

TO BE BROTHER

Opening:

Our Lord Jesus prayed: “Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are. Consecrate them in the truth. Your Word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I send them into the world.” (The Prayer of Jesus, Jn. 17, Vs. 11, 12, 17 & 18)

Reading:

I would like to share with you Brothers the experience that I am living at these very moments. I am not speaking as yet of a message of my program but I want to let my heart speak a bit. My first sentiment, as I expressed this morning, is that the principal thing for me, before and now, is to be a Brother and that to be Superior General is an adjective that is surely important but temporal and subordinate to the first. Brother is the noun and it is what I want to go on being: a Brother that listens, that respects, that understands, that encourages, that commends the ministry and the needs of the Brothers to God. I want to be a Brother who animates in the discernment of the signs of the times , the creative responses, the fidelity to the Gospel values, who is open to the cries of the poor and the needs of the young.

To paraphrase the well-known expression of St. Augustine cited in *Lumen Gentium*, I believe that I can say: *“If I am frightened by what I am for you, I am consoled by what I am with you; for you I may be the superior, with you I am Brother. That first name speaks of duty, the second, of a grace; the first of a danger, the second of salvation.”* What is certain is that being Brothers is our secret, our strength, our greatest treasure. (*Brother Alvaro’s address to the Chapter*)

Pause:

Response: O how good it is, and how pleasant where Brothers dwell together in unity.
(Ps. 132, Vs. 1)

Reading:

Last November I received two birthday cards that touched me profoundly: the background of one card was a map of the world, and the message written across it was Happy Birthday, Brother. I appreciated this card because I have tried to be a universal brother, a brother to all . . . One of the most fascinating aspects of these years has been that of experiencing international brotherhood and sisterhood. To meet and to know so many wonderful people of diverse nationalities, races, cultures, languages political/economic situations, and religious has been a marvelous experience, one that has changed my life. Many Brothers that I knew very personally God has already called to their reward. Brothers that I first met as candidates, postulants, novices, and scholastics are now adults with many years of experience. Some of them are in this room today.

The second birthday card contained a personal note that said simply, Thanks for being brother to all of us. I haven’t always succeeded, I know that. But I have tried.
(Brother John Johnston, 6/7/2000)

Pause:

Response: Like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down the beard, the beard of Aaron, that ran down to the edge of his robe. (Ps. 132, Vs. 2)

Reading:

I am often asked, "How did you know what you wanted to do?" Well, it was not a question of what I wanted to DO. It was what I believed God had created me to BE. Somewhere deep in me there was a belief that I was Brother.

In the years which have ensued, I have never significantly wavered from that belief for long. Somehow to cease being Brother would be to lose myself - like losing an arm or a leg. I cannot be whole and be anything else.

My years as Brother have introduced me to an incredible group of men throughout the world. These men are a crosscut of humanity. Some are brilliant; some are hard workers. Some are saints; all are sinners. They are my Brothers. Through them I have met and grown to love our common Father, St. John de La Salle. From him I have learned that young people are God's greatest and most beautiful creation. From him I have learned that young people "most in Need" have first call on the charism we call "Brother." From him I have learned to give a second, and third, and fiftieth chance when a young person is making mistakes and to know that this grounded trust is never misplaced even when it fails. (Anon)

Pause:

Response: It is a dew like that of Hermon, which comes down from the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord has pronounced his blessing, life forever. (Ps. 132, Vs. 3 - 4)

Intercessions: *Leader:* We trust in God's concern for every person in creation,
All: increase our capacity to love others.
Leader: O God of mercy, you guide us to spiritual growth,
All: - strengthen your life within us.
Leader: You came to save all those in darkness,
All: - help us to save those within our reach.
Leader: Inspire us to find ever new ways of serving the poor,
- let our creativity become their salvation.

(Personal Intentions)

Our Father:

Closing Prayer:

God of all the living, we praise your name in our midst. You, O Lord, walk among us in that person who is most in need of your unconditional love. Bind us together with the grace of your redeeming love. Help us to be Brother to one another, but especially to those far away from salvation. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, our Brother.

Amen.

(Arranged by Brother Louis Welker)