New publication by Brother Pedro Gil: “From One Community to Another” (Lasallian Studies No. 19)

“History has revealed to us that religious life will last as long as the Church. It has shown a remarkable power of survival, a marvellous capacity to develop and adapt, in spite of periods of crisis, in spite of the ups and downs that religious life has known. If we have the courage, the openness and the willingness to be led by the Spirit, the work begun by Saint La Salle and developed by generations of his children over nearly three centuries will see a new flowering of its dynamism in the next generation, that is, over the next century.”

With these words taken from the speech of Brother Charles-Henri, former Superior General of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to the General Chapter of 1976, begins the work ***“From One Community to Another*****,”** written by **Brother Pedro María Gil**, of the Arlep District (La Salle in Spain and Portugal), which consists of two volumes and is part of the **Collection of Lasallian Studies**.

Under the general direction of **Brother Santiago Rodríguez Mancini**, Director of the Office of Lasallian Heritage and Research, this new publication is the **19th** issue of this significant collection, which for more than three decades has contributed significantly to the dissemination and deepening of the living tradition inherited from Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

Looking to the future

On this occasion, **the research of Brother Pedro María Gil is part of the commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the pontifical recognition of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools**, through the Bull *In Apostolicae dignitatis solio*, issued by Pope Benedict XIII at the end of January 1725. “a good occasion to look to the future and to ask ourselves about the meaning of its journey through these three long centuries of life,” as he himself states in the presentation of the book.

“The concrete origin of this work was in the reception of the capitulants, returning from the Assembly in Rome in 2022,” continues Brother Pedro. “Before them, in their reflections, **I had the impression that we had not made much progress in interpreting the dynamics of the last half-century**.”

Therefore, observing that “two or three decades had passed that showed both the inadequacy of the inherited model for the Lasallian community and the emergence of new forms in its design,” Brother Pedro felt moved to “systematise reflection on the process of the large Lasallian community with the aim of spreading it throughout its universe and contributing to harmonising the different situations.” To this end, he adds, **“I was greatly helped by the reception of the study in Rome and, in particular, by the Lasallian Research Seminar held in October last year**.”

Transformation of the community experience

Although the author had initially planned to title the work “Three Centuries Later,” in explicit reference to the Bull, he confesses that **“little by little, I saw clearly that I had to be more specific and make it clear that three centuries later, we were facing a transformation of the community**.” “That is why I thought it was important to point this out on the cover.”

Furthermore, as he delved deeper into the convictions that accompanied him during the process of research and systematisation, Brother Pedro acknowledges that “throughout my life, I had come to realise that De La Salle was not the founder of the Christian Schools—as some of our hymns sang—but that he had founded the Brothers of the Christian Schools, that is, communities that would animate the schools. **That network of communities was the essence of our inherited institutional structure**.”

“From that point on, I understood better what had happened during the last century and perceived the Institute’s desire to establish a new model. In other words, I interpreted the entire 20th century as a movement towards the refounding of the Community of the Christian Schools,” he adds.

Restore, Renew, Refound

He has developed this perspective extensively throughout the first volume of his work: **“A Century of Signs**“. “It was first a time of perplexity and attempts at restoration. Then, another time, full of generosity, dedicated to the renewal of

what had been inherited. Finally, we are living the fruit of this and we speak of a time of refounding," he asserts.

On the other hand, in the second volume, **"The Interior Architecture,"** he refers to the axes of the new Community and proposes six criteria for building it: (1) An Institution in History; (2) the New Evangelisation; (3) the Call; (4) the Commissioning; (5) the Christian School; and (6) the Community of the Christian School. Thus, he emphasises that the objective of his study has been "to achieve a common language regarding Lasallian identity" as "a possible underground architecture for a possible future."

Three keys to understanding

"I believe that it is time to gather together all our efforts to overcome perplexities and give meaning to the renewals, interpreting everything as a great invitation to fidelity to God, to the Institute, and to the 'signs of the times'," emphasises the Spanish religious, as he shares some keys to reading this new Lasallian work — the same ones he has used in his writing — namely:

- **"The first is a review of our history over the last century**. I believe that we do not know it well enough. I am not talking about knowing it in a scholarly, scientific way, as a historian would. I am referring to the family chronicle, as it is shown to us over three or four generations. And it would probably be enough to do so with regard to the local area, known to all: it is more than eloquent. It is worth trying."

- **"The second key is theological in nature: it is reflection on our consecration**. We need to reflect on the meaning of what unites us, of our commitment, of our stability. To understand, for example, the *Meditations for the time of Retreat* beyond conventional religious forms: not to reject them, certainly, but to understand their real meaning."

- **"And the third is sociological**. We need to contextualise our Institution within the whole range of social institutions today, both those that exist and those that are needed. We need to realise that perhaps the very concept of education means something different today than it did two or three centuries ago. We need to do this, not to distance ourselves from anything we do, but to understand it better and then reconstitute it from within. The value of our local institutions is enormous, and we must recognise and appreciate it. This can provide us with a level of resources

for our institutional renewal that others do not have.”

The two volumes of this new work by Lasallian Studies No. 19, **“From One Community to Another,”** 218 and 232 pages respectively, are now available in Spanish, both in digital and print formats. English and French editions will be published shortly.

Download the two volumes of the new publication *“From One Community to Another” (Lasallian Studies No. 19)* here.

- **Lasallian Studies 19**
  Pedro María Gil
  From one community to another
  Lasallian Studies 19 – I. A century of signs

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** In addition, a summary of the work is shared in podcast format, created using Artificial Intelligence.* ***Listen to it here (in Spanish).***