

DE LA SALLE BROTHERS

# INTERCOM

Lasallian  
Family  
Magazine

A CHURCH  
ON THE

MOVE

A WORK IN PROGRESS

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## PRESENTATION

I am pleased to present INTERCOM 150. Since 1979, this magazine has been a means to share good news from around the Lasallian world.

Through the stories and pictures you are invited to appreciate how Lasallians continue to creatively enrich our tradition of bringing the Gospel to the world of education. You will see the richness of our diversity and the active commitment of Brothers, Partners, present and former students, and the entire Lasallian Family to make the world a better place for everyone.

"A Church on the Move", the title of this edition of Intercom, invites all of us to go beyond our borders to build bridges of mutual understanding. The articles that follow tell the story of what Lasallians are already doing in this regard.

Lasallians are full of hope and joyfully collaborate in favor of the common good. We hope that many young men will be inspired to become Brothers and that other women and men will join us in announcing the Good News through the ministry of human and Christian education.

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# OUR MISSION, A COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

## Borja Doval Fernández-Cormenzana

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The story of humanity is the story of a journey, a story of going forth to seek something better. That is what St John Baptist de La Salle did when he left behind what he had supposed was due to be his life, in order to dedicate himself to others, to the poor, especially poor children.

At the present time, including in the pages of Intercom, we are called upon to remember that fact and to set out on the road. As Church and as the De La Salle Institute, we are called to leave behind our comfort and our security so as to discover the opportunities and responsibilities that will be awaiting us on the way in

the shape of other people and their needs and their rights.

We are living in a time of revolution which is also redevelopment. We must follow the example of our Founder and allow ourselves to be called by those most in need, the children who need to see their rights being met, giving them the opportunity for education, helping them become adults, developing the best tools to support them in their growth. We have the responsibility of constructing a cohesive society for the children of today and of tomorrow, to support those who are impoverished and excluded. If we do not do this, what kind of example are we

giving them? What kind of society are we preparing them for? We must labour for a just society which will care for them and protect them, and which will be for them a school of fraternity.

We are told that we are experiencing times of change, but that has always been the case. Nothing remains the same for ever, even though we might like to believe that it does. Like times past, our own times are times of bewildering and exciting change, change that can lead us to a better world or to a world that is more fragmented and selfish. It is our responsibility to follow the right path, the path that leads us to others. Let us learn to be courageous enough to find new ways for responding to our mission of education.

In some places, our children become educated by looking at screens, but they are also educated by playing with sand. Our world is very diverse, and currently in some of our establishments they learn through computers and in others through chalk and blackboard, while in others all they can do is dream about the notebooks and pencils which they do not have. Some children have their right to education guaranteed securely, in other places it is only a dream. While some are free to cross frontiers and experience life as a game, others experience violence in their homes. And while some work at their studies, others can only dream of doing so. All of these different kinds of children must be the object of our mission.

Our educational mission is enormous. We may express it in two simple words, but it is much more than that. It means

responsibility for children of all ages, responsibility for education and responsibility for the gospel which calls us to a revolution of love as love for our neighbour.

Our mission is so great that it cannot be restricted to the establishment where we are working, within the walls of a school, the entrance to a hostel or a machine in a workshop. It is not confined to a single title.

Our Educational Mission is big enough to embrace different places, languages, colours, ages, instruments and projects in various countries and cultures. We must recognise that we have the ability to work in this diversity of contexts. Our Educational Mission is only understood when viewed in its entirety and its diversity.

One of the forms that our mission takes can be seen in our socio-educational works such as **Elkarbanatuz**, which is where I work.

Elkarbanatuz is a Social and Educational work of the Lasallian network in the District of Arlep.

Our aim is to build a more just society through social transformation and socio-educational support for people in vulnerable situations.

Our team includes both professionals and volunteers, plus associates and collaborators without whom nothing would be possible.

We cater for more than 1,200 individuals every year in the different programmes and services that we have developed. More than 500 of these are included in programmes of direct social care, more than 600 are in the programmes of awareness-raising and more than 150 in programmes of international collaboration

Our work has developed in four areas.



The Area of Training for occupational work aims to give employment training to people who are in situations of vulnerability through dynamic programmes that help them to become real protagonists in their own development, promoting their personal autonomy and also their social participation. We have three such programmes: a pre-employment training centre, an employment mediation service and a centre for social incorporation.

In the Area of Residential Intervention, we work to get them to arrive at social inclusion in a holistic intervention for individuals through personal and social educational projects. We develop the means for social inclusion and promote equality of opportunity, and we cover their basic needs of accommodation and living. We have six socio-educational hostels for young people and those in the process of attaining social inclusion.

In the Area of Childhood, Family and Primary Care, we develop specially designed programmes for those in need relating to childhood and families in responsible society and citizenship. We run four such programmes and services: a centre for integrated socio-educational care for the child and family that is complementary to the school, a socio-administrative reception and support service, a programme of financial aid and a programme of sensitisation to promote the values of justice, solidarity and international collaboration.

Finally, we have an Area of Economic Support and Administration with the task of working on a management style for the mission which is ethical and responsible and which will generate a management form that is focussed on individuals.





When we raise our eyes and let reality have an impact on us, and when we leave our little world and realise that a much bigger one exists out there, we then discover that our responsibilities and opportunities are much greater. We discover children who need us, people who are living in poverty, families living in the street; we discover children who have no schools to go to because they are fleeing from war or poverty. If we raise our eyes, we meet young people who have left home in search of a decent life, young people who are alone, with no training and in search of employment.

If we raise our eyes and try to see, we discover that in the world of today education takes on many forms, and that the education of children can take place in the school and in the home, and the training of young people can take place in agricultural centres, teacher-training centres, employment

training centres and universities.

If we raise our eyes, we will see that the strength of our Community lies in our

diversity, knowing that we are distinct but complementary to one another so that we form a model school of fraternity.

We are all called to follow the example of St John Baptist De La Salle, letting one step lead to another, setting out on the road, leaving in order to find an encounter with the neighbour who needs us most. Our mistake would be to remain in peace and quiet, not going out to that encounter but remaining in safety instead of reaching out to ensure the safety of someone else.

We possess the richness and the experience of community, which involves the sharing of life and being co-responsible. This experience should lead us to understand that we must work together with others in network and in networks. We must accept the responsibility of participating in society in a meaningful way, participating in local and international organisations and institutions in which the world of education, solidarity and the fight against poverty and exclusion are key features.

Going forth means setting our sights on others, showing we are ready and prepared to take up the challenge that there are people who need us.

**La Salle Worldwide**  
@lasalleorg

**#WeAreLaSalle**

To be a De La Salle Brother is an option

Support young people who express the wish to explore this magnificent vocation.

**#WeAreLaSalle**

# LASALLIAN MISSION: #100GIGANTES

*Creators of peace where life is calling*

## Br. Carlos Alberto Pinto Corredor, FSC

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The Lasallian Holy Week Mission is one of the experiences that has for many years been part of the process of formation in the District of Bogotá. This experience in apostolic service is currently being enriched by the national situation which is moving towards the construction of peace.

The national scene challenges us Lasallians of Colombia to develop new actions for evangelisation in areas of the most evident poverty and need. We have opted for the country areas, because we see there the need for a message of hope that declares that a different reality is possible. The rural areas of Colombia have suffered from violence and the consequences of war. Nevertheless, we are convinced that in spite of the daily difficulties there are people out there who still show signs of simple optimism and solidarity, motivated by a faith that meets the demands of a

life of labour in the cultivation of the earth.

### The Mission of the #100Gigantes

In joy and hope, we have started on a work of motivation in schools and through social networks, since we know that that is the world in which our young people move with ease and where the message of Jesus requires innovation and creativity. It all started with an explicit invitation to serve in Gigante, a small village in the south of Colombia where the Lasallian presence has existed for only five years in a

Normal School (for teacher training).

United in this spirit, the Lasallian Mission is the instrument which the Good Lord has made use of to bring together one hundred passionate Lasallians, including young men preparing to be Brothers, students, teachers, former students and Brothers, from more than eighteen educational establishments throughout the country. We call them the "Gigantes" [giants]. The principal idea was to get them to free themselves from the daily routine and to leave their comfort zones so as to reach out to thirty-five country districts and more than six parishes. This became our "Tent of Meeting" (Exodus 33:7-9), with the hope of doing as much good as possible through a radical option for Jesus and sharing in the Lasallian mission in order to become "messengers of peace".

### One Call and many Voices.

In our Church in Latin America, we are going through a process of conversion





which calls for disciples who are missionaries, capable of SEEING the true situation and JUDGING it according to gospel principles so that our thoughts and feelings can become ACTIONS for the benefit of others.

It was moving to see how as missionaries we would walk for hours to get from one house to the next. In the mountains, many children came together to listen to us and the message we were bringing them. It was a community effort alongside country people engaged in the cultivation of coffee, community leaders and local priests. Some of our Brothers and other religious ran a session in a diocesan school for sixty new parish leaders. Since this was for some of them their first experience, a training session in mission was organised in the local community so that the most experienced could return next year to the same places.

Enthusiasm welled up in our experienced leaders at being welcomed into the families in rural areas, since they were sharing their daily life and meeting other people from the area in schools, community halls, open air gatherings or in their houses in order to discern and share, in union with Jesus, the story of the Passion and Resurrection.

Without doubt, proclaiming Christ requires a heart full of passion and a programme of formation that makes us become fascinated by the person of Jesus, imprinting in our hearts the sense of discipleship and inspiring us to be Christian leaders in the style of De La Salle. There are many possible forms of expression for the generous self-dedication made by our young people and our teachers who take on this District pastoral activity. The call of God results in acts of dedication which are particular forms of responses to life situations that are crying out.

For that reason, our #100Gigantes receive an induction into the cultural and religious contexts before being sent out to their mission. Similarly, special emphasis is placed on the liturgy of Holy Week and on the five strands that all Lasallian leaders must incorporate into their lives of proclamation and service generously offered and having Jesus as the centre of the action undertaken for others.

#### Jesus in our eyes

In this first strand, we invite the missionaries to do nothing except in view of God, because anyone who has opened their eyes to the call of the Father has decided to see things only with the eyes of faith, to cease being

self-centred and to realise that “it is necessary to open one’s eyes so as to be able to understand in a compassionate way the life of ordinary people” and to see them in the way Jesus would.

#### Jesus in our hearts

Secondly, it disturbs us to see that Jesus is increasingly absent from some situations. However, *God who guides all things with wisdom* is calling every young person, every teacher and every Brother, *from one commitment to another* to discover Jesus as the Master who will lead us to give witness and who will be the treasure that strengthens and motivates our hearts.

#### Jesus in our hands

Thirdly, work in the mission helps us to recognise that our hands are a gift from God made to bless others, to be supports for the weak, builders of peace and yielding fruit that

will enable us to be known by our works (Mt. 7,20). In our Lasallian vocation, we are called on to discern the talents we have been entrusted with, to discover the power of our actions and to be creators who work in a unique way in the lives of others.

#### Jesus in others

In this fourth strand, we help our missionaries to discover the joyful fact that we Lasallians are profoundly communitarian and that it is through fraternity with others that we find the way to build the Kingdom of God. Jesus calls us to feel we are united with him, sharing in his mission, and so we are able to respond to this grace by placing ourselves “joyfully at the service of others.” (Rule of the Brothers No. 48).

#### Jesus in all that is around me

In our fifth strand, the #100Gigantes, who mostly come from big cities, find themselves surrounded by nature and discover themselves as part of creation. For many, the mission is an experience of contact with mountains, horse trails, small streams and a fresh climate.

That means that when we make Jesus the centre of our lives, we are led to be in brotherhood with all that is around us and to see things in the way Francis of Assisi expresses it in *Laudato Si*. “*The whole material universe speaks the language of the love of God, of his overflowing love for us. The earth, waters and mountains, everything is a caress from God. The story of our own friendship with God is constantly developing within a defined space which becomes a personal symbol, and each one of us cherishes the memory of places that we find it very good to recall.*”

Pope Francis has invited us to ask ourselves the question *Have you thought about how you can put yourself at the service of others? Do not bury your talents! Aim at great ideals, ideals which enlarge your heart, ideals of service which make the talents bear fruit.* Our response to the invitation of the Holy Father has been our mission, and we have opted for service as a Missionary Community so as not to waste the talents we have received.

As we completed the mission with hearts all excited, we asked ourselves how we had been transformed by Jesus; how we had formed one single heart and one spirit in the midst of all our cultural differences; how La Salle is a sign of life which impelled us to construct a community commitment so that we returned home as Christian leaders and builders of peace, capable of going beyond the frontiers and reaching out to others to touch their hearts just as ours were touched during this marvellous experience.





# “KNOW THEM BY THEIR NAMES”

**Br. Miguel Serafín Marcos Hernández, FSC**

The RELEM Novitiate, Madrid (Spain), District of ARLEP. Next academic year in the Community of the Colegio La Salle  
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The Novitiate Community of RELEM comprises six novices from three different countries (Argentina, Bielorrusia and Spain), together with the Novitiate staff. Every Wednesday evening they join the Sant'Egidio Community in Madrid for an experience of prayer after which they go out to share a meal with *friends from the streets*. Yes, friends. This word is perhaps the key to this short article which aims to present the testimony of one individual who has been involved with this project for two years now, and to show how this has influenced his life as a person, a human being and a religious.

I recall the first day when I went to the Sant'Egidio Community in Madrid, which is based on the Community founded in Rome by Andrea Ricardi in 1968. I remember how I was challenged by the question put to us by their spokesman, Jesús Romero, when he explained to us the work they were doing in the Spanish capital. *How many of the poor people on the streets do you know by name?* Certainly, we are proud of being ready to help those who are in great need, but how many do I know personally?

To begin with, I was able to base my defence on the claim that there are different kinds of poverty, that in our Lasallian schools we care for children from families that are really in need, and that spiritual poverty is a kind of extended poverty which also deserves our attention. However, do I know anyone who finds they have to spend the night in the street? Do I know someone who has to beg for a bowl of soup so as to get warm before going back to a rented room where they cannot turn on the heating because they cannot afford it? Or someone who has stopped buying patches to control their blood sugar levels because they cannot pay for them? or who lives infested with bugs that have invaded their

tiny, dilapidated lodgings, and they cannot afford to buy the insecticide necessary to avoid being bitten at least forty times a day on average?

Such people do exist! I got to know them in the course of this past year. They are 'Church' but we forget all about them. They have parishes that are geographically very close to them, but very distant in terms of affection. We Christians seem to be content to just leave everything to 'charity'. We console ourselves with the thought that there are help centres subsidised by everyone where they will receive attention and may even be taken off the streets. Undoubtedly, it is a joy to see the generosity of the members of the Church, but when someone wants a hug, it is not enough just to show them your wallet. As Joaquín García Roca reminds us, *The essence of gospel brotherliness always lies in giving our neighbour what they need (...) not speaking words when they want silence; not giving them long speeches on their rights when what they are asking for is bread.*

But how can we know what our neighbour needs, if we keep on avoiding any close contact with them, when we prefer to turn up the volume on our headphones rather than have to listen to their complaints? The phrase from the Letter to the Hebrews comes to my mind, *He was not ashamed to call us brothers* (Heb 2, 11), and I ask myself if we are able to call ourselves 'brothers', when we persist in ignoring those on the periphery and the fringes, and while we continue to give justification to the words of Olivier Clément, *The real tragedy [in the Church] comes from a divorce between the*

*sacrament of the altar and the sacrament of the poor.*

Nevertheless, thanks to this experience I have been able to discover that our friends on the streets are prepared to forgive us, to leave aside any rancour and to start again. For sure, this reconciliation is made difficult by the divorce between the Church and the poor, which is both sad and very real. Indeed, *There is nothing more depressing than the sight of people who claim to be followers of the Jesus of the gospel but who continually lambaste a world that is already devastated.* Enough of this discouragement and pessimism! The Kingdom which Jesus dreamt for us is worth the effort. Let us strive together to reach it; let us give moral breadth to our lives and cultivate a gospel simplicity in our way of thinking and our style of life.

And how do we make a start? That is much simpler than it seems. You just say *Hello!* and follow it up with a handshake, a hug or a kiss. Hugs and kisses are never wasted, and they have an unimaginable power to heal. Maybe the poor smell awful, maybe they are dirty, but it is our duty to give them dignity, to love them as the brothers and sisters that they are. In my experience with Sant'Egidio, I can truly say that I have experienced a multitude of unpleasant situations and confrontations between individuals, friends who get drunk and lose control of themselves, even some who have stolen from us the things we intended to share with everybody. At the same time, there have been without doubt innumerable situations of joy and satisfaction in this experience. For example, when one of the friends comes up to you with a rare smile to tell you that he has got a job; or another lad has managed to get off the streets and move into lodgings; or when you celebrate someone's birthday and they tell you that it is years since they last blew out the candles or since anyone gave them a little birthday present; or when we can rejoice to find out that someone has



come off drugs and become rehabilitated; or when we can enjoy a Christmas dinner together.

All in all, the thing I thank Sant'Egidio most for is the fact that it organised an activity for me which enabled me to *get to know them by name*. The people in the stories I have just outlined are not just strangers you read about in news items or who contribute to the national statistics of prostitutes, drug addicts, alcoholics, petty criminals and the poor. They are real people with names like José, Lola, Yan, Pepe, Helena, Miguel Ángel, Dani, César, Nereida and so on. They are friends for me to be concerned about and to rejoice within the happy times, to hold their faces in my heart and to pray for them as I accompany them. It is not a question of changing their lives through our efforts, even less by force. It simply means accompanying them and sharing their lives week in week out.

I am grateful to the novitiate for having given me the opportunity to get closer to social reality, to get to know not only

the things in life that harmonise but also the dissonances.

This time of living with others in the novitiate is the period for developing my life and mission as a Brother of the Christian Schools.

I have found that this experience has opened up for me the reality of what is called the *fourth world*, the periphery in the centre of the city, where poverty bites and moves in to stay, unless we can step forward and come near to it and love it so as to grow together. This is not the time for lamenting but for taking action, switching off the televisions and the mobile phones through which we weep over all the stories of injustice (or pretend to weep over them, maybe in a *tweet* or a posting in our Facebook). Let us stop being just *hearers*, and let us learn to approach the one who is Life by approaching life, because then the words of Jesus will find their meaning, *whenever you do this to one of these my little brothers, you do it to me.* (Mt 25, 31).





# BUILDING A FAMILY FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Helen Thian Rem Thiang

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Due to the military government take over of all the Christian Schools, including our Lasallian schools, the educational standards became very, very low. Consequently, the number of the youths who don't know the value of good education is increasing.

As many may know, our country is still having conflicts between different ethnic groups and the government. Our educational system is so limited and is teacher-centered. Students are not encouraged to think critically and ask questions. Students memorize all subjects just to finish all the grades from school. As a result, most of the people feel like education is not important and they don't need to be educated because they cannot use what they have learned for their career even after they graduated.

The present Democratic government is giving priority to an international standard of education, businesses, and job opportunities. Thus, the English language becomes crucial for young people to pursue a higher education and be able to work with international communities. Young people leave their hometowns for Yangon, which is the commercial city, and come to our La Salle Center with the recommendations of La Salle Old Boys (former students) from different parishes.

In our Center, we provide not only language but more importantly, develop human values such as environmental, social and peace-building because our students are from different cultures and backgrounds with different beliefs. We work hand in hand in learning, doing school activities and projects. They learn English together through the above



activities both in the classroom and outside. In all these activities, we, teachers and students, help each other to share our talents and our stories as a family. The Centre makes the students realize "Education is the right weapon to change the world".

Since our Lasallian Education is without borders, we welcome all Lasallians around the world, to share your gifts and stories. We always appreciate to have visitors and volunteers in our Center.

## *Students' inner words*

### **Tun Tun Win (Intermediate level)**

I become sociable talking with my classmates who are from different parts of Myanmar. I have self-confidence more than before because I have to solve the problems by myself. I come to know what my life goal is because teachers from La Salle bring me up and guide me. I feel that I get a big family

because the teachers and classmates helped me and gave me warmth that I have never felt. I become an ambitious man because I saw many ambitious people at La Salle Centre.

### **Hkawn Seng Aung (Intermediate level)**

I have more confidence to interact with foreigners from learning with native speakers at La Salle. I'm not afraid to stand and speak in front of many people as the result of doing different presentations. I improve my

comprehension of reading and writing by doing book reports every week. I can speak fluently as the result of talking with the classmates and the teachers. I feel happy because La Salle Center is like my home with the kindness of the teachers and their good instructions.

### **Khin Nwe Nwe Khaing (Pre-intermediate level)**

I feel that I have improved my English due to the wonderful teaching of my teachers at the Center. I love the rules

and regulations of our Center. We, the students, need to take lots of time to improve our skills, but the teachers help us patiently.

### **Bugar (Elementary level)**

Different activities in class help me gain more self-confidence. I understand English when I arrive this Center. I feel happy because my teachers and classmates are nice. We all like to speak with foreigners because that helps us to improve our speaking and listening.

### **Kyu Kyu (Intro level)**

I feel so happy to attend at this La Salle Center because I learn many things that I didn't know before when I come here. It's very hard for us to speak in English as a beginner, but we gain more confidence to speak because of the encouraging words from the teachers. I love our La Salle Center.





# PROJECT URUBAMBA

*From a concern to a project without borders*

## Xavi Canaleta

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At the present time the needs of values formation in our Lasallian university campuses have changed from the past. The needs are there, but how to reach our students requires efforts to rethink the educational model. On the other hand, the disadvantaged sectors remain and education is a means which must promote inclusive development. From this concern was born Project Urubamba, an international university cooperation that has been rolled out at

La Salle Campus Barcelona – University Ramon Llull, since 2012. Now, five years later, we believe that the project is becoming more important than ever, but we do not want to forget that its origin was conceived by the confluence of different needs lined up at a specific time.

At La Salle Campus Barcelona we were concerned about finding a line of projects for the final year of academic career with a component of solidarity. We wanted to raise awareness among students about social life and solidarity that our Lasallian model could include in the training of our students.

The visit of Brother José Luís Vadillo to our campus was the spark that ignited our project and after 5 years of cooperation it is more alive than ever. Being designed for the mission in the city of Urubamba (Cusco, Peru), and more particularly for the public La Salle Institute, it made us see that the needs in Valle Sagrado in general, and at La Salle Urubamba in particular, be adapted to what he was looking for at the Barcelona campus. In this way, we can achieve two objectives: on the one hand, the promotion of values among students and, on the other hand, to strengthen the Lasallian network with the collaboration between the two institutions.



After dialogue with the partners of La Salle Urubamba, targets were defined, and a cooperation agreement signed between the two institutions between 2012-2017. The initial objectives were the following:

1. Technological support of the institution.
2. Teacher training assistance.
3. Assistance in the training of students.
4. Support of the educational communities of the high Andes (project e-Yachay)
5. Impetus of bilingualism and the preservation of Inca culture.

### The training of teachers and La Salle Urubamba

One of the two main objectives of the Urubamba project is to support the improvement of the quality of teaching in La Salle Urubamba. This must be reflected in the improvement of the staff and the quality of teachers who are part of the institution.

For the implementation of the project in Urubamba a series of training courses intended for two different audiences: teachers and students are designed and planned.

Regarding the training of teachers there has been established a set of areas of knowledge that might develop:

- **New technologies in learning:** it is a fact that new information technology and communications (ITC) give a chance to the teacher who previously was not rethinking even his/her way of teaching students so as to make it more motivating, effective and efficient.
- **New learning methods:** today the student profile has changed. It is necessary to innovate in teaching and learning methods in order to motivate students, improve their academic performance and a higher degree of satisfaction. Teachers need to update their teaching

and learning by introducing active methods into their daily teaching.

During the period 2012-2017 of this agreement, different events took place at La Salle Urubamba addressed to teachers and students of the centre. From the first intervention up to now there were two workshops, 8 training courses for teachers and 7 training courses for students. It seems that the last achievement of 2016 was the most relevant where more than 150 people in La Salle Urubamba were the beneficiaries of the proposed training. For July 2017, 8 courses are foreseen with increased training.

### Project e-Yachay

Yachay means 'learn' in Quechua. This project aims to create an inclusive socio-educational environment in the rural communities of Valle Sagrado through the use of digital technology. The educational communities in this area are located in mountainous areas that rise above 3,800 meters. In addition, they are not within one





group, but include children who live scattered in the high mountains.

The e-Yachay project aims to introduce new technologies in schools in rural communities in the high Andes to improve their motivation for learning and bringing about an inclusive socialization.

It is also necessary to provide the school with a minimum digital infrastructure to run the project. To be able to develop the project it is necessary to draw up complementary lines of action between them; to design **teaching-learning activities** that allow the acquisition of digital skills and promotion of collaborative learning in schools and, ultimately, improvements in students' Spanish communication skills. It is also important to give the Centre **digital basic infrastructure** to run the project. To ensure the project lasting there must be **involvement of teachers** in school communities of the high Andes.

Finally, it is essential that teachers continue to conduct these activities throughout the year and that they can **be accompanied**.

A pilot project was carried out in a community where the Urubamba project already has contacts and previous knowledge: the educational community of **Pampallacta**. This community is located 3,900 meters above sea level in the town council area of Calca. In July 2015, a pilot test was done.

The educational community of Pampallacta had a small digital infrastructure installed in 2014 thanks to the collaboration of La Salle Urubamba. Although it was a precarious and obsolete equipment installation, it was enough to carry out the activities of the pilot phase. Students dedicated themselves to taking pictures of the environment by collecting various objects related to nature around them that they could

then transfer and store on computer images. Students from different courses collected a total of 1,731 images, in short, a small audiovisual experiment, a document available on the YouTube channel of the project.

In July 2016, the e-Yachay course of the previous year was consolidated. It continued in the Pampallacta educational establishment working on two lines of action: a visual, oral and written expression workshop (e-Yachay 2016) and educational robotics pilot study for students in primary and secondary education. With 7 computers and 5 digital cameras the hardware installation was done through the collaboration of the UNESCO Chair of Ramon Llull University to improve technology infrastructure.

The pilot course of introduction to educational robotics was a success. Without ever having experience of this topic, the response of teachers and



students was excellent through their motivation and learning. The e-Yachay 2016 project has encouraged the boys in primary and secondary schools to improve their digital skills and the use of expression capabilities.

The objectives set for 2017 are oriented to grow the Project by replicating the experience in other educational communities of the high Andes.

#### **Present and future of the Urubamba project**

Currently, the Urubamba project is a project developed from the La Salle Barcelona campus and articulated with our Proide University delegation (PROIDE campus). It is open to our entire community of teachers and students on campus.

So far, there has been the active participation of 18 teachers and 8 students. For 4 of these students this has helped them to present their end

of studies' projects. Interest in the project has been spread among our students and we already have 15 applications for 2018. The future looks promising and a project of cooperation like this is open not only to our

University, but to the whole of the Lasallian network. The vocation of service must be one of the pillars for planting it in our students and the benefit that teachers and students receive surpasses what we give them.

La Salle Worldwide

@lasalleorg

“ London, Manila, Kabul, Caracas, Aleppo and all cities where human life has been put in danger are in our heart and prayer. ”

#WeAreLaSalle



# CREATING A CAMPUS OF INCLUSION\*

## Elizabeth Moors Jodice

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**One Call, Many Voices - Dialogue Three: In secular and religious spheres, we must have a deep understanding of the culture in which we live.**

Muslim student Roshun Rahimi had trouble finding her place at Saint Mary's College of California in Moraga when she transferred there in September 2014. Wearing a hijab, she felt different from her peers and, admittedly, did not make an effort to immerse herself into campus life. The commuter student began to feel isolated.

"I started kind of spiraling into a depression-like feeling," Rahimi recalled. "So, I actually got the paperwork from the registrar's office to drop out."

Then, she received an email in February 2016 that would change her perspective. It was an invitation to Muslim students, staff, faculty and their families to attend a dinner as a way to support Muslims on campus. The timing was perfect. It was just days after Rahimi and her aunt, who were both wearing headscarves, were removed from a flight for additional screening. They were traveling with Rahimi's three young cousins to visit a family member who had been diagnosed with cancer.

Despite her hesitation, Rahimi attended the dinner with her mother and younger brother. She still remembers being greeted by the "radiant, smiling faces" of faculty and staff. She was shocked to find that this

supportive community had existed all along.

## Welcoming cultures at Saint Mary's

As Lasallians, welcoming and understanding different cultures is at the heart of dialogue three in the Lasallian Reflection for the current liturgical year, "One Call, Many Voices." Dialogue three reminds us that Lasallian spirituality "listens with care and respect and is open to the questions proposed by people of other faiths."

That is exactly what Rahimi experienced at the dinner. Sponsored by Saint Mary's President James Donahue and Brother Charles Hilken, FSC, director of the college's Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture and Action, dinner conversations centered around how Saint Mary's could be more supportive of Muslims on campus. Rahimi suggested adding an interfaith prayer space, something that the college had been considering for years.

"It would be awkward because sometimes I would be praying in what I thought was an empty classroom and then a bunch of students would walk in, and they would see me in the

corner doing all of these weird movements," she explained.

Rahimi found a champion in Karin McClelland, director of the Mission and Ministry Center. With Rahimi's help, they selected a room and it informally opened that semester. The Interfaith Sacred Space was dedicated in October 2016.

Opening the Interfaith Sacred Space is just one example of how Saint Mary's has taken steps to develop a "deep understanding of the culture in which we live," as highlighted in dialogue three in the Lasallian Reflection.

McClelland, who is a graduate of Saint Mary's, returned to the college about three years ago as a staff member. She found initiatives in place to be inclusive of many cultures, along with a desire to do more. Although the college is deeply rooted in its Catholic tradition, one goal is to promote the development of one's faith – whatever faith he/she practices.

For example, when there is a major crisis locally, nationally or internationally, the campus comes together for an interfaith prayer service where people can express grief and pray for unity in ways that reflect their tradition.

"We're slowly getting there in terms of transforming people's perceptions and their ideas around feeling safe and giving people a place to come together," said McClelland.

Just some of the many initiatives Saint Mary's has undertaken to promote inclusion include the College Committee on Inclusive Excellence, the Catholic Institute for Lasallian Social Action, the Center for Engaged Religious Pluralism, the Intercultural Center, the Women's Resource Center, several degree programs that focus on

justice and interfaith issues, and participation in Interfaith Leadership Institutes to learn how to support interfaith movements on campus.

"These are different student support services that help us diversify the voices, but support those students and their development so that they can identify themselves as a full member of this community and know that all are welcomed and loved by God," explained McClelland.

## The power of invitation and support

That message is getting out on campus. In some ways, it's more of a whisper – things that happen in everyday life and not part of a developed program.

Rahimi finds these messages of inclusion in her classrooms and with her friends. Her friends have expressed their support to her in light of struggles Muslims face nationwide, and her professors are careful to work around the schedule of Muslim holidays.

"My professors have always been extremely understanding and just pillars of support," Rahimi said. "That's one thing that I've always appreciated. I've never felt treated differently or secondary to my other peers by any of my professors at Saint Mary's. If anything, I've just been supported."

That feeling of support started with a single email – the invitation to dinner and discussion.

"That one email changed my whole entire life at Saint Mary's," Rahimi said. "Had it not been that one email, had it not been my mom pushing me to go, my life would not be where it is today. I have had so much opportunity and so many different achievements and failures that I'm actually proud of all of them. I've had so many different opportunities presented just

because of that one email."

One of those opportunities came from Rahimi's work with McClelland in establishing the Interfaith Sacred Space. Finding her home in the Mission and Ministry Center, Rahimi began working as a Lasallian Peer Minister, a role that allows her to lead interfaith education and celebrations on campus. Being a Lasallian Peer Minister also introduced her to people who have become her best friends. She has turned her experience of feeling isolated into a positive experience as she works on inclusivity, including helping to form an interfaith task force with people of different faith and non-faith traditions with the goal of making the campus more open and inclusive.

Rahimi will graduate in May 2017 and leave her mark on the campus. It is

especially important to her because her older brother, Rahmon Rahimi, is now a Saint Mary's student, after transferring there from another school. Like Rahimi, at first, he struggled to find his place on campus. Recognizing her experience in him, Rahimi introduced him to people in the Mission and Ministry Center and includes him in her activities. He is now finding his place and plans to apply to be a Lasallian Peer Minister.

Whether it is the action of one person or a coordinated campus-wide initiative, Saint Mary's is living the third dialogue in the Lasallian Reflection and committing to "a continuous, humble, and loving dialogue in order to understand the deep aspirations of people (*Rule*, 14)."



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# MUSIC: INSTRUMENT OF EVANGELISATION

J. Jesús Vázquez Estupiñán e Irving E. Cuevas Rivera

Directors of the Students' Orchestra

**// Music and young people are the perfect harmony // that shortens distances, defeats antagonisms and encourages the promotion of world peace.**

(John Paul II to the students of the orchestra of La Salle University in St Peter's Square, Vatican City)

The desire to serve through the experience of music with the orchestra has for many years brought us to sing in hospitals, homes for the elderly, prisons and marginalised areas. During our tours we have met members of the Pro Association for people with cerebral palsy (APAC); as a result of one of our presentations, we have committed ourselves to working with them in the foundation of a musical band with people having disabilities.

It is a wonderful opportunity for young people to become impregnated with faith, community and service. These are life lessons that we experience in singing as a group that create an atmosphere that allows exchanges and above all a strong interaction. A sick, vulnerable or marginalized person is

the living presence of Christ and to enter into communion with them leaves indelible traces on you.

Children and youth have banished forever the false and fabricated idea of antiquity that people with disabilities are "cursed by fate, incurably crazy, invalids or disabled". Their beautiful souls transcend their pain. Their way of thinking is a lesson for those who are apparently healthy; but especially for young people and children, who sometimes refuse to practise arts or sports, while they have a body in a state that is enviable, worthy to be highlighted, following the example and witness of these warriors of life, artists endowed with talents that don't make them different with different abilities, as it is thought, but situate them at the





level of human dignity.

Faith becomes practical, when music allows a contact and a fraternal dialogue with a sick person, an old man, a prisoner, with the poor, the needy and those who are alongside us. Encouraging the formation of a band of disabled people, another with blind children and a choir of orphans, have clearly been an opportunity for us all to grow and learn.

After fifty years of journeying with the ideal of spontaneous and joyful music, the students' orchestra of La Salle University of Mexico has always been the hallmark of a particular history not only in theatres, television forums or in different scenarios, but for the willingness to serve, the dedication without measure to help with genuine and harmonious music the needy brother or sister - often confined in a hospital, in prison, in a shelter, an orphanage or an asylum. Music has been the solace that lightens the burden of the pain and diminishes the sadness.

Thousands of members have gone through the orchestra of La Salle University, by participating in what has become a comprehensive training program that animates and enlivens the ideals of faith, community and service, through singing together and instrumental music.

We have travelled through the five continents and the huge geography of Mexico playing even in the most temperamental and unexpected spots but always making an effort with the direction and execution of our music in asylums, hospitals and orphanages around the world.

But above all, there remains our vocation of pilgrims, making ourselves available to sing unconditionally in the courtyard of a school, in a shantytown, in the public square, in the local area or some forsaken little village.

Music is a powerful educational resource that promotes the integral formation of the human being regardless of age. In the educational process, the benefits of the practice of music are designed to shape human better beings, over time and through the power of the powerful and appropriate combination of sounds and silences. Music is an art that helps channel sensitivity, encourages creativity and develops skills.

The symbiosis of music education with the person promotes spaces of serenity, channelling concerns, contributes to healthy recreation and contains an exciting playful element. Let us not forget that we are immersed in a world of sound signals. Music becomes a springboard for the development of other skills and

knowledge. Interactive music reinforces skills, memory, space management, control of proportions, dexterity, and fostering of socialization.

The experience of values such as service, generosity, teamwork, leadership and compassion, are possible through musical processes.

Zubin Mehta said: **"Music is very important for quelling violence. It is an interval of peace in today's turmoil"**.

From the orchestra there have also arisen religious vocations. Evangelization has been made possible thanks to the sense of belonging and service. Many young people have discovered the face of God and the joy of animating Eucharists thanks to the continuing opportunity to be in contact with the Word and the Good News that the Lord gives us day after day at every moment through the testimony and experience of the Holy Scriptures.

UNESCO has recognized the students' orchestra of La Salle University by a prize awarded to brother Enrique A. González Álvarez.

**"Music is synonymous with freedom, to play what you want and as you want, provided that it is good and with passion."** Let music be the food of love! Kurt D. Cobain.

# BY GOING OUT OF MYSELF I ENCOUNTER LIFE. I HAVE A MISSION IN THIS WORLD!

**Br. Enrico Muller, FSC**

Scampia/Naples, Italy, District of Italy  
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**"We sense the challenge of finding and sharing a "mystique" of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage.**

EG 87

Buildings of 13 to 17 storeys, wide double-lane divided roads, huge and empty spaces, widespread dirtiness, and the feeling of abandonment...seem to be the essential elements of suburbs; in this case, of the northern suburb of Naples, Scampia. Since 2007 a Lasallian community has chosen to "enter the suburbs" to "be saved" (LP 2016) for those on the

margin: young people who are early school-leavers, in unemployment, women victims of violence, underage parents, people involved in organised crime, gypsies...

Amongst these people who welcomed us saying "It's good to know there are Brothers who are coming to live with us" the community felt

the call to be the "leaven in the dough" (Lk 13, 20-21) to "be one people" (EG 273).

Venturing into this unknown "holy land" of Scampia demanded that we "take off the shoes" of our certitudes and beliefs, to be more supple and less rigid, more ready and less prisoners of our ideas and our comfort zone; more free to listen to "the cries and groanings" so as to be drawn along the less-travelled roads; there were no plans or programmes to follow, but gradually the overall picture emerged - perhaps so as not to frighten us and to get a developing understanding - a little like a "navigation" on leaving the shore that later launched us "upon the deep on a boat without sail or oars" (Med. 43.1).

We learned to walk with all those who want to do something beautiful for vulnerable people, going beyond an ideological, religious, barrier and that being done spontaneously, without prior planning. We could feel we were Church in a different manner because we were recognised by others as a Church that was neighbourly and close, one not turned inwards, safe, but arrived at meeting places where life is lived: the street, the market, the neighbouring apartment, the social centre, the talk...without preconceived ideas but seeking.

To facilitate our "being with" the strategies declared prophetic were the following:

To live in a public-housing apartment: living in real the proximity of the sometimes "annoying" children ringing the bell just for playing, so as to stay with us doing their homework and





sometimes even to pray with us, and then people coming at any time to ask your help.

Sharing with laypeople the Lasallian educational mission for the service of the poor in new way: discernment led us to choose not to set up a new educational institution dependent on the religious province but to find a cooperative venture: *Occhi aperti* "Eyes Open" and a voluntary association "Arrevutammoce" as new tools for engaging others today in the mission.

Walking with other religious communities who have decided on a path for confronting themselves, to sustain themselves in contemplating the signs of the times and places for evangelising, to evangelise and to be Church as communion.

Renewing the school and education for those at the edge: creating IO VALGO "I'm of value", the Lasallian school of the second chance and offering them training programmes for which they can be responsible and thus to make a different future;

teaching basic language skills to adolescents and gypsies, battling with them – and not for them – for the right to dignity, to citizenship and education; allowing formation and work experiences to girls fighting for equal opportunities and a future where they will not be the slaves of men; organising the Scampia International Art Colloquium so that beauty be both liberation and tool for transformation.

Welcoming the benevolent of the whole world: since our foundation we have been contacted by Lasallian initiatives so that we can be a "bridge" for uniting our people with people who have the desire to "be" to do something good with and for the poor.

Loving Lasallian vocations: several Lasallians have found in the dynamic of our insertion a time and a space favourable to the deepening and understanding of their vocation, perhaps because *"the most important innovations all proceed from a mental - sometimes physical - change...By this change he takes into account the other and what makes him different; a change that is destabilising. John Baptist de La Salle understood this and the foundational Lasallian act is there, before all and above all, it is at the origin of all our sacred history"* (MEL Cahier No 4, p.7).

The spiritual teachings of de La Salle began to take on a more profound dimension: the "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God" amidst the dilapidated staircases of the overcrowded buildings or in the deafening misery of a gypsy camp; seeing the drug peddlers met together to control the territory, or in front of a pregnant woman abused

by her husband, obliges you to flounder about in reality with the eyes of God because there your powerlessness is humanly revealed; it gives room for anger and sometimes it is too painful or wearying; his presence at that time helps you seek his providence and his goodness in the folds of Life and their life.

Here there arises spontaneously the need and the personal and community demand for silence so as to listen deeply to the cries and moanings, the stirrings of the heart, the divine inspiration and the Word that sometimes seems so clear, written and inspired just for our people, and, thanks to this Word to read the Good News "with your feet" at Scampia. It is an ongoing revelation and an ever deeper and different understanding.

Reading the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* means finding a similarity – painful – between the experiences lived by La Salle and his Brothers of the 17th century and our 21st century.... Some of his words, some of his ideas help us animate the day and it is true that "our consecration, our mission and our organisation are adapted to life in zones at risk" (Circ. 466.01.28).

The mission that we are living here is quite simply directed "mainly to the educational needs of those whose dignity and basic rights are not recognised"...to try "to give them the possibility of living with dignity as being sons and daughters of God" always needing to know how to "renew and diversify our" propositions "according to the requirements of the Reign of God" (R. 13).

After 10 years we feel that we need to discern anew - but with a greater number of Lasallians and partners – the call that we have received, and that we should be living "tomorrow": opening a project that will give a second opportunity for students at secondary level, creating job opportunities for the young that we have journeyed with over these years, responding to the desire of our gypsy brothers and sisters who want their children to go to school; to renew the Eyes Open cooperative, to be more innovative, more attentive to the professional study courses of the people who come to stay with us and for the young people whom God has confided to us.

All this sacred story in which we are only co-stars with the children and Scampia people, with Jesus and his Spirit, gives us great freedom of mind, because it is life that marks our "rhythm" and allows us to follow the dynamic of the "signs of the times and places": all that conforms us in poverty to the image of the Trinity who is choosing us and calling us, sending us, consecrating us and saving us (R. 21).





# THE IMAGE OF *LASALLIAN REFLECTION No 3*

The logo is made up of a bird known by the name of "TROGON" (Trogonidae). Trogons are residents of rainforests throughout the world.

This bird is recognized worldwide for its colourful plumage, which vary in each region where it is located and can be observed with its different nuances, which reflects the diversity and natural wealth of areas where it is found.

Starting from aesthetics, by the distribution and the diversity offered by this family of birds we have created a stylized figure of this species using the institutional colours with a fresh touch that we can remember easily by this identification.

Similarly, we worked on the silhouette of the bird wing to simulate a hand with a flame at

the centre, which denotes the idea of teamwork and the solidarity of Lasallians to build an inclusive, free and just world.

Typographic selection was conducted with a young and dynamic audience in mind that allowed us to choose options that can represent the movement and flowing style of its features, with a solid colour that makes for easy interpretation.

With these ideas, we wanted the logo to meet the following specific objectives:

- reflect the diversity of the Lasallian community in the world.
- show the importance of the work and of the fraternal team.
- take into account the importance of overcoming barriers to personal and social development.

- promote recognition of the Lasallian community worldwide.

La Salle University Oaxaca, in Mexico, designed the logo that identifies *Lasallian Reflection No. 3*. We thank the communications team of this institution of the District of Antilles - Mexico South for cooperating fully with the Office of Communications and Technology of the Generalate in Rome which has benefited all Lasallians of the world.

To consult *Lasallian Reflection No 3* go here:  
<https://goo.gl/SSWpm3>

The logo and changeable archives are available at:  
<https://goo.gl/nBjdFw>

The manual for using the logo can be found here:  
<https://goo.gl/nBjdFw>





# LA SALLE ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOL

## Br. K.S. Yoganathan, FSC

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In the year 2011 the Brothers Community at De La Salle House Mannar began to explore the possibilities of starting an English Medium School for the less privileged children of Mannar. But the idea was bombarded with much pessimism, unknown fears, objections and criticism. In spite of all these, the Brothers went on to start the new school keeping the following prime objectives. Br. Yohan was assigned by the community to execute the plans for this particular project.

1. To promote quality and holistic education through English language
2. To provide opportunities for students from war affected areas to learn English

3. To uplift the standard of education in the district of Mannar: which was considered as backward or undeveloped area for a long time.
4. To enhance the opportunities for a better career for students in Mannar.
5. To promote peace by providing opportunities for students, i.e. enabling students to communicate with the students from the Southern part of the country who speaks totally a different language.

It is important to mention here that the present Lasallian Mission in Mannar, and the flourishing vocation to the Lasallian Brotherhood from this part of the country, owe a great deal to the great stalwarts, Brothers Hillary Joseph, Michel Joseph, Gregory Bernard and

Baptist Croos. Through their indefatigable and dedicated efforts they had laid a sound foundation for educational opportunities for the people of mostly neglected Northern Province in Sri Lanka.

The present La Salle English Medium School in Mannar is the fruit of the seeds sown by these true hardworking and dedicated Lasallian. I am so proud and privileged to have been trained and educated under the guidance of these great educationists. The present La Salle English Medium School in Mannar is providing a high quality Lasallian Education in the light of the traditions and values imparted by these extraordinary De La Salle Brothers.

The perfect discipline, values and high standard of education are the benchmark of these great Brothers. Having said all these, I like to state the marvellous educational services rendered by the present La Salle English Medium School in Mannar. The



Brothers in the District of Mannar have been serving in a number of state schools since the beginning, but this new venture was launched to mark the completion of 60 years of educational services of the De La Salle Brothers in Mannar.

The rationale for starting this new school was mainly to re-build the war affected community in Mannar. The 3 decades old ethnic has come to an end. But the trauma and aftermath of this bloody three decades old war continues to prevail. This has completely shattered the people in every walk of life. The aftermath of the civil war is devastating and has left countless people homeless, disabled, and orphaned. The educational sector in the northern part of Sri Lanka especially in Mannar also was badly affected and hindered the growth of students and younger generation. It is in this context that the De La Salle Brothers in Mannar, decided to begin an English medium primary school to build up the lives of the people.

The war is over and the hope for a brighter future for students and younger generation is imminent. In spite of the devastating aftermath of the war, the people begin to rebuild their lives in all sectors. We believe that the attention given to the educational sector of the Mannar district will play a significant role in rebuilding the lives of

the people. The future of the children depends mainly on the type of education we give them. Therefore starting an English medium primary school will be one of the major factors in the process of rebuilding. Opportunities for higher studies have been denied or limited to students from Mannar mainly due to the lack of proficiency in the English Language. Lack of English language spoken and written has been a major drawback to the youth in Mannar today seeking employment and pursuing further studies. This factor also has contributed to a great extent to the unrest among the youth in the north of this country. The absence of a common language

such as English is a major contributory factor to the ethnic problem that has cost thousands of lives destruction of properties.

The international schools in other parts of the country are beyond the reach of the lower middle class and a top quality English teaching institution by the De La Salle Brothers in Mannar is a great benefit to the majority of the children in Mannar. In addition, the demand for sending the children to Brothers' school is very high.

The school is now six years old and has progressed tremendously in all its aspects. The huge contribution of Lasallian Foundation Australia towards the development of the physical set up for the school is commendable. We remember them with gratitude for their continuous support towards this school. The commitment of St. James Shaehan High School – Orange-Australia to support our schools is remarkable.

At present there are 140 students both male and female, with fifteen teaching staff including two De La Salle Brothers and two sisters from other Religious Order. In spite of many challenges and unknown fears the growth of the school is eminent. Elocution classes are also conducted to improve the art of speech in our students with the help of the Institute of Western Music and Speech (IWMS).



The Lasallian school nurtures in its members an awareness of the living presence of God in our world.

**#WeAreLaSalle**

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# Interview

## Br. Leonardo López, FSC

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### Can you describe the Lasallian presence in Venezuela for us?

Lasallians have been present in our country since 1913, and they have played an important part in the construction of a country which has gradually grown and developed as a result of the oil boom. The first Brothers settled in the town of Barquisimeto, and within a few years they had extended their presence to other places. Today, there are six communities of Brothers with ten colleges led directly by the Brothers, and in the Foundation La Salle we have five secondary schools five research centres and two University Colleges.

We are located in the following States: Carabobo, Lara, Mérida, Amazonas, Trujillo, Cojedes, Nueva Esparta, Delta Amacuro, Bolívar and Distrito Capital (Caracas).

Since 1990, we have been part of the Venezuelan Association of Catholic Education (AVEC) which has signed an agreement with Government of Venezuela to ensure the provision of a quality education for the children of families of slender means. In the Sector of Venezuela, 12 out of 15 of our educational establishments benefit from this subsidy, and this enables us to respond to the commitments made by the Institute since its beginnings and reaffirmed by all the General Chapters.

There are 21 Brothers, and we provide for a total of 16,920 students and employ 1,901 members of staff.

The Lasallian voice in Venezuela is one that is heard and recognised in the different areas in which we are present, and that is thanks to the many years of commitment and dedication by many Brothers and lay colleagues.

Lasallian association in Venezuela is something that has grown in strength gradually and almost imperceptibly, since responsibility for the proclamation of the gospel has been assumed by all as a commitment of the Church which recognises the riches possessed by each one of us who is called to be part of the one big family. Without the presence of committed lay colleagues the Lasallian response to the needs of the country would have ceased long ago.

### We who are not natives of Venezuela have only a superficial understanding of what is going on in your country. Can you as a citizen and as a De La Salle Brother give us a brief analysis of the current situation?

Venezuela is going through a huge crisis in all areas, political, economic, legal, social, educational and security. Corruption and the violation of the National Constitution are two of the most serious aspects in which the national government is involved.

President Nicolás Maduro has failed to acknowledge the will of the people in the elections of December 6th, 2015, which resulted in a new National Assembly (Congreso) in which two thirds of the deputies were of the opposition party. He is promoting a Supreme Tribunal of Justice (TSJ) which has been appointed in an illegal manner. In addition, he signed a decree which took away the powers of the National Assembly and gave them to himself as the President of the Republic. That was the last straw and it angered the whole country.

Something similar happened in 2016 and it provoked a referendum which is a constitutional right. This time it was the National Electoral Council (CNE) which suspended it without much explanation. This escape valve was closed by a "dialogue" in which the Vatican played a sincere role as mediator. The so called dialogue was a shot of oxygen for the President.

As for the citizens, more than two thirds of the voting population demand the following.

- Liberation of political prisoners.
- General Elections.
- Allowing entry to humanitarian aid.
- Removal of the illegal judges on the supreme justice tribunal.
- Restitution of constitutional rule.

The crowning of all this comes in the shape of an economic tragedy with an annual inflation forecast to be 1,600%, in 2017, the shortages of food and medicine, the lack of any future for young professional people, the persecution and imprisonment of those who dare to protest and express any ideas contrary to the government and even death as happened to Manuel Sosa, a former student of our Instituto La Salle in Barquisimeto, who lost his life during a peaceful protest on May 25th of this year.

In the face of the development of this accelerated crisis, the population is rising up to demand that its rights be respected and that constitutional rule be re-established. It all started on April 1st of this year when the opposition party, the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática, called on the people to take to the streets, peacefully, lawfully and without any violence. During the first 68 days of this street resistance (up to 06/06/2017), the Ministerio Público has recognised that 63 individuals have died in the protests against President Nicolás Maduro, and more than 3,000 citizens have been detained, many of them condemned by military tribunals which is completely illegal.

The situation is not the same in every town, and some have more conflict than others. However, it is certainly the case that throughout the country there are protests every day. The result of this is that the principal communication routes remain blocked, and this prevents movement in vehicles and even on foot in some places.

### As we are holding this interview, there have been a number of weeks of continuous street protests. The result has been a tragic number of deaths and people are uncertain about what to expect in the coming months. Why are people taking to the streets day after day? What possible way out is there from this situation?

The protests are gaining in strength every day rather than weakening and dying down. The people are desperate and full of pain and a sense of helplessness, because they have been duped and deceived by speeches and promises that remain unfulfilled until now.

The minimum salary of a worker in Venezuela hardly covers 7.81% of the cost of the basic food ration. Add to that the fact that there is an 80% shortage of medicines and medical supplies to care for patients in the hospitals. Insecurity prevails in the streets, and it is calculated that one Venezuelan dies by violence every 30 minutes. All of this, plus all the violations against human rights and the breakdown in constitutional rule, are the principal reasons why people continue to go out onto the streets to demand a change of government.

Possible ways out? The government of President Nicolás Maduro should respect the National Constitution, give up the idea of creating an illegal Constitutive Assembly and proceed to call general elections to allow the people to express themselves and appoint new authorities as the National Constitution specifies.

Evidently, international support is very important in all of this. Any actions that other countries can promote and carry out to rescue democracy in Venezuela are indispensable, if we are to stop this wave of deaths and detentions which are making the scene worse every day.

As things stand, I must say that the idea of a dialogue is very complicated since the first attempt was a failure, because the government did not keep to the agreements. Dialogue for peace means recognition of the other and reaching agreements that will be carried out. It means finding possible ways out to resolve the tragic situation of the country.







**A few weeks ago, we heard that a Lasallian school had been attacked. In what other ways have the educational and pastoral activities of Lasallian establishments in the country been affected?**

April 19th is a day of national celebration to mark the end of Spanish rule in the city of Caracas, and it is known as the day of the proclamation of independence. On that symbolic occasion, the opposition called for a march by all those who were not in agreement with what was going on. They march to emblematic places such as the Defensoría del Pueblo, which is supposed to take action in cases of any violation of human rights.

People poured out into the streets like a river. The government sent in the militarised police to repress with brutality and disproportionate force the manifestation by peaceful and unarmed people.

In Mérida it was just the same. In the avenue that passes in front of our colleges La Salle and La Salle-Hermano Luis, there is a screen that acts as a gate. Some youths who were in the manifestation were being beaten by the police and the military, so they jumped over the fence and took refuge in the college grounds. They ran across the property and went behind the building which houses the Brothers' community. Brothers Juan Bosco Chacón, Fredy García and Lucas Manzanal were in there at the time.

A group of hooded and armed men belonging to the shock groups of the government, then entered the college. They are armed civilians and they enjoy impunity from the justice machinery. The young demonstrators had by now left the college, but the motorised group forced their way in. They broke down the door of the Brothers' community and destroyed everything that they could lay their hands on and could not steal. They broke or stole all the electrical goods in the property, refrigerators, microwaves and windows. They overturned the tables and counters in the dining room and study hall. They even destroyed three cars that were in the car park.

The Brothers were very frightened. They were not hurt physically, but they felt insecure and uncertain about what might be done to them by this crowd of people who were out of their minds, incapable of reasoning and blinded by the ideological bombardment they are subjected to.

The Brothers received a lot of support from the Cardinal Archbishop of Mérida, Mgr. Baltazar Porras, and also from the directors of the Venezuelan Association of Catholic Education (AVEC), from other religious communities and especially from all the students and the members of their families, and from the former students.

Private education is going through times of great fear and uncertainty. We try to carry on working and fulfilling the service of education to which we are committed, but it is not easy. In some towns, the staff and pupils cannot come to school because of the situation in the streets. Many parents are afraid to send their children, so we are trying to use technology to maintain daily contact with the pupils in connection with each of their different areas of study. This will help in the short term, but it will not be suitable in the long run. Supervision by the officials of the Ministry of Education is constant and intimidating. For our part, we are doing everything that is necessary to meet the requirements of the commitments we have made.

**In radically politicised situations such as those that prevail in the country today, how do you deal with the polarisation that may occur in the school corridors?**

Our schools are inclusive places and we make great efforts to ensure that all the children and young people feel loved and respected. We do a lot of work with the teachers and parents to ensure that the students are not contaminated by all the negative atmosphere which weighs heavily upon us. We can truly say that in the great majority of our schools there is a climate of fraternity and a recognition of others as friends and companions. There are very few occasions when it is necessary to intervene to correct words or actions that can affect the climate of mutual acceptance.

**What kind of educational initiatives have been taken in the schools to support the students in this serious situation?**

It is difficult. All the teachers have to watch very carefully every word they say which in relation to the present situation. The guitar classes and religious education lessons are privileged locations for training in values and raising awareness of the complex and painful situation we are going through as a country.

Eucharistic celebrations and times of prayers are fundamental pillars for uniting the community in the common goal of peace and the saving of democracy in the country.

**In these times when many put their trust in the words of the gospel, what moves have been made by the Church? In the parishes, the dioceses, the Conference of Religious, etc?**

Communications sent out by the Venezuelan Conference of Religious (CONVER) have been unequivocal in acknowledging the great crisis the country is going through and expressly rejecting any acts that violate human rights or the National Constitution. There have also been some actions of a religious nature organised in the streets and some participation in peaceful events where the people are expressing what they feel and think.

The Episcopal Conference has also taken up a very clear and firm stance, rejecting the governments actions and proposing alternatives of dialogue and ways of saving peace and democracy. Communications from the Conference are read out in all the parishes at Sunday Mass.

**What kind of things do the Brothers say to one another in the light of the situations they experience every day?**

We Brothers are all very concerned, and we have expressed, via social networking and our Sector digital newsletter, our condemnation of all acts of violence and violations of human rights. We take part in the different assemblies convoked by the Conference of Religious, and in every community there is a daily reflection and prayer centred on the crisis in the country. All of us Brothers are convinced that change is urgently needed in Venezuela.

**What message do you Brothers of Venezuela have for your fellow countrymen and for us Lasallians throughout the world who are hoping that change will come soon for your beautiful nation?**

In the middle of all our crisis, the De La Salle work is still alive and is renewing the commitment that was made more than 300 years ago by our Founder and the first Brothers, commitments to the Church and especially to the world of education to save the children of the artisans and the poor whom Gods places in our classrooms, to save them from ignorance, persecution and deceit, to save them from a world which appears to have forgotten the fact that we are all brothers and sisters, children of the same Father. We seek to build a corner of peace, dialogue and fraternity in every one of our colleges.

We De La Salle Brothers in Venezuela, have come to see clearly that "association" is the way forward to ensure that the gospel is proclaimed. It is the work of everyone, to go where we are sent, taking the word of salvation. It is not the responsibility of just a small group. So it is with pride and joy that we see how, together, we are continuing to ensure life and commitment in every one of our educational establishments.

Lasallian schools are places of salvation, where mercy and affection are easily and palpably experienced. We must not ignore what is going on in the streets, and today we weep and suffer pain to see how our country is set on the road of injustice and destruction. Once again, we raise our voice to condemn every act of violence or disregard for and violation of the National Constitution. We are the heirs of Simón Bolívar the liberator, and for many years Venezuela opened its doors generously to all those brothers and sisters who left their own countries to seek new opportunities. But today it is we who turn to the world and ask for help, seeking to renew those ties of fraternity which overcome the borders that separate our countries.

In these very painful times, we turn to all Lasallians and ask them to be united with us in praying to God the Father that peace and democracy may return to Venezuela. We are grateful for all the gestures of solidarity that you have been able to offer all those Venezuelans who have come to you for help.

Our 104 years of service in this country make it incumbent on us to stand by those who are suffering and are victims of abuse and illtreatment. We renew our commitment to be prophets of the Good News, denouncing all that is contrary to the message of salvation proclaimed by Jesus.



# BEING A DE LA SALLE GUADALOUPE SISTER IN AFRICA. A WAY OF LOVE FOR GOD AND HUMANITY

## Sister Razanavoary Tsiatengy Victoire

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Evangelisation is the essential mission and the priority of the Church. "The pilgrim church is missionary by nature" (AG 2). Her

children have the task of becoming involved in this by their witness of life and various actions. We also speak today of the urgency of the new evangelisation but there are places where you need to begin with the first evangelisation.

For the month of May 2017 the intention of Holy Father Francis was "Evangelisation particularly in Africa". Lasallian presence has had a major role in the evangelising role of the Church on this continent by the ever-active presence of the Guadaloupan Sisters consecrated to the human and Christian education of children and youth as a means of evangelisation.

We effect our mission not only in the educational works of the Brothers and Sisters but working directly also in ecclesial ministry, in particular in parish catechesis, in preparing children, youth and adults to receive the sacraments through liturgy motivation and the animation of various movements of children, young people and not-so-young people.

### Catechesis

Starting with the postulancy, the Sisters, in all the countries where we are, are engaged in teaching catechism to the young who are preparing to receive the sacraments of Christian initiation and even marriage. We likewise run retreats before the time set for receiving sacraments.

In certain places our school classrooms welcome groups, particularly on Wednesday afternoons and for the whole of Saturday and Sunday for various activities.

In catechesis the Sisters work with seminarians and members of other religious communities present in the parish and with lay volunteers.

### Parish pastoral mission

The Sisters and the young ones in formation are responsible for children and youth groups of the parish community or in the church where they are engaged in Eucharistic movements, scouting, choirs, Children of Mary, and men's and women's groups.

They accompany them and give them a doctrinal and biblical formation by organising regular meetings – generally weekly – monthly retreats and occasions for sharing, for conviviality and leisure.

### From among these groups of children and youth there emerge, in general, the vocations that are the most consistent, persevering and faithful

In certain dioceses we are responsible for the co-ordination of pastoral groups for the whole diocese. The person who directs the co-ordination of the diocese or the parish is called "Zoky am-Panahy" or older spiritual Sister. It is for these teams to organise their movement's activities at parish or diocesan level, to ensure their implementation and evaluate them. The Sisters in charge make visits to places where there are these movements to encourage and train local managers. Sometimes they work all day and night. They sleep where they can. In addition, the sisters are responsible for the Confederation of children and / or young people at the parish or diocesan level movements. Some Sisters in our communities are 100% dedicated to pastoral care and work directly with the parish priest.

### "The Lord has visited us"

Our communities are most of the time in places with no electricity, no drinking water, no public or private transport. A parish may have between 35 and 50 Church communities, remote from one another. The Sisters visit the Church communities on their own or with the priest or a deacon. When it is the priest who is travelling there is the possibility of transportation by car, if



### The challenges of evangelisation

not in the best Christian communities these send people to accompany the Sisters and transport them by motorbike or bike, but if there is no such possibility, the Sisters walk kilometers through mountains and rivers inhabited by dangerous animals like crocodiles. They have to walk through the forests, under the sun, and in dust, rain and mud.

Some places had never seen nuns and their presence fills these with joy because for them, it is a sign that the Lord is visiting them. Not only they have not seen nuns, but they are also people who have not had the opportunity to learn to read and write so that catechesis is oral and by heart.

Arriving there after going through what God has kindly put on their road, the Sisters teach catechism, run retreats, teach songs, give talks and meet with women so as to provide craft classes; more importantly, they sisterly share the Body of Christ in Eucharistic celebration or Sunday Assembly when they celebrate in the absence of the priest.

Evangelization is facing several challenges, especially in Africa. For the Sisters in Madagascar, it is a matter of showing, motivating, persuading and captivating by their witness of life that Christ lives and that it is worth the trouble to come close so as to discover and love him. Only half of the population of Madagascar is Catholic. The rest consists mainly of those who practise traditional religion, Islam, and other religions with the arrival of several Asian immigrants, mainly from India and China who have settled there. So, our biggest challenge is to "begin evangelisation in the places where the Gospel of Christ has not yet arrived," the struggle to eradicate religious syncretism and the search for faith in the triune God.

May the God of love and tenderness embrace us with his mercy and gives us the grace to be Sisters with our Brothers, with a free spirit, ready to listen to the voice of God who calls us to proclaim his glory and go to meet Christ there where life is crying out...



# “LEAVE TO SERVE: THE SCHOOL’S PRIVILEGED ROLE IN EVANGELIZING THE YOUNG THROUGH SERVICE AND REFLECTION.”

## Micky Dominick

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As Catholic educators of the 21st century, we are continually challenged to be the disciples of the church against an ever increasing backdrop of secularization in our society and within the walls of our schools. This challenge, borne from the realities of a changing demographic in our enrollment profiles, e.g. declining in enrollment at traditional Catholic feeder schools; a decline in the number of “practicing” Catholics in our population; and an increase in the number of students coming to us from public

schools; should not be viewed as a negative, but rather as an opportunity to embrace and engage the next generation through a more tangible approach based upon living the Gospel. As St. Francis taught, we should preach the Gospel always, and use words when necessary.

To that end, the foundation of any faith experience will always be built upon the core teachings of the church, and the opportunity for faith filled reflection, dialogue, and discernment.

However, now more than ever, the need

to tangibly reinforce those teachings through the opportunity to meet others where they are, to truly see the face of Jesus in those in need, and to open one’s heart to the possibilities of discipleship have never been greater. Further, doing so requires a concerted, thoughtful, and focused effort to provide those opportunities in an appropriate manner that will allow our youth to logically progress from an initial encounter to a full immersion with those who have been marginalized in our society.

At La Salle College High School, we have invested significant effort and energy to ensure that not only our curriculum and our retreat programs logically integrate, but also to develop and deploy a comprehensive program of service, to further support the spiritual development of our students. In the spirit of De la Salle who taught that, “God, who directs all things with wisdom and moderation, and who does not force the will of men,” we have also adopted a philosophy of placing no service requirements upon our young men. While perhaps counter-intuitive, through this approach we have also achieved an 85% student participation rate in service related activities and programs. Senior Hunter Bradbury further reinforces this point adding, “from freshman year through senior year La Salle teaches the values of service, but I believe the most crucial point is that we are encouraged and provided with opportunity, but not required to do service.”

Beginning with their first day at La Salle, we engage and broaden the understanding of our freshmen with regard to what it means to be Lasallian, the calling of our founder, and the role that they play in carrying out that

legacy for our school and the church at large. Shortly thereafter, we introduce them to the concept of serving others through our Freshmen Branch-out Day experience. On this day of service every member of the freshmen class, along with a significant number of faculty, and any and all fathers who can join us are “branched-out” across the city of Philadelphia to work with Catholic Social Service’s agencies; Catholic elementary schools, food banks, homeless shelters, and nursing homes. The goal is simply to expose these young men to the various levels of need in our community, and do so alongside a significant number of adult role models, in order to facilitate discussion and awareness, while at the same time delivering roughly 1500 hours of service to our community. The day ends with facilitated prayer and reflections sessions led by our faculty in an attempt to help these young men process more deeply the impact they had on the community, and perhaps the impact the community had on them. From that point forward, it becomes their decision to engage in a broad range of weekly service opportunities, and for upperclassmen a week-long summer immersion program.

Supported by a dedicated group of faculty moderators, every day of the week students are presented with opportunities to encounter Christ through after-school tutoring programs for at risk students at two grade schools in the Kensington section of Philadelphia; visiting with the elderly at two nearby nursing homes; serve meals and engage in the ministry of hospitality to those living on the streets of Kensington, many of who suffer from addiction; participating in



the Street Outreach program where students prepare and serve meals, as well as distribute clothing to people living on the streets of Philadelphia; learning more about the challenges of the marginalized through facilitated discussions organized by the Human Rights club, or through becoming a member of the school’s ministry and service team. Each of these offerings provides students with the opportunity to engage in a manner and at a level with which they are comfortable.

Moving beyond our weekly programs students are also engaged in a series of seasonal efforts such as food drives, Operation Santa Claus, and our week-long celebration of our Lasallian heritage, FSC week. In addition, for our

upperclassmen we provide them with unique opportunities to “immerse” themselves more deeply into their Gospel calling, through participation in one of our week-long summer service immersion trips. For rising juniors, that opportunity is limited to a week living in and serving in the city of Philadelphia. This program is designed to provide students with a hands on experience similar to that of the Freshmen Branch-out day, but taken to the next level. The program will have students serving many of the populations identified previously, but in a smaller group, and more focused manner whereby students will not be able to practice their faith at arm’s length. Supported by morning prayer and evening refectio





challenges our young men to accept the challenge of Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez, who asked, "So you say you love the poor? Name them." It is in this context that the realities of answering the calling of Pope Francis to become a "church that is outgoing," begin to become very tangible for many of our students.

Building upon the foundation laid through the "Urban Immersion" program we then provide our rising seniors with the opportunity to take their experience to the next level by taking the Gospel message beyond the city of Philadelphia to places as diverse as the Navajo Nation; to work alongside migrant farmers in the Coachella Valley; continue their work with inner city poor in Chicago and the Bronx; help build affordable housing in Appalachia; continue the re-building efforts in the still storm devastated communities of the gulf coast; or work alongside others who share our

having to turn away students from the senior year program, when demand has exceeded our ability to respond. Further, students are required to raise all of the necessary funding for their own trips through a series of organized fund-raising efforts. One of the comments we continuously hear is summarized best by senior Kieran Hogan, "service at La Salle is something much more than something take part in, it is a part of the culture. There is a level of excitement about signing up for the summer immersion trips or going on homeless outreach. It builds relationships with others I would have never known, and more, very humbling to be a part of."

In the end the overarching goal is simple and two-fold. First, for our students to come to the understanding that they are blessed, and with that comes a responsibility as Catholic Christians to be called to fellowship and the care of our brothers and sisters. And secondly, that the greatest gift any of us have to give is our time. It is in these two simple goals that we have set a path forward to help our young men to answer the call of becoming a church that is outgoing, and the respond to the Gospel calling of discipleship.

Lasallian and Catholic mission in Puerto Rico or St. Lucia. Again, while no students are required to participate in either of these programs, we have continually experienced participation rates above 50% for both classes, even

students.



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Isn't it amazing to know that  
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time zones there is always  
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