Letter to the Young Brothers of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

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Dear Young Brothers,

Some Brothers who are members of the Young Brothers' Commission of the Institute have thought of me to address a few words to you in the context of the Lasallian Year of Catechesis. Without much prompting and with more heart than any other rationale, I would like to share with you some reflections on this request that I believe may be of special importance for our motivation.

The final document of the II IYBA gathered what had been discussed and expressed during those days in Rome. In the sharing, concerns, desires and hopes were reflected and concluded in the drafting of some dreams that allow us to glimpse our horizon as young Brothers. Among them, I like to reread how they proposed to us that at the end of this decade we should live our vocation with enthusiasm (cf. II IYBA, 2023, p. 18). They themselves, welcoming the message of the Superior General, recognized that it is not possible for them to "refound" the Institute, but that as young Brothers we must read "together and by association" the signs of the times in order to give a response characterized by "creative fidelity" to our Lasallian history.

The group of Lasallian anniversaries that have been grouped together this year — and which almost do not allow us to savor the singularity of each one of them — have a common denominator, that is, to focus attention on vocation. Mission and vocation correspond, in such a way that the Declaration (1967) reminds us that "[The Brothers] are catechists by vocation," that is to say, the mission and apostolate of the Brother consists in being a witness to the Kingdom of God, not only while teaching classes or explaining catechism lessons, but with his whole life, his community relationships and his consecration to God.

In the face of the demands and challenges of our time, we should be grateful that we are celebrating the tercentenary of the Bull of Approbation of the Institute together with the Year of Spirituality and the Year of Catechesis, because they help us to respond with "creative fidelity," that is, to allow ourselves to be conditioned by

fidelity to the present and fidelity to our Founder (cf. Declaration, 1967, p. 6). Today the Church, through the words that Pope Leo XIV addressed to the Lasallian family, urges us to "be springboards for exploring paths, developing instruments and adopting new languages, with which to continue to touch the hearts of our students" (May 15, 2025). This invitation cannot leave us indifferent, since, in spite of the contextual difficulties of the different regions in which we are located or the socio-cultural experiences with which we share our mission, we Brothers have always sought the necessary channels to deploy an integral education that is not limited exclusively to human formation, but which provides the tools for an encounter with God. In fact, it is not proper to our Lasallian history to dissociate catechesis from human education, since "to work, then, in educating free persons is already to dispose them to the faith" (Declaration, 1967, p. 41).

While it is true that "the Christian School facilitates the exercise and effectiveness of explicit catechesis" (Declaration, 1967, p. 44), the personal encounter with Christ that we Brothers live through our consecration and community prayer make us living witnesses of the Gospel in order to facilitate among young people the encounter with "the God who calls them by name" (Declaration, 1967, p. 40). Hence, reference is made not only to the explicit proclamation of the Word of God and evangelization, but also to the daily witness in our lives, as an authentic catechesis and realization of our vocation.

Thanks to our singular presence in the world, in the midst of the world but without being of the world (cf. Jn 15:19), we can offer a catechesis centered on life and oriented toward life (cf. Declaration, 1967, p. 40), which overcomes "increasingly widespread relational models based on superficiality, individualism and affective instability" (Leo XIV, May 15, 2025) and proposes a pedagogy of fraternity where human relationships are at the center of the maturation process, offering the opportunity to approach others — neighbors, neighbors or people of every condition and place — in order to prepare for the authentic encounter with the Other, God.

This model of catechesis, connatural to the essence of the Institute, is what differentiates our pedagogical and evangelizing proposal in today's society and Church. By directing our gaze, throughout this year, toward this constitutive dimension of our vocation, we not only give thanks for the past and reflect on the

present, but we also determine the horizon toward which we wish to lead ourselves. Prioritizing, therefore, our catechetical vocation should help us not to forget the dreams we have defined for ourselves as young Brothers: to revitalize our vocation and "return to the poor" (cf. II IYBA, 2023).

Throughout this Lasallian Year of Catechesis, we Brothers can respond with fidelity and audacity by supporting, accompanying, energizing and animating pastoral and evangelization processes by contributing the elements proper to our Lasallian tradition. Together and in association with our Partners we must offer the criteria and the stakes to continue leading children and young people toward an encounter with the Risen Christ. To be mediators and ambassadors of this event is part of the heritage bequeathed to us by our holy Founder and will allow us, with healthy pride, to be recognized there as Brothers - older brothers of our students - who make visible in their being the values of the Gospel.

"Oh, what joy will the Brother of the Christian Schools experience when he sees a large number of his pupils in possession of eternal happiness, to which they will be indebted to him, by the grace of Jesus Christ" (MTR 208,2,2).

Let us rejoice and be glad, Brothers, as we carry out our mission throughout this Year of Catechesis, knowing that "*we will shine* like stars for all eternity" (Dn 12:3).

A fraternal embrace.
Long live Jesus in our hearts! Forever!

— *Brother Álvaro López Falcón, FSC*

Questions for Reflection

The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools' Standing Committee of Young Brothers will host a virtual forum on Sept. 28, for the international community of young Brothers to discuss their vocation as catechists.

The committee has created the following reflection questions ahead of the Sept. 28, online dialogue.

1. Describe a significant experience relevant to your vocational process that is related to catechesis/religious education or pastoral activity.
2. Throughout the initial stage of the formation process (that is, until the profession of first vows):
    a. Did you have experiences related to catechesis/religious education, either in a school or parish setting?
    b. Do you believe that you were given the tools, resources and formation necessary to carry out the ministry of catechist/religious educator for the rest of your apostolate?
3. The "The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration" (1967) states that: "the exercise of the catechetical ministry in favor of young people will become for (the Brother) a permanent incentive to live his religious consecration more authentically" (p. 38, p.4). What relationship do you see between your catechetical/ religious education ministry and your consecration?