



DAILY REPORT  
18 May 2022

# Day 18

Today, as anyone involved with the General Chapter and everyone working at the Casa Generalizia knew, was the day that the Superior General would be chosen. The creation of *Paths of Transformation* had been the primary work of those involved, but they would now turn their attention to the key person who would oversee their implementation and lead the Institute. As the Chapter Coordinator said at the end of the process: “This has been an emotional moment in our Chapter, but very much in God’s presence.” Below is a brief chronicle of the various steps of this experience:

- The capitulants met in the Aula Magna at 9:00 am, dressed formally because this was something important, something with significant character. There was a quiet intensity of presence in the room; a sense of expectation, a sort of suppressed excitement. The Chapter may set our future direction, but the success of its implementation depends on the leadership that is chosen to do so, among whom the Superior General is the most significant. The session began when the tower bell at the Casa Generalizia struck the hour.
- The Coordinator made a formal statement about the importance of this session and the steps that would be taken, based on the *Manual of Procedures* that had been approved earlier. It was clear that this was not to be an ordinary plenary session, a fact confirmed by the sea of robes, formal dress, and deeply silent disposition.
- The Coordinator invited everyone to stand and sing the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, with the words and music projected onto the large screen in front. The lights were kept off in order to see the screen better,



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with only natural light entering the room, and the Brothers stood at their places during the singing. It was a fine start, well-placed, strong voices singing the ancient hymn and invoking the Holy Spirit.

- He then gave the floor to Br. Robert Schieler, the Superior General, for words of encouragement. Br. Robert told the group that they were about to enter into a most solemn moment of a General Chapter, choosing the person most suitable to lead the Institute. “In our history, you have been given an honor and a privilege to be able to do this.” He asked everyone to pray for a union of mind and heart - one with the heart of Jesus - because then the Holy Spirit would be the author of our decision. After his short talk, there was a sustained, genuine, and heartfelt applause that lasted for several minutes. Still, no one had talked except for those on the dais.
- Following the clearly outlined procedure, there was now to be a first set of formal votes. An earlier straw vote had been taken at an earlier session, but this would be the first official one. The ballot included the top names from that straw vote, plus a blank area where any other name could be added. Each of the official 70 Capitulants - therefore not including the Consultors, etc. - was told to choose or write only a single name. This was done in a complete and prayerful silence. The Scrutineers, who had been given the task to distribute, collect, and count the votes, passed out the ballots, collected them, and took them to the room behind the Aula Magna.
- For the next 11 minutes, during the count, the hall was as silent as the morning meditation period in the sanctuary church; relaxed, thoughtful, at ease, even contemplative. No one moved or fidgeted.





It was like sitting inside of a 3-D photograph. When the Scrutineers came back, they walked down the center aisle and gave the results to Br. Antxon, the General Secretary. Br. Jorge, the Coordinator of the Chapter then announced the names and votes that the top four individuals had received. Three of them were Capitulants and one was a Brother who was not present at the Chapter.

- The period that followed was a time when these top candidates could make a statement or be asked questions. The translators were asked to remain, and everyone else who were no Capitulants were dismissed from the Aula Magna. These would wait outside the closed doors for further developments.
- At one point, the three candidates who were Capitulants left the hall, because now the other Capitulants would speak with one another without any of them in the room. Those waiting outside the Aula Magna experienced another a period of waiting, along with the three candidates.
- Eventually, the three Brothers who were candidates were summoned back into the hall, and the next official vote was held, each Capitulant indicating their single choice among the four candidates. Those of us who had remained outside the hall knew that a result had been reached when we heard loud applause coming in through the closed doors and open windows, followed a short while later by a second instance of loud, sustained applause. Subsequently, we were all invited back into the Aula Magna, and found a room filled with bright energy and joy. On the dais stood Br. Robert Schieler, and next to him was Br. Armin Luistro, the newly elected Superior General.





- (The following is based on information obtained after the election.) That second vote had produced a very substantial majority for Br. Armin. When the Scrutineers had finished their public counting of the ballots in front of the assembly, the Coordinator of the Chapter announced the official count, making it clear that Br. Armin had been the assembly's top and almost single choice. Right after the count had been announced, Br. Robert Schieler, who had been sitting at the center of the dais as the President of the Assembly by virtue of his position as Superior General, picked up the seal of the Institute and the Rule - three copies for each of the three official languages of the Institute - and walked to the front of the dais and down the center aisle to the row where Br. Armin sat. In turn, Br. Armin made his way down the row to the center aisle and stood there. Br. Robert Schieler said: "Br. Armin, do you accept the will of the body of the society to be the 28th Brother Superior General of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian schools." Br. Armin answered, "With humility, in obedience, in the presence of God, I accept the election." It was then that the second applause that we heard happened.
- Br. Armin was then escorted to the dais and the President's seat because at that point he became the Superior General. When those who had waited outside had returned and the room was full again, but now with a feeling of satisfied gladness, Br. Jorge invited everyone to come up to the dais and give him a gesture of support. This lasted quite a while and was not hurried. People was happy to await their turn, and Br. Armin was very gracious and sincere as he greeted each one. On the other side of the dais where he was standing near the front window, Br. Robert Schieler was similarly and spontaneously thanked by those going back to their seats, showing a sincere appreciation for his eight years of leadership.





- At the conclusion of the gestures of support, and at the instruction of Br. Louis Mjalli who oversees the liturgy and prayer committee for the Chapter, we left the hall in procession to the main sanctuary where we would pray in thanksgiving for our election results. The Brothers walked in two lines down the hallway and the grand stairway in front of the Superior General's office, through the glass hall, and into the sanctuary of St. John Baptist de La Salle. The house staff, all dressed very nicely, had waited for us in the main atrium as we descended the large stairs, and they followed us into the sanctuary.
- Earlier in the procession, the Brothers had begun to spontaneously sing the Taize chant, *Laudate, Omnes Gente*, in continuous repetition, and when they reached the church, Br. Rodolfo Meoli had figured out the musical key and accompanied the group on the large pipe organ. The tail of the procession consisted of the youngest Brother at the Chapter, Br. Luke Thatsaworn, followed by the two former Superior Generals, Br. Alvaro and Br. Robert, and finally the new Superior General, who carried a reliquary of the Founder. The group reached the sanctuary, and all of us knelt for some time in silent prayer, with Br. Armin doing so in front of the large reliquary of the Founder. A song of thanksgiving was then sung by everyone present.
- We were instructed to go out via a side door to the garden area just outside the church. Here, preparations had been made to plant a large fruit tree to commemorate new beginnings. It was lowered into place, filled in with dirt, and watered by various people, representing the Brothers, the Partners, CIAMEL, Young Lasallians, and so on. After the planting, different District, Regional, Casa Generalizia, and other groups wanted to have photos with the new Superior





General. This lasted quite a while and ended around at 11:30, when most Chapter members went for a coffee break and Br. Armin held a recorded video interview in the garden area.

- Thus endeth the election process of Br. Armin Luistro, FSC, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools for the next seven years.

There still was more work to do, and we reassembled in the Aula Magna at noon, where Br. Armin was asked to share some initial words with us. He came to the dais and delivered his impromptu, thoughtful, and heartfelt appreciation, especially for the unity of spirit expressed in gestures such as the sustained applause for Br. Robert Schieler. It had been a fraternal, warm, spontaneous message that did not need any words. Such gestures are what brings all of us together in this 342-year journey. He spoke about how Br. Alvaro had inspired him many years earlier, and said “If Brother Robert survived, maybe I can survive.” He spoke about coming from Asia where there are acute problems of poverty, injustice, tribal wars, abuse, etc.; things that make him ask “What can I contribute?” “What can we contribute?” He asked to hear our stories, to walk with him and his new team, so that we will truly understand what the challenges are.

Br. Armin also spoke about today’s gospel, which had been read during the morning prayer service. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (Jn. 15: 5) That was very comforting, because if there are challenges or things we can’t address, we can simply stay with Jesus. We don’t have to solve all of the worlds’ problems, we don’t need a perfect list of resolutions from this Chapter. What we can do is rest in the comfort of God, who says, I will make all things new; not you, as Cardinal Tagle had told us in his homily. During the past few days, he had begun thinking that





the new pathways may not be on solid ground. Perhaps the Lord is inviting us to go onto our little boat and go to where there are no roads, only the movement of waves, trusting that the wind of the Holy Spirit will lead us. The boat is safer near the shore, but boats are made to go out to where it is risky, where we go by the grace of God and the guidance of the Spirit. “Brothers and Partners, I don’t know where we will go, but if we trust the spirit, she will be there; she will be there to guide us.”

Everyone then left for lunch and returned at 3:00 pm to resume the consideration of the *Paths of Transformation* that the various groups had worked on and which were ready for presentation to the assembly. We looked at the results of the work from Group 6, Group 7, and Group 3.

Group 6, *Lasallian Vocations: Walking Together*, had reduced their previous six paths of transformation to four. These concerned the implementation of Circular 475; the development of new ways to accompany Lasallian and Brothers, especially young Brothers, on their vocational journey; the creation of an international campaign promoting Lasallian vocations, especially for the Brothers; and providing suitable formation for those involved in vocation ministry. All four of them were passed, with a single small amendment added to the last one.

Group 7 had the long title of *Leveraging the human and financial resources of our international Institute to ensure the sustainability of the Lasallian mission*. It included detailed proposals for an endowment fund in support of the care of retired Brothers, for the Solidarity Fund, and for the Mission Endowment Fund. They were the fruit of much care and work, and each component was carefully considered, amended when needed, and approved.

Group 3, *Renewed Structures for the Future*, provided five paths of transformation that addressed various aspects of the Institute’s present and possible





future governance and the Institute's organizational structure. Two of these were discussed at length during the time that remained available for this session. They were returned to the committee with the input that had been provided. The other three proposals will be considered at the next plenary session.

The session ended at 6:24 pm, and the Eucharistic Liturgy began at 6:45 pm. This was followed by a social and a special supper that had been prepared on the occasion of the election of the Superior General. The dinner was marked by a continuation of the sentiments of the day; real joy at the choice of Br. Armin as the new Superior General, and a deep appreciation for our common Lasallian vocation and shared mission of human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor.

**By Br. George Van Grieken, FSC,**  
*Chronicler day 18.*



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