

LA OLA 40 (THE WAVE 40)

A Lenten experience

We have all experienced the changes in routine that the crisis resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to humanity. Education has not been unaffected by this contingency. Throughout the Lasallian world there are countless examples of Brothers and teachers who have created, modified or reinvented experiences to reach out through social media or other methods to students who have not returned to their schools in person.

From Colombia, Brother Manuel Alejandro Vásquez, pastoral director of the Lasallian District of Bogotá, tells us about an experience they had during Lent.

What is THE WAVE 40?

It is a Church experience to share the faith in the Lenten season with a spiritual and liturgical rhythm suited to the language of children and young people. The young people motivated us to mobilise ourselves with new ways of doing pastoral work and bringing the message of Jesus through

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social media. We planned a Church action that would have an impact on the educational ministries of Colombia, allowing us to speak the same language and being focused on the youngest students and adolescents.

Where did THE WAVE 40 emerge?

The WAVE 40, formerly called Challenge 40, emerged in 2018 in the north of Colombia, in the city of Cartagena. There, several Brothers and teachers from the three Lasallian schools in the city, under the leadership of Brother Andrés Elio Velasco, dreamed up and carried out this experience which resonated in many other Lasallian schools in the country, which subsequently replicated and adapted to their own contexts the initiative of making Lent a vital time for the faith growth of all Lasallians.

What did THE WAVE 40 bring for this year 2021?

This year, THE WAVE 40 wanted to continue providing tools to all Lasallians in order to strengthen the spiritual dimension. This year, video “stories” were organised for the social media where a phrase was shared each day to encourage personal reflection. At the end of each story, people were invited to go to the District’s website, where they could find a psalm for personal or community prayer.

And this year, did YouTube programmes play a major role?

That’s right; this year, in order to accompany the children and young people of our network of schools from home with a clear, creative and family-oriented message, we organised 16 TV programmes with reflections on this time, eight for children which we called “La Salle Kids” and eight for young people called “La Salle Connection”. These were broadcast from Palm Sunday onwards.

This was complemented by several family prayers and Eucharistic celebrations which were broadcast live and attended by thousands of families from all over the country.

This year the Lasallian Family of the District of Antillas México Sur joined in this experience. We created synergy and together we thought about this experience for the year 2021. This meant meeting with the pastoral teams of both Districts, organising the scripts and presenters, discussing the messages we wanted to convey and then producing high quality programmes for YouTube.

It was a valuable learning and growth experience for all of us who were involved in sharing the way of living faith in two countries that share the same language and similar political and social challenges and that are separated by thousands of kilometres.

Why share faith in our social media?

We are all called to show the loving face of God who invites us to be better every day. Sharing THE WAVE 40, La Salle Kids and La Salle Connection on our social media is a way of living together the values of the Gospel; it inspires others to strengthen the spiritual life, and drives us to dream together of actions to reach out to those most in need in our local contexts. We all invest - spend - time on the internet and with this experience we wanted some of that time to help grow in faith and action for others.

Finally, Brother, could you send a message to all Lasallians around the world?

I encourage all Lasallians to continue to be connected to the experience of the Risen Jesus, who makes our lives vibrate and who commit us to act in view to improve our own lives and the lives of others.

Let us never get tired of dreaming big. In these times, virtuality allows us to break down barriers and frontiers so that we can work in community.