RELAL: Challenged to a new adventure with the Lord!

At the end of the Meeting of the Lasallian Region of Latin America (RELAL) with the Superior General and his Council, held in Medellin during the week of 4 to 9 September, Brother Armin Luistro, Superior General, addressed the 59 participants from the eight Districts of RELAL, recalling that **"the 46th General Chapter invites us once again to a new adventure with the Lord"**.

Calling upon creativity

Armin evoked the unprecedented track record of Lasallians in Latin America and the Caribbean, since the arrival of the first De La Salle Brothers in the second half of the 19th century: "**it is a powerful story that captures not only your glorious past, [but] it is also an amazing narrative that should call upon your creativity and deeply touch your hearts**, just as our own founding story does," the Filipino religious assured.

Going to the "peripheries and borders of the continent" remains a necessity for RELAL. "**Where are your brother and sister in Latin America and the Caribbean**" is a question that cannot be put off. Brother Armin also invited us to consider in depth the "uncomfortable questions" suggested by Brother Carlos Gómez, Vicar General, when referring to the Leavening Project: when did we last make a liminal, bold decision pushed to the limits? Is community life at the heart of the educational project? Does our educational service respond to exclusion, injustice, inequity? which of our current ministries or communities have walls thick enough to resist the leavening power of the yeast; which of our current ministries or communities have walls thick enough to resist the fermenting power of the leaven?

Embarking on the journey to the peripheries

"It is up to each of you to live these questions as we all set out on the journey to the peripheries," said the Superior General, quoting one of the biblical texts meditated on during the meeting, as a motivation for pilgrimage and for stepping

out of comfort zones, “to feel that gentle breeze in which the Spirit of the Lord whispers: **‘Put out into the deep and lower your nets for a catch**‘.

With grateful feelings, **Brother Armin urged RELAL to continue to embrace “the challenges for the Church, the strengths and opportunities in our communities and ministries**, and the possible common projects and strategies that could guide us in the years to come (…) We are La Salle! Animo La Salle!

He also remarked, regarding a memorable quote from Brother Álvaro Rodríguez, former Superior General of the De La Salle Brothers, that, truly, “our greatest richness is to be Brothers”. Thus, “I am only a Brother as long as I act as a brother, speak as a brother, love as a brother. **I am only Lasallian as long as I act as a Lasallian, speak as a Lasallian, love as a Lasallian**. May we be able to celebrate our Lasallian fraternity every day and continue to do every action every day for the love of God,” he concluded.

Many lessons have been learned and many commitments have emerged from this RELAL meeting. This is how the Brother Visitors succinctly expressed it:

Accompanying the vocation of Brothers and Lasallians

“The accompaniment and vocation promotion of the Brothers and Lasallians” will be a priority, a commitment for the Lasallian District of Bogotá, as its Visitor, Brother Diego Díaz, said. For that reason, **“formation is essential”**, he underlined.

Another task that the District will take on will be **“to make the Leavening Project a reality, especially in the contexts where there is the greatest need**, whether in Colombia, in Latin America or in other realities of the Institute”, because what it is all about is “being on the move, as Pope Francis asks us to be”.

Building a new momentum

Brother Olavo Dalvit, Visitor of the District of Brazil-Chile, believes that their main commitment after the meeting will be “to encourage and promote that we can think differently”, with regard to the Leavening Project, so as not to concentrate all our efforts “on maintaining the structures – although this is also an important issue – but to **look towards proposals where everyone feels part of it”, and this undoubtedly implies “an interior conversion, a personal**

conversion”, in order to “build a new dynamic within our communities”.

“We need to look at the people, at the realities, understanding that **each lay person -men and women- each Brother and each formand is part of this process that needs to be undertaken**“, adds Brother Olavo, after the meeting held in Medellín.

Committing to ‘Pathways of Transformation

For the Visitor of the District of Antillas-Mexico Sur, Brother Francisco Flores, “many commitments” are emerging from the days of these days, and specifically in relation to the Leavening Project. “Perhaps the most important thing is that **there may be many plans, texts and publications, but the important thing is that the content reaches the heart and helps us to move from within**, to look at the realities we have in front of us from another point of view, to respond with all the energy, with all this look and these new ‘Pathways of Transformation’ to which the General Chapter invites us”.

In short, for the Visitor of Antillas-Mexico Sur, “the commitment is that these documents touch the soul, the heart, and that a **change is generated in the people who make up the Districts**, and that this change may be perceived in the new ‘Pathways of Transformation'”.

Dreaming together

“To be open to continue working in a network, opening ourselves to the lessons learned, strengthening [this network], creating synergies and sharing what we learn, but, above all, to continue dreaming together”, are priority actions for the District of Central America – Panama, according to its Visitor, Brother Manuel Orozco.

It is a question of embracing not only the dreams of the District, but also the Regional dreams and those of the Institute, the Lasallian religious pointed out, stressing that this imperative “involves personal and community conviction – in communities of Brothers and educational works – to **continue to make the Kingdom of God a reality on a daily basis and with concrete actions**“.

Accepting the challenge to go to the peripheries

Br. Fabián Maragliano, Visitor of the District of Argentina-Paraguay, underlined

two vital tasks which emerged from the RELAL meeting with the Superior General and his Council. Firstly, “to accept the challenge of going to the peripheries”, which implies **“discovering which are the peripheries we have in Argentina and Paraguay”**.

Secondly, there is a need for “communities that animate”, and this implies “**revitalising communities of Brothers and Lay Partners who are capable of carrying out projects in the midst of those most impoverished**, of the peripheries”. The mission of the Visitor of Argentina-Paraguay after the Meeting is to work on these challenges, to begin to move forward and to consolidate them, if necessary.

Knowing how to die in order to seek new scenarios

Likewise, the Visitor of the District of Norandino, Brother Jeanpierre Zambrano, highlighted that **“it is time to open up new pathways”** after having established a new District experience, in order to “seek new scenarios”.

This implies **“knowing how to die” to some “outdated realities** of many years, and opening ourselves to new experiences”, continues Br Jeanpierre. If this important step is not taken, “the District of Norandino will not be a prophet, it will continue to do business as usual”, and “it is time to be a prophet and to be bold!

Assuming the continent’s new challenges

From the point of view of Brother Jorge Antonio Aguilar, Visitor of the District of Bolivia-Peru, one of the challenges raised by the RELAL Meeting was, on the one hand, “**accompanying the Brothers, being close to them**“, but also the need to “prepare ourselves to take up the challenges posed by the current circumstances” in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Faced with the migratory phenomenon that is affecting the continent, Br. Jorge affirms that “my commitment is that my Brothers and all our Districts commit themselves to **support all these people who are moving in Latin America**“.

Continue networking

Finally, Brother César Pablo Campos, in charge of Vocations Ministry in the District of Mexico Norte, expressed the desire of the District leadership team to

“**renew the agreements, efforts and commitments with RELAL, to continue to be involved in the networks** that the Region already has” and to “promote pastoral ministry, communications, programs with volunteer, as well as reflection on the rights of children and young people”, among other aspects.

This implies “continuing to join forces in terms of the religious formation of the Brothers”, for which “we have created a strong partnership with the northern zone of RELAL, with the Districts of Antillas-Mexico Sur, and Central America – Panama”, around “**common formation processes so that Brothers and Lay Partners are better prepared** (…) in order to be a light for those around us”, concludes the Lasallian religious.