From Foundation to Refoundation

By Brother Miguel Campos, F.S.C.

From the beginnings of the community of the De La Salle Christian Brothers until today, our Assemblies and General Chapters have been understood as the most important expression of “our association for the educational mission” entrusted to us.

The 44th General Chapter that took place in Rome from April to June 2007 was an unprecedented event in the history of those gatherings. This Chapter had been preceded by not only the usual global consultation of all the Brothers, but also of lay Lasallian educators from 80 countries. In the five years prior to the General Chapter, more than 1,000 Lasallian educators had met in local, national, and regional assemblies leading up to the first International Assembly, held in Rome in 2006 with broad representation from 50 countries. The 42 languages among the participants showed clearly the international dimension of the Lasallian world.

These assemblies point toward something “new” all over the Lasallian world. Something is changing. In the process, all Lasallians feel challenged to respond to the urgent new educational needs of our times, reinventing our identity and the purpose of our association for mission. Some structures of the past will be replaced by new structures in which our passionate commitment to education will generate new life.

From its beginning, the Lasallian “association for mission” has expressed its bonds of communion and its work in education as a dynamic process.

Canon J.B. Blain, one of the first biographers of St. John Baptist de La Salle, gives us insight into the Founder’s life by speaking of “crossroads” that emerged unexpectedly during the common journey of St. La Salle and his associates [see “Crossroads” sidebar, below]. During each new crossroad, something died and something was born. Their growing identity, personal and corporate, was embraced as a task and a gift as they responded to new situations and educational needs. In the process, they were challenged to remain attentive to an uncertain future.

Through these crossroads, St. La Salle and his companions experienced God calling them to open up to a wider horizon—the salvation of all, particularly those who were marginalized.

This foundational story is not simply one of nostalgic remembrance of the heroic steps of St. La Salle and his...