castro as its head. They did not know that tensions were increasing between the revolutionary government and the Church. Only well after the fact did they learn that Santa Maria del Rosario had been surrounded three times by groups associated with the government, as part of a larger pressure campaign against schools and organizations associated with the Church. They only learned that there was a crisis when they were told by their superiors at the start of January 1961, that they would have to make a choice. Either they could leave the Novitiate and stay in Cuba, or they could continue their formation in Panama.

They all chose to continue. Miguel and his cousin José Pal were allowed to travel to Oriente to see their families for an evening prior to their departure. It was the night before Three Kings Day, a traditional family holiday. They had dinner with José Pal's family, Miguel's mother, and his brothers. Miguel's father did not attend, nor had he gone to Miguel's ceremony when he took the habit. Once Miguel made the final decision that he would join the

Brothers, his father stopped speaking to him. They never saw or communicated directly again from that point on, until his father's death in 1968. From his father's point of view, he had lost a son.



## 2. THEOLOGY STUDENT (1959-1965)

*Fascinated by an ancient Church  
capable of reinventing itself*

Miguel received the religious name of Brother Miguel Arturo when he took the habit. He faced his novitiate with serenity once he arrived at La Carrasquilla, Panama, at the end of January 1959. Miguel professed his first vows on September 8, 1961.



As a result of the events in Cuba and the exile of the Brothers from the island, the Superiors decided that ultimately, they would send Miguel to the District of the Antilles. He was first sent to Rome to continue his scholasticate, this time as a student Brother at the Jesus Magister Institute, whose community was located in the Generalate in Rome.

Beginning with the 1957-1958 school year, the Jesus Magister Institute was functioning as an alternative theological studies center for teaching Brothers under the patronage of the Lateran University. This enormous effort of theological formation, directed especially to lay Religious, had been due to the impulse of the then Brother Superior Nicet Joseph, to the Lasallian Studies under the tutelage of Brother Maurice Auguste and to the inter-congregational team led by Brother Michel Sauvage. Sauvage had inspired the guidelines for the Novitiate's formation program in Panama that Miguel had completed. The degree in religious sciences that the Jesus Magister Institute offered to the Brothers was equivalent to a degree in theology, but this equivalency was disputed by the religious authorities of the time who refused to allow non-clerics access to the canonical degree of licentiate in theology—this was still the pre-Vatican Council era.

At the age of 23, Miguel began his theological studies. Fascinated by two thousand years of theology, he felt intellectually challenged. As he would later observe, even in a monastic environment, he was impressed by the high quality of the studies in sacred scripture, dogmatics and morals, as well as by the community life and the experience of the liturgy, chanting and the divine Office.

Thinking back on his own journey, Miguel emphasized that what impressed him most about these studies was his growing understanding of how over the centuries the Church, each time it entered a different historical cycle, had had to reinvent its language, its definitions, its



liturgy, its music, its art, in order to be able to continue evangelizing. For him it was not only a matter of learning what defined each period but also of understanding these processes of reinvention. That experience marked him and shaped how he along with thousands of other people, witnessed the speech of Pope John XXIII in St. Peter's Square, on October 11, 1962, after the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council:

I remember being present in St. Peter's Square the day all those bishops were entering the Basilica in procession; that afternoon, John XXIII was speaking to millions of people gathered in the square, telling us to love one another. The message was so simple and so beautiful. I felt so happy. Yes, it felt wonderful to be Catholic, because this was part of the great story of two thousand years and millions of people struggling to bring the Gospel to the modern world. Because, at that time, the Church was really very backward, in the late 1950s. There were things, like practices and traditions, that were really not that impressive. Vatican II made the effort to bring the Church into the modern world and say, "Well, we have to do the Church in a different way." That was exciting!

When Pope John XXIII died, on June 3, 1963, Miguel remembered that he was taking an exam on Church history. Together with a fellow student, he went to the Vatican and, with great ingenuity, was able to enter with the accredited diplomatic corps into the papal apartments and pray for the deceased Pope.

I kissed the feet of John XXIII; for me he was a holy man, whom I admired.

He finished his licentiate degree in theology in June 1965 with a dissertation entitled “The Mystery: Ephesians 1:9b.” He had the opportunity to experience first-hand the atmosphere surrounding the sessions of the Second Vatican Council, which concluded in December of that same year.

Miguel, by that time, was a young Brother, intellectually well prepared and armed with the ability to speak, read, and write English, French and Italian, in addition to his native language of Spanish. He had been forced by circumstances to become an expatriate and had turned necessity into opportunity by becoming a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world. Fascinated by the knowledge acquired, he returned to his Antillean District, to put into practice everything he has learned.

### 3. FIRST YEARS AS A BROTHER (1965-1970)

*From commitment to commitment,  
in confusing times*

Brother Miguel Arturo, upon finishing his licentiate in Theology in Rome in the summer of 1965, was sent to the community of the Colegio Dominicano de La Salle, in the city of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, to teach religion and mathematics to students of fourteen and fifteen years of age.



He arrived at a key moment in the country's history, marked by serious political instability. In response to an attempted revolution that had taken place in April 1965, the Dominican Republic had been occupied, first by the United States Army and, later, by an Inter-American

Peace Force sent by the Organization of American States (OAS), which would maintain its presence on the island until September 21, 1966. The population was divided, and the atmosphere was that of a civil war. The Brother's school in Santo Domingo sat on the literal dividing line that had been established by the peace keeping forces to separate the two sides. While the youngest Brothers, who had been completing formation, had been sent to a safer part of the country, a small group of more senior Brothers had stayed at the school and assisted refugees from the conflict, regardless of which side they belonged to. When Miguel first arrived, he described how disorienting it was to be there, after his ordered life in Rome:

The whole world disappeared for me. I arrived in a place where there were no rules, no vows, no structures, no school; it was like a Latin American novel.... like *Cien Años de Soledad*.

The Brothers reopened their school to serve students even before the end of the conflict, because they could see how young people were suffering. By the end of 1966, elections were held, the peace keeping troops departed, and the country became more stable, although political tensions remained.

Miguel had studied chemical engineering before entering the Institute and had studied theology in Rome. He found it somewhat ironic to come to teach mathematics. His first reaction was to see this assignment as the world upside down. However, he set this aside and at the age of 27 he put all his knowledge into the service of teaching his students.

Just three months into his time at the school, an event happened that transformed Miguel. One of his students, Cristobal, was killed by a drunk driver. This event shook him tremendously. It made him realize that there were fundamental issues of life and death that affected his students and that he needed to go beyond what took place in the classroom.

I became more attentive to their needs, to their personal problems, which I had been completely unaware of, because I thought I had all the answers.

A little more than a year after his arrival in Santo Domingo Miguel made his perpetual profession on July 31, 1966, at the Brothers' retreat center in Jarabacoa. His students were invited to the ceremony. He had lived his novitiate and scholasticate, his initial formation, as a positive experience. Even so, he continued to struggle with the question: why had his father been so negative towards his vocation?

It was a nagging question. Maybe he knew something I didn't... But I think I can honestly say it now, that my father was wrong. I was right; I was making the right decision; but I had doubts. And I was at the end of my formative years, teaching, and there were so many tensions in the Church, especially, at the end of the sixties, with Vatican II about being a religious, about how to be a Brother. Things were changing so rapidly that everything was confusing.

At this time, the 39th General Chapter was coming to an end at the Generalate. The capitulants had had to divide the Chapter into two parts. Only at the end of June 1967 would they publish a document that would be key to the renewal of the Institute: *The Brother of the*

*Christian Schools Today. A Declaration.* Miguel, who had spent time in Rome and knew some of the main drafters of this document, such as Brother Michel Sauvage, read with admiration the provocative invitation of the 39th General Chapter to renew the Institute.



Miguel took initiative along these lines. During the 1967-1968 school year, Brother Miguel created the Department of Education in the Faith of the Colegio Dominicano de La Salle; he worked on the renewal of catechesis and collaborated with the youth ministry of nineteen schools. He also directed pedagogical and pastoral formation programs for teachers along the lines

proposed by the Second Vatican Council, promoting an *aggiornamento* of ecclesial thought and action.

His father died in 1968. Miguel kept in touch with his family, but he could not return to Cuba, like so many who had already left the island. Even though Fidel Castro's government was allowing the return of some priests, it was forbidden for the Brothers; the prominent role they had played in the promotion of Catholic Action in Cuba weighed heavily. Education was in the hands of the regime. Miguel's brother Pedro had been jailed as a counterrevolutionary.

The tensions and aftermath of the Cuban Revolution also had their effects on the Brothers in the Dominican Republic. Miguel was not the only Cuban Brother present in the Dominican Republic—most of the Cuban-born Brothers who had left Cuba had been called to serve there. Their presence would create a particular tension with the Brothers who were Dominican and had been there prior to the arrival of the Cubans. The Cubans had gone through a revolution that had helped them open their eyes to the social reality of the poor. At the schools the Brothers had had in Cuba, rich and poor children had studied side by side; they had never revealed the economic origin of the families. However, the revolution had made many of them more radical in their commitment to directly serve the poor in education. This situation would generate tensions within the communities, it contributed to the departure of many young Brothers, and even brought the Brothers into political difficulties with the government of the Dominican Republic—two

Brothers were expelled from the country on suspicion of being communists. Even at the Colegio Dominicano, there were parents who objected to the educational reforms that Miguel and others had introduced. Miguel described the reforms as emphasizing freedom, responsibility, and justice as educational values but this was a change from what had been, in his view, a more conservative orientation and not everyone agreed with this new direction.

In this tense atmosphere, Miguel recalled that within the communities, “everything became an issue.” Because he had spent time in the United States and spoke English well, Miguel was accused by some of being an imperialist and, ironically, by others of being a leftist. It was then that the Superiors decided to send him to Miami to work with the Cuban Brothers. His ability to speak English, his degree in Theology in Rome, his pastoral work and his international experience guaranteed his ministry in the United States.

Between 1968 and 1970, Brother Miguel went to work in the youth and campus ministry of the Archdiocese of Miami. His first assignment was as pastoral animator of five communities of university students at Miami Dade Junior College and the University of Miami. Subsequently, he was responsible for the diocesan formation program for Hispanic catechists. Finally, he collaborated on the creation of a master’s program in Religious Studies at Barry College for men and women religious. Once again, Miguel demonstrated his resilience by creating new opportunities in his life.



## 4. STUDENT AND RESEARCHER IN ROME (1970-1973)

*To perceive God's calls in the unfolding of history and to respond to his invitations*

The first years of Brother Superior Charles Henry's administration, during the new post-conciliar times, were marked by great unrest, not only within the Church but also within the Institute itself. Likewise, tensions were multiplying in the world of politics, economics, and culture. The world was changing, and the Institute was part of this process.



The 39th General Chapter (1966-1967) had marked a turning point in the understanding of the Brother's vocation. There were intense moments of confrontation

of models, of redefinitions, of sometimes radical options, which did not fail to cause anguish among many Brothers. Miguel had experienced this first hand in Santo Domingo and in Miami.

In this context, and after several years of teaching and pastoral experience, Miguel returned to Rome to pursue doctoral studies in Theology at the Pontifical Lateran University, between 1970 and 1973, alternating with some service in the Generalate, first as Director of the *Lasallianum* community (1970-1971) and then as part of the team of the *International Lasallian Center - CIL* (1971-1973).

As Director of the *Lasallianum*, for one school year, Miguel was in charge of accompanying an international community of Brothers studying different subjects at universities in Rome. His facility in several languages and his leadership style generated a reciprocal and positive trust in this community.

*We made decisions together; it was a wonderful experience.*

Miguel began his doctoral studies in Theology at the Lateran University in September 1970. He arrived with the desire to do research, under the guidance of a mentor. His first idea was to study the experience of Cardinal John Henry Newman and the nineteenth century; perhaps he was struck by the Cardinal's personality, his open, critical, and reflective spirit adapted to the needs of a very complex century. Nevertheless, when the moment of decision arrived, and he asked himself: "Why don't you do that with De La Salle?"

So, I decided to do a scientific study of La Salle and dropped the initial idea. It was three wonderful years of research and writing.

Brother Michel Sauvage served as his mentor and had a positive impact on the project. Michel and Miguel felt a great mutual admiration for each other. Each complemented the other: Michel's deep Thomistic culture was greatly enriched by Miguel's keen sense of the evolution of social circumstances. Both were capable of elaborating an original theology. The thesis that Miguel developed, under Michel's direction, bears witness to that experience.

Through *The Gospel Itinerary of St. John Baptist de La Salle and the Recourse to Scripture in the Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, Miguel worked on the autobiographical texts of the Founder, elaborating a new understanding of his itinerary and his listening to the Sacred Scripture in his life. The way he approached that experience created a new style, a new language, a new narrative of understanding the Founder, which was received with enthusiasm by the Brothers. Miguel knew how to reread and enrich the first experience of his mentor, Brother Michel Sauvage, who in the years 1956-1957 had discovered the text of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. This text had caused in Michel "a shock, a kind of blow, an impact" that made him realize its centrality in the understanding of Lasallian spirituality.

Miguel's thesis helped, undoubtedly, to underline the experience of the human and spiritual itinerary of the Founder. For Brother Robert Comte, this aspect is the

most original contribution of Miguel in relation to that of Michel, which strongly marked his thought: his attention to the spiritual becoming of people, which shows his interest in authors along the lines of Jung and Erikson. Miguel, understanding the steps of John Baptist de La Salle, promoted a spirituality that invites people to assume their own itinerary. In the introduction of the second part of his thesis, Miguel expressed himself in these terms:

In reality, these four historical moments and the meaning that he [De La Salle] personally attributed to them, have revealed to us how a man, absolutely committed to the world in which he lived, perceived God's calls in the relationships he maintained with teachers, civil, and ecclesiastical authorities and, above all, in the needs of artisans and the poor. Thus, from commitment to commitment, he became irrevocably attached to a work that he eventually discovered to be God's work in the world. Guided by faith, in the fabric of his earthly existence and, particularly, in his interpersonal relationships, he discovered the calls of the Gospel. He took up the mission entrusted to him by the Son of Man through his personal association with the teachers to establish the Christian Schools, in which the Gospel was proclaimed free of charge to the poor. In this communion he forms and educates others and educates himself so that, together, they give a radical response: to renounce everything and incarnate himself in the situation of poor teachers, in need of everything, to consolidate a work that evangelically adopts the world, to the point of losing everything and embracing the total eclipse of self, for the good of God's work.

Given the doctoral program's emphasis on research, Miguel worked in archives and libraries between Italy and France. For this reason, perhaps, he had to give up the direction of the *Lasallianum* community and remained a

member of the Generalate community between 1971 and 1973, which gave him more freedom of movement.

Nevertheless, he would continue to collaborate with the *International Lasallian Center* (CIL) and would be part of the animation team for the fourth session, held in Rome from January 8 to April 26, 1972. This new experience of ongoing formation in the Institute had been created not only as an alternative to the *Second Novitiate* but also as a response to the Institute's desire to respond to the challenges of renewal proposed by the *39th General Chapter*.

Unfortunately, the experience of the first three sessions of CIL had been almost "a failure" for the center. Although the General Council had selected Brothers of high quality and professional competence to coordinate the CIL sessions, the first experiences were full of setbacks. Brother Michel Sauvage, by then Assistant for Formation, had been in favor of CIL finding "its own way". This only came about after it had almost reached a dead end.

The renewal of the CIL animation team and the reformulation of the programs and contents gave it a new impetus. Brother Telmo Meirone, from the District of Argentina-Paraguay, had been sent to the 4th session of the CIL, even though "it did not have good press":

There were plenty of illusions in our enthusiasm as Brothers who were beginning the second stage of youth, with our sails filled by the winds of the 1966 Chapter... we found ourselves with an international group, with our spirits burning for the renewal of the educational mission. And there we met you, Miguel. And with Michel Sauvage and all the fantastic staff

and guest speakers. You fanned the flames of our bonfire even more with the new fire brought to us by the Vatican Council and the General Chapter of 1966.

Miguel's doctoral thesis received the highest grade - *summa cum laude* – and deserved to be published in the collection *Cahier lasalliens*, in two volumes, Nos. 45 and 46. It would soon become a classic work of Lasallian studies and, practically, obligatory reading for understanding the life and spirituality of the holy Founder. This reflection opened up new ways of looking at the ministry of the Christian educator.

Miguel, at the end of the summer of 1973, prepared to return to Miami. These were rich years of research, of production, of consolidation of a vocation committed to the promotion of Lasallian thought. He received recognition for his rigorously researched contribution, without leaving aside his cheerful spirit and good humor. He has been a good Brother with whom to share dreams, fears, and challenges in a world in need of inspiration. He still had many challenges ahead of him in his thirty-fifth year.

## **5. EDUCATOR AND PASTORALIST IN THE UNITED STATES (1973-1986)**

*Walking together with others, in an intense epochal change*

Just as John Baptist de La Salle remained attentive during his itinerary to the invitations of the Spirit, Miguel also allowed himself to be challenged by the same Spirit in his ministerial journey. He responded generously to the successive calls of God, without disregarding his Latin and Cuban heritage. This became more evident in this new stage of his life. His contribution was widely recognized in the various ecclesial bodies.

His theological and pastoral legacy as a catechist, writer, formation leader and lecturer developed in various ministries within and outside the Institute. Upon his return to the United States from Rome, during the 1973-1974 school year he was Director of Religious Education for the Archdiocese of Miami. Subsequently, during the 1974-1975 school year he worked at Christian Brothers Spiritual Center in Adamstown, Maryland, and from 1975 to 1977 at La Salle College in Philadelphia. As a staff member of the Christian Brothers Spiritual Center, he led retreats for Catholic high school youth in the Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Washington DC areas. It was a grueling job, with groups of young people taking turns on a permanent basis.

Sometimes I spend an entire semester with students who disappear and, in three days, here you are connected forever! I have a lot of respect for the ministry of retreat centers.

From September to December 1977, he took time off to participate in a spiritual renewal program at Sangre de Cristo Retreat Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico; then for the remainder of the 1977-1978 school year he lived in the community at Hudson Catholic High School in Jersey City. From 1978-1981 he was Director of the Office of Latino Ministry for the Archdiocese of Miami and, from 1981-1986, Director of the Office of Religious Education for the Archdiocese of Newark. In an interview at the end of his life, Miguel would confess that those years were extraordinary for him.





In the midst of that overflowing and varied activity, Miguel also received invitations from the different regions of the Institute to collaborate in the formation of Brothers and Lasallians. His participation in the CIL sessions in Rome, from 1975 to 1985, made him a reference point for Lasallian thought on a worldwide level; even more so, with the publication of an *Introduction* that accompanied the edition of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, prepared for the Brother delegates to the 40<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of 1976 in Rome. Furthermore, in the same year of 1976, together with Brother Michel Sauvage, he published *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor: The Spiritual Experience and Spiritual Teaching of St. John Baptist de La Salle*. It became another point of reference, more complex, one that required a more attentive reading by Brothers who were just discovering the riches of the founding time of the Institute.

Miguel had, after a period of searching and discernment, applied for admission to the District of Baltimore in the USA on September 29, 1974. Shortly thereafter, on November 23 of that same year, he had received a letter from Brother Colman Coogan, then Visitor, informing him of the “unanimous and enthusiastic” acceptance by the District Council. These were times of change and of cultural revolution that had not left him indifferent. He had become interested in a radical experience of service to the poor in “Spanish Harlem”. He was inspired by the testimony of Father Félix Varela y Morales, a Cuban philosopher who had worked in the Archdiocese of New York on behalf of the Irish refugees between 1837 and 1848. But, always attentive to the signs that God was

sending him, he was fully convinced of his contribution to the Institute when he began to work at La Salle College in Philadelphia; there, he identified himself with the efforts of so many young people who were studying to better themselves.

I fell in love with the place and with Philadelphia. It became my home.

Later, as a professor of Theology at La Salle College in Philadelphia, during the years 1975 to 1977, Miguel ventured into an autobiographical approach to religious experience, reading with his students a series of biographies of people who had been involved in society, in politics, in the culture of their respective times, from the perspective of their choice of faith. He was surprised by his students' positive response to Dag Hammarskjöld's book, *Markings*, as a testimony of adult faith in the contemporary world. A similar example was the positive response to the biography of Dorothy Day, as a female figure who defended radical causes in the mid-twentieth century. This intellectual effort fueled Miguel's search for new, perhaps more sociological, approaches to the understanding of faith.

First as Director of the Office of Adult Religious Education for the Archdiocese of Miami (1978-1981) he contributed in particular to the creation of the lay ministry formation program, promoting catechesis in support of diocesan agencies in the Newark (1981-1986) and Philadelphia (1991-1992) Archdioceses. One of Miguel's deep convictions at that time was to understand adult agendas in educational experiences. He had been

deeply impacted by becoming a study partner and sharing in formation with his adult learners, in a two-way relationship where they were building knowledge together, giving new meaning to their life journeys.

On the occasion of the Institute's Tercentenary celebrations in 1980, Miguel delivered a keynote address at Manhattan College entitled *The Charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle: A Living Memory and Vision Affecting Our Present*. He affirmed the importance of community, as a space of memory and hope. He believed that the future of the Institute "is built in the light and shadow of our past, of our history". Recalling De La Salle's experience in founding the Institute and his trust in Divine Providence, Miguel hoped that we would have the same faith that the Spirit was active in the events of the Institute today.

With this rich experience, Miguel went to work in the Archdiocese of Newark from 1981 to 1986 as Director of the Center for Lay Ministry Development. This space for adult education allowed him to interact with priests, religious and lay people, in a very enriching experience of communion. He published, with the support of his team, nine courses of a formation program, in English and Spanish. This experience also led him to take risks in one of the most troubled areas of the United States (Newark, New Jersey); he would later say that, without the Lasallian approach, he would not have dared so much. John Baptist de La Salle, centuries before, had had the strength to leave his world, his culture, his society of privilege, to embrace something so different. Miguel had been inspired by his audacity to face this new ministry.

In fact, in his passion for the Lasallian charism, Miguel contributed with Brothers Joseph Schmidt, William Mann, and Frederick Mueller to the founding in 1984-1985 of the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies in the then United States-Toronto Region.



Miguel had a captivating personality, inviting and encouraging others to develop their own talents and abilities. He spoke to each one as a partner; he started from people's own experiences, honored them, and invited them to integrate these in their own itineraries. He was deeply rooted in the movements of our time. He said that it was "a moment of epochal transition

[that] constitutes a historical cultural tidal wave”. To live, then, that moment, was a “time of announcement and decision”. The theme of transition – personal, community or institutional – was an important part of his reflection.

He also experienced an important transition in his personal life. In 1980-1981, due to a more open relationship between the governments of Cuba and the United States, Miguel was able to travel to Cuba twice to visit his family. He went as a private citizen, not as a Brother – the Brothers and most religious organizations were still allowed only very limited access to the island, although a dialogue between the Catholic Church and Cuba had begun in the 1970s. Miguel was able to visit his mother and brothers, and he assisted his brother Pedro in being able to leave Cuba. Miguel was disturbed by the deep divide between Cubans on the island and Cubans in the diaspora when they were able to visit each other. These visits cemented his desire to return to Cuba to live, not as a visitor, but as a Cuban.

## 6. NEW IMPETUS TO LASALLIAN STUDIES (1986–1991)

### *Accompanying Brothers from their own stories*

Upon completion of his responsibilities as Director of the Office of Religious Education for the Archdiocese of Newark, Miguel returned to Europe to assume the direction of *Lasallian Studies* at the Generalate in Rome for three years. He continued to collaborate with Lasallian research until 1991. He lived between Paris and Rome, always ready to give conferences and retreats in all regions of the Institute. He collaborated in the creation of the *International Session of Lasallian Studies* (SIEL), a very rich experience of formation of Lasallian researchers at the Generalate and he participated in the 1990-1991 session.

In assuming responsibility for *Lasallian Studies* between 1986 and 1989, he had the opportunity to integrate the products of Lasallian research from other cultures. This ability to bring Lasallian thought into dialogue with the diversity of the Institute undoubtedly helped him to open up perspectives and enrich the sociological approach he had already developed in his past experiences.

Lasallian research was born from a European approach and Miguel had worked with this content with Brothers and Lasallians from France, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Great Britain, Belgium, Holland, Austria, and Switzerland. This allowed him to understand the different sensitivities towards

the new themes that were emerging in the Institute. He was further stimulated by working with Lasallians from other regions outside Europe; he participated in regional formation programs, such as the *Center for the Renewal of Lasallian Spirituality* (CREL) promoted by the Latin American Lasallian Region (RELAL); also, in different houses of initial formation of RELAL and the Asia-Pacific Region (PARC) and the same SIEL program in Rome with Brothers from all over the world.

Together with Michel Sauvage, in 1989 he published, in the collection *Cahiers lasalliens*, the *Explanation of the Method of Prayer. Presentation of the 1739 text*, as a modest “working tool”. Brother Alain Houry, by then Director of the Brothers’ community of Rue de Sèvres in Paris, recalls how Miguel and Michel had worked with scientific precision on the 21 acts of interior prayer, completing and adjusting each text, even making suggestions and comments. The work seemed endless, focused on scrupulously respecting each other’s observations, until the time came to decide on the final text for publication. This testimony reminds us of the precise and careful style of work that Miguel had developed throughout his experience as a Lasallian researcher: the figure of a man inspired by the truth, with an intellect nourished by a rigorous university formation and a great commitment to understand the contribution of John Baptist de La Salle in the Church, from his particular context, was emerging more strongly.

His excellent knowledge of French contributed to the rigor of his work. Brother Jacques D’Huiteau, who

knew Miguel from Miguel's time in Rome, would insist on this point as crucial to maintain the seriousness of *Lasallian Studies* in the future. Miguel's work had all the guarantees of accuracy and veracity, which increased its value to contemporary Lasallian reflection.

Apart from his scholarly contributions, it is impossible to overlook Miguel's personality. Always accessible and fraternal in his relationships, he was able to welcome with respect the observations of others. He tried to make his interlocutors feel valued. However, he did not see himself as a spiritual expert; rather, he understood that each Brother's vocation was oriented in another direction. It was a matter of fraternal accompaniment, more in keeping with the educational dynamic.

Two decades later, when Miguel shared his profound experience of friendship with Michel, he revealed an event that they both lived toward the end of this period: together they had decided to seal an alliance between themselves, a few days before saying goodbye to Rome. According to Miguel:

We celebrated a private ritual to become aware that we had been called together to accompany our Brothers on their own journeys. In a secret act, without any canonical or Institution implications, we evoked in our own way the "secret vow" of De La Salle and his two associates, Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin. What we were doing was not an external or sentimental imitation, but an act born of our conviction that the charism conferred in the 17th century is leading the Brothers today in a new direction, through storms and resistance.

Once this experience was over, Miguel returned to the United States.



## 7. BACK TO PHILADELPHIA (1991-1998)

*Aware of living in a time of transition*

Miguel spent the next seven years in Philadelphia. It had been a defining experience for him in the early seventies; he would continue to find in each experience a reason to nurture his vocation, always challenged by the educational and cultural context of young people and adults. His activity was exuberant, committed, and marked by his particular vision.



During the 1991-1992 school year he served as Director of the Hispanic Office of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, in the Secretariat for Evangelization. Then, for the next six

years, from 1992-1998, he worked at La Salle University in Philadelphia as Director of the Office of Multicultural and International Affairs, pioneering many of the functions that would later be included in the portfolio of a Vice President for Mission. During that time, he developed several programs aimed at the formation for Latinos which had a wide impact, especially the Associates degree program, *Bilingual Undergraduate Studies for Collegiate Advancement* (BUSCA).

During those seven years he continued to be invited by the Brothers of all the regions of the Institute to participate in various Lasallian formation programs. The list is long: Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Panama, Costa Rica, and Honduras in the Lasallian Latin American Region (RELAL); the Philippines, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Malaysia and Pakistan in the Pacific and Asia Region (PARC); Ethiopia, Madagascar, Rwanda, Congo Kinshasa, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Cameroon, and Ivory Coast in the Lasallian Region of Africa-Madagascar (RELAF).

In the Lasallian Region of North America (RELAN), he participated in countless seminars, retreats and assemblies of Brothers and Lasallians in New York, Baltimore, Winona, San Francisco, St. Louis, and Covington, Louisiana. In a very special way, he made significant contributions to the Buttimer Institute, working with Brother William Mann on the topic of Lasallian Spirituality. Also, he participated in 1996-1997 in the founding of the Lasallian Leadership Institute,

working closely with Gery Short, Brother Frederick Mueller, and Brother Robert Schieler.

Miguel was convinced at the time that the understanding of ministry and religious life in the Church had undergone a monumental change in the post-Vatican II period. That change was only the prologue to a real transformation that would take place in the realization of the Institute's educational ministry at the dawn of the next millennium. This is what he declared in 1995, at the sesquicentennial celebration of the District of Baltimore.

His conviction of living in a period of transition, an intermediate time, led him to generate a style that invited people to reflect and make an impact on the structures of animation of formation and of educational ministry. Through his reflection and practice, he gave a coherent message of what it meant for the Institute to rediscover the original experience of Lasallian association, starting from the intuition of the shared mission. Charles Gaus AFSC, a witness of that time, remembers him in this way:

Brother Miguel described it as a time of change in which one reality was unraveling, but a new reality had not yet emerged. He saw it as a time for Lasallian discernment, that is, discernment in the context of community. In this in-between time, he envisioned, encouraged, and acted to support the Lasallian movement of Brothers and Partners, advancing the shared mission, and actively pushed old structures and thinking to form new models and new thinking to animate the mission.

Miguel was representative of an intellectual elite. Gery Short, former Director of Education for the San Francisco - New Orleans District, remembers him in these terms:

What distinguished Miguel was his deep knowledge of 17th and 18th century French spirituality and the way it manifested itself in the life of De La Salle and the early Brothers. His work with Michel Sauvage is legendary and certainly influenced his current work and writings. Along with the Buttimer Institute, I observed Miguel present several times at district, national and international meetings. I also had many opportunities to sit with him and learn from him on a personal level...Miguel was a good presenter, but his greatest gift was as a writer, based on his application and understanding of French spirituality and its influence on De La Salle and the Brothers for a projection of the present and future needs of the Brothers, the Institute, the Lasallian mission. He promoted, practically insisted, on a return to the initial spirit of the Institute that inspired De La Salle and the first Brothers to attend to the needs of the young, to found schools and to form a community. It was the spirit and commitment of De La Salle, best expressed in the *Meditations*, that drove Miguel's thoughts to where we need to invest in commitment and spirit in the life of De La Salle, as opposed to safeguarding the structures that have been created by the Institute over the years. He called us to invest, to discover this spirit of De La Salle as we consider the future of the Lasallian mission, the Brothers, the shared mission.

## 8. FINALLY, BACK TO CUBA (1998-2000)

*Walking with hope to open new  
paths for the Church*



The return of the Brothers to Cuba in 1987 had sown in Brother Miguel great hopes for the possibility of collaborating in the Lasallian mission in the country of his birth. His dream became a reality when he was sent to Santiago de Cuba in 1998, where he served as Pastoral Coordinator and Director of Youth Ministry in the Diocese of Santiago de Cuba. Notably, he coordinated the 1999 diocesan assembly, among many other contributions that led him to advise the pastoral planning and assemblies of other dioceses and of the Cuban Episcopal Conference itself, always remaining

close to the youth and the People of God, accompanying the multitudinous pilgrimages to the National Shrine of the *Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*, patroness of Cuba.

He was also witness to and a protagonist of the visit of John Paul II to Cuba, from January 25 to 28, 1998, in his capacity as head of the Youth Pastoral at the national level. It was an unprecedented moment for the Church, since John Paul II was the first Pontiff to make an apostolic trip to the island, in addition to its profound pastoral significance in the midst of the Cuban revolution, which had already completed four decades.

Miguel had never been emotionally separated from Cuba and his family. He kept his dream of returning to his country of his birth; he had even put his name on a waiting list. He did not understand how some people did not want to return. He was aware that he had not experienced firsthand the persecution of the Castro regime, and especially the violence that some had experienced, including his loved ones. That gave him a certain freedom to approach the reality of socialist Cuba.

After the death of Miguel's father, his mother Angela Mariño de Campos had remained on the island, making an enormous effort to lead her daily life within the constraints of the revolutionary system. She wanted all the members of her family to leave the country; she had even affirmed that she would not die until that happened. In fact, her son Pedro, who had been in jail for many years, accused of being a counterrevolutionary, was able to get out of jail in the mid 80s, and finally made it to Miami, with some assistance from Miguel.

His younger brother Freyde, who had been a doctor, also managed to leave the country and join his brother Pedro in Miami. Miguel's mother's wish, to see them all out of the country, had come true. She died in peace in Miami, surrounded by the affection of her children.



Miguel also went to Santiago de Cuba in 1998 to become Director of the Brothers' community. Brother Osvaldo Morales, who had accompanied him in 1959 from the city of Santiago de Cuba to Havana to enter the Novitiate, was waiting for him there. Now the circle was closed: Miguel himself was coming to accompany Osvaldo in this new ministerial adventure, almost forty years later.

On his arrival he was received by the then Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, Monsignor Pedro Meurice, a man of extraordinary vision who had been able to understand the revolution and guide the Church in the midst of a regime characterized by the absolute control of the population.

A first-hand witness, Cuban alumnus Antonio Lopez de Queralta, shares with us an appreciation of Miguel's arrival and impact in Cuba:

It was not easy for Brother Miguel to land in the situation of Cuba, since he came from a very different reality; above all, he suffered a lot with the food, which at that time was very deficient; of course, never as much as now. But yes, with the grace of God and with a lot of willpower, he adapted to his new destiny. His time at the seminary of St. Basil the Great, as a teacher, left its mark and marked the seminarians, not only for his knowledge but also for his devotion, because when he arrived, he always went to the chapel to visit the Blessed Sacrament and before leaving he did the same. He would walk to the seminary, which was quite far from the Brothers' house. He immediately made friends with many former students, former members of Signum Fidei, Lasallian cooperators, neighbors of the Brothers' house, the clergy and, above all, the Archbishop. He knew how to get along with the Brothers' community, whose members were of different nationalities. I think he suffered a lot and also endured the economic, political, social and, especially, religious situation that Cuba was going through. As Director of the community, always in coordination and with the consent of our dear Monsignor Meurice, he was very dynamic, hardworking, innovative, but above all, very Lasallian. His conferences and spiritual retreats marked the work and left an indelible memory in the ecclesial and Lasallian groups.



Miguel was particularly proud of the fact that when he returned to Cuba this time, it was as a Cuban, and with a national identity card. While it was not easy, he strove to live as his fellow Cubans did. Recalling his experience in Cuba, Miguel affirmed that he fell in love with Cuba again, with his land and his people. But now he had left the protected bubble of his childhood and he sought to understand the profound cultural evolution his country had undergone, to tune in to the enormous hope he was able to perceive in the people and to promote new ways of being Church in a challenging context.

I was a wonderful three years in Cuba and, as far as I was concerned, I could have stayed there forever.

But Miguel's dream came to an end when the Brothers, gathered at the 43rd General Chapter in Rome elected him in June 2000 as General Councilor of the Institute for the period 2000 - 2007. It was a hard blow for him because he wanted to remain in Cuba.

I had felt very efficient working with the young people in the Cuban dioceses. So, I ended up thinking: what am I going to do? Anyone can do the work from Rome, but not everyone wants to stay in Cuba.

Why choose someone who was already well placed and was doing what he had to do...? There were not many Cuban Brothers left. Those who were still alive could not go back, either because of work circumstances, pressure, stress; but I was willing and was, in fact, one of the only ones happy to go there. I had accepted the challenge. Why did they choose me?

Miguel never returned to Cuba again, although he often spoke of his desire to do so.

## 9. GENERAL COUNCILOR OF THE INSTITUTE (2000–2007)

*In faithfulness to the movement of the Spirit,  
with a heart on fire*

Miguel was elected as General Councilor at the 43rd General Chapter, to accompany the new Brother Superior Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría and his Council for the period 2000-2007. As always, he put into play his resilient capacity and assumed with all the originality of his person this new responsibility in the Institute. His itinerary, rich in experiences, had prepared him to assist to Brother Superior in the government and animation of the Institute (R. 128).

As General Councilor, he attended the administrative meetings of the Superior General and his Council. In particular, he accompanied Brother Superior on his pastoral visit to Latin America. He was very active in leading retreats and workshops, participating in assemblies, regional meetings, and conferences of Brother Visitors. To respond to his mission, he maintained permanent contact with the Executive Secretary of the region to coordinate the progress of the *Latin American Regional Educational Project* (PERLA), the retreats for Brothers, the formation programs for directors and the ongoing formation experiences of Brothers and Associates. He assisted Brother Vicar General William Mann in his role of accompanying the

USA-Toronto Region. In addition, he worked directly with the International Commission on Associates and Lasallian Family and the Lasallian Educational Mission Commission.

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez recalls the positive impact of Miguel's presence from the beginning of his experience in Rome:

When in the 43rd General Chapter of the year 2000 I said to the Brother capitulants, in my first words as Superior, *that being Brothers is our secret, our strength, our greatest richness*, I did not count on experiencing it in a profound and concrete way with the close and fraternal presence of Brother Miguel Campos, as part of the team that was to accompany me for seven years. Previously, I had already had the opportunity to know and admire him in some meetings for formators or Visitors, or through his books and some of his dissertations... I always found in Miguel the friend who was concerned about me, and not only about my ministry. During these years and later, when he left Rome, he shared with me his ideas, concerns, joys, and hopes in relation to the Institute, which helped me a lot in my interventions and writings for the Brothers and the other members of our Lasallian family.

During his second year in Rome Miguel learned that he had Parkinson's disease. At first, he was disoriented because he had always been in good health. Although he considered resigning, he received the full support of Brother Superior and the Brothers of the Council. He was 63 years old; he was the oldest of the group. But the Brothers invited him to continue, in spite of his limitations, which would gradually become more evident. Miguel would find in Parkinson's disease a challenge to recreate himself, to think and project himself into the

future. The disease would be a companion of his journey until the end of his days.

Another significant event for Miguel was to visit his dear mentor and friend, Brother Michel Sauvage, before his death, which took place in Annapes, France. We do not have the exact date of that visit, but we do have the testimony of the profound spiritual experience that both lived when they said goodbye to each other, in which they gave each other a blessing and sang one of their favorite hymns. Michel and Miguel were thus able to celebrate to infinity their immense hope, confident in the presence of the provident God who had accompanied them in their Lasallian intellectual and spiritual adventure for four decades.

Miguel had undoubtedly built an original path in the Institute. Now, in his role as General Councilor, his intellectual qualities, the depth of his research on the Founder and his gifts as a teacher to transmit his knowledge to the Lasallian world made him a point of reference for all. Brother Claude Reinhardt, General Councilor at the time and co-worker, highlights in particular three qualities that made him special:

Miguel had acquired strong convictions as a result of his Lasallian studies; but he was not an ideologue who pretended to impose his views on everyone. He was able to listen to different opinions, integrating them into his thinking to produce an even richer one, nourished by consultation with real people. Miguel loved the Institute and promoted unity in the mission, a mission expressed in different forms of educational action. His successive missions testify to this: he was involved in the pastoral care of Spanish-speaking emigrants while being a

university professor; he was involved in adult education and, at the same time, in the pastoral care of young adolescents; and he encouraged the opening of universities in other Districts, convinced of the power of intellectual formation to provide quality education to those who need it. Miguel was a man of rich intuition who was quick to understand the people he met, their character traits, their aspirations and their talents to be developed. It was all this that made Brother Miguel so deeply supportive and a brother to his brothers, faithful to his vocation to the end.

From Rome, supported by the work of all, he shared many of his treasures. In a particular way, and thanks to the contribution of Brother Michael French, by then Director of CIL in Rome, we can learn more about his particular way of preparing his presentations:

Working with Miguel was a great gift because he was a master when it came to planning presentations and networking. Miguel would often call me. He would say, “I have to plan a capstone session for Buttimer, and I need a song, a movie, and a couple of good questions.” I would gather some materials that dealt with the topic he needed, and we would get together and start planning. I would provide the raw material and watch Miguel turn it into something brilliant and wonderful. I would delight in Miguel’s artistry in shaping the resources, especially the questions. I remember he would spend a lot of time shaping the titles. He used to say, “First, ask the right question; then give the right title, and the rest will fall on its own.” His titles included two parts: one, a direct statement of the name of the article, and the other, a more in-depth explanation of the implications....

He was passionate about the topic of Lasallian Universities; for Brother Álvaro Rodríguez, Miguel was convinced that they responded in an ideal way to the Lasallian charism in today’s world. He saw in the

exponential development of our universities a sign of the times.

When I was preparing my speech for the 45th General Chapter, Miguel sent me his reflections. One of them alluded to Brother Michel Sauvage who, as we know, we cannot forget when we talk about Brother Miguel, because of what he represented for him throughout his life. *Michel was not a great strategist, but it seems to me that he was right when he spoke of having a very clear purpose, for what we are called, and to put all our resources into that purpose. Placed in that frontier with the neediest young people, of affection, of security, of having a job, of dignity... to put all the resources of the Institute, from the primary schools to the universities, from the social work and pastoral care of the youth, from the function of educators in the earthly city to the ecclesial functions.... Everything we are and have at the service of the urgency of children and youth.* For Miguel it was clear that the *raison d'être* and purpose of a University do not necessarily appear either in its buildings nor in its *campuses*. Its purpose is to contribute to the development and protection of human dignity; to help find meaning in life; to preserve and enrich the cultural heritage; to fight against poverty; to give clues to the search for truth and, for believers, to find Jesus Christ and live the Gospel values.

Miguel's creative energy and brilliance were still in full effervescence in 2005, when he dedicated himself to producing two documents that would be key for the reflection of the Institute. In the first place, he prepared, for the First International Assembly for the Lasallian Educational Mission (AIMEL) in May 2006: *Fidelity to the Movement of the Spirit: Criteria for Discernment*. Secondly, with the help of five qualified Brothers representing the five regions of the Institute, he drafted the document *Being Brothers Today*, which was to be a key piece in preparing the whole Institute for the celebration of the

44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of 2007. Brother Álvaro Rodríguez offers a vision of the scope of this reflection:



It was not only a text but an interactive process of community discernment that invited us to deepen our certainties and convictions about being Brothers in the world and in the Church today. I believe that we were anticipating synodality, that walking together which today the Church wishes to be one of its characteristic features. The purpose of this document was to be a witness text and a sentinel that wanted to urge all the Brothers to question themselves about what was deepest in their lives as Brothers, open to the *inspirations and movements of the Spirit*, as St. John Baptist de La Salle often said. It was a question, therefore, of making a vital synthesis based on fraternity, integrating the tensions that spring from gratuitous love: *we are Brothers because God is Father*, and his love is supportive and effective: *what you have done to the least of these you have done to me*. It is about a gratuitous love that becomes history, where efficacy emerges as a requirement of love and contemplation, as a life-giving element of a historical action.

Miguel then finished his term as General Councilor in Rome and returned to his District to continue his itinerary, limited by his health as his Parkinson's disease worsened, but without ceasing to contribute to the work of God, which is his Institute. We owe the motto of the 44th General Chapter, *Being Brothers Today, Eyes Open, Hearts on Fire*, to his inspiration.



## **10. IN THE SERVICE OF THE INSTITUTE (2007-2015)**

*Together we are called to be witnesses to the  
Kingdom for young people*

Returning to the Baltimore District, which was to form part of the District of Eastern North America (DENA) beginning in 2009, Miguel was sent to the La Salle University Philadelphia community. In this third opportunity, he was named “Distinguished Professor” of the Lasallian Mission. He was, therefore, a person of reference, assistant to the President; he was part of the team that would design, coordinate, and implement the mission and strategic plan of the University as Catholic and Lasallian.

Accompanied by his community, while still attentive to his health, Miguel used his creativity and genius to translate the Lasallian heritage into the university world. Together with Raymond Ricci, then Assistant to the President for Mission Integration, he organized a series of three seminars, addressed to the faculty and staff of the University, where they studied Lasallian association in the context of the social doctrine of the Church and the Catholic intellectual tradition. All of these initiatives spoke to their belief in and commitment to the transformative power of Lasallian association and shared mission.

For Miguel it was important to welcome the gift of the Lasallian vocation of so many men and women who identified with the charisma of De La Salle. He invited the Brothers not to focus on themselves, but to trust in Providence and to launch themselves, together with Lasallian Associates, to find new challenging spaces in the service of children, young people and adults, from the richness of the Lasallian educational ministry, as a gift for the Church and society.

At the same time, he was taking up again with all his strength the publication of a book he had started with his mentor, Brother Michel Sauvage, between 1997 and 1998, before his experience in Cuba. Miguel had at his disposal the contents of twenty-two interviews, occupying more than three thousand pages of information, in which he had identified the essential axes of Michel Sauvage's itinerary, in the form of a story that could be shared with the new generations of Brothers of the Institute.

Recognizing his limits, he organized a task force with the support of then Secretary for Lasallian Research and Resources in Rome, Brother Diego Muñoz, Brother Paul Grass of the Midwest District and Brother Robert Comte of the District of France. Together they came up with the publication of *The Fragile Hope of a Witness*, in *Lasallian Studies*, which would be offered to the Brothers at the 45th General Chapter in May 2014. Miguel thus closed another important circle in his life. The intellectual and spiritual experience lived with Michel Sauvage could then be shared, discussed, and celebrated by the Institute

to which they had dedicated all their originality, together and by association, until the end of their days.

As the years passed, the deterioration in Miguel's health was evident. By 2012, he had already shared with Brother Alvaro Rodriguez a personal and vital reflection entitled: *Living in the Spirit every day the demands of Parkinson's disease*. It was a testimony that fully portrayed Miguel: realism, sincerity, and spirituality.

After pointing out the physical, mental, psychological, and professional challenges, Miguel concluded with spiritual coordinates and decisions, recognizing that he could not face all the challenges presented to him, for which he chose three nuclei:

First, the abandonment, on the part of God, of the Brothers and friends, of the professionals, being more and more marginalized and forgotten; second, the insecurity, having lost my place in the history of the world, of the Church, having lost the central axis of history, the impotence and lack of energy to connect with others, to associate with old and new friends; and, third, the instruments that can help me in these moments: *Lectio divina*, which will be the instrument that will allow me to identify the core of what is happening, to praise, to give thanks and to move forward; the Eucharist, which will be the center and summit of all that I celebrate in the prayer of fragile hope, and the prayer of hope itself that I will do every day when it is convenient, especially in the off periods. I can exchange it with "Seigneur Jésus, fils de David, pitié de moi" [Lord Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.]

Miguel remained in the De La Salle Community of La Salle University until he could no longer manage on his own. Embraced by the recognition and appreciation of the Lasallian community, he continued his final journey

at De La Salle Hall Residence in Lincroft, New Jersey, health-care facility of the Brothers of DENA where he could receive medical care appropriate to his needs.



## **11. HIS LAST STEPS (2015–2024)**

### **Ready to embrace the gift of eternity**

If anyone lived his last years in the shadow of the cross, it was Brother Miguel. A progressive neurological deterioration forced this man of boundless intelligence and energy to face the harshness of finitude. His famous ability to communicate and connect with almost everyone was sadly limited. He could not see well enough to use a computer and it was difficult for him to make himself understood through speech.

Challenged by Parkinson's disease, Miguel's brilliant mind became a prisoner of his body. Gradually, his body stopped obeying the brain's commands. He found it difficult to understand what it was saying. Miguel realized that his physical condition would not improve and for several years he silently prepared himself for death.

About a week before he died, Miguel fell in his room and was sent to the local hospital for a check-up. They found blood clots, and the doctors wanted him to remain in the hospital and receive palliative care; but Miguel wanted to die among his Brothers. After a visit from his friend, Archbishop Nelson Perez, who anointed him and gave him communion, Miguel left the hospital and returned home to be with his Brothers.

Two days later, Miguel celebrated his Easter in the peace of the Lord, on January 4, 2024. The news of his death

shocked the entire Lasallian world. He was remembered in a memorial service held at the chapel on the La Salle University campus.

As former Superior General Robert Schieler shared in his remarks during Miguel's Funeral Mass:

Like many of you who had the privilege of knowing him and being in his presence, he was a friend, a mentor, and an elder brother to me... He saw and nurtured qualities and gifts in us that we were unaware we possessed.

His remains rest in the District's Cemetery of the La Salle Hall Community of the Brothers in Beltsville, Maryland.

His theological, pastoral, and spiritual legacy will continue to animate the life and mission of Lasallians. We end this story with the testimony of his friend, Archbishop Nelson Perez:

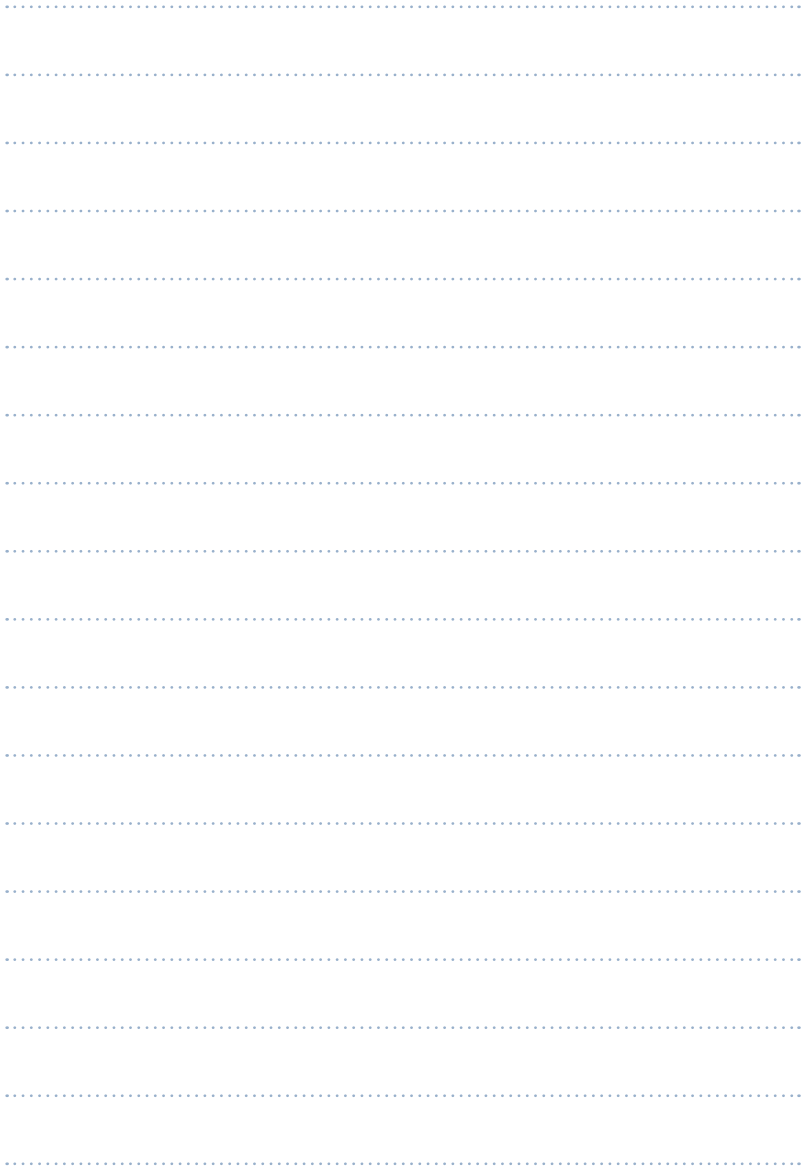
Brother Miguel was many things for many people; for the Brothers, whom he accompanied, his family and friends. For me he was – and still is in many ways – a teacher, a mentor, a man of great wisdom and deep spirituality; but, above all, a brother and friend, a confidant and consoler in good times and in difficult times. I am a better man, priest, and bishop because of him. I will always be grateful to God for having been able to spend time with him in the hospital a few days before he was called to his reward and to embrace the gift of eternity. We talked, we celebrated the sacraments of the Church, which he received with a beautiful sense of joy and reverence, expressed in his eyes and in his wonderful smile. We all meet incredible people on our journey through life and ministry, but I know, with conviction, that for many of the Brothers, the faithful he served and his friends, he was and always will be an exceptional servant of the Church and the world. I know that the good work the Lord began in him and through him was

brought to completion, and the hope that fueled his heart is now an amazing reality. Rest in peace and joy, Miguel!



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