

Intercapitular Meeting, May 2004

# The Educational Service of the Poor

Brothers of the Christian Schools  
Via Aurelia 476  
00165 Rome, Italy

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## Presentation

You are opening here a new MEL booklet which, as well as being an echo of an event (the Inter-Capitular Meeting of May 2004), offers you a description and analysis of the expressions and new or renewed forms of the Educational Service of the Poor across the Lasallian Educational Service of today.

Invited by the Br. Superior and his Council, all the Regional Coordinators, Visitors, Auxiliary-Visitors, Presidents and Delegates, were at the Mother House in Rome in May 2004 for what is called an inter-capitular meeting. Four years after the General Chapter which had as its theme precisely *Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor*, it was necessary to take stock in this area and to give some new impetus. How had the Regions and the Districts, in their diversity, responded to Proposition 12 of the General Chapter which had asked them *to measure the degree of contribution of the works of the Districts to the educational service of the poor, and to draw up a plan of action (...)?*

This booklet will allow you to become aware of the main parts of the excellent and eloquent contributions which were made at this meeting. It will allow you to distance yourself a little for a time from your local educational mission in order to look with a greater air of detachment at the map of your Lasallian Region and that of the Institute. You will then see that the conviction and energy which you put into your educational mission or the interest which you show in your mission is widely shared and gives rise to new initiatives and a more determined commitment among numerous Lasallian educators across the world. It is good that we should in our minds the map of our District and that of the Institute, which shows us the diversity of the "works" being engaged in, different and complementary aspects of the one educational mission. There we can distinguish the tendencies and emphasis of recent years, the strengths and resources, the paths still open...

You will read the invitations and exhortations, such as those of Br. Alvaro, Superior General. You will read descriptions of projects by Regional Coordinators or Visitors. You will also read the analy-

sis and commentaries suggested by these projects, followed by some forecasts and lines of action proposed by Br. Nicolas Capelle, Secretary for the Education Mission.

In reading the projects carried out or still going on, you will see that to follow up the propositions of the General Chapter, the Districts have followed the path of realism: analysis of needs, assessment of our strengths, initiatives which can be evaluated. These new achievements or these reforms of older programs already tried out, make us understand the different directions taken in the Lasallian world, between innovation and creation on the one hand and revision and transformation on the other hand. This shows that in our family, the call to educational service of the poor is addressed to everyone and that, whatever our commitment today, we can all do more and do it better.

You will meet the protagonists in the Lasallian Educational Mission: Brothers and lay Lasallians, young volunteers and adults associated in varying degrees in and for the Mission.

You will go from country to country, visiting the most varied centres: from a university to a training centre for indigenous Australians, passing through primary and secondary schools, establishments with a long experience and very daring initiatives for the improvement of the conditions of women (India), the Boys Towns and hostels for the socially excluded as well as discreet service in multi-religious societies. These reports also conjure up what is at first sight less spectacular and less moving, but just as necessary for our overall progress: programs for justice and peace and efforts to give financial support in so many countries where education is not subsidised. In reading the texts or reading between the lines, you will perceive the concern for making God known in countries where that is possible, or elsewhere, to be His loving face.

You will surely be both moved at seeing so much generosity and justifiably proud of belonging to this Lasallian family. And in your heart you will hear again the call of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter and above all of the young and of the sons and daughters *"of the artisans and the poor"* of today.

There is no doubt that what has been achieved in these recent years and earlier has been achieved in the movement of the Spirit

who inspires, accompanies, accomplishes and brings to fruition...  
May this same Spirit make us sensitive to the numerous calls to  
serve, so that together we may still be *"instruments of salvation for  
children and the young, especially for those who are farthest  
removed from it"*.

Br. Claude Reinhardt, FSC  
*General Councillor*

## Intercapitular Meeting, May 2004

First of all, Brothers, welcome to this house, which is your house, the common house which unites the Brothers, who come from all over the world, in the same dreams, hopes, challenges, concerns and fears. Thank you for having accepted the invitation to leave your local, everyday reality for a few days in order to open yourself to the international reality of the Institute and together to look for the ways that will allow us to continue being instruments of salvation for children and the young, especially for those who are far from it.

I am especially grateful to the Government Commission and to the team of Brothers who have prepared for our meeting with such dedication and effectiveness.

With this meeting we begin again the tradition, which was interrupted when the period of government was reduced to seven years, of intercapitular meetings and it seems to me that we ought to keep this practice, as it allows us to have a vision of the Institute in its totality and to give renewed momentum to setting in motion the Chapter propositions in a globalized world that changes rapidly and where local urgencies sometimes drown out the most important perspectives and priorities that should guide our leadership ministry.

I had the opportunity in 1981 to participate in the last Intercapitular meeting just a few weeks after I was appointed Auxiliary Visitor of Central America and I have a fond memory of a meeting which allowed me to know the Institute better and to begin my ministry with a wealth of knowledge and a broader perspective. Furthermore, since we have no pressure on us to approve propositions we can devote more time to a discernment both unhurried and without tension which will surely allow us to be more open to the inspiration of the Spirit to live our lives as Brothers more authentically and to give new energy to the Lasallian mission which today we share with the laity.

Our meeting is a concrete response to Proposition 12 of our last General Chapter, which had as its purpose to move forward in educational service of the poor and which asked each District,

Sub-District and Delegation to evaluate the degree to which its ministries have drawn up a plan of action with the participation of Lasallian Associates. We are here to reflect on and to share what we have done in this regard and above all to gather new strength so that, as the *Rule* asks, *direct service of the poor becomes more and more an effective priority (40a)*. Along with this central theme we will touch on other points of great importance for the future of our Institute.

The note sent by Brother Michel Sauvage to the Chapter of 2000 was preceded by a text from a book by Gabriel Ringlet, entitled *The Gospel of a liberal thinker, Could God be a lay person?*, which goes like this:

*If Christianity has a future,  
it will be none other than a vagabond future  
and the rediscovery of that which some theologians call  
"the essence of Exodus"  
because in the present, even more than in the past,  
the central issue is to leave Egypt  
and to pass through the Red Sea,  
to encounter foreign people,  
to invent,  
to innovate,  
and to go forward without baggage  
along an unknown road  
in search of something which is possible and new.*

Since the end of the Chapter of 2000, many of us, with renewed faith in our vocation and in our mission, have set out on the road, advancing, inventing, innovating along roads not known before. We have embraced the Lasallian dream of Association to respond together, Brothers and laity, to the educational urgencies of our time. We value this integral core as the place where the identity of the Brother and the lay Lasallian are built. We have embraced the commitment to work in the promotion of the vocation of the Brother and of the laity. And we have searched for new ways to structure the network of ministries and Lasallian communities in different regions of the world. Institute Bulletin 248, on educational innovations, presents us with a marvelous panorama of what has been lived and done in recent years.

For many of us, this impassioned search in today's world has meant also a rediscovery of the Exodus, of the passing from a known land that we had to leave behind in order to sail towards a shore that we were not familiar with. Like the disciples of Jesus, without realizing it, we've found ourselves in the midst of the sea, rowing against the wind and the tide, following the invitation of Jesus, rowing far out to discover another land. Leaving behind the shore of security and what is known has never been easy and perhaps more than once we have questioned if we are really going forward or falling backward, having been stripped of everything, in the most radical ontological poverty.

## 1. The Exodus experience in our origins.

The Exodus experience that Ringlelet identifies as the essence of Christianity, also characterizes the life journey of Canon John Baptist de La Salle, who left behind a known land to go forward with the first teachers, towards a new shore in 1682.

Brother Luke Salm describes for us what this change from his paternal house to the Rue Neuve meant for the Founder, the house on the Rue Neuve being the true birthplace of our Institute and the beginning of our first community: *For John Baptist de La Salle, this move meant more than a change of residence. He was in fact leaving behind once and for all the comfortable world in which he had grown up to become part of the world of the poor. It is difficult for a modern reader to realize the repugnance felt by this sensitive and delicately brought-up priest when he first experienced the cramped quarters, the sounds and the smells of a quite different social milieu. The coarse food especially brought him to the point of physical nausea, which he was able to overcome only by going without food altogether for days at a time. But once committed, there was no turning back (The Work is Yours, page 37).*

This text invites us to think about from where we serve poor children today. Do we do it from their own world, or from a world of privilege and comfort? The new experiences that we are living today, thanks be to God, I think ought to bring us to a second chance for reviewing our lifestyle and to live our poverty more radically. As John Paul II reminded us in his Lenten message this year: *"Becoming" little ones and "welcoming" little ones are two*



*aspects of one, extraordinary teaching which the Lord renews to his disciples in our time. Only the one who makes himself "little" is able to welcome lovingly the "littlest" brothers and sisters* (2004 Lenten message). And this is what the Rule tells us: *The Brothers are convinced that if they were to fill their hearts with the goods of this earth, they would close themselves off from God and become as strangers to the poor* (32).

An Exodus experience deeper still was no doubt the move from Reims to Paris. The fears and the joys of a life in common, as well as the successes and failures in the professional and ministerial life in the Church in service of poor, young children, would now be the integral core of De La Salle's identity and that of his two associates. In the formula of consecration and association, known as the Heroic Vow, to achieve the establishment of the society of the Christian Schools, De La Salle, along with Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin, express this common will and policy to advance together toward that new world along a road that had not been known before.

Perhaps our meeting today here in Rome in 2004 might come close to that same integral core that marked the identity and the mission of our origins. And that together in Rome our Assembly might carry on that Assembly-Retreat that associated De La Salle with the first Brothers, which culminated in consecration, associating with one another to take on, together and by association, the program of evangelization in favor of the poor, open to all the young people that God entrusted to them.

The Exodus dimension of that experience of the vows of 1694 can only be appreciated, broadly and accurately, in light of the written texts which came along many years later but which are linked to the liturgical days during which their Assembly was carried out. These are the *Meditations* that correspond to *Rogation Days, the Ascension, Pentecost and the Holy Trinity*.

- Let's begin with *Pentecost*. As the first disciples scattered and hid themselves in fear, we Brothers feel called by the Spirit to leave that shore of fear and weakness behind and to walk together as we proclaim the Gospel: *An amazing thing: that these men, up to then so earthly-minded that they could not grasp the sacred truths... were all at once enlightened... (Meditation 43.3)*.

- That Exodus experience is re-lived in the prayers for the Rogation days, renewed each day, in which we associate ourselves with the passion that God has for the *abandoned and the orphans* (Cf. Meditation 37). We are God's ministers, ignited by the passion for his saving plan and his compassion for children who are poor and abandoned.
- That experience is also characterized by Christ's passion for those whom God entrusted to him, and for whom he consecrated himself, even to the point of giving his life. Being one with Him in the heart of God will be the force that makes our ministry believable. (Cf. Meditation 39 for the Eve of the Ascension).
- The experience is also characterized by the experience of the Spirit which gives us the power to perform miracles, to touch hearts (Cf. Meditation 43).

This Exodus experience, enlightened by the liturgical texts of those days of the assembly and the retreat, culminated in consecration on the *Feast of the Holy Trinity*.

This was the mystical and apostolic integral core that characterized the Assembly of 1694.

## 2. The Intercapitular Meeting in light of our first community and the Assembly of 1694.

Today, even more than in the past, Ringlet reminds us that the central issue is *to leave Egypt and to pass through the Red Sea, to encounter foreign people, in search of something which is possible and new.*

- *To leave Egypt*, the Egypt of our security and certainty. To look with new eyes at the urgencies that children and the young are living on all continents. Children and young people with no school, no family, street children. Child soldiers. Abused children. Child workers with no technical training. Children and young people who have been displaced by war. Immigrant children and young people in countries where they are not welcome and where they are rejected. Our network of ministries has been invited to fight together for the rights of children. Our universities and our

formal and non-formal educational programs have this great challenge before them for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- *To pass through the Red Sea* of our insecurity and uncertainty. From lifestyles that are secularized, dispassionate, disillusioned and consumeristic, that do not show to the world God's passion for the poor and the dispossessed of this earth. Insecurity for the decrease of financial resources. Insecurity in our community and professional life. Insecurity due to violence and war. For political and social situations that result in poverty for so many men and women, with entire families plunged into poverty.
- And, above all, an openness to encounter *foreign people*, in new places of educational service, with new people, opening our places to so many men and women who also find their central core among us in Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

### 3. The heart of our Meeting.

We will no doubt live this meeting in the fraternal joy that always characterizes our international gatherings. May that joy find its nourishment in that first central core of our history that was the consecration of those associated for mission in 1694.

But we do not want to keep on looking back at the past. Today, more than in the past, we need *to invent, to innovate and to go forward without baggage*.

- *To invent* new responses that match the social, economic and political changes for the people where we ourselves are, being attentive especially to children and young people who are excluded from the benefits of globalization both in rich countries and in poor countries.
- *To innovate* our structures for community and professional life shared with the laity. Chapter decisions on restructuring are not fulfilled only by the restructuring of Districts based on a decreasing number of Brothers or geographic advisability. Restructuring requires that it first be lived in the personal life of each Brother and each committed lay person. It is lived out in the restructuring of educational

works especially by the creation of participatory structures for the mission which respond better to the problems of young people today.

- *And to go forward without baggage*, in pursuit of Jesus Christ and in the style of De La Salle's community. But none of this will be lived authentically if we do not open ourselves, in conversion, to the powerful action of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which rekindles in our hearts a passion for the poor and, based on them, a passion for all the young people we serve.

## Conclusion

Brothers, allow me to conclude by sharing with you two signs of life and hope which are being seen in the Institute. No doubt we will share others among ourselves here.

I had the good fortune last December to participate in a meeting organized by RELAL (Region of Latin America) for 70 young Brothers under the age of thirty from that Region. At the conclusion of the meeting, they wrote a Creed that reflects their concerns and their dreams. I'll share with you the first few articles. It is an act of faith which today we are invited to renew:

- *We believe that God has gathered us together to keep schools in service of the poor, together and by association.*
- *We believe that our primary association is with the Brothers and we also associate with those who want to live the Charism of De La Salle in their lives: the dream of a human and Christian education for the poor.*
- *We believe that Jesus calls us to share, as he did, the challenge of our mission in building the Kingdom.*
- *We believe that the Holy Spirit will enlighten us along new paths of association.*

During my recent trip to the Mideast I was delightfully impressed by the courage and the determination of our Mideast District to respond to the tremendous needs of nearly 45,000 children and young people who have been displaced from Sudan. In the midst of their own poverty and with major support from the Brothers,

they will open a new community at the end of June or at the beginning of July. During my visit to the various sectors I heard the Brother Visitor say repeatedly: *It's a matter of priority...It's like the widow's humble contribution.* I hope that RELAF (Region of Africa) can join in on this project as soon as possible and that other Regions in the Institute can lend a hand to our Brothers and other Lasallians from the District in that part of the world which has been so tested by violence.

Let us not be afraid of our *vagabond and wandering future* and the rediscovery of the essence of Exodus of our Christian faith and of our Lasallian origins. May we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit along unknown roads but always open to the unforeseeable and to hope.

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría  
Superior General

# The Regions

## PARC

Br. David Hawke

### **Australia**

Luurnpa Catholic School, Balgo Hills is located in Western Australia on the edge of The Great Sandy Desert. Brothers and Lasallian Partners work with indigenous Australians in primary, secondary and adult education.

Resources have been developed in the local language, Kukatja, in order to facilitate learning. Local teacher aids assist in classrooms.

BoysTown is a welfare and vocational training enterprise based in Queensland, Australia with outreaches in other States of the country. It is well known internationally for its telephone counseling service, Kids Helpline. A Parentline counseling service operates for adults.

Programmes cater for indigenous people, single mothers, the unemployed, people with mental health issues, drug offenders and prison inmates.

### **Sri Lanka**

Diyagala Boys Town caters for up to 150 boy resident students who come from poor disadvantaged backgrounds. The program offers a variety of vocational training opportunities leading to employment upon graduation.

Signum Fidel has initiated teaching programmes in villages to assist students whose learning skills are challenged. Teachers and aspirants join Signum Fidei in offering these programmes.

Lasallian Educational Services is a programme literally established in the slums of Colombo where people live in shanty towns. The programme provides pre-school education, health and nutrition training for mothers and basic vocational training. The staff represent the multi-faith dimension of Sri Lankan society. These people

while representing various faith traditions consider themselves very much "Lasallian."

## **Pakistan**

The Lasallian mission in Pakistan is conducted within a multi-faith environment, the majority of people being Moslem. The two English-medium high schools in Multan and Faisalabad subsidise the education of poor children in the Urdu-medium schools and the slum school. Most of the children educated in these Urdu-medium projects are the "poorest of the poor."

In Karachi the Brothers conduct an orphanage for poor children from the populous city environs.

## **India**

The growth of the Institute in India has empowered the Brothers and Lasallian Partners in the Delegation to reach out to the poor with many educational projects in mainly the south of the country. While there is a multiplicity of projects, St Joseph's Boys' Village and "Reaching the Unreached" are worthy of comment.

St Joseph's provides residential programmes and outreach programmes in surrounding villages in order to empower the local people and especially women to care for themselves and develop work projects generating income. Boys' Village offers education and training in such areas as health, nutrition, child welfare, family planning and vocational areas.

Brother James Kimpton's "Reaching the Unreached" programme is well known internationally as it offers education and training to the poorest people. The programme is skills based and highly practical, catering for people over a cross section of ages.

The Delegation of India offers rural education programmes, street children projects, working children projects, women's self-help groups and a farmers' forum.

## **Japan**

The orphanage in Sendai caters for children from broken homes and disadvantaged backgrounds. The Brothers and lay people staff this twenty four hours a day, seven days a week project.

## **District of Penang**

In Sarawak, East Malaysia the Brothers in association with alumni run rural education projects in order to offer schooling to the poor who would otherwise lack educational facilities. Volunteers give tuition in Maths, English and Science.

## **Philippines**

Out of education for justice programmes in high schools, universities and colleges in the Philippines, Lasallians develop programmes responding to the increasing educational needs of the poor.

Some examples are the Kuya Centre in Manila which offers educational programmes for the many street children in the area; La Salle High School, Green Hills opens its well-resourced school at night in order that adult students may be educated, filling gaps in their education which may have been non-existent for them as youngsters.

Bahay Pag-Asa (House of Hope) is a programme for young offenders based in Bacolod. Brothers and Lasallian Partners assist in this programme of rehabilitation.

## **Thailand**

One of several programmes for poor children operates out of Nakhonsawan. Children who literally live on a garbage dump are offered pre-school education and skills training in order that they may be prepared for mainstream education.

## **USA and CANADA**

Br. Bob Schieler and Br. Fernando Lambert

## **Overview...**

- Since 2000, 17 new ministries opened which deal directly with the economically poor. (15% of all current works).
- 27% of our current ministries serve the poor exclusively.
- 13% of those we currently serve have an income which is



below the Federal Poverty Level (\$US18,800/4).

- Our Institutions currently give over \$US24,000,000 annually in financial assistance at the elementary and secondary levels.

### **1. New Initiatives since 2000...**

- 12 San Miguel Schools between 2000-2004
- 2 Christo Rey Schools
- Non-formal Educational Center Initiatives
- Centre for young immigrants

### **2. Pre-Chapter Initiatives...**

- Beginning the San Miguel Schools
- Elementary Schools for the poor
- Non-Formal Education Centers
- Centres for human and Christian formation

### **3. Long-Standing Initiatives**

- Financial Assistance
- Community Service Programs
- "Plunge" Programs for teachers/collegians
- Child Care Facilities
- Non-Formal Adult Literacy
- Seamless links between long-standing and new Initiatives
- Overseas: Haiti, Lwanga, Bethlehem, Cameroons...

### **4. Helping Teachers Adapt Methods...**

- Lasallian Leadership Institute, Buttimer Institute, Lasallian Social Justice Institute, District Teacher Training Programs...
- "Plunge" programs
- Grants for training San Miguel and Nativity School Principals (collaboration of the Brothers and Jesuits)
- Training for Lasallian Volunteers, young Lasallians, partners...

## 5. Brothers' Communities...

- New communities created in Canada and the USA, some with volunteers as members, partners and young Lasallians
- Annual use of community excess funds for poverty initiatives
- Brothers participating with lay partners in Lasallian formation programs

### The Challenges

#### A Listing of Challenges

- Funding new initiatives
- Impact on District Finances
- Fewer Brothers
- Training for this work
- Educating and empowering our boards

### Plan of action

1. During the next 5 years, within the regions of Canada and the United States at least one new ministry in direct service to the poor will be established annually.
2. Districts and Institutions will continue to provide and seek new revenue to increase their service to the poor.
3. Districts will continue their efforts and commitment to place additional Brothers in ministries in direct service to the poor.

In June 2004, the Lasallian Social Justice Institute was inaugurated in El Paso, Texas.

## Europe and the Middle East

Br. Ismaël Beltrán and Br. George Absi

Summary of the information received from:

Regions: ARLEP, France, Italy, REBIM, The Middle East

District: Holland

Sector: Romania

– **What method of evaluation did you use?**

- a. In some Districts Socio-scientific studies were carried out, defining in advance the variables and indicators. Carrying out the corresponding tests. Analysing the results afterwards.
  - surveys to which families replied freely
  - information developed by the Directing team.
  - meetings of the members of the entire education Community of each establishment: Brothers+Teachers+Parents+Pupils
- b. In other Districts, they replied to the Questionnaire of six questions drawn up by the Centre of the Institute.
- c. Other Districts sent in a report drawn up by themselves in which they described their situation in regard to the ESP

**1º. What Initiatives have the Districts taken?**

**a. Increasing awareness:**

1. The Brothers and the Communities:
  - Retreats.
  - Zone, District and Region meetings.
  - Insertion Communities.
  - Restructuring of Communities according to the criteria (among others) of a better service to the most needy.
  - Many Brothers and Communities took very seriously *"The Brothers live simply"* (R32):
    - the carrying out of domestic chores
    - community management of material goods
    - a tendency towards a greater simplicity of life
2. Teachers, Pupils and Parents of Pupils
  - Meetings at the start of the year (and throughout the school-year) on:
    - The specific character of Lasallian Establishments
    - The Education Project of the Establishment
    - The Plans "Education in Justice and Solidarity" and "Attention to diversity"

- Schools for Parents
  - Gradual implantation of “The Social Educator”
  - Campaigns of help and solidarity
  - Invitations to take part in Aid Projects for the Third World, personally or by giving financial assistance.
- b. Drawing up “Plans for Education in Justice, Solidarity and Peace”**
- c. Setting up specific programs**, depending on the official regulations of different governments:
- For pupils having special educational difficulties.
  - Programs for attention to cultural and ethnic diversity...
  - Programs for immigrants and other ethnic minorities such as the gypsies.
  - Programs for pupils having failed in other establishments through lack of motivation or lack of learning techniques.
- d. Reinforcing the role of the Guidance Counsellor**, by creating Counselling Departments staffed with highly qualified persons and giving them the necessary means.
- e. Research into educational alternatives for pupils under-performing in school**, who tend to combine learning and behavioural difficulties. Many of our Lay Partners actively participate in the programs organised.
- f. Starting new educational works aimed at adolescents and young people in danger of being rejected by society:**
- Hostels/ Guadix, the Obert Project, Managua, Iasi...
  - Day Centres: Alucinos, the Condal Foundation, Oscar Romero, 'Avenir de Jeunes', Kids Kabin, Khoronfish....
  - Non-Formal Education: Pildesti, Bristol, Bayadaya (Upper Egypt)...
  - Centres for Handicapped children: Alexandria, Cairo
- g. Forming NGOs, Foundations, Associations...** which have influenced our Educational Establishments, by increasing their awareness, by promoting volunteer movements and

collecting funds to finance Projects in needy sectors of the Institute and in other Institutions:

- Proyde+Proide+Proega+Proideba+Edificando
- Semil
- Work in Upper Egypt

**h. Sending Brothers and Lay Volunteers into Lasallian Establishments needing educators:**

- Latin America and the Carribean
- French-speaking and English-speaking Africa

**i. The reinforcing of numerous initiatives which have already been in existence for many years:**

**1. Educational Initiatives:**

- “Significant Communities of Brothers” have been supported in specific projects of the ESP.
- basic or support classes for slow learners, immigrants...
- programs of pedagogical innovation: Ulises, Crea, Optimis, Ideal, Fénix, Arpa, Effective Reading...
- In Turkey: the creation of primary schools after the earthquakes.

**2. Social Initiatives:**

- free school dining-rooms and help for families (Bethlehem)
- the gift of premises
- taking in immigrants
- formation for the unemployed
- opening up our establishments to those around us
- periodic attention to weak children: Mondragone

**3. Pastoral Initiatives:**

- the opening of numerous Pastoral Centres: Kintbury... and others
- Pastoral activities for animating young people who are engaged in solidarity activities: help with studies, welcoming the homeless, social clubs/hostels...

- promotion and formation of Volunteers
- increasing awareness among our Lay Partners and training them.
- campaigns such as “Defending the Rights of the Child” and “Africa: a school for all”

## **2° What are the Indicators which show the opening of our Establishments to the poor?**

- a. The formation of our Lay Partners (in general at the same time as the Brothers) has orientated our Establishments towards the ESP.
- b. The Regional and European Commissions on Education, Pastoral Ministry and the Missions have proposed ways and means for progressing towards the ESP.
- c. The poverty of certain families has been an obstacle to the permanent presence of pupils in our Establishments:
  - Ease of enrolment
  - Study and restaurant stipends
  - Gratuity or discounts in the sale of schools materials
- d. The opening of the majority of our establishments to the surrounding area and to the numerous immigrants who are looking for a place to study, has increased greatly in recent years.
- e. The educational programs offered to needy people in the neighbourhood have been:
  - help with studies
  - social integration by means of various workshops or activities in which many Lay Lasallians participate.
  - recreational activities
- f. Some students have volunteered or been sent into marginalised neighbourhoods, street educators, ...supported morally and financially by the other establishments.

3° Important orientations which should be taken into account in plans of action

**a. With regard to Brothers and Communities:**

- to continue to influence personal awareness as well as going beyond individualism and the search for convenience.
- to propose to them experiences of personal commitment with concrete works
- to continue to influence personal awareness and the reappraisal of our style of community life.
- to encourage the communities to take on concrete commitments.
- to support those who are already engaged in the works of the ESP and those who are at risk, by means of a close accompanying person, especially where the youngest are concerned.

**b. With regard to the Educational Communities:**

b.1 With the teachers:

- increasing awareness
- formation
- experiences
- commitment

b.2. With the pupils:

- a plan for Educating in Values; Justice, Solidarity, Tolerance
- experiences with the needy people of their nearest neighbourhood
- promotion of Volunteer movements among the older pupils
- collaboration with Lasallian NGOs or others
- adequate planning:
  - of an Action Plan Tutorial
  - of a Plan of Orientation
  - of a Plan of attention to Diversity
- education for free time and leisure.

**b.3. With families:**

- To continue to present to them in an adequate manner, our special Character, our Education Plan and our specific Projects devoted to the poor.
- Plan of Family Education:
  - for normal families
  - for broken families
  - for single-parent families
- Promotion and reinforcing of the figure of the “Social Educator” so as to be able to approach certain families who are satisfied with “allowing” their children to attend the school.
- To promote and coordinate efforts which are at present being made by Past Pupils and International Young Lasallians.

**c. With regard to the world around us:**

- To establish a system for the observation, knowledge and interpretation of the reality around us from the point of view of the ESP. It is a pity not to make the pupils aware of the areas of poverty which surround them.
- There exists a “Fourth World”, perhaps unknown, but very close to many of our Establishments. We also need to concern ourselves with this type of poverty.
- To organise the opening of our Establishments and adapting them towards the needs of the neighbourhood by means of suitable activities.
- To open up our Educational and Religious Communities to collaboration with other religious and civil Institutions.
- To decide how much money we can afford to devote to these works.

**d. With regard to other Establishments, other Districts, other Regions...**

- an exchange of solidarity initiatives
- To arrive at a necessary and desirable convergence both



as regard to the language and methods by which we transmit our message.

- To arrive at a “Solidarity Fund”, in the District, the Region, the Institution?

**e. With regard to District or Inter-District works of a special character:**

- animating those already in existence
- the study of other possible initiatives (of District, Region, Institution) with:
  - immigrants
  - street children
  - adolescents at risk
- The formation of some Brothers or Lay Partners as:
  - street educators
  - night educators
  - educators of 'travellers'
  - educators of families
- To collaborate closely with the other religious and civil institutions.

## The Lasallian Region of Latin America

Br. Carlos Gómez

The RELAL Region comprises 310 works with 260,000 students, 20 educators and 1.050 Brothers in 215 communities.

1. Our commitment is organised around the Education Project of the Latin American Region (PERLA). It rests on 5 pillars: the explicit announcement of the Gospel, the democratisation of knowledge, durable human development, the defence of the Rights of Children, the promotion of Justice, Peace and the defence of life.

Our criteria of choice are: the boldness of solutions and their prophetic character for social transformation, presence among groups which are normally marginalised, realism.

2. Our initiatives since the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter
  - Formal schools with research into new pedagogical approaches and clearer policy options.
  - Works carried out to remove illiteracy and the formation of adults for work.
  - The formation of teachers for public and diocesan schools
  - Propositions for Lasallian Volunteers
  - The participation of Lasallian universities in new formation and research projects.
3. The reinforcing of some of our achievements of recent years:
  - the ethnic education of indigenous and Afro-American communities
  - initiatives for street children
  - formation in democracy, justice, Christian sharing of goods
  - The Lasallian Mission towards the poor and the excluded
4. Development of organisation and animation for the Education Service of the Poor: efforts of the Brothers Visitors, the MEL Commission, retreats, evaluation, development of 'popular education', re-evaluation of the vow of poverty...
5. Difficulties and weakness in our action
  - we are still identified with large institutions
  - resistance shown towards the support given to more 'popular' works
  - many Brothers are not sensitive to people in working class areas and do not share their life-style.
  - the young Brothers too are not always willing to join them
  - in general we are not linked very much with working-class movements whether civil or Church
  - we have not put in place processes of systematisation for getting the best out of new works and for creating aid networks.

## The Africa Region

Br. Yemanu Jehar

Since the General Chapter the Region has taken on some innovative projects. Here are three of them presented briefly:

- **In Burkina**

The Lasallian Establishment Badenya (a word which means “fraternity”) was born of a proposition made to the District Chapter of West Africa. For about fifteen years the different District Chapters had expressed the wish to go back into primary schools. From 1948 to 1969, the Brothers of the Christian Schools had run three primary schools in Burkina.

The District Council seized upon an occasion which could be called providential: the offer of an establishment comprising a primary school and a College of General Education, situated in Sector 28 of Ouagadougou, that is to say in the most easterly peripheral area of the capital. The desert-like slope on which the school is situated is inhabited by families of poor or modest means. There is no dispensary or administrative office (neither a police-station or social services).

For the most part the inhabitants of the area are families who leave every morning for the city centre in search of work and food. At the end of the day they return home where their children are waiting for them after coming out of school.

The parents have chosen the Brothers' establishment because the education is of good quality, because it is near home and because the school fees are low - 4 dollars a month.

The primary school consists of 6 classes with a total of 324 children. The College of General Education has 4 classes with 192 pupils. In all there are 260 girls and 256 boys. The Brothers are happy to see the importance the parents attach to the education of the girls. This represents a big evolution if one compares this number with those in villages a long way from the capital where the number of girls receiving education is much smaller.

- **Madagascar**

The 'HANITRA' Centre was founded in December 2000. Set up within the boundary of Stella Maris College, Toamasina, this initiative of the Brothers of the Christian Schools aims at housing, educating, instructing and forming abandoned children.

At the beginning the Centre had 5 children with one Brother looking after them; now HANITRA ensures the training of about a hundred children with 5 persons working there: 3 female educators and 2 male educators. There is a doctor who comes to the Centre whenever he is free.

70 children have been enrolled in the private and public primary school from 12<sup>th</sup> class to 7<sup>th</sup>. Those girls who are not at school (too old) are given a technical formation at the Centre: cutting and dress-making, crochet, embroidery, macramé, raphia weaving, etc. The boys are offered garage-training (auto-mechanics), hair-dressing, carpentry, agriculture and animal-rearing.

20 children are enrolled at the Notre Dame de Lourdes school which is run by the Lasallian Sisters, thanks to grants to pay their schools fees. They are doing very well.

Girls and boys who have not been to school, whether through negligence or because of the poverty of their parents, are received at the Centre for a technical formation in craftwork and they produce crochet-work, embroidery, table-mats, pin-cushions, perfumed vases, baskets, dolls, pictures, bedside-lamps etc. These items are sold, either in the market or during exhibitions at the Centre.

The main aim of the HANITRA Centre is to lead these children at risk towards school while teaching them to respect the rights of the child. It is also the means of getting them off the street. All are taken in gratuitously and are helped by study grants.

#### **“Child Discovery Centre” Nakuru (Kenya)**

The majority of the street-children and other marginalized young people who were roaming around the city-center and in the uncomfortable slums of Nakuru with no precise destination, today have a home known as “Child Discovery Centre” where they are received with care and compassion.

“Child Discovery Centre” has been created by the tireless efforts and the great concern for the needy of Brother Francis Kamanda, a young De La Salle Kenyan Brother, who is a member of Mwangaza Religious community in Nakuru. Brother Kamanda brought together the spirit of evangelical mission of charitable agencies and the generosity of sensitive people in order to create CDC where poor and neglected young children are beneficiaries of an ideal project which provides them with a decent home and with an opportunity for good education and training for basic skills.

Most of the children who live in the Centre have abandoned their rural villages for various reasons:

- they belong to poor and distressed families
- they are orphans of parents who died because of AIDS, TB, and malaria
- could not afford their education
- they have no chance for any type of medical assistance

Nakuru is one of the main towns in Kenya situated in the Great Rift Valley, about two hours drive north-west of Nairobi (capital city).

Three quarters of the population in Kenya consist of Bantu-speaking people (Kikuyu, Luhya, and Kamba) while the remainder are Nilotic (Luo, Maasai, Samburu, Turkana and Kalanjin).

About 75% of the population is Christian while the rest adhere to ethnic beliefs.

Agriculture provides employment to 80% of the workforce and accounts for about 30% of the GDP and 50% of merchandise export value. Kenya is among the world’s leading exporters of tea and coffee. The unemployment rate is 50%.

# Report of the Secretary for the MEL

Brother Nicolas Capelle

- Description
- Prospectives
- Questionning

The General Chapter of 2000 requires the Brothers Visitors and their Councils

- to see to improving the Educational Service of the Poor (ESP)
- and for that purpose
  - to gauge the level of contribution of the works to the ESP
  - this evaluation is to issue in an action plan (drawn up in collaboration with the Lasallian Partners)
- This will be the object of deep thinking about the future in the course of a meeting of the Brothers visitors.

This is that report. It made maximum use of the contributions from 40 Districts which replied to 6 questions in the survey of the Secretary General as well as the much more detailed studies which certain Districts sent to the MEL Secretariat in the past year.

This report can be improved; it aims here simply to give an accurate, general overview of the major trends noted in the Institute at the present time. Quite obviously it has nothing prescriptive or evaluative in it. It is simply a photo.

## 1. An overwhelming trend: the ESP is a genuine preoccupation of the Institute and the Districts

a) The general thrust of our projects, our texts and explanations... has been asserting it in an insistent manner, over a certain length of time but notably since the 43<sup>rd</sup> Chapter. The targets have been especially:

- responses to populations in cultural difficulty (young people, adults)

- the rights of the Child
- the formation of Teachers

**b) But the thrust is strongly supported by concrete commitments:** and it is felt that the great majority of Districts have taken the orientations of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter seriously.

For the last four years concrete expression has been given to it, in particular, by:

### **1. The setting up of**

- Schools: Argentina-Paraguay, the Districts of USA/Toronto, Central America, West Africa, South Mexico, North Mexico, the Antilles.
- Social Centres: Philippines, VietNam, Australia, North Mexico, Porto Alegre, Madagascar.
- Cafeterias: West Africa, Great Britain, USA
- Cultural programmes to make up for deficiencies in the country (democracy, citizenship...): Central America, Colombia, Venezuela
- Justice and Peace programmes: Districts of ARLEP, Philippines
- Teaching methods: Bogota, Medellin, Central America, Porto Alegre, ARLEP (mediation, reading, educational quality...)
- Paulo Freire pedagogical networks: Argentina, Porto Alegre

### **2. Putting concrete systems in place so that the ESP may become a visible Lasallian characteristic:**

- coordinating the ESP in all the works: North Mexico,
- a defender of the rights of the child in all works: Valencia, Andalusia, Central America,
- analysis of the economic situation of each family: Central America,
- a social assistance commission in all works: Sao Paolo,
- setting up social educators in all works: Madrid,
- systematic evaluation of Justice and Peace programmes in all works: Valladolid, Madrid,
- systematic surveys to gauge the degree of respect for the rights of the child in all works: Philippines,

- holding quite open forums on *educating the social conscience*: North and South Mexico, Midwest, LINE, ARLEP, Baltimore, Venezuela, USA, North Belgium,
- revitalisation of the evening school: North Mexico,
- formation of the members of the Management Councils: USA,
- the Lasallian Universities have embraced the preoccupation with the ESP (surveys, initiatives)
- solidarity with small colleges: Near East,
- expansion of technical teaching: Bolivia.

**3. Formation sessions offered to young people, to parents and to some volunteers** within the framework of formation in citizenship, of encounters between different social groupings by means of a concrete commitment to meet with poverty-stricken groups: Australia, Central Spain, France-Semil, Argentina, West Africa, Hong Kong.

**4. Increasing Lasallian voluntary service:** North Mexico, Ecuador, USA, the Philippines, France.

**5. Specific surveys of our older works** to get to know in the interests of which families we are working. Examination of the fees: each District applying the criteria matching it: Spain (centres and communities), Bogota, France, LINE, Baltimore, San Francisco, Ireland, Lasallian Universities (IALU)

**6. Systematic search for funds:**

- creation of special funds: Malaysia, RELAL, Lasallian ONG
- reorganisation of the bonds between new works and older works
- increasing study bursaries in old establishments and in the universities: IALU, USA, North and South Mexico, Japan
- expanding contracts with the State: Venezuela, Bogota, Medellin,

**7. Reappraisal of our traditional practices:**

- must we always be the owners and have our own schools (with all the usual constraints) OR must we not collaborate more with other organisations (State, dioceses, congrega-



tions...) and make available what is particular to us (formation of teachers and educational and pastoral teaching methods)?

Therefore: increased collaboration with the State, the dioceses: Venezuela, Bogota, Medellin, USA. That sometimes allows us to go to where the poor are and with competence.

#### **8. Commitment to 'the dignity of the teaching profession'.**

This is a serious concern: teaching is not valued in many countries and the salaries are pathetic. Our training courses want to make a contribution in this area (Bogota, Togo, Central America, Peru, Argentina, Kenya, North Mexico, Ecuador.). But we do not know how to come to grips with this problem at a meaningful level (governments, unions, political powers).

#### **9. Creation of educational networks** which project a dynamic and trans-District image; they also enable teachers to become identified with an ESP type of pedagogy: San Miguel in the USA, San Miguel in Panama, AVEC in Venezuela, Freire Pedagogy (Argentina, Porto Alegre) Telephone counselling (Australia), LPEP (USA), Heuther (USA), Bolivia (at the planning stage).

#### **10. Priority financial investments** for ESP works and real estate developments and improvements.

## **2. The main preoccupation**

### **How to assure the continuity of new works for the poor?**

- in terms of finance (time-honoured works also have their problems)
- in terms of personnel

**With whom do we combine** (State, dioceses, Companies, Congregations) to work according to our skills (pedagogical, educational and pastoral) and not be totally lost in management?

### **Difficulties**

- *On the part of the Brothers:*
  - ordinary resistance as long as certain Brothers have not had an immersion experience amongst the poor

- some Brothers are committed as individuals: Canada, North and South Belgium
  - difficulties in evaluating works according to the economic criterion
  - difficulty in knowing whether the new works are the fruit of personal initiative or of a community approach
  - in terms of the community the Brothers live in the style of those around them
  - **Let us note:** Young Brothers commit themselves more easily and certain Districts have set up their houses of formation near areas of poverty and the Brothers work there enthusiastically;
- *On the part of Lay people:*
    - Lasallian training has brought Lay people to grasp what the ESP is
    - they are sensitive to it and sometimes are strongly committed: USA
    - they also expect the Brothers to be clearly committed
    - in many countries their economic situation is precarious
    - in certain countries the prevailing mindset is resistant: Japan, Hong Kong, Ireland

### 3. Questionings arising from the MEL Secretariat

1. We must create new systems for seeking finance
2. Regarding our pedagogies, our books, our programmes and our training...: do they develop an education which is critical, shows solidarity, is responsible and favours real social change in favour of the economically, culturally and spiritually excluded?
3. What are our criteria for cooperation with the State?
  - can we reach the poor?
  - can we develop our unique characteristics and, in particular, in the formation of teachers?

- have we enough freedom to step in and be creative rapidly and flexibly?
4. Do we make sufficient appeal to those Lay people who desire to commit themselves and set up simple systems?
  5. Has not the moment arrived to federate our Lasallian Volunteers, for example, by continents?
  6. Would we not be interested in projecting 'recognisable, visible identities' in the form of flexible networks, in the service of the Young or adults in difficulty? Who identifies us immediately in the wider world?
  7. Example: the San Miguel Schools in the USA, Mobile Antennas for Gypsies in France, AVEC schools in Venezuela as well as the Flasa system.  
Others could be imagined starting from what already exists; often what is missing is a simple system of exchange of ideas and coordination.  
I pinpoint some possibilities: in Africa the Centres for street children, in Europe (Schools, neighbourhood Centres).

#### 4. The Educational Service of the Poor (ESP) and the Role of the Br.Visitor and his Council

As we know, it is the entire Institute which is vowed to the ESP: and that in virtue of the Vow of Association which the Brothers make with each other.

The Lay Lasallians who join us on this road, participate in their own way in this ESP.

But if the Institute is vowed to this work, not all have the same function; and I believe that the Visitor and his Council (for the time given to them) are: the Guarantors and the Managers of the ESP.

If you will allow me, I would like to limit my words to what we have heard during the Inter-Capitular meeting. I will also not talk about the need for the Br.Visitor and his Council,

- to encourage and accompany the Brothers and men and women 'on the front lines'

- to promote formation for the ESP
- to put in place a system to assure long-term financing

**Instead, I want to stress 2 characteristics which seem to me to define this role of Guarantors and Managers:** Evaluating and Founding

**a) Evaluating and Founding the new need**

- to take the time to put down roots in an area, to become informed, not to arrive with a ready-made project
- to listen

I emphasise the above for two reasons:

- we are active people, we have practices which work, we have a lot of experience...DANGER: of knowing instead of the people, of not allowing any say to the poor people we are joining, the danger of applying known recipes or of repeating a method of working which no longer corresponds either to the expectation of those we are helping or to the educational and pastoral approach which was formerly valid.
- we are in an epoch in which the Churches are turning back in on themselves: the movement begun 50 years ago in the Church to go to the poor where they are, by penetrating into the terrain....this movement is giving place to another need: to find more marked certitudes, rhythms, rites and belonging; we see it among the younger ones (priests, Brothers, new religious movements, new Church communities).

To evaluate and found takes time. The Br.Visitor and his Council ought to keep an eye on it.

**b) Evaluating and Founding the old and present-day responses**

Whether it is a question of formal or non-formal works in the ESP.

It is an obligation of justice not only for those we desire to serve but also for those who devote themselves to this service: all need the guarantor authority to play its normal role. I notice that the Visitors are respectful when they visit works which are a bit special... they do so with respect but also sometimes with a fear of

not understanding everything; and they might be stopping themselves from posing some salutary questions. Those who receive you expect your salutary questioning even if it is out of phase and surprising.

It is for this reason that I spoke of having at District level a Permanent Observer for the ESP.

For example within the framework of Educative Pastoral Ministry (MEL)

His role could be:

- to keep an up-to-date set of national data on children, poverty, the evolution of social levels, social tendencies (in many countries there are studies on these questions)
- to make known to the works the criteria which we value for the ESP
- to measure our commitments in terms of these criteria, every three years for example

This Observer would allow us:

- to draw up informed and comparative assessments
- to make a competent and valid contribution which we could offer to university institutions (such as our own universities) for the development of a scientific knowledge of education.

I'm thinking there of the contribution made by the Australian phone line which has a methodology for the observation of young people in distress (one and a half million calls a year) and which collaborates with researchers to extract from the practice a renewed sociological knowledge of the young and their present-day ways of expressing themselves.

As a result those running the telephone line developed observation protocols which could be used. Furthermore they developed a new way of listening to the young ('a theorising') from which they developed formation courses for listening to children (Cf. MEL booklet No 5).

In these domains of the creation of new scientific knowledge in the field of education we should become aware (and the Visitors in the first place) of our responsibility:

We are a compact and coherent social body with:

- a founder and textual sources
- a relatively long history
- a global vision of education activity in its human, Christian, and spiritual dimensions
- a special conception of the teacher, both minister of God and professional
- a verifiable anthropology by means of recognisable practices

In an educational world

- where thought is specialised, atomised, broken up
- where practices are disjointed, piled up, accumulated according to social, economic, corporate dictates...

we need to make our approach known and open ourselves to scientific research in order to make our contribution to the development of scientific knowledge in the domains of education, pedagogy, evangelisation by culture.

**c) This will allow us to better evaluate and found our action by having** more long-term views by bringing out the theoretical pre-suppositions of our action in order to lay the foundations of our questioning.

For example:

- what is the relevance of the educational and pastoral approaches which we are developing with and for the poor?
- what will be the long term effects of the fill-in educational role which we are allowed nowadays in some countries? How can we increase the State's awareness of its educational responsibilities?
- what can we learn from social movements about the aspirations of populations and new ways of participation and of solidarity? Could these new ways inspire our pedagogy and in which conditions?

**The Br. Visitor and his Council have the role of LOOKOUT.**

They run the day-to-day activities but they should also from time to time climb up on the bridge of the ship to see what's coming and pick out the currents.

**To end I would like to make 3 suggestions:**

1. we need to think of the ESP in flexible terms. Why?
  - because it is not certain that in the future we will have the personnel and finances to support large works as in the past
  - in order to set up a variety of practices which arise from our surroundings (Schools for gypsies, San Miguel...)
  - for self-formation through the exchange of good practices
  - in order not to exhaust our educators and to allow them to move around
  - so that the system can recognise us as a community in the ESP
  - donors prefer working with systems which have their own characteristics
2. We must take care to talk in an inclusive way about the ESP.

I believe that the Institute is by its very origins an Institute which is necessarily under pressure; and it is at that moment that is most alive. I will explain:

- JBS created the Institute to respond to the educational and Christian needs of the children of artisans and the poor. It was the first stage, one that he wanted.
- But this foundation, which quickly became efficient and credible, opened itself to the needs of young people from better-off families.
- Our history bears witness to this permanent reflection which is part of our make-up and the endless process to which we are committed: starting out from the poor, becoming open to others, building societies in which each one can find his place, then: starting out again from the poor...

3. We need to leave our Districts from time to time to visit other achievements and if need be to live for a few days in a very different reality. This is what helps in evaluating in order to found.

## Conclusions: 3 perspectives

### **Br. Jean-Baptiste Seguin: Auxiliary Visitor from France**

"It's truly unbelievable all that is going on everywhere in the world and about which I knew nothing". I share this reflection, heard in passing [or in part ?], from a confrere. The last General Chapter gave a strong impetus to have educational service to the poor become or become again our priority everywhere in the Institute.

New needs have called forth new responses on the educational, pedagogical, cultural, and religious level. I have been struck by the importance given in several projects to the education of girls and to the role of women. Similarly, immigrant populations have given rise to novel responses to their needs, without ideology but with realism.

Consistency between word and deed seems to me still a challenge to be taken up at the level of the Brothers' community (*our* life style) and of the educational community (consistency between educational projects and reality). A way of living it is perhaps in the permanent self-education of the Brothers and of their lay colleagues.

The essential role of economic factors, of financial support seems to be a major challenge that must be addressed. That *challenge* affects solidarity on the level of Districts in the Institute, as well as social justice and the gratuity that characterizes us.

Care to link human and Christian education seems clearly to be a reality that we must pursue in the projects undertaken without giving priority to either one, but responding to the new needs that appear in different milieux in view of announcing the Gospel.

The role of those in charge [administrators] is essential to support and launch projects.

### **Br. Frank Byrn: Visitor of the District of New York**

1. The theme of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Chapter "Associated for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". I heard this theme being put into action.



- Our Rule tells us that “in their desire to make it possible for poor people to live with dignity and to be open to the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Brothers show genuine creativity in responding to new needs”.

We saw how this is lived out.

2. I sensed a pattern in the reports we heard today:
  - a) There was a perceived need.
  - b) There was a study of their need.
  - c) There was a response to this need by a program, a new ministry, a network and a curriculum.
3. These responses involved our partners, volunteers, alumni, other religious, and Brothers both old and young.
4. These works have provided a benefit for the people who were being served, but those working in these ministries were energized.

The initiatives with the poor have also had a positive impact on our communities. Some of the positive effects mentioned were:

- Vitality and enthusiasm.
- Renewal of spiritual life.
- Fostering of vocations in some cases.

It was also mentioned these new works do involve sacrifice on the part of the Brothers and our Associates.

5. I am encouraged by the presentations: the Institute has taken to heart the Directives of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Chapter and its emphasis on re-turning to our works with the poor.
6. There are challenges:
  - Finances.
  - Finding new works.
  - Aging Brothers; smaller number of Brothers.
  - Encouraging Brothers, old and young, into to get direct service with the poor.
  - Balancing our traditional works and new initiatives.
7. The enthusiasm we saw from each Region leads me to believe we will meet these challenges and that our desires the reach

out even more to the poor. Is what God wants of us. I am confident he will bless our effort.

**Br. Jesús Miguel Zamora: Visitor of the District of Valladolid**

In the midst of our frailness, because of aging, tiredness, routine or disappointment, our movement towards the poor permits us to enjoy those “sparks” of creativity that light up a promising future which we have heard about.

Our history is not, nor can it be a fate that looks down upon those who profit least from globalization, but it must be one of brief and small examples of hope in a world which is more and more in need of fraternity, of meaning, of God.

What we have shared reflects the efforts of many Lasallians (Brothers and lay) to make credible faith in humankind, to make possible God's desire “that all live”, to sow the seed of hope and creativity in the different areas of the Institute, always in favor of those who need us and not to look for, as our priority above all else, the success of our institutions.

I was very much struck by the following:

**a. In Central America:**

That the option for education is a life option (human rights, respect for teachers and teacher-training), where to educate means to have effective, long-term, and serious projects from their very conception and which include all teachers (another example would be that of PERLA).

**b. In Medellin:**

I learned that to be citizens and to form citizens generates life alternatives which make Brothers feel committed to the world today, since to be a Christian and to be a citizen is the goal of Lasallian pedagogy that reaches out to all.

**c. In the San Miguel Schools:**

I would stress that, to be committed to the poor increases creativity and the updating of teaching methods, and brings changes in community living, educational work, faith rooted in culture, and even in finances.

**d. In the Lasallian Center in Colombo:**

I was struck by the fact that to return to the Founder and to teaching is to bring back dignity to children, young people, and adults, that to foster culture is to see that persons can live and find meaning and social usefulness in their work. Also, that this does not require large investments, but open dialogue, the acceptance of diverse religions, and mutual cooperation.

**e. In the Association of School in Upper Egypt:**

I would underscore the fact that, opening one's heart to the work of a co-worker, and working with others, makes us take another look at the origins of the Institute, without forgetting other areas connected to education: the promotion of women, medical attention, human development, inter-religious and inter-congregational dialogue.

For their part, the various Regions of the Institute are starting initiatives that are varied and full of life, where the principal role is open to Brothers of all ages, to lay colleagues, to young people in formal schools and in non-formal establishments, where schools work jointly. These are trends that are lighting the way and they are full of life!

And still we continue feeling fragile, Brothers young and old, because we are tempted to greatness, we are dominated by self-sufficiency, by a long history of educational successes which may make us forget about tremendous needs. Sometimes we are weighed down by our heavy institutions which are resistant to change...

Therefore, in the midst of our certainty and our weakness, there continues being reflected great variety within a plural Institute, sensitive to the pressing needs of the young.

The Institute is alive, but it is in need of continual conversion. It needs to be an Institute of today, but it cannot turn a deaf ear to the needs of tomorrow. It needs to be an Institute where God continues to be present in the midst of its achievements, never forgetting that everything depends upon God, so as not to drown in its own successes.

We have an Institute that continues to search for effective channels, in the knowledge that everything has not been accomplished. May we as Brothers and may our communities continue being a small piece of yeast. And may we not forget the strong need for many women educators, Brothers old and young, to play a major part and to take advantage of the enormous wealth of knowledge on the part of associates and partners.

It may not be our destiny to harvest all the fruit, but it is up to us to sow the seed. Education is the most beautiful adventure, more so when it is done in the service of those who have little. It is an adventure that is worth a lifetime consecration.

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