



**Roma 2012**

Rome, Sept. 29, 2012  
Bro. Paolo Barolo, s.g.

Dear Brothers,

The word “Brother” has been used many times in the Inter-congregational Program that ends today -- a meeting, many participants tell me, that became more and more interesting and full of content as the days passed and the talks came one after the other, with practical activities in the language groups, which added knowledge and deepened the friendships among the participants. It could not have been otherwise, from the time that everything was conceived, designed, created, planned out and followed with great care and affection. The program was planned down to the smallest details, so that everything would fit as perfectly as possible.

For all of these, the word that spontaneously comes from my lips is “Thanks!”

Before anything else, we give thanks to the Spirit of Jesus, our Brother, who has inspired the program. If we go back to the beginnings of the initiative, we would be surprised to see how sometimes, the Spirit blows she wills and how She wants to. Indeed, it all began with the difficulties presented by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, in endorsing and publishing a document that the Superiors General of the Congregations of Brothers had presented. The publication of this document had been seen as timely, as a gesture of recognition by the official Church, of the importance of the life of the Religious-Brother, and its dedication in service to the ecclesial community. An ecclesial reality that has not been recognized, or at least not valued by many pastors of the Church and thus, by the people of God. It was this resistance that has united us to our Superiors, and has given us the opportunity to think together and thus, the idea of this inter-congregational program was born.

While the idea came from a common concern of the Institutions of Brothers, it is nevertheless only due to the many people who have been excited about the project that it has been carried out and celebrated.

In thanking each of these people, however, we risk leaving out some names: to all of them, goes our sincere appreciation.

- To those who have guided the day-to-day animation and organization of the various activities.
- To those who have prepared and guided the reflections and the dialogue.
- To all the people who made possible, these days of living together and the development of the program: translators, personnel of the Casa per Ferie, and the Brothers of the De La Salle Community.

Both the many brothers and lay people who were involved have shown that innate ideal of service in our lives and have spared no effort in offering this for the good of all.

In the welcome address, Brother Juan Andres Martos, Superior General of the Brothers of the Holy Family, had expressed a wish and said: “Just as today we begin a program with members of Brothers’ Institutions, I would wish that the next one would be among sister Institutions.” Doubtless, a first step toward that inter-congregational brotherhood we all want has been taken in this encounter, and now we need to continue along that path.

We all know the Gospel story of the Transfiguration (cf. Mt 17) and we know how it was an important moment in the journey of the community of the Apostles: “*Jesus took Peter, James and John, and led them up a high mountain and was transfigured before them, so that his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light.*” This vision produced an irrepressible happiness in the Apostles; Peter expresses it in these words: “*Lord, it is good that we are here, if you want, we can set up three tents here: one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah.*” We also know how the rest of the Gospel story continues: “*... while coming down the mountain*”. The lives of the three apostles ran their course, but this powerful experience that gave them the strength to continue and overcome the moments of the passion and death of the Master gave them also the strength to announce the resurrection.

Brothers, you who have participated in this inter-congregational program the meeting: the task of going down to the plains and bringing the seed to the other brothers of your congregations and their communities and to speak of the great religious family of Religious – Brothers also awaits you. To do this, you have been working this last week to prepare materials that may help facilitate the task. The program is not over though; it has just begun because, as they say, the result of an encounter is not seen in its celebration or in its development, but in the effects it produces. Jesus himself teaches us this when he says: “**I have come to bring fire to the world, and how I wish it were already blazing!**” (Lk 12: 49). *That fire that the program has set in your hearts now has to be fire for the other brothers.*

*We know, too, what happens when you throw a stone into a pond: the ripples spread, spreading across the entire surface of the pond, this is the wish of all of us here: that the spirit of brotherhood of this program extend to our congregations of Brothers so that, together, we form a great family in the Church. Indeed, the word “Brother” leads directly to the concept of “family” and here we speak not only of each of our religious families, but of the great family of all those that we honor in carrying the name, Religious - Brothers.*

- A family whose members live the same religious consecration and the same ideal of brotherhood, even if there are different types because of particular charisms. A family of brothers called by Christ to show to all that brotherhood is feasible and that living together is not impossible, provided that they bring together the love of God and the service of others and where the ideal of their lives would always be that of “*being brothers in Christ.*” A family where real, free, quality, and authentic relationships can be lived, and where these relationships reflect the face of “God with us.”
- A family whose specific contribution to the whole ecclesial community is to show, up to its ultimate consequences, that spirit of unity which Jesus asked the Father for the apostles and disciples: “*Father, I pray not only for them but for all those who, through their words, will believe in me, that they may all be one, as you and I are one*” (Jn 17: 21). A spirit of unity that, in a particular way, shows to men and women of this world that the love of Jesus is able to create bonds so strong that they can beat the divisive tendencies of individualism and selfishness. In physics, they speak of centripetal and centrifugal forces. The community life of the religious – brother, lived in all its intensity, shows that Jesus' love is the force that

draws us all and unites us, just like the sun which draws and keeps the planets in our solar system, at the same time leaving them free to follow their orbits in space. These paths are, for each institution, the charism and spirituality marked by its founder.

We need to consider ourselves a family of sister institutions, and form such, and as a force undivided, to be in the service of the whole ecclesial community, actively involved in the latter's life and mission, develops within it, the tasks and services according to the richness and diversity of gifts of which each institution has been given by the Spirit. The apostle Paul tells us very graphically: "*And Jesus Himself made some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, in order to build up the body of Christ*" (Eph . 4, 11). Thus, though some institutions are involved in education, others in health, others in various works charity and still others work in many varied apostolates, ... yet, all give testimony to the presence of Jesus in the world and in the lives of men. *Lumen Gentium* tells us this, using the image of the tree: "... *This is the reason why, like a tree that spreads out splendidly and thrives in the Lord's field starting from a seed planted by God, they have developed various forms of communal and solitary life and a variety of families that increase the range of resources for the benefit of their members, and for the good of the entire Body of Christ. And it is these families that offer their members the benefits of a greater stability in the way of life, a teaching from experience on seeking perfection, a fraternal communion in the service of Christ and liberty strengthened by obedience, so that they can faithfully and assuredly live up to their profession and go forward with a joyful spirit on the path of charity*" (LG 43).

Who among the Religious - Brothers does not recognize himself in these family traits? Will that day arrive when all of us Brothers' congregations will find ourselves in that family of sister congregations? As I have said earlier, the program of this inter-congregational course, "***The Identity and Mission of the Religious - Brother in the Church and in the World Today***" represents a time of joint reflection and, moreover, is the beginning of a path towards mutual understanding and regard in esteem.

Lastly, two special remarks of gratitude are in order:

- First, for the visit of Msgr. Joseph Tobin, Secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life who, in presiding at the Eucharist on the 20th of this month, has expressed his personal interest and that of the the Congregation which he represents in the Institutions of Brothers, just as he has expressed, together with his appreciation, for this program
- Second, our gratitude to the *Claretianum* which, through its Rector, *Fr. Santiago M<sup>a</sup> González Silva, cmf*, has agreed to recognize this course, giving it academic recognition and validity, which honors us all. Thank you, Fr. Santiago and to the Superior General of the Claretians as well, Fr. José Abella, who wanted to preside over our closing Eucharist.

May Mary, Mother of the Family of Jesus, who gave her full obedience to God's plan of salvation Mother of God, bring us all together as one and may her example of prayer, of family trust and quiet service be the icon for all of us to rejoice in bearing the title of Religious - Brother.