Presentation of the Year's Theme

Brother Aidan Kilty (Sept 24th 2020)

On September 24, 2020, for the first time in a long time, in the Aula Magna of the Generalate of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the General Council met with all the employees, to mark the beginning of the new year of work, after the difficult times of these last months, forced to stay at home and to a substantial change in our habits.

Taking advantage of this occasion, Brother Aidan Kilty (RELEM Councillor) shared with all those present his personal reflection on the theme of the year:

Good morning to all of you. For the next few minutes I would like to say a few words to you about the Lasallian theme that we have chosen for this year. As you are aware, the theme is: **You are part of the Miracle. Our vision, our passion, our future**. At first glance, you might think that this has little to do with us here in the Casa, that it really only concerns those in the outside Lasallian world, those directly involved in Lasallian education in the thousands of schools, colleges, centres and universities throughout the Institute. Certainly, there is no doubt that this theme does resonate with all true Lasallians engaged in education since it recalls the powerful and inspiring words of Saint John Baptist de La Salle to all engaged in the Lasallian mission that "the greatest miracle you could perform" is to "touch the hearts of your students and inspire them with the Christian spirt…for this is the purpose of your work…"(Med 139.3).

However, the Gospel inspiration for this year's theme is the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand from "five loaves and two fishes" in Matthew's Gospel which has application to all of us in our everyday life, irrespective of the nature of our work. All of us have something to offer – all of us have our own particular five loaves and two fishes – which, with the grace of God, can make our world a better place to the extent that we are prepared to share what we have. And the world that I am referring to is not some distant or remote Lasallian educational world; it is the world of our families, our friends, and our work here in the Casa.

This, too, is part of what it means to be Lasallian. At the heart of the Lasallian

mission, at the heart of the Lasallian vision, are relationships; between students and teachers, between teachers and parents, between those who work together in any of our houses or centres for the greater good; all are called, in the words of De La Salle to perform the miracle of "touching hearts".

And how is this manifested here in the Casa? It is through the quality of our relationships that we "touch hearts"; in the way we reach out and support each other; in the way we treat each other; in the smile of welcome that we give to each other; in the way we speak to, and about, each other. To the extent that we treat each other with respect and compassion, here in the Casa **we become part of the miracle** of "touching hearts". Clearly, this is not exclusive to Lasallians – all are challenged to be respectful and compassionate irrespective of our religious beliefs; it is part of being fully human but, nonetheless, it is one of the characteristics that identifies us as being Lasallian and helps to create an authentic Lasallian community.

The Gospel story of the feeding of the five thousand recounts that the disciples came to Jesus and asked him "to send the people off to the villages to buy themselves food"; the response of Jesus was "…give them something to eat yourselves…" Lasallian Reflection number 6 highlights a number of significant examples as to how Lasallians worldwide have responded to Jesus' challenge to "give them something to eat yourselves…". In the Reflection you can read, for example, about the response of the District of Francophone Canada creating a centre to welcome an immigrant community struggling with financial issues and cultural isolation; or the response of the College of St Benilde in the Philippines to provide educational opportunities for young people with disabilities such as blindness and deafness or those with mental health issues. Nearer home, in Scampia in the South of Italy, you will see that CasArcoBaleno was created in response to the educational and spiritual needs of young Neapolitans and Rom living in grinding poverty, unschooled, and vulnerable to threats and pressure from organized crime. You can also read about the Fratelli Project, which some of you may know about, a joint project by the De La Salle and Marist Brothers in Lebanon, to deal with Syrian and Iraqui refugees from war and religious persecution.

Obviously, living and working here in the Casa, we are not in a position to participate directly in the miracles of compassion and generosity that these initiatives, and so many others, represent throughout our Lasallian world.

However, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, the miracle of “touching hearts” is open to all of us here in the Casa through the quality of our daily relationships, by our support work for the worldwide Institute through our various offices and Secretariats, and through our work in ensuring that the Casa is a nourishing, welcoming and hospitable environment for all guests, particularly Lasallians from throughout the world, who come to make use of our facilities here throughout the year. You are all an integral part of the Lasallian mission and you all have the opportunity to be “part of the miracle”. Brother Superior and his Council are very grateful to all of you for your essential role in developing the Lasallian mission.

Thank you to all of you.