

# Young Lasallians called to “Fan the Flame of Hope”

On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March, **more than 200 Lasallians gathered to take part in Flame 2025 at the Wembley OVO Arena in London.** “Sponsored by the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation (CYMFed) in England, Flame is a biennial event which brings together over 10,000 young people, making it the largest Catholic youth gathering in England and Wales”, remarked Heather Ruple, Chair of the Commission on Association of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.



“This year’s theme was ‘Unstoppable: Fan the Flame of Hope’”, continued Heather, who underlines its relevance “as the Church celebrates the **Jubilee Year: ‘Pilgrims of Hope’**, and the Lasallian Family continues to mark the **Year of Lasallian Spirituality**” coinciding with the **Tercentenary of the Bull of Approbation** of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

In addition, the Lasallian Family in Great Britain is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Saint Cassian’s* Centre in Kintbury; that is why CYMFed invited Br Chris Patiño, General Councillor of the Institute, to be part of the group of special guests at Flame 2025.

“At a time when polarisation, isolationism, war, increasing poverty in many places, the continuing mental health epidemic, especially among young people, a mistrust of institutions, including our own Church, and societal messages that often confuse and mislead all surround us [...] we need to fan the flame of hope”, observed Br. Chris, urging young people to “believe in your goodness, believe in your potential, believe that God loves you unconditionally and therefore you are called to a mission of love. Chris, urging young people, **“believe in your goodness, believe in your potential, believe that God loves you**

**unconditionally** and therefore you are uncalled to a mission of love”.

## Unstoppable mission



“This must be our unstoppable mission”, affirmed Br. Chris, referring to his own vocation: “as a De La Salle Brother, I am guided by the charism handed down by our Founder, St. John Baptist de La Salle, Patron Saint of Educators, **a charism that is rooted in encountering hope in young people through the ministry of**

**education**”. Furthermore, “in the words of De La Salle, young people are the letter that Jesus Christ dictates to us and that [we are called to write every day in their hearts, not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God...]”.

“Can you believe that? Can you recognise that you are a letter dictated by Jesus Christ?”. Brother Chris challenged the young people, encouraging them to hope: **“Through you, through your dreams, through your joys and struggles, the Spirit of the living God wishes to cultivate the unstoppable hope** that will build the reign of God, a more peaceful, just and fraternal world, because ‘the love of God has been poured into [your] hearts through the Holy Spirit’”.

This requires that we recognise the ways in which God realises this love within us. To highlight this conviction, Br. Chris assured, **“the great mission we have today as a Church is to once again humanise our world, our societies, our communities**”. It is therefore required “to see, honour and embrace the humanity in each person. To love one another, as we have been loved”.

An example of this is the secondary school run by the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rumbek, South Sudan, to which the Lasallian religious referred. “The school opened in 2018 where today we have a community of three Brothers, one from Nigeria, another from India and the third from Venezuela (...). **In the smallness that is the community and the bareness that is the land, they seek to carry out a transformative educational mission with and among others** (...). It is not an easy mission, but together, with the local Church they are fostering peace and creating hope in a nation that has been scarred by violence and suffering”.

Br. Chris also made explicit reference to ***Saint Cassian's in Kintbury***, “**where for 50 years young people have been invited to become themselves, to become aware, to become reconciled and to become good news**. Without knowing it then, Br. Damian Lundy, the founding figure of *Saint Cassian's*, attentive to the Holy Spirit and with the desire for young people to recognise that Spirit of the living God within them, created a space that cultivates that unstoppable hope. This work continues thanks to a dedicated staff and a team of volunteers; they, along with young Lasallians from throughout England, are represented here today”.

### ***The Kintbury Experience***

Regarding this significant work, its current director, Emma Biggins, **said that “retreats at *Saint Cassian's* allow young people to take time away from the everyday, to encounter God, to discover their worth and to grow in faith”**, so that the path laid out by the Brothers continues today, 50 years later. “This vision of youth ministry continues to inspire volunteers, teachers, staff and students from schools around the world”, she added.

From an informal education approach, the ***Kintbury Experience***, as it is known, offers young people spaces for interiorisation and spiritual retreat. “More recently, with the introduction of five core principles: faith in the Presence of God; Inclusive Community; Respect for All Persons; Quality Education; and Concern for the Poor and Social Justice, **retreatants have come to understand the legacy of De La Salle and the worldwide Lasallian mission**”, explained Emma.

In summing up, Heather expressed that “the Year of Lasallian Spirituality invites the Lasallian Family to consider, in part, how we live out our incarnational spirituality in daily interactions with young people and with each other in a community. **Flame was an opportunity to gather Lasallians in England together; and to celebrate our faith in a space which allowed our young people to show authentically and unreservedly the gift of hope** that they are to their school communities, the District, the Lasallian Family and the Church”.

**You can watch Br Chris Patiño's intervention at Flame 2025 below:**