

In memoriam Brother Miguel Campos FSC (1938 - 2024)

On the morning of January 4, 2024, Brother Miguel Adolfo Campos Marino departed to the Father's House. He passed away at the age of 85 at De La Salle Hall in Lincroft NJ (USA), where he had lived for the last few years.

His journey as a Brother of the Christian Schools and his great **spiritual, theological and pastoral legacy**, in addition to his highly appreciated human and academic qualities, find their origins on the Caribbean island of Cuba.

Early years

He was born in Guantánamo on June 17, 1938. From the age of 7 to 18 he was a student at the Sacred Heart school run by the Brothers of the Christian Schools in his hometown. After completing his secondary education, he started Chemical Engineering at Georgetown University in the United States, but he only stayed there for two years (1957 - 1959), as he joined the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on July 16, 1959, entering the novitiate in Havana (Cuba). By that time the Cuban revolution had already succeeded.

On 7 October of the same year, 1959, he received the habit, and was given the religious name of Miguel Arturo - as was customary in religious congregations before the Second Vatican Council. Later, **on September 8, 1961, he made his first vows** in Panama, a few months after the expulsion of the Brothers from Cuba by the revolutionary government led by Fidel Castro.

For him, as for the other Cuban Brothers, **what seemed like a 'pause' in the service of his people, ended up being a permanent exile.** Given the circumstances, he was assigned by his superiors to the District of Antilles. Those who knew him testify to his ability to adapt and learn a new culture and language: "forced by circumstances into becoming an expat, he made opportunity of necessity and became a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world".

Formation and contribution to Lasallian Studies

Brother Miguel was 23 years old when he began his theological studies as a

student Brother at the Iesus Magister Institute in Rome; he earned his degree in 1965. Later, after several years of teaching and pastoral experience, he returned to the Eternal City to conduct his **doctoral studies in theology at the Pontifical Lateran University between 1970 and 1973**, alternating with some service at the Generalate, first as Director of the Lasallianum (1970 - 1971), and then as a member of the staff of the International Lasallian Center - CIL (1971 - 1973).

His doctoral dissertation on the ***Gospel Itinerary of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*** received the highest score (*summa cum laude*) and was published in the collection *Cahiers lasalliens* - in Nos. 45 and 46 - and soon became a classic work of Lasallian Studies and, practically, a required reading for understanding the life and spirituality of the Founder, which included an innovative and detailed commentary on his ***Meditations for the Time of Retreat*** which opened new paths for understanding the ministry of the Christian educator and his vocation.

From the time of his doctoral studies, he was accompanied by Brother Michel Sauvage (1923 - 2001), with whom he cultivated a prolific friendship and shared important initiatives of research and dissemination of Lasallian Studies, as can be seen in ***Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*** (1977), as well as in the ***Explanation of the Method on Interior Prayer of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*** (1989), published in the *Cahiers Lasalliens* (No. 50), among many other works developed in co-authorship and which had a great impact on Lasallian formation throughout the world.

His deep closeness and friendship with Brother Michel are reflected in the commemorative book to the French Brother published in the collection *Études lasalliennes* No. 17 under the title: *The Fragile Hope of a Witness* (2014). In the epilogue, Brother Michel testifies to their “**affinity as conspirators seduced by the Spirit**” and to the significant secret vow which united them in association for the service of the Institute, at a time of “fragile hope”.

Educator and pastoral minister

As an educator, pastoral minister, scholar, lecturer, counsellor and spiritual mentor, Brother Miguel Campos had a transcendent impact on the lives of many Lasallians in the Institute. In his first years of pastoral ministry (1965-1968), after earning a Degree in Theology, he taught Religion and

Mathematics in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), where he created the Department of Education in the Faith, collaborated in the revitalization of catechesis and energized Youth Ministry in 19 educational works. There he also led teacher training and liberation pedagogy programs. Those were the times of the *aggiornamento* brought about by the Second Vatican Council.

In 1974 he formally joined the then District of Baltimore, which later became part of the District of Eastern North America (DENA). His contribution as an educator and pastoral minister **was widely appreciated in various ecclesial bodies**. He served as Director of Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Miami in two periods: from 1968 to 1970 and, after completing his doctorate, from 1973 to 1974. Later, he was Director of Latino ministry offices in the same archdiocese of Miami (1978-1981), and Director of Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Newark (1981-1986).

His theological and pastoral legacy as a catechist, writer, formator and lecturer also unfolded in various ministries in the United States and Institute formation centers such as the Christian Brothers Spiritual Center in Adamstown MD (1974 - 1975), La Salle College in Philadelphia PA (1975 - 1977), Sangre de Cristo Retreat Center in Santa Fe NM (1977 - 1978) and Hudson Catholic High School in Jersey City NJ (1978). At Philadelphia University (1992 - 1998), in particular, he served as Director of the multicultural program and developed several programs aimed at the formation of Latino pastoral agents that had a wide impact. He also collaborated with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, where he was in charge of Latino ministry (1991 - 1992).

Within the Institute, between 1986 and 1991, he was in charge of *Études Lasalliennes* in Paris (France), **always ready to give conferences and lead spiritual retreats in various Lasallian Regions**. He was also part of the team which planned the SIELs and taught at one of them in 1991.

Back to Cuba

However, the return of the Brothers to Cuba in 1987 had sown in Brother Miguel great hopes and expectations for the possibility of collaborating in the Lasallian mission in his own country. His dream became a reality when he **was sent to Santiago de Cuba in 1998, where he served as Pastoral Coordinator and Director of Youth Ministry in the Diocese of Santiago de Cuba**, and, in

particular, coordinated the diocesan assembly in 1999, among many other contributions which led him to advise on pastoral planning and the assemblies of other dioceses and of the Bishops Conference itself, always remaining close to the young people and to the People of God, accompanying the multitudinous pilgrimages to the National Shrine of the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, patroness of Cuba.

He was also a witness and key player in the visit of John Paul II to Cuba, from 25 to 28 January 1998, in his role as head of Youth Ministry at the national level. It was an unprecedented moment for the Church, as he was the first pontiff to make an apostolic journey to the island, in addition to its profound pastoral significance in the midst of the Cuban revolution that had already completed four decades.

General Councilor

Brother Miguel was there when he was **appointed General Councilor of the Institute during the first term of Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría** as Superior General (2000 - 2007).

During this mandate, his mission as a Councilor focused, above all, towards the **accompaniment of the Region of Latin America (RELAL)** and the process that led to the publication of the document *Being Brothers Today*, among many other tasks that were entrusted to him.

At the conclusion of his service as Councilor, he returned to the United States where he **continued to collaborate with Latino pastoral ministry** in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, with Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Newark and with the Office of Multicultural and International Affairs at La Salle University in Philadelphia as an Advisor until 2015.

His final years (2015 - 2024) were spent at De La Salle Hall Residence in Lincroft NJ, where he faced with a spirit of faith and courage the Parkinson's disease that was evidencing progressive neurological deterioration. "His famed ability to communicate and connect with almost anyone grew sadly limited, and he grew quiet," commented the DENA Brothers in his obituary. "His sparkling eyes and gentle smile remained," they add.

Easter

Brother Miguel celebrated his Easter in the peace of the Lord on January 4. The news of his death was a sensitive one for the whole Lasallian world. **His theological, pastoral and spiritual legacy will continue to encourage the life and mission of Lasallians.**

His funeral Mass will be celebrated on Saturday, January 13 at 2 pm at the De La Salle Chapel of La Salle University, Philadelphia (1900 West Olney Avenue - Philadelphia PA 19141). Burial will take place on Monday, January 15 at 11.30 am at La Salle Hall Chapel (6001 Ammendale Road - Beltsville MD 20705). His remains will be laid to rest in the De La Salle Cemetery located at De La Salle Hall.

We thank God for the life and testimony of Brother Miguel Campos. RIP

" The wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever" (Dn 12:3).

** With information from the Institute's Office of Data Management and Research and the District of Eastern North America (DENA).*