Meeting of Fraternities and Lasallian Associates for the Mission

From 16 to 18 January, a meeting was held in Rome, at the Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, for representatives of the *Associates for the Mission* from Spain, Italy, Portugal and Burkina Faso, and of the *Fraternities* from France. About twenty Lasallian teachers reflected and had the opportunity to listen to and discuss with each one another, sharing their experiences of their vocation as Associates.

The meeting is part of the programme of the Office of the Lasallian Charismatic Family to get to know and initiate a proactive and enriching dialogue with all the charismatic groups and realities of the Institute. Last year, in May, a meeting was held with the Mother Superiors of the Lasallian women's congregations, representatives of Signum Fidei and other groups. This year it was the turn of the Associates and the French Fraternities next May, the Plenary Assembly of Signum Fidei will take place to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its foundation, while in the near future, yet to be defined, contacts with other groups of the Lasallian Charismatic Family are already planned.

The meeting with the Associates and Fraternities revealed great vitality and strong enthusiasm on the part of all participants. "With the strengths of the Associate vocation, we have also glimpsed the challenges that await us. That is why it is necessary to constantly renew our Lasallian paths of mission, of calling to Lasallian vocations and of commitment to the educational service of children and young people," says the Director of the Office, Brother Mario Chiarapini. "The different realities of expression of Asociation all contribute to the vitality of the charism that is at the heart of everything. Our Associates and the members of the Fraternities reveal themselves to be true Brothers according to the idea of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, even if they are not so from a canonical point of view. They are Brothers to all those who are committed to the same educational mission and older Brothers to the children they meet every day."

Ms. Colette Allix, coordinator for France, remarked with satisfaction: "We have

experienced three days of fraternal exchanges, prayer for the mission, sharing of associative experiences and Lasallian journeys. We were happy to meet each other. The group work allowed us to take on board the reflections shared by the speakers. We thank Brother Mario for his testimony, the stimulating organisation and his sense of humour. We reflected on our identity as a Charismatic Family, on the links between Brothers and lay people, on fraternity as a ministry, on mission, on vocation."

The representatives of the Arlep District, Manuel Jesús Bravo Sánchez and Jordi Jover Ollé, reiterated that "it has been a fraternal and positive meeting, which has generated closeness and mutual understanding. We are different, but we are united precisely by the Lasallian charism."

The three days of reflection were enriched by presentations from the Vicar General of the Institute, Brother Carlos Gómez, who recalled some original and fundamental aspects of the Lasallian educational charism, such as the strength of community, the mission to serve the poor and young people at risk, and the spirit of faith with a constant commitment to discerning God's will.

Similarly, Brother Mario Chiarapini focused on the identity and meaning of belonging to the Lasallian Charismatic Family; Ms Colette Allix spoke of the transition from Brothers to lay Lasallian, in fidelity to the founding charism; Mr Andrea Testa addressed the vocation of the associate, called to an important mission. For his part, Brother Joël Palud, General Councillor, strongly emphasised the need to undertake adequate formation for the transmission of the Lasallian charism, while Ms Annalisa Malatesta drafted the concluding and programmatic lines for a future path.

In saying goodbye, the Associates and members of the Fraternities committed themselves, each in their own environment, to be yeast and wind of hope with boldness and generosity.

* *Article prepared by the Office of the Lasallian Charismatic Family.*