La Salle Tabatinga Community: learnings and meaningful experiences

The La Salle Tabatinga Community «is a very necessary presence, not only because of the work it does with the community, with the local Church, but also as a **sign of insertion and an example of the whole Leavening Movement**«. With these words, Brother Rafael Cerón, General Councillor of the Institute, has appreciated the Lasallian mission in Amazonia, on the triple border between Brazil, Colombia and Peru.

During his most recent visit to the community of Brothers and volunteers in Tabatinga, accompanied by Brother Vinicio González, Secretary General of the Lasallian Region of Latin America (RELAL), Brother Rafael had the opportunity to talk and share with those who are finishing and those starting their service in this particular Lasallian mission, considered to be **"a forward post" in the Region, because of its service to those most in need.**

"The greatest learning that I take from the experience here in Tabatinga is to **have discovered the flowing life of the Amazonian Indigenous people, of the people who live here, where they have definitely** integrated from very remote times to nature, to the spirit of the rainforest", declares Brother Marco Salazar, summing up his work during the last few years, underlining that, from the ecclesial point of view, it has been "an enormous learning of synodality, of operating with missionaries, with priests, with lay people, with religious men and women … a very rich experience".

Pastoral Ministry of Vocations

In this regard, the bishop of the Brazilian diocese of Alto Solimões, Mgr. Adolfo Zon Pereira, particularly appreciates the fact that "**our pastoral ministry of vocations has begun a process of accompanying young people in their vocational journey**, It was a treasurable moment that is helping us to promote local vocations a little more".

One of Brother Daniel Niño's contributions over the last three years has been precisely in the formative, pastoral and vocational accompaniment processes. Taking stock of the path he has journeyed, he states, "**the greatest learning has come from contact with the indigenous peoples.** Meeting these people who bring with them a whole ancestral background, a whole series of experiences of spirituality, has made me rediscover God from different aspects".

Jonhatan Stiven Olarte also agrees, pointing out that "One of the things I have learned from my experience as a volunteer in the community of La Salle Tabatinga is to recognise God in my neighbour, in the affection that the people give us, in sharing with the native peoples; and this has been very important for my personal development and for my vocational and professional search". "**I am very happy with the community experience, to feel «part of» and to get to know more deeply the De La Salle Brothers who welcomed me with open doors"**, he adds.

In the case of Brother Jesús Emmanuel Villegas, taking part in the mission of the Church in Tabatinga has lead him to «be attentive, to get to know, to see and to be able to act with the people we live with», especially in the face of the call **"to take care of our common home and to be brothers of all for all"**.

Moving away from our familiar structures

Brother Marco highlights, "**from the Lasallian point of view, it was also an experience of going out, of moving away from our familiar structures**", "we are opening ourselves up to a different way of responding to the mission, to the great needs that exist here", a region that has been strongly impacted by violence, human trafficking and drug trafficking, among other realities that continue to be a great challenge.

For his part, Brother Mauricio Gómez Sánchez, who has joined the community this year, shared his expectations in terms of hope: "**My hope in this journey is to get to know and appreciate the Amazonian face of the Church**. It is also to continue the work that we as Lasallians have been doing to bring us closer to the life of the native peoples who have preceded us in this territory".

In the same perspective, for María Victoria Cisneros, a volunteer from the District of Argentina-Paraguay, "to come to get to know, to learn, to learn with others and to fill myself with the love of God that he has for me in these places" is one of her greatest motivations as she initiates her missionary experience at La Salle Community, Tabatinga.