

# Entre amigos (Among Friends)



2020 has been a difficult year for everyone. Around the world we have witnessed a lot of changes that leads us to rethink our own existence as human beings, as Christians and as a society. As Pope Francis invites us on numerous occasions, we must look at ourselves in the midst of these circumstances and we have rowed the same boat in order to move forward.

In Peru, the first case of coronavirus was confirmed on March 6<sup>th</sup>, on March 11<sup>th</sup> the government decreed a state of emergency and on March 16<sup>th</sup> the mandatory social immobilization began. At the San José La Salle school in Cusco, where I work, and in all the rest of the schools in the country we did not have enough time to prepare and deal with this difficult situation. We had barely started two weeks of classes and everything we dream of for the students has been transformed.

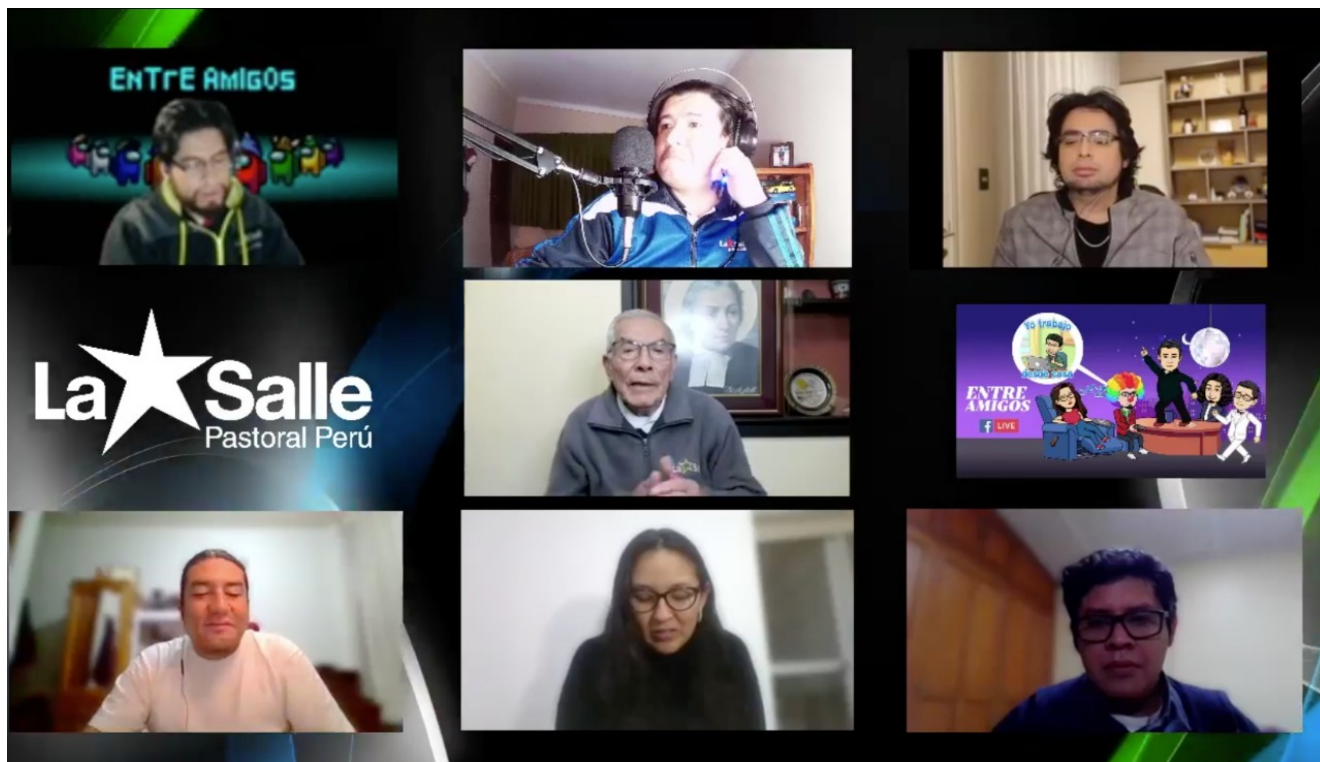
Today the classes continue empty and dusty, the courtyards in silence show us a joyless panorama. There are no more songs or Eucharists with the students, but despite this, hope remains.



Personally speaking, the first weeks were very hard, since we were not able to go out and the mobility of the staff was drastically restricted, our social interactions were reduced to the communal sharing of prayer, lunches and the occasional community time. In these moments the monotony and restlessness were gaining their space in my own interior. I did not even want to think what the children and adolescents must be feeling, who at their young age had to stoically confront a confinement at their own homes, without playing with friends or visiting their grandparents.

In our Latin American countries, very unlike other cultures, physical contact is very necessary: shaking hands, giving a hug, saying hello with a kiss on the cheek, all this is part of us and from one moment to the other it was taken from us. Our social relationships change to cold bows at a distance with those we could see but with a gaze that expressed our desire to hug. In addition, socialization emerged through the screen of a computer, a tablet or a cell phone.

But like every human being we have to live a process of adaptation and it has to change to a reality that can transmit that fraternity beyond the borders that were being created and that is why, that in a virtual meeting with some brothers and friends arose the idea of sharing a moment ***Among Friends*** and that it is transmitted so that anyone can see that and interact with us.



The group is made up of three La Salle brothers (Sebastián, Emilio and Eduardo) and three catechists (Julio Carlo, who works at the La Salle University in Arequipa, Azucena and Percy, both a couple and teachers) together, every Friday we meet for about an hour and a half to talk and share those experiences that we are living.

The starting point was that, to get together, share and interact with the people we have met together in our path through the pastoral of different educational works and the people we met by participating in the missions that the brothers carry out each year. We thought that we would share a space with a few other people, no more than ten, but week by week that number increased and this space became something new, a new pastoral experience.



The first guests appeared, who entered to the live chat to talk and play. We always start with a prayer and end by entrusting our rest to the Virgin. But in the middle of the talk we understood that the guest always present was Jesus Christ, who strongly links us to the pastoral and to the people who come along with us. We can all be far to each other (on the other side of a screen) or in different cities, but each meeting, each conversation links our history and the memory of what La Salle did to us.

Only few times we met at the same time in the same work. But the stories of the past make us feel Lasallians, and that we are building ourselves as a community. Professors, catechists, young brothers and those who are not so young have been invited to this program, so I can also appreciate that this space becomes vocational when we feel that we share part of our lives and our dreams.



I want to thank all those who join us Friday through Friday because they are also part of what we believe, and that is that at La Salle we always build fraternity. For those who are interested in seeing us, they can enter Facebook @PastoralLasallistaPeru every Friday at 21:00 (GMT-5) and find a space to be ***Among Friends***, who are Lasallians and feel like brothers.