

DE LA SALLE BROTHERS

INTERCOM

Lasallian Family Magazine

UNITED diversity



149
may
2017

Index

3	Presentation
9	Lending an Ear
11	Interview Br. Téfió Raoul Traore
20	Interview Br. Manuel Estrada Carpintero
27	Many Voices, One Call
29	The Lasallian Centre of Egypt
31	Interview Br. Carlos G. Gómez
23	THE LASALLIAN COMMITMENT IN THE HEART OF PALESTINE Br. Peter Bray Bethlehem University Palestine
5	MISSION DOWN UNDER Merv McCormack
15	Young Lasallians at the Heart of the Community
17	Interview Mariano Walenten
4	LA SALLE AKASSATO, OPENING UP PATHS OF HOPE Br. Paco Fallado, FSC
7	ONE CHARISM, TWO INSTITUTES, ONE MISSION Br. Patrick Bradley, FSC
13	A precious sharing - Being a Lasallian in Portugal



Intercom 149 - May 2017. De La Salle Brothers – Lasallian Family Magazine.

Editor: Br. Alexánder González FSC agonzalez@lasalle.org |

Editorial coordinator: Ilaria Iadeluca iadeluca@lasalle.org | Graphic design: Luigi Cerchi lcerchi@lasalle.org |

To send articles: comunicazione@lasalle.org | Brothers of the Christian Schools – Rome –

Communications and Technology Service | www.lasalle.org | Facebook: www.fb.com/lasalleorg -

Twitter: [@lasalleorg](https://twitter.com/lasalleorg) - Instagram: [lasalleorg](https://www.instagram.com/lasalleorg)

Presentation

Br. Rafa Matas, fsc

General Counselor
rmatas@lasalle.org

Pope Francis affirms that “there is a communion of life among all those who belong to Christ” (October 30, 2013), and he affirms moreover that the Holy Spirit “apparently creates disorder in the Church because the Spirit produces a diversity of charisms, of gifts, but under His action, all this is a great richness, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, which does not mean uniformity, but bringing everything into harmony. Moreover he insists,” in the Church, harmony is the work of the Holy Spirit” because “only He can arouse diversity, plurality, multiplicity and, at the same time, unity” (19.05.2013).

The expression “unity in diversity” may seem a contradiction to us, but within the context of our Institute and the whole Lasallian Family, we attempt to live it because we are committed to the “communion” that is the source and fruit of the mission we carry out and which extends to all who are committed to it (cf.R. 18)

It is clear that diversity is a reality. Our geographical presence in more than 79 countries involves different cultures, outlooks and sensibilities. This is also reflected in the way of living our charism within the Lasallian Family for more than 50 years. Many Christians, including other religions, who are in contact with the Lasallian charism, make their spiritual itinerary, testify to their faith and share the one educational commitment in communion.

We have a long tradition - a path travelled without having reached a definitive destination. We are still on our way in communion with the Church and with many other Charismatic Families.

There are many ways to express our “unity in diversity” - the following serve as an example without pretending to cover all:

- Historically and in many parts of the world we share formation with other religious institutions. Argentina, ARLEP ... were pioneers in this. Currently CELAF in Côte d'Ivoire is another good example today.

- Our formation programs, both locally and internationally, are an excellent meeting point between the different members of our Lasallian Family in which Brothers, Sisters, Lay Associates and Colleagues share, in diversity, educational itineraries that undoubtedly favor and generate unity and communion.
- The presence of Brothers and Lasallians who collaborate and actively participate in different institutions or organizations working for catholic schools and/or Consecrated Life at local, national and international levels.
- There is also collaboration in many of our educational works - at the moment hundreds of religious and priests are engaged in our works. Examples are the joint work with the Daughters of Charity in our two educational works in San Francisco at Sacred Heart Cathedral and De Marillac Academy; in Thailand with the Lasallian Sisters (La Salle College of Bangkok); the Guadalupana Sisters of La Salle (Casa Hogar de Saltillo in Mexico or in the Akassato school in Benin) as well as the different educational works of Signum Fidei in Peru



are in Turin with the Union of Catechists.

- Even at the level of our Residences for Senior Brothers we find this practice. For example, in the Residence of Laval in Canada in which, in addition to our Brothers, there are Religious of other congregations like the Brothers of Saint Gabriel or the Benedictine Fathers.
- The new Formation Guide, which is in the process of being developed based on Proposition 31 of the 45th GC, seems to proceed in the same direction: a unique Guide that contemplates our diversity and generates communion.

The Institute is also involved in two projects that express this "unity in diversity":

- **"Tutti Fratelli"** which since 2010 brings together more than 17 congregations - fundamentally of Brothers - to exchange experiences and promote common initiatives, formation, searching ... and who meet together systematically so as to continue walking as brothers.
- **"Charismatic Families"** which is being consolidated as a common space of encounter and impulse

between religious and laity belonging to the different families born of the new ideas of "*Caminar desde Cristo* No. 31) and which has its headquarters in our own Generalate.

It was after the 44th General Chapter that we made a qualitative change from "what we do together" to "who we are and what we build together". In addition, our last 45th General Chapter challenges us to continue walking and building "beyond the borders" conscious that "the communion that consecrated men and women are called to live goes beyond the religious family or the Institute itself. By opening themselves to communion with other Institutes and other forms of consecration, they can broaden communion, discover common evangelical roots, and together more clearly welcome the beauty of one's own identity in charismatic variety, as branches of the one vine. (*Caminar desde Cristo* no 30).

In this sense I share here some of our undertakings that are no longer utopias but prophetic realities that represent a way of living out what we express in our own Rule: "Regions and Districts draw up plans which enable all their works to be really committed to helping the poor and combating the

causes of poverty. These plans which include **cooperation between congregations**, develop the community dimension of educational works, and encourage the shared mission to open up more to the service of the poor" (R 29.1):

- **Solidarity with South Sudan (SSS)** is one of the first intense endeavours - an inter-congregational project in which more than 260 congregations are, in one way or another, involved. Among them, 23 live and work together in this devastated country in 5 mixed communities committed to forming teachers, health workers, pastoral workers and agricultural programs, training people enabling them to advance their own country. It was for our Institute a commitment from the 44th General Chapter and from there we are going ahead. Our three Brothers are there.
- **The Fratelli Project** in Lebanon, * opened another important door. The Marist Brothers and the Brothers of the Christian Schools are beginning a new community of shared life for a mission on the border with refugee children and young people from Syria and Iraq. At the moment the community is



composed of 3 Brothers and another is preparing to join immediately. We committed ourselves to this from the “beyond the borders” promoted by our 45th General Chapter.

- The **Community of Loja** in Granada (Spain) in which Brothers share mission and life in a new mixed community formed by 2 Sisters of the Congregation of the Purity of Mary, 2 La Salle Brothers and 2 Lay Lasallians and who live for the purpose of welcoming children and young people having high risk of social exclusion, the majority being immigrants.

Undoubtedly the commitment of our 45th General Chapter expressed by its Proposal 19 in response to emerging new needs will foster new opportunities that will allow us to live unity in diversity. Some new projects are already being developed in ARLEP in Cadiz and in RELAL in Brazil.

- This same issue of Intercom helps us to know but also to reflect how this diversity living in unity is a fact in our Lasallian reality.

Challenges? difficulties? No doubt there are. We do not forget that to live diversity leads us to have to cross “to the other shore” of ourselves and therefore, to overcome “storms”. The meditative reading of Mark 4: 35-41 reminds us of this. However, experience tells us that all kinds of storms are overcome when:

- There is dialogue, openness of mind and heart towards the other.
- We “waste” time on knowing ourselves, on sharing, on praying together ...
- We obtain a good formation so as to integrate the difference that enriches us.

- There is a previous personal work in the members of these communities of reconciliation with oneself, a certain maturity, a sufficient emotional stability and a healthy clarification of personal motivations ...
- We have our own charism internalized, identity consolidated and the willingness to share it humbly, without arrogance.

Living in unity from charismatic diversity helps us to live the Good News of Jesus more freely, enriching us, challenging us, making us more humble. We cannot face our future from a basis of dispersion. We need to be Church, to live together the adventure of the Spirit and the following of Christ, to learn to love the community and the religious family of

the other as our own. There is no doubt that joys and sufferings, worries and events can be shared and become those of everyone from intercongregational experience and, especially, the way of living communion within our own Lasallian Family.

United in diversity involves a challenge that enriches us and for which we need to continue placing all the Brothers together with the Associates and the entire Lasallian Family. If we follow this way we will find the enthusiasm, the internal resources and work methods to make it grow in its identity based on respect for diversity, but in communion with all and between all. From there our Family will enjoy a vitality that will attract new vocations.

REGIONS

PARC

PACIFIC-ASIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE

RELAF

RÉGION LASALLIENNE AFRIQUE-MADAGASCAR

RELEM

RÉGION LASALLIENNE EUROPE-MÉDITERRANÉE

RELAL

REGIÓN LATINOAMERICANA LASALLISTA

RELAN

LASALLIAN REGION OF NORTH AMERICA

La Salle Akassato, opening up paths of hope

Br. Paco Fallado, fsc

General Director De La Salle Akassato (Bénin)

pacojfs@lasalle.es

As the Spanish poet Antonio Machado would say, "As you start to walk, there is no path, the path is made as you go forward". La Salle Akassato, is an educational work which is walking forward step by step, day by day.

We are situated about 15 kilometres from Cotonú, the economic capital of Benín. Our village is in the province of Abomey-Calavi. It is a zone in full expansion, and the density of the population is rapidly increasing. The original inhabitants are currently becoming the minority in view of the numbers arriving in from the surrounding areas. Most people find employment in Cotonú, the capital, or in the town of Calavi. The result is that our neighbourhood is a "dormitory", with all that that implies.

Our *Colegio Católico de La Salle* opened its doors on October 1st, 2011, when fifty seven children, boys and girls, came to us as we began our work. From the beginning we have been ready to accept all who ask for a place without distinction. We provide a quality education that is accessible to all.

In succession, the primary section opened in October 2013, and the infants section in October 2014. We began using the new Lycee building in November 2016.

Currently, we have a total of 1,158 pupils, 589 boys 569 girls, of whom 458 benefit from school meals.

We are making good progress and the successes in the official exams are proof of the quality of our educational work: secondary exams 97% in June 2015 and 85% in June 2016; end of primary exams 95%, in June 2016. Our college has the highest numbers on roll in the area.

However, good academic results are not the only thing that attracts people to our college. Our Lasallian educational project, involving the whole educational community, creates a synergy that drives the educational work of each and every one. It means that the diversity which exists becomes a richness in our work, starting with the leadership team which comprises a Lasallian Guadalupana Sister as head of the infants section, a lay head of the primary section, a lay head of studies in the secondary section and a De La Salle Brother as Director General. Everybody forges Lasallian links so as to achieve a remarkable educational harmony. Similarly, our lay staff of 39 men and 28 women manifest a singular richness against the background of the African mentality which is reluctant to promote the value of women outside the family home. This all serves to

generate a feeling of trust among the families.

Our pupils include Catholics, Muslims and followers of the traditional religion. In a society which tends to radicalise attitudes, we are inclusive and live in harmony. We receive the children of labourers, artisans, teachers, doctors and officials, all side by side, and we persist in promoting respect for diversity. There are some cases among our pupils which deserve special mention as examples of educational inclusion. Two girls with Down's syndrome are given greater individual attention and are educationally included without any problem. Our educational action plan includes tutorial work for children with learning difficulties and efforts to promote inclusion in sporting activities.

We continue to progress and to move forward, maintaining our goal to be united in diversity, men and women of consensus, building a world that is more human for everybody. Our hopes are being fulfilled and we shall continue to work to ensure that the Lasallian star of "signum fidei" will continue to shine where diversity is a richness. Let us be builders of bridges for the pupils whom God has entrusted to us.

Mission Down Under

Merv McCormack

Executive Director of the Lasallian Mission Council – ANZPPNG
mervmccormack@delasalle.org.au

The District of Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea (ANZPPNG) is nothing if not rich in its complexity and diversity.

From the wide open spaces of deserts, beaches, rainforests, and snow-capped mountain ranges; from large city-located schools to tiny single-room schools set on sandy-shored islands; from freezing cold winters to blazing hot summers; from drought to flood; from schools comprising exclusively Christian and Catholic populations to schools which are predominantly Muslim in composition; from countries where English is the universal language to PNG with its more than 840 languages and dialects. And as diverse as we are, as dissimilar as we are, there is the unifying and dynamic reality of being Lasallians, people who act as big brothers and big sisters to each other.

Welcome to our world-here is a little bit about us.

The Brothers' 2012 District of ANZPPNG Chapter unanimously approved the creation of the Lasallian Mission Council (LMC) as the lead entity responsible for conducting and sustaining the District-wide Lasallian mission into the future. The development of the LMC was a recognition of the importance of Lasallian partners in assisting the Brother Visitor and his District Council in matters concerning the mission. LMC informally commenced operations in 2013, and was incorporated the

following year. Membership was mandated to include at least 50% lay partners, but lay involvement has comprised a higher proportion than that since inception.

The establishment of the LMC has been intended to strengthen the association between the Brothers and those engaged with them in their mission, ensuring that there is genuine co-responsibility in decision-making as we work towards the integration of the various Lasallian works. An ultimate goal has been to ensure the sustainability of the Lasallian mission so

that the needs of the young, especially the marginalised in our society, can continue to be met.

LMC, in common with all Lasallian works, entities and operations, takes as its inspiration a vision of education and welfare within the Lasallian tradition characterised especially by demonstrated fidelity to the story, philosophy and spirituality of St John Baptist de La Salle. To this end, LMC is charged with the



responsibility for assisting in the coordination of the delivery of mission in all parts of the District, and for providing formation and youth ministry services.

LMC has as its operational arm, the Lasallian Mission Services' (LMS) team. This small professional team comprises colleagues who oversee operations, communications, Formation, youth ministry, and assistance with Lasallian vocations. The talent, energy and commitment to Lasallian ideals of the LMS team has been a notable feature of the ANZPPNG District in recent years.

The ANZPPNG District comprises approximately forty-five works, including schools, two Teachers' Colleges, the *Lasallian Foundation Australia* (LFA), and *Yourtown* (formerly known as *Boystown*). The schools range from Institute-owned and operated ones, through to those which operate as part of a systemic Catholic network, through to a small number of schools which function somewhat independently within various Dioceses across the four countries. Currently,



both *Yourtown* and LFA operate as independent incorporated entities. In time, it is intended that both entities will come under the ownership of LMC.

Additionally, New Zealand, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea each have a Mission Action Committee (MAC), which is charged with the responsibility of providing leadership and direction for the Lasallian mission in their respective countries.

An Australian MAC will shortly be inaugurated. Examples of specific MAC duties include working with the LMS team in developing effective programs in youth ministry; strengthening the Lasallian networks around the country; and identifying and responding to local needs.

The ANZPPNG's District Formation Committee, in existence since 2014, was inaugurated with the goal of assisting the Lasallian Mission Council Board in exercising its leadership responsibilities with respect to formation, youth ministry and the promotion of the Lasallian vocation.

On February 27, 2017, the Formation Committee was officially renamed as the Gerard Rummery Institute in honour of the outstanding leadership of Br Gerard Rummery, the renowned Australian Lasallian Brother, leader, scholar and teacher.

The challenges throughout the breadth of ANZPPNG are considerable, but so are the dedicated Lasallians, Brothers and Partners, together and in association, who continue to enthusiastically answer the call, just as John Baptist de la Salle and his companions did all those years ago.

Feel free to check out the District of Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea at delasalle.org.au.

Live Jesus in our hearts!

COMMUNITIES AND BROTHERS

AROUND THE WORLD THERE ARE

657

BROTHERS' COMMUNITIES

LIVING IN THE COMMUNITIES THERE ARE

3829

BROTHERS

One Charism, Two Institutes, One Mission

Br. Patrick Bradley, fsc

pjcb Bradley@hotmail.com

Br. John Pongpat, fsc

pongpat.fsc@gmail.com

In a relationship which can be described as “Lasallian Siblings”, the Brothers of the District of Vietnam and the La Salle Sisters live out their shared charism together and by association.

In 1966, the La Salle Sisters were founded by Brother Le Van Tam with the expressed mission of caring for

young children who were abandoned and orphaned as a result of the civil war which was being waged at that time. The Sisters adopted the Rule and spirituality of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Today, the Sisters conduct several nursery schools and kindergartens. Their mother house is a short walk of less than five minutes

from the Brothers’ center at La San Mai Thon in Saigon.

Since 1975, no religious schools have existed in Vietnam. In 2005, taking advantage of recently- approved government policies, the Brothers opened Vinh Ky School in Yali in the highlands of the central part of



Vietnam. As required, this is a private, non-sectarian school. The Brothers' community is over 100 meters from the school. There are no religious symbols present in the school buildings or on the property. In the space in each classroom where a crucifix is usually hung, a large framed photograph of Ho Chi Minh is displayed. Grace before meals is replaced by folk songs. In lieu of formal religion classes there is a weekly class in human development which lasts 15 minutes.


The school has a current enrollment of 672 boys and girls in grades 1-5. Among the many poor students, there are 83 children who are members of the Ethnic Minority, very poor indigenous persons living in the area. 340 of the students live at the school from Monday to Friday. On three of those evenings they receive a 15-minute class in human development.

In 2016, Sister Vo Thien Cu, the Regional Superior for the Sisters in Vietnam, accepted the invitation of Brother Nguyen Van Phat, Visitor, to open a community of La Salle Sisters close to the school in Yali. Last September, three La Salle Sisters began teaching at Vinh Ky School. This has been a win-win situation for all concerned. The Brothers wanted the assistance of the Sisters in taking care of the very youngest children as well as providing the Sisters with an opportunity to practice their teaching skills. The Sisters, in turn, wanted to learn how to run a school as well as serve poor children in a school setting.

The Sisters are all classroom teachers. They help in teaching the human development classes in the school on Monday mornings as well as the evening classes for the boarders. On Sundays, they join the Brothers in teaching catechism classes in the local parish. Brother Le Vinh Nhut, the principal, is delighted with the presence of the Sisters. "They teach the

students with all their heart, and I never have to worry about the quality of the learning that is happening in their classes."

Although the students, parents, and faculty know they are religious, the titles "Brother" and "Sister" are never used. They are always addressed as *Thay* or *Co*, the common forms for addressing male and female teachers, respectively. There are six Brothers in the community. Four work at the school and two supervise a boarding house 100 meters away for 110 high school boys. The Brothers, La Salle



In a country overwhelmingly Buddhist, the mutual collaboration of these two Lasallian congregations as companions of Saint La Salle have been a prophetic witness of what association for mission is all about despite the many challenges they face.

Sisters, as well as the over 20 other staff members including three Sisters from other congregations gather together for lunch and dinner each day and participate in faculty retreat experiences.

Although the Sisters just began their ministry in Yali in September, the experience of collaboration between themselves and the Brothers is not a new development. Young Brother candidates begin to collaborate with the Sisters on the first day they arrive at the aspirancy community at Mai Thon. The Sisters are present at daily Mass and also assist in the care of the elderly Brothers in the Holy Family community. The Brother postulants teach catechism with the Sisters every Sunday afternoon. The Sisters and Brothers work together in planning and executing many religious programs for

the local parish which is situated at La San Mai Thon. The aspirants and postulants for the Brothers attend weekly classes with their counterparts in the La Salle Sisters. Along with well over 100 lay colleagues, the young Sisters attend classes with the scholastic Brothers in the theology center at Mai Thon.

Collaborating in Lasallian ministry is not limited to Viet Nam. There are La Salle Sisters in Bangkok who supervise the La Salle Nursery for approximately 60 children, aged 2 and 3-years-old. Across the street from the nursery is La Salle College where the Sisters are in charge of the kindergarten program for 900 children between the ages of 3 and 6. While the two Institutes maintain separate residences on the college compound, the Brothers and Sisters share in everything which is mission-related as well as quality time for prayer and meals.

In a country overwhelmingly Buddhist, the mutual collaboration of these two Lasallian congregations as companions of Saint La Salle have been a prophetic witness of what association for mission is all about despite the many challenges they face.

In San Jose, California the Sisters and Brothers minister together at La Salle Community Center. Programs offered include childcare, an after-school program, instruction in the Vietnamese language, and a summer program incorporating both learning and recreational activities. The special contribution that the Lasallians offer in San Jose is helping the children bridge the gap between their two cultures- Vietnamese and American.

These ministries give witness to the reality that the Lasallian charism is truly a gift to the Church and by their mutual respect and cooperation, the Sisters and the Brothers demonstrate that their mission is clearly a shared one ... together and by association.

Lending an Ear

Antoine Béland

International Coordinator for Young Lasallians – Canada
abeland@lasalle.org

Wonder is a feeling we always like to have because it touches us in the innermost part of our being. We can wonder at the most ordinary things, like a beautiful sunset or the first buds that open on the trees after a hard winter. We also wonder at more important things, like the success of our children or the goodness of our parents. In my own case, I have had the occasional opportunity to see the Lasallian charism at work in countries other than my own, and for me it is an endless source of wonder to see the small miracles it performs among the young people entrusted to us. I recently had occasion to travel in three African countries, and I was able to meet some of those young people, former students, who have absorbed the Lasallian charism and are spreading it all around them. These Young Lasallians are living the charism in a way that may at first sight appear different. But when you look more closely, you realise that the heart of their Lasallian life is identical with ours. Maybe we should lend our ears to listen to

the beating of that heart. Here are three stories of wonder, one from each of the countries I visited.

My first stop was in the community of Lasallian Volunteers of Cameroun, in Mbalmayo. These young people are living in community in a house adjacent to the school complex of Saint Mutien-Marie, for which they are collectively responsible. The volunteers come from the four quarters of the country and when they arrived, not all of them were familiar with the Lasallian charism. They are there because they

want to win the hearts of the children of the region, most of whom are very vulnerable. In the course of their commitment and through a community life rich in prayer, they gradually discover or rediscover what a Lasallian life is all about. They live, pray and work with a zeal that one is tempted to compare with that of the Founder and the first Brothers. After a year or more in the community, the volunteers leave the house, but several of them have continued to work in the Mutien-Marie Centre, while others



continue as members of the Association of Lasallian Volunteers in Cameroun and support it in any way they can in their local areas. In every one of them, it is wonderful to see the same simple approach to the call that took them to Mbalmayo, namely to provide children with an identity and a future. That is the goal of salvation that is shared by all Lasallian educators throughout the world.

When I was in Togo, my attention was caught by a group of enthusiastic and committed young people. The University of Lomé is not a Lasallian establishment, but it takes in a number of former students from our colleges around the country. Some of these were very much involved in the pastoral activities of their schools, and a few years ago they expressed the desire to continue living a style of life that embodied the Lasallian charism in an intentional way. As a result, the Young Lasallians group in Lomé University now welcomes all the former students who want to continue their personal development in the values of faith, fraternity and service. The group is also a real family for the young people who often have to move far from home in order to attend the university in the capital. The group has been in existence for several years, and they are now beginning to think about new challenges they can meet in order to make a more committed response to their Lasallian vocation. The dynamism of these young people is catching, and their presence gives hope the whole District.

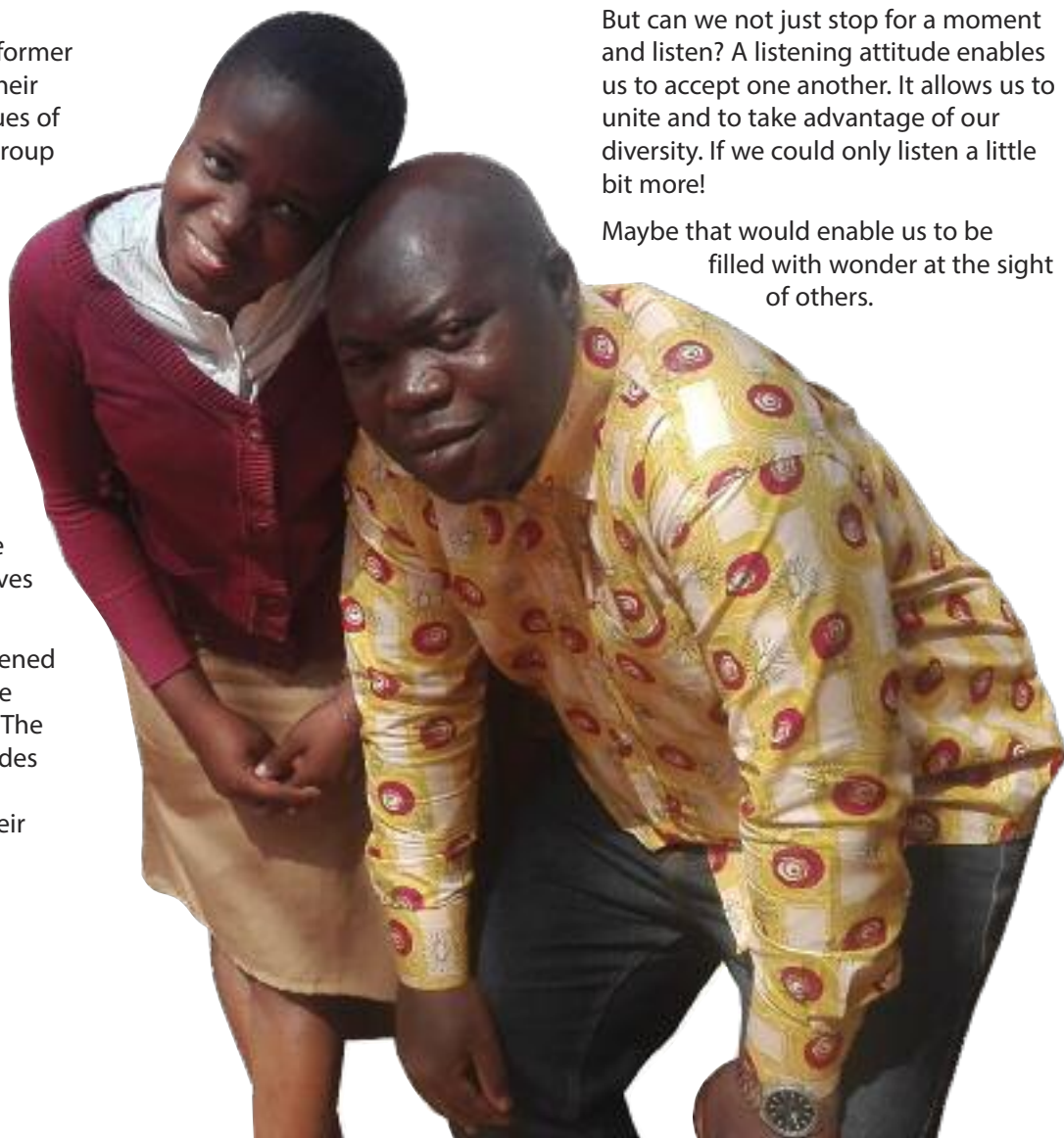
Finally in Burkina Faso, it so happened that I arrived at the time when the novices were out on placements. The novitiate in Bobo-Dioulasso includes candidates from the countries of French-speaking Africa, and in their second year the novices spend a

month in one of the Lasallian establishments in Burkina. As a result, I had the chance to meet and talk with a number of them while they were going through this important phase in their formation. I was particularly impressed by the importance that they attached to pastoral work with children. These novices understand the importance of providing a vocational accompaniment to the children entrusted to us, and they know that lay teachers and Brothers need to work together in order to carry out that mission. Several of them were given responsibility for a pastoral group during their period of placement. These future Brothers will be returning to their own countries and they will share with others the task of leading more and more young people to decide to follow in the footsteps of Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle and to become in turn bearers of the Lasallian charism.

There is an immense richness in the diversity of experiences among the adolescents and young adults of Africa who are living according to the Lasallian charism. An often stated desire of theirs is that of getting to know what is being done in other parts of the world so that they can draw inspiration from the projects of others who, like themselves, want to devote themselves to the educational service of disadvantaged children. They want to be united with others and to be really part of the big Lasallian Family. There is no doubt that the African continent is facing problems that others can scarcely imagine. A reasonable and reliable access to the means of communication which allow young people to share their experiences with one another presents a considerable problem, and it is one that, viewed from outside, seems hard to overcome.

But can we not just stop for a moment and listen? A listening attitude enables us to accept one another. It allows us to unite and to take advantage of our diversity. If we could only listen a little bit more!

Maybe that would enable us to be filled with wonder at the sight of others.



Br. Téfio Raoul Traore

raulfec@yahoo.fr



I am Brother Téfio Raoul TRAORE from Burkina Faso. I am the eighth in a family of nine children. Currently, I am studying for my International Masters degree in Business Administration (MBA), in the La Salle campus of the Ramon Llull University in Barcelona.

1. To whom is the activity you are involved in addressed specifically? Describe briefly the place where you work and the people with whom you work (the general context of your mission, establishment or project).

I live in the Community of Premia de Mar, where Saint Miguel Febres Cordero once lived. As a religious and a student, I take part in the life of the Community. During the first semester, I helped out in the Lasallian NGO of *PROYDE*. I was

involved in the group of Young Lasallians of the *College in Premia de Mar* and in the pastoral ministry in the Sector of Catalunya with Brother Javier Nuñez. I have cut down on my involvement in these activities so as to give more time to my work on the Masters thesis. I also teach catechism in the Parish of *Santa Maria in Premia de Mar*.

In the university, I am known as a Brother, and I try to carry the responsibility with dignity.

I find my presence in Barcelona enriching from several points of view.

– The witness of fidelity by the elderly Brothers who, in the evening of their lives, continue to look for ways in which to participate in and support the Lasallian educational mission as far as they can through prayer,

charitable activities and care for others.

- The experience of living with Associates, sharing prayers, meals, exchanges of ideas on Lasallian topics and on the life of the college, and seeing their generous dedication. It all gives me hope that the Lasallian venture still has good days ahead of it.
- The dynamic pastoral ministry in the Sector of Catalunya and in the leadership of the college in Premia de Mar. I am always impressed by the enthusiasm of the teachers in the college.
- The Sector leadership favours the inclusion of lay Lasallians in decision-making processes, in initiatives which foster autonomy and in efforts of solidarity with refugees, immigrants and fragile Districts.



2. In practical rather than theoretical terms, what does the Lasallian charism mean to you in your actual situation?

The Lasallian charism consists in rescuing young people from the clutches of ignorance. It means opening their minds to the vastness of science, the arts and technology, and at the same time guiding them towards transcendence and an appreciation of the invisible. The Lasallian charism is also the catalyst for qualitative transformation in our society, and this is especially clear in developing countries.

3. Describe in five words what De La Salle means in the place where you are

Vision-Experience- Accompanying-Service-Transformation.

4. What things do you bring to the Lasallian charism?

My religious consecration lived with joy in the midst of a secular society; the seriousness with which I do my studies; my dedication to the mission of my District; my whole person with all my qualities and limitations; my contribution to discussions on various topics; the witness of my life as a Brother, loving and forgiving and ready to see and listen rather than to speak.

5. In the context of your current mission, what ideas are suggested to you by the commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the death of our Founder?

I am very proud to be a disciple of Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, a saint who is an enlightened leader. He knew how to read the needs of society and to find an answer which continues to inspire thousands of men and women in their ministry three hundred years later. The commemoration is a due homage to our holy Founder and a call to each one of us to make him contemporary to the men and women of our age. He was an innovator, so why should only talk of him in the past tense?

6. What message would you like to give to Lasallians throughout the world?

My message to the Lasallian family is one of joy in the commitment to a better world, shown in our daily tasks in our various establishments for people with various expectations. Like Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle,



we Lasallians should be innovative in our responses to the needs of society.

With particular reference to RELAF, where innovation is extremely necessary, I am inclined to say the following.

Let us learn to initiate, not to oppose.

Let us learn to propose, not to criticise.

Let us learn to appreciate, not to moralise.

Let us learn to generate, not to

waste.

Let us learn to plan, not to improvise.

Let us learn to serve, not to dominate.

Let us learn to analyse, not to pontificate.

Let us learn to include, not to reject.

Let us learn to build, not to destroy.

Let us learn to cooperate, not to compete.

Let us risk making others happy.

Let us risk being happy.



A precious sharing - Being a Lasallian in Portugal

Paula Fernandes Lopes

Colegio La Salle in Barcelos, Portugal

paulacflopes@gmail.com

I am Paula, 34 years old and single. I am an Associate, and I work as the person in charge of Pastoral Ministry and a teacher of Biology and Geology in the *Colegio La Salle* de Barcelos in northern Portugal, in the District of ARLEP.

It is my belonging to a community that enables me to live as a Christian and to be at the service of children and young people, especially the poorest.

The story of my link with De La Salle began when I was a ten year old pupil, and it has developed over time as a story of growth in faith and encounter with Jesus by way of the Lasallian charism.

The many experiences that I have had, as a student, as a member of Christian

groups and as a teacher, have been privileged occasions that helped me to discover my vocation as an educator, which has meaning only when it is lived as a community experience.

The path by which God led me through Christian groups has made me grow in the discovery of the value and importance that others hold in my life of faith and to see clearly that I am called to live in community. My experiences as a teacher and my increasing involvement with students through organising pastoral activities, helped me come gradually closer to the Community of the Brothers in the college. It has always been an open and welcoming space where we can feel at home. This has made for a

sharing of life, not just a sharing of the mission.

My participation in international meetings (assemblies, youth gatherings, JMJ and CEL), has opened up for me the reality of the Institute, which goes far beyond the walls of my college and my situation. It has helped me to feel part of something much larger and to be in communion with so many people whom I regard as my 'brothers and sisters' even though I have never met them.

My decision to ask to become an Associate in the Lasallian charism dates from 2012, and my ties to the Community of Brothers engendered a natural response to God's invitation to





become a Lasallian educator. Having made the act of Association, I was open to the grace of living in a Community in which the Brothers care for one another and which is open to the children and young people entrusted to us.

The great feeling of communion that comes with the community experience leads far beyond relationships, languages and frontiers, and it springs from the sharing of the same feeling of faith and the same awareness of being children of God, called by Him to a life

of service in education, tracing new lines of action capable of transforming the world and bringing about the Kingdom of God.

There are two Lasallian establishments in Portugal, a college in Barcelos and a hostel for boys in Braga. The pastoral ministry is very dynamic, and it involves many children, adolescents and adults. It is inspired by three Lasallian Communities, one comprising Brothers only, another for Associates and a mixed Community comprising four Brothers and myself.

We all share the life of Lasallians in Portugal, with a simple dynamism that produces a lot of vitality. We share personal projects, make retreats together, celebrate each individual's significant occasions in life such as birthdays. We are a Community of people of different ages and states of life, but in our diversity we live out the same call and the same vocation. Together, we are called to care for children and young people, helping them to get to know Jesus and to be touched by Him.

Young Lasallians at the Heart of the Community

Félix Jacques

Animator Centre Notre-Dame de la Rouge, Canada

felix@camplarouge.qc.ca

The Lasallian community was always part of my life, even before I knew it. My parents used to organise pastoral weekends with a group of university friends, and those among them who had children started to hire places for

them in the Lasallian camps to give them happy memories and to teach them Christian values. However, it was only some years later, when my sister and I started going to *Notre-Dame de la Rouge* at the age of 8, that my parents

met up again with Brother Michel Jacques who had helped them during their preparation for marriage. We grew up in the camps, becoming junior leaders and eventually permanent members. We experienced marvellous summers surrounded by people who were enthusiastic and devoted. So when I reached the age of 22, it was my turn to give something back to the community that had seen me grow up and had shaped me over the years. For a few years, I took part in the organisation *Bouffée d'air* [Breath of Air], which operated for the benefit of the disadvantaged children of Lachute and Rosemont in Montreal. The group aims to give children from difficult backgrounds the chance to get away for a breath of fresh air, away from their daily problems. Obviously, I was not the only one involved in this activity. Several young people from the camps, group leaders or others, were very keen to help these children and joined the team of volunteers working for four weekends a year. In that way, young people like myself who received so much from the Lasallian community were able to give something back to those who were in greatest need. During my summers as a group leader in the camps, I developed the qualities which enabled me to gain the position of Permanent Leader. I used to think I



knew the Lasallian world of Quebec, but I was far from realising the breadth of that community which is still very much alive. Even though the Brothers are quietly ageing, the Young Lasallians are responding by taking a greater place in the life of the community. I learned about the existence of the *Villa des Jeunes* and the *Lasallian Centre Saint-Michel*, which are right in the heart of the big cities of Quebec and Montreal. In these centres, children of all ages come to find strength, to grow and to enjoy themselves. I was fortunate enough to be able to take part in a joint project for the youngest children mounted by these two centres. We set up the Council for Lasallian Youth of French-speaking Canada and we organised the pilot project *L'envolée des Jeunes* [the Rise of the Young] to provide free activities to all who wanted to come to us. This will also provide opportunities for young people looking for meaningful volunteer experiences and a real sense of achievement in their activity. Contrary to what some people choose to think, Lasallian life and even



Christian life are very much alive and resilient. We have the enthusiasm and the rashness which will allow us to

continue the dream and the lifelong mission of all those dedicated Brothers who have gone before us.



Mariano walenten

dirgralsanmartin@lasalle.org.ar



I am currently engaged as Director General of the Obra Educativa de La Salle in San Martín, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. As such, I try to ensure the unity of four levels of education in the one complex, working in conjunction with the heads of each of the different levels.

Who are the specific recipients of the work you are doing? Describe briefly the place where you work and the people with whom you work.

My work is basically with the senior management, the teaching staff and the administrative staff of the establishment (totalling around 250). I am also concerned with the parents of the 2,000 students who attend our school.

The school includes nursery level (ages 3-5), primary level (ages 6-11), secondary level general and technical (ages 12-17) and upper high school and adult levels (16 years and upwards).



The school is located in what is basically an industrial neighbourhood with small and medium enterprises, and it was once considered to be the major industrial zone in the region. The families who choose our school make great financial efforts to invest in the education of their children.

Describe how you see your situation and activities, without going into a lot of theory. What does the Lasallian charism mean to you?

In my experience, the Lasallian charism Lasallano has two fundamental aspects, namely association and mission. To us it is clear that our mission is concerned with the educational service of the poor (although carried out in contexts of greater or less social vulnerability). In addition, I have learned that community is indispensable for that mission. Knowing that we are associated with others in the same mission enables us to carry it out. There

is no mission without community.

In five words, express the meaning of De La Salle in the place where you are.

Association, fraternity, educational service of the poor, incarnation, networking.

What contributions do you make to the Lasallian charism?

I think it is more a question of what the Lasallian charism brings to me, so I find it difficult to answer this question. But if I am pushed I would say that my contribution is related to the preceding questions. It involves a commitment to the mission, but it is above all a matter of the will to find a deeper association and to create and develop space for community and fraternity.

In the mission you are involved in, what ideas are suggested to you by the 300th anniversary of the death of our Founder?

The first idea that occurs to me is that we should make a gospel response that is faithful to the context in which each Lasallian community finds itself. That is the principal thing for me, and after it come the other ideas of permanence, belonging, reading our story in faith etc.

What message would you like to give to Lasallians throughout the world?

The same message as the General Chapter asked us to focus on for this year, namely that we should continue to search for the God who is calling us to cooperate in His work, and who does so through a multiplicity of voices in which the Lasallian charism is being incarnated in this world, the voices of the poor, of children and young people, of immigrants, of the unemployed. It is my great desire that we will be able to continue responding faithfully to these calls.



**Tercentenary commemoration of the death of
Saint John Baptist de La Salle,
Founder of the Institute
of the Brothers of the Christian Schools
(1719-2019)**



Pope Francis once said, “we are pilgrims from death to fullness of life...” Saint John Baptist de La Salle, Patron Saint of Teachers, entered that fullness of life in 1719. During 2019 the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools will celebrate this 300th anniversary as the Year of Lasallian Vocations. The De La Salle Tercentenary logo is a circle that represents the fullness of life.

Within the circle is the numeral 300 in an ascending appearance to symbolize the continuing vitality of the Institute and celebration of St. La Salle’s entry to the fullness of life.

The circle has openings rather than a closed curve. Each number in the 300 has openings rather than three separate numerals. The openings indicate how the Lasallian Mission is open to going beyond its own borders. They are like portals where Lasallians can easily break barriers in their own vocational journeys and be one with those living on the peripheries.

The theme text is placed around the circle to clearly define the tercentenary celebration. While death may have separated Lasallians from their Founder, the wrap text around the circle signifies how Lasallians worldwide continue to show much heart, commitment, and life that unites them all even more profoundly in the Lasallian Mission.

Blue is chosen to follow the Institute color.

We want to extend our appreciation to Antonio del Rosario and Jaker Leno of the Philippine Sector of the LEAD District for their assistance in creating our tercentenary logo.

#300LaSalle

Interview

Br. Manuel Estrada Carpintero, fsc

Member of the District of Central America-Panama, Nicaragua

manuelfsc@gmail.com

I am Brother Manuel Estrada Carpintero. I was born in Spain in 1939, in a very humble family with few material resources. I have been a missionary in Central America for 60 years. Currently, I am in Nicaragua, where I have taken citizenship. I have always been a member of the District of Central America-Panama.

I graduated with a masters in sociology and anthropology in France and did theological studies in the University of Comillas, in Spain. Before that, I studied mathematics and physics in Nicaragua. For 58

years I was devoted to teaching in secondary education. At the present, I am in active retirement.

I was a Director in schools and Communities for many years, university professor in various institutes of higher education, and up to this year District Assessor for Former Students and for the Signum Fidei Fraternity.

I was Auxiliary Visitor in Nicaragua during the first years of the Sandinista Popular Revolution, then a missionary for three years in Haiti as part of the 100-plus Mission and Coordinator of rural educational projects in Guatemala and Nicaragua.

For the past three years I have been the Administrator of GAFNI (Management of

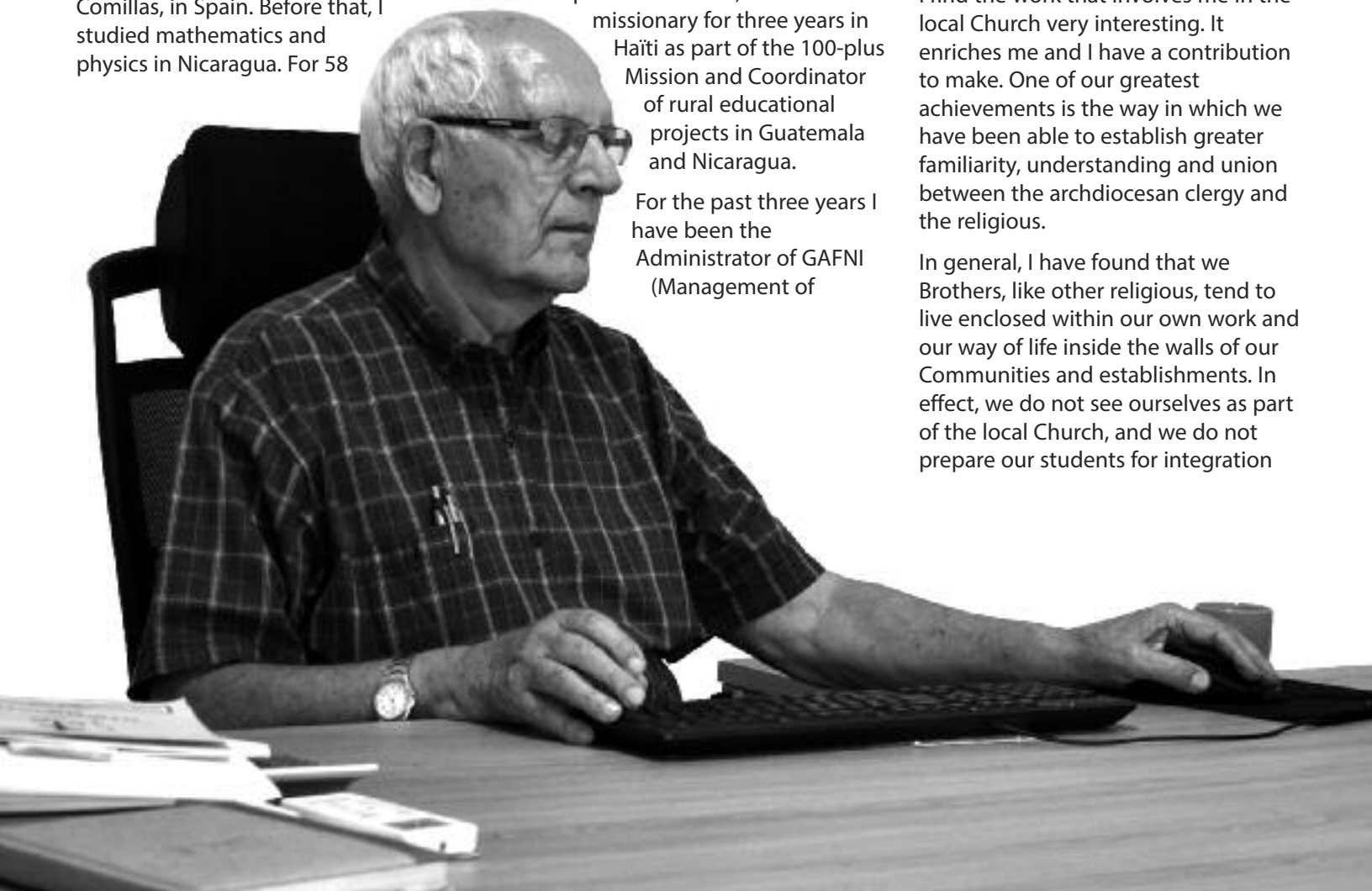
Financial Administration in Nicaragua), the body which oversees the management of money, resources and properties of the District. That means I have to deal with financial bodies, lawyers and state authorities.

In addition, I am committed to working in the local Church as Coordinator for Religious Life in the archdiocese. I am in touch with the religious of the 65 Congregations in the Archdiocese of Managua.

This work is part of the archdiocesan Pastoral Vicariate, which includes 23 groups of pastoral activity. I am in touch with all of them, one way or another.

I find the work that involves me in the local Church very interesting. It enriches me and I have a contribution to make. One of our greatest achievements is the way in which we have been able to establish greater familiarity, understanding and union between the archdiocesan clergy and the religious.

In general, I have found that we Brothers, like other religious, tend to live enclosed within our own work and our way of life inside the walls of our Communities and establishments. In effect, we do not see ourselves as part of the local Church, and we do not prepare our students for integration



into their parishes or the archdiocese. I have tried to encourage people to “step outside” and feel they are “Church”.

Our archdiocese includes the three Departments of Managua, Carazo y Masaya. It is led by Cardinal Archbishop Leopoldo Brenes assisted by an Auxiliary Bishop. It is very clerical in its organisation, and we play our part in making it more open to the laity and to a recognition of their role according to Vatican II and the wishes of Pope Francis. The Church needs to include those who are not clerics (lay people and religious Brothers and Sisters).

What does the Lasallian charism mean to you?

I define it as “The educational service of the poor, motivated by the spirit of faith as defined by Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle and directed towards the local community in which we live as Brothers”.

The backbone is formed by the three Lasallian values of faith, fraternity and service to the poor.

Choose 5 words to describe what De La Salle means in the place where you live



In Nicaragua, De La Salle means a hundred years of prestige for quality in education and technical training at secondary and higher levels, supported significantly by service to all who ask us for it (poor, middle class or well off) and openness to the local Church.

What elements do you bring to the Lasallian charism?

During my activity as a missionary, I think my contribution to the Lasallian charism has been my union with and support for the local Church. I have done that in every place where I happened to work, in Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua. I have maintained close relations with bishops, priests and lay groups, offering my services with the support of my Community and the District.

In your present mission, what ideas are suggested to you by the commemoration of the 300 anniversary of the death of the Founder?

I would like to see some important initiatives being carried out to make our Founder better known, but not just in general terms by repeating the same old “commonplaces”.

We need something new in two directions.

1. Jean-Baptist de La Salle as pedagogue and Patron of Teachers. Present this to the Ministry of Education, to teacher training establishments and to teachers. We could organise a joint plan with the Ministry of Education for a National Congress on Education with the participation of Brothers, teachers, education authorities, former students, parents and students of the upper secondary classes. People would be selected from the different groups according to the contribution they could make.

Analyse what Lasallian education can offer to Nicaragua today, in the light of the innovations made by Saint Jean-Baptist de La Salle in his

day. Recall the fact that the first teacher training establishment in Nicaragua was founded in 1913 as the Pedagogical Institute for Men and was a Lasallian foundation.

2. Emphasise the figure of the Founder as the **liberator of the poor**. For this, it would be good to present him as someone who “from wealthy origins, discovered the world of the poor” and moved towards them to offer them his knowledge and his life. The poor of Nicaragua are looking for a liberator, and one might rise from the ranks of Lasallians. For this, two things would be necessary.
 - a) On the intellectual level, we could organise literary contests among our students and teachers, with formal discussions in our schools. It would be useful to compare Saint Jean-Baptist de La Salle with Blessed Mgr Romero.
 - b) On the level of actions, it would be the right time to realise another “pioneer work for the most vulnerable”. If that cannot be done, at least I do think that in preparation for the celebration it would be possible in the District to promote smaller initiatives for the very poor in all our establishments, among students, teachers and parents.

What message would you like to give to Lasallians around the world?

Let us make the most of this tercentenary celebration in order to come closer to the gentle figure of our Founder in those ways that most concern us, namely spirituality, pedagogy and commitment to the poor.

Without being vain, let us revitalise in our spiritual life and our daily activities our feeling of pride at being Lasallians. Let us make it our life’s motto that “Today, we are De La Salle”.



The Lasallian Commitment in the Heart of Palestine

Bethlehem University empowers young people to live life to the full

Interview to Br. Peter Bray, fsc

pbray@bethlehem.edu

By Br. Daniel Felipe Niño, fsc

hdafenilo@gmail.com

After Pope Paul VI visited the Holy Land in 1964, he saw how important it was to find ways to support the Palestinians. Thus, three projects emerged. The first two projects were Tantur, a world center for studies in ecumenism, and Ephpheta, a medical center for children born with hearing and speaking disabilities. The third one, however, took a lot longer to formulate and was initially very vague.

It was only in 1973, under the guidance of Archbishop Pio Laghi, the Apostolic Delegate at the time, that the final project came into being: a University. Before then, anyone wanting a university education had to go outside Palestine. In general, only the wealthy families could afford to send their children abroad to study. Afterwards, many of them decided to stay in the countries where they studied. Therefore, a university, a good one, would give the Palestinians the opportunity to get access to professional education in their own land and stop the emigration of highly skilled or well-educated individuals. It would be the base for the establishment of a society able to face



the difficulties of the Israeli occupation, not with weapons but with knowledge.

Under the leadership of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, Bethlehem University opened in October 1973 to receive its first 112 students. Today, 43 years later, it is the only Catholic University in Palestine, providing, for some 3200 students, quality higher education, "Founded on truth, built on justice, animated by love".

During the last 8 years, it has shown tremendous growth led by the present Vice Chancellor Br. Peter Bray. He holds a doctorate in leadership from the University of San Diego. His extensive experience over more than thirty years of administration in Lasallian institutions and his passion in the field of leadership, in which he has taught in Universities and other educational institutions in many countries, have been some of the main pillars for his



commitment to Bethlehem University. Born in New Zealand, Br. Peter has a special attachment for the essential mission this co-educational institution has on the need of building peace in the middle of an unfinished conflict.

In Bethlehem, the “Signum Fidei” star is still shedding its light over the many voices that have responded to God’s call to procure his glory by ensuring dignity to the poor through education. It is here where Br. Peter has given his time to share with the Lasallian Family some of his deepest reflections. It is the Brother’s hope to enlighten our mission and encourage us to engage tirelessly with De La Salle’s legacy.

Br. Peter, without a doubt, Bethlehem University has been fostering the new life of the Gospel locally and throughout the whole country. What are the main signs of this new life in the midst of a Christian minority population?

The Christians in the Holy Land consider themselves as an integral part of the Palestinian people and do not reflect on their role as a minority. There are Muslims who also see them as a central part of the Palestinian scene. These Muslims reflect on the decrease in the number of Christians as diminishing the very character of what it is to be a Palestinian. There are, however, considerable pressures on the Christian community that militate against the growth of that community. The economic pressure across Palestine is being felt by Palestinians because of the occupation. This has led some to leave Palestine in search of a better life. However, there are still many who have no intention of migrating. Those students coming to Bethlehem University are challenged to commit themselves to fostering a quality of life that respects individuals, promotes dialogue and engenders hope. It is in these three areas that Bethlehem University is contributing to the enrichment of the lives of the people and seeking to bring new life, not only to the Christians, but, in line with Jesus’ mission, to enable all students to live life to the full.



Regarding Jesus' mission, which is also ours, Br. Robert Schieler reminds us that the Rule recognizes the ministerial co-responsibility of Brothers, Partners, and other "many voices"; responding to the "one call" to procure the glory of God. In the context Bethlehem University is set in, this co-responsibility is also shared with non-Christians. It means that more voices are joining our common call. In what way does this particular reality of Bethlehem University enrich and give a wider perspective to our mission?

At the heart of the call for Bethlehem University to serve the Palestinian people through education is a deep respect for each individual who is encountered at Bethlehem University. This respect is evident as faculty and staff seek to be brothers and sisters to one another and older brothers and sisters to the young people entrusted to them and it is here that the common call becomes evident. What we are trying to do is create an environment, develop an atmosphere and provide an opportunity for our students to gain

the knowledge, acquire the skills, and develop the virtues that will enable them to live life to the full, despite the occupation and restrictions that go along with being in Palestine. It is important to keep in mind St. Irenaeus' comment that "The glory of God is human beings fully alive." Thus, the procurement of God's glory is essentially tied into helping people live life to the full. In what Bethlehem University is doing it is seeking, in the words of St. Francis, to "preach the Good News at all times, and, if necessary, use words." It is in the nature and quality of the relationships, the way faculty organize, advise and link with students that Bethlehem University is helping to create that environment which is going to procure God's glory. It is in responding to the common call to live life as fully as possible that all employees at Bethlehem University are enriching the lives of individuals and empowering them and thus serving the Palestinian people through the education that is offered. This is not just a task for the Christians, but for all who are

participating in the mission of Bethlehem University. This Lasallian emphasis is not just for Christians. It is an expectation of all at Bethlehem University as the common call goes out to enable and empower young people to live life to the full.

Who are then the new voices, the protagonists of the Lasallian Family in Bethlehem University?

There are an increasing number of people who are taking up the call to live out the vision of De La Salle. The faculty and staff who have been on the Lasallian Leadership Program in Rome is increasing in number and they are finding support in the group. These people have the capacity to make a difference by following through on the enrichment they received during that program. In addition, the students who have become ambassadors of Bethlehem University are more and more inclined to speak publicly about their lives in a way that reflects the influence of the Lasallian spirit on the way they approach things. These faculty, staff and students are in reality

becoming brothers and sisters to one another and again in building those relationships they are promoting the Lasallian Family. This becomes evident in the resilience that students show in supporting one another in dealing with the challenges they face. As one said, "there are restrictions everywhere as a result of the occupation, but they are not inside me, they are out there and we are dealing with them and not just sitting around blaming occupation for everything that we can't do. I am a twenty year old girl and I want to do what I want to do, and I am going to live my life!" Such voices give evidence of the empowering experience that Bethlehem University is providing to enable people to live life to the full.

Your experience really shows that the institutional work of Bethlehem University is helping to revitalize the Lasallian mission. How do you think this experience could help our schools and universities to provide an answer to the new challenges of the increasingly intolerant, tight and

conservative perspective of western countries that face the integration of a bigger population from different cultures and religions?

In revitalizing the Lasallian mission, Bethlehem University is embedded in the mission of the Church which is here in the Holy Land to live the Good News. Doing this runs contrary to the often natural inclinations of people. In a situation where Christians are a small portion of the population and there are uncertainties for them around their future and the possibilities of extreme elements having an influence, there is an inclination to circle the wagons, to put up walls and separate into safe places with like-minded people. The Church's mission and that of Bethlehem University, is to do the opposite. The Church and Bethlehem University want to pull down walls, to open the windows, to reach out in faith to those people who are likewise frightened. People need to be wise and careful, but they need not be driven by fear. The challenge is to link with

people who are feeling the same anxiety as themselves and so gain strength and strategies for dealing with the real issues they face. This means taking risks, reaching out in a spirit of love so that they can show there are alternative ways to relate than the closed, frightened, intolerant stance which closes people off from one another. The Lasallian mission to build life-giving relationships is providing people at Bethlehem University with the opportunity to see beyond the immediate danger, to see the reality of people's lives and to work with people who are different and as a result come to accept people irrespective of their background or beliefs. This, however, requires courage. The opportunities available at Bethlehem University for students to come to know one another across their differences means they can grow to trust one another and gain courage from the common purpose at the heart of Bethlehem University's mission.



Many Voices, One Call

Br. Daniel Berlay Montes de Oca Lindoro, fsc

fscberlay@gmail.com

No, I have not made a mistake in the wording of the above quote. So, my Brothers, why did I write it that way? The answer is very simple; just carry on reading.

The fact was that on November 5th, 2014, I found myself with two suitcases, a one-way ticket, a work permit, a heart full of hope and encouragement and a mind turned upside down, with the single, very nervous key idea that "life begins at the end of your comfort zone".

I was accompanied by Brother Martin Rocha (Visitor of the District of Antillas-Mexico Sur), and after a brief stopover in Miami we arrived in Montreal. My aim was to work with the Brothers of French-speaking Canada in setting up the Saint-Michel Lasallian Centre and to help in the animation of Community life in the District.

I was welcomed by the Brother Director of my new Community (Brother Yvan Lavigne), who was waiting for me with a big smile and a warm overcoat to protect me from the low temperatures which were already afflicting that beautiful country.

From that time on, my experience of "mission" was changed by great opportunities for learning, during which I shared pleasant and edifying moments of dialogue with Brothers who have devoted themselves "body and soul" to "saving the souls" of the children entrusted to them. It was also a great opportunity for me to learn how to share the Lasallian charism and entrust it to a great number of associates who are passionately dedicated to continuing that great mission.

These associates of ours are examples of a firm determination and a will to take on the challenge of "touching hearts", accompanying the rising generations in their search for the truths and convictions which will empower them to work for their own good and that of their neighbours and their environment.

However, my greatest learning experience was and will remain my acquaintance with all those who had come to Montreal from other places, other cultures and other contexts. They have my greatest admiration and respect. They are brave and decisive in their reaction to adversities, but ready to accept what it means to "start again", convinced that they are here to struggle and to be ready, day in day out, to turn their goals into realities.

Above all, they have unshakeable faith in themselves but also the humility to ask for and to accept help. They opened up the horizon of my vocation and sense of belonging to the Institute and made me broaden my criteria, my dreams and my aspirations.

Our good God, as I like to call Him, came to me every day of my stay in Montreal. He came in the varied colours of the different populations, Muslim, Jewish, West Indian, "québécois" and the rest. All of these showed that our pathway to God requires much more than good will.

It is hard to conclude a report like this without some words of thanks.





- My thanks to Jesus, the missionary and the neighbour of all, who accompanied me in the times of fullness and joy and also in the times when darkness, loneliness, confusion and melancholy invaded my heart.
- My thanks to my Brothers, the members of my family and my friends, who in their love always had time for me, even without knowing it.
- My thanks to all those who make up the Lasallian family in Quebec and the surrounding area. I can never tire of thanking them for how unbelievably well they made me feel at home. Thanks for their trust, their corrections and their hearts full of life and hope.
- My thanks to my Brothers in the Institute. Through their creativity and enthusiasm, they make shared mission a space of fraternal encounter and dialogue and of tireless search for the Absolute.

After almost three years of this incomparable experience, I land back in Mexico with a changed outlook, convinced that “God attracts but does

not force”. Above all, I am confident that our Institute and mission have been, are and will continue to be “of great necessity”.

Many voices, many different ways of

thinking, speaking and discerning. That is something marvellous and it carries one single message: **I am the Way and the Truth and the Light (Jn 14, 6).**

Live Jesus in our hearts! For ever!



The Lasallian Centre of Egypt

Br. Jean-Claude Abou-Atmé, fsc

Leader of the Lasallian Centre of Cairo
source_etoile@hotmail.com

We begin this presentation on the Lasallian Centre of Egypt by saying that the participants are divided into two groups, one in Cairo and one in Alexandria.

The programmes we offer are for mixed groups of teachers, from different cultural backgrounds and with varied experience according to age and religious faiths.

In the course of an entire school year, we try to get them to discover their mission, in themselves and in their surroundings.

We count on the dynamics of the group to ensure depth in reflection and in faith.

Every meeting follows the same method of work

- We take for our departure point some real experience in people's situation.
- We raise questions about their experience and about ways to improve things.
- We reflect on the demands made on us by the children, the mission and the Lasallian community.
- There is always a regular time for

meditation in common at the start of each meeting to prepare us to go deeper into things and develop an attitude of silent listening.

- At the end of each meeting, we draw up personal charts to reflect what we have learned during the session.
- This approach enables us to discover our individual capacities, and it strengthens our personal convictions.

Organisation: 17 meetings of 2 hours each

Programme:

- 1** The following question serves as a starting point: Why am I a teacher, and what reasons made me become a teacher?
- 2** We make a comparison of what influenced and promoted our personal development as pupils in school with what influences us today as teachers.
- 3** We base all our reflections on the thought of Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle regarding pedagogy and spirituality (taking into account that the group includes teachers who are non-Christian). We are always concerned to ensure that our

educational practices are in line with Lasallian principles.

4 We pay attention to the individual personalities of the children and try to learn about their lives and their personal, family and educational difficulties, in order to support them in their growth and avoid any misunderstanding or prejudgements between us and them.

5 Our action is also aimed at the child in need. We arrange visits to handicapped children through the *Centre de Vie* (Alexandria – Saint Marc) and the section *Vie meilleure* (Cairo – De la Salle).

6 Profile outlines: teachers are given observation sheets to help them study the individual case of a child of their choosing. They observe them for a fortnight and share their remarks and conclusions about the child with other participants in subsequent meetings.

7 Our point of reference is the historic period of Saint Jean Baptiste de La Salle. In the course of his own life, he discovered in faith his mission to educate children.

8 In our own mission, we draw inspiration from the Lasallian heritage which is based on association (Brothers

with Brothers, Brothers with Lay Lasallians, Lay Lasallians with Lay Lasallians). This is what guarantees our continuing in the same spirit.

9 Our mission today calls us to identify the contemporary needs of children and young people and to find responses to their needs. That is what characterises us.

10 At the end of the programme, we draw up a joint roadmap based on what we have learned in the different sessions.

The programme of the Centre is the fruit of the work of various leadership teams since its foundation twenty years ago.

The Specific Nature of our Lasallian Centre

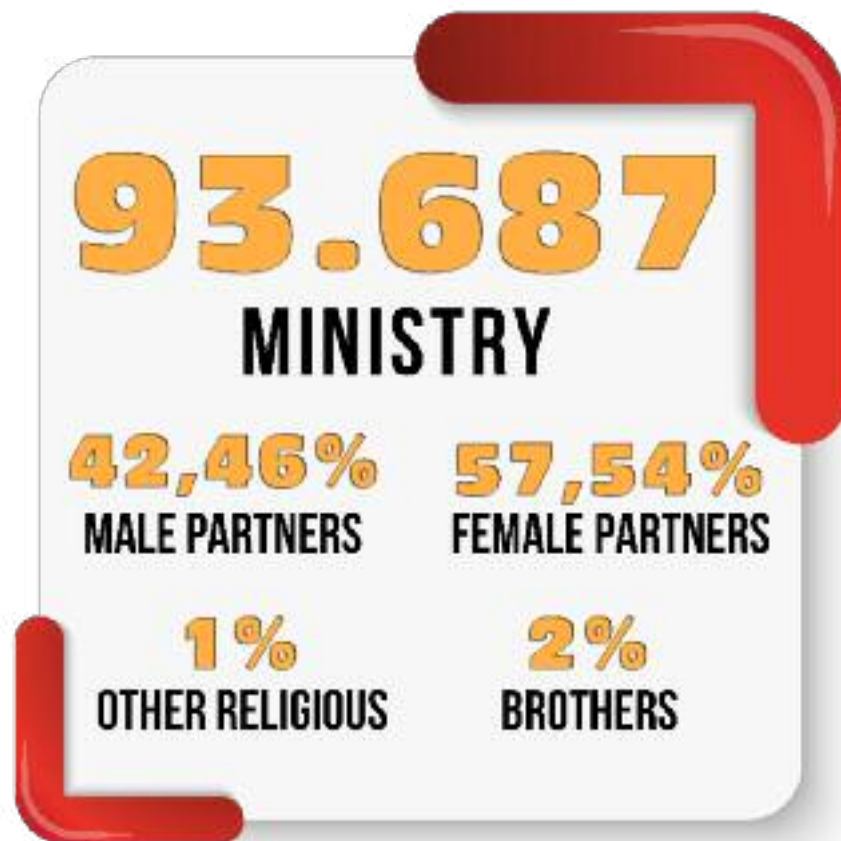
The Centre was founded to meet the

challenge of training Muslim and Christian teachers together in the thinking of Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle. At first sight, this may not appear possible, but experience has shown that it can be done, if everyone makes the effort and is convinced about it, in spite of all that is happening today. There are still Muslims and Christians who are committed to peace and fraternity and who can continue to meet and discuss, overcoming prejudices and superficial clichés so as to get to know one another. When they are united around a common set of values, Lasallian values, Christian and Muslim teachers learn a lot from one another. They can accept their differences and discuss questions about education according to the mind of Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle. This gives them common ground for meeting and a chance to have dialogue while respecting one another's faith.

The meetings play an important role in gaining knowledge about others, and the mixing of religious cultures makes for a richer sharing. The thoughts of Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle facilitate meeting and exchange between teacher who would otherwise work side by side without knowing one another. Meeting around a shared value helps people to live together in our Lasallian establishments.

Finally, I want to express the desire that we will continue to make efforts along this pathway to overcome our differences so as to work better as a team, basing ourselves and our schools on Lasallian thinking.

To conclude I shall cite an African proverb "Alone, one travels quickly. Together, we travel further". This all gives witness to the calm atmosphere of living together in tolerance which predominates in our Lasallian schools.



Interview

Br. Carlos G. Gómez, fsc

Visitor of the District of Bogotá

carlos.gomez@lasalle.edu.co



I made the novitiate in 1980 and Perpetual Profession in 1985.

Licenciate in Religious Education, Masters in Political Science, Doctorate in Education; professor in various educational institutions of the State and of the Congregation; rural teacher and university professor; these last years I was President of the Universidad de La Salle in Bogota. From November 2016 I have been appointed Visitor of the District of Bogotá.

The Institute is no longer the same as it was in the time of the Founder and the first Brothers, and neither is the educational mission. Say in your own words, and please speak freely, what you consider to be the original charism of our Institute.

De La Salle and the first Brothers made creative commitments to the education of the poor, the evangelisation of children and young people and their inclusion in a society that was rigidly

stratified and exclusive and in a Church that was profoundly clericalised. They discovered the transforming power of the Christian school and how educational innovation can transform the lives of families and of society. So the original charism lay in their continuous educational creativity to enable the poor children to find opportunities in their situation, communities of meaning, experiences of God, the construction of personal dreams and social orders directed towards justice, equality and fraternity.

The Founder and the first Brothers listened to the voices – the needs – of their time and acted on them. Various challenges exist in the situations and locations where we are present today, and creative responses are being made by Brothers and lay Lasallians. How can we safeguard the charism and at the same time make room for a response to the new kinds of call made within the special vitality of our charism, without allowing it to become diluted in the course of its history?

We will take care of the charism so long as we understand the original inspiration and give it new meaning. Education is continually changing, as is the school. Consequently there is always a need to reinvent, recreate and start anew. Being faithful to the Lasallian charism and tradition implies a rereading in today's context of our spirituality and our aim to help the

men and women of today to find meaning in their lives, opportunities to play their part in history and to encounter the saving mystery of Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis tells us that “The Church does not grow by proselytism. It grows by attraction”. In the case of the Institute, in spite of the decrease in the number of Brothers, this growth is manifested in new forms for living the charism. This leads to other questions. Are we attractive? Is that important? What is our greatest power of attraction?

I believe that there are in the Lasallian world innovative educational experiments which are attractive and which are clear responses to needs in the various situations in which the Institute is present. This does not always happen in our way of life when it is understood in terms of the Brother's vocation. We can become attractive when we manage to be infected with fraternity, committed to the poor, innovative and creative, able to take risks, ready to put ourselves in God's hands and to let the risen Christ shine through us. I think administration is eating us up and we have lost direct contact with the pastoral and educational ministry to young people. Where we can combine creativity, risk-taking and meaningful alternative lifestyles, we become meaningful and sufficiently attractive. The Institute will remake and refound itself, when it takes risks, accepts challenges and believes with conviction that it is indeed “God's work”. In these new settings also, the Brothers find reasons to believe and reasons to hope. On the other hand, I like to give a nuance to the expression so often used among us that “this Institute is of very great necessity”; as the Founder said. I think that the feeling that we are necessary can make us relax and nod off. We are not necessary, but we can become immensely significant. Strength can sprout from our weakness, and the conviction that this is “God's work” can

lead us to open the doors of our communities, our schools, our houses, so that young people can find meaning in their lives, goals to strive for, means for moving forward, and the presence of the good Lord who satisfies, heals, pardons and inspires. As for us, we can revitalise our commitments and find new reasons for living and striving.

In his Encyclical “The Joy of the Gospel”, the Pope Francis invites us not to allow doubts and fears to suffocate our boldness. What doubts and fears, indeed what dangers, do you think are present in our Lasallian situation today? What bold steps will help us to overcome our fears?

A school is in danger of developing sclerosis, repeating itself, ceasing to generate dialogue between our spirituality and our educational role through new methods of pedagogy and developments in the theory of education and cognitive sciences. On the other hand, we need boldness to respond with creativity and daring as we formulate and implement projects to meet new kinds of poverty in the situations of those who are excluded from society and from the means of knowledge and are thus marginalised by the economic systems. In spite of all that, our creativity should enable us to proclaim the Gospel in the realms of knowledge and the elements in our world which build walls, undo individuals and destroy nature. Our excessive endogamy is suffocating creativity, our inward focus on ourselves is impoverishing our projects. Endogamy produces genetic defects, focus on self brings self-indulgence. Boldness may lead us to failures, but it is far better to make mistakes when trying than to die of boredom. In taking risks we can increase our faith, and hope can flourish in boldness. It is a matter of choosing between innovating or disappearing, creating or perishing.

In these times of new kinds of nationalism and new kinds of individualism, how should we understand the expression “united in diversity” in the context of our charism? What aspects of it keep us united in diversity? How can we integrate the special identity of the lay Lasallian with the special identity of the Brother so as to continue our work of construction together?

Not only do we see new nationalisms and individualisms, there are also new kinds of fundamentalism and relativism. The way forward is precisely an open approach, which invites rather than imposes, dialogues rather than indoctrinates, includes rather than discards. It is the pathway towards respect for diversity without abandoning one's convictions. Tolerance is something very necessary today, and it requires individuals who are ready to invite, welcome and able to find what unites rather than what divides. Unity is never uniform or dogmatic, but is open to dialogue and constructive.

On the other hand, the identity of the Brother does not become diluted or relativised through collaboration with people who choose a different way of being Christians in today's society. The Brother is a witness to Jesus Christ in his fraternity, in being dedicated “entirely” to the cause of education for the poor, and in the stability resulting from his willingness to be available “morning noon and night”. He will always be a light and a beacon by living out the basic values freely and joyfully so that his incarnated faith, his shared fraternity and his passionate commitment will open up paths to new worlds and new situations. Our “common house” that Pope Francis talks about is the place of encounter, the only ground possible, the one space for diversified reality, which makes it possible to construct unity in diversity.

We are more than

1,107,861

Lasallians

#SomosLaSalle | #WeAreLaSalle | #NousSommesLaSalle





La Salle



/lasalleorg



lasalleorg



@lasalleorg

www.lasalle.org

