Educating to transform: Lasallian commitment to peace and the peripheries

Brothers Carlos Gómez and Martín Digilio in dialogue with Vatican News reflect on the educational mission of the Brothers of the Christian Schools which promotes peace, justice and integral ecology, especially in the peripheries of the world.

Young people as a "volcano of life" and teachers as ministers and missionaries: these are the two images of the educational world offered by Pope Leo XIV in the audience to the Brothers of the Christian Schools – founded by St John Baptist de La Salle – received on Thursday 15 May in the Clementine Hall.

In the background of the meeting, two special anniversaries: the tercentenary of the promulgation of the Bull *In apostolicae dignitatis solio*, by which Benedict XIII approved the Institute and the Rule (26 January 1725), and the 75th anniversary of the proclamation by Pius XII of De La Salle as "Patron Saint of all Educators" (1950).

In an in-depth, reflective interview, Brother Carlos Gómez, Vicar General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, shares the impact of Pope Leo XIV's message to the Lasallian community. Gómez underlines the importance of quality education focused on the poorest, the lay vocation of the Institute and the commitment to evangelise through fraternal witness, especially in contexts of exclusion and vulnerability.

Pope's message to the De La Salle Brothers

Brother Carlos describes the Pope's message as simple, profound and prophetic and emphasises the lay vocation of the Institute, arising from the request of a lay teacher, not the clergy. He also emphasises fraternity as a hallmark of the De La Salle Brothers and the importance of maintaining a school that is open, inclusive and at the service of the poor. He reiterated his call for peace, dialogue and education as a bridge, rather than war, and finally pointed out the relevance of teaching in the vernacular, as De La Salle did, to include all.

For his part, Brother Martin Digilio states that the Pope offered a “powerful and hopeful” message, diagnosing the current educational reality. The Holy Father also spoke metaphorically about youth as a “volcano of life” that needs to be channelled through education

Charism of the De La Salle Brothers
Brother Carlos Gómez declares that the Congregation’s current mission focuses on education in the peripheries, both geographically and socially. The Brothers insist on quality education, especially for the poor, because only quality education transforms lives. Lasallians are active on five continents, including Africa, South East Asia and Latin America, serving rural and marginalised areas.

Brother Martin Digilio explains that the charism of the Congregation is inspired by the Spirit from its origins, it seeks to bring the Gospel closer to marginalised children and young people. The Lasallian Mission – he adds – is imbued by social justice, peace and integral ecology.

Evangelizing through education and educating through evangelization

Brother Carlos Gómez affirms that it is lived out both in words and actions, depending on the cultural and religious context. In countries where it is not possible to speak openly about Christ, the message is conveyed through fraternity, solidarity and defence of human dignity, especially of girls.

Education must respond to local realities, for example, in rural areas it must value rurality without associating it with poverty or exclusion and avoid transmitting the idea that the only valid path is to migrate to the city.

Brother Martin Digilio, General Councillor of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, reflects on the inspiring message of Pope Leo XIV during the audience with the Lasallian Family. He highlights education as a key ministry for building peace, justice and fraternity, reaffirming the Lasallian charism of delivering quality education to the most vulnerable ones. He underlined the importance of making educational works visible in the peripheries of the world, as a concrete response to the challenges of humanity and an expression of the Gospel in action.

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