



De La Salle

Lasallian VOCATIONS

Bulletin

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Being anxious and worried

Br. Rafa Matas, FSC
General Councillor

A vocation is no doubt one of God's mysteries. We are in His hands and we trust in Him alone. He alone can determine the hour, the day and the way if the charism is to die out. Who are we to say "It's finished!"?

God is continuing to bless our Lasallian family with new vocations. This varies according to geographic locations, but He has not stopped giving a call and receiving responses.

What He asks of us is that we continue to go forward, trying to live out as consistently as we can the things we have decided in our Assemblies and Chapters. May the Gospel and our Rule become the reference points for our way of life and not just words on paper.

It is only right that we should be concerned about the situation regarding Lasallian vocations as well as other Church vocations. The mission entrusted to us calls for people with a vocation. We need to be concerned about

new vocations. However, if we are only 'preoccupied' with them and do not really 'occupy ourselves' with them, I am not sure that we are responding to what God is asking from us. You and I and all Lasallians are mediators and instruments which God uses to challenge people and to arouse and awaken new vocations.

In addition to your "preoccupation", do you really "occupy yourself"? And does not the same question apply to our fraternity? Are we not leaving all that to "those in charge", since that is what they are there for?

If we are both preoccupied and occupied, it will be possible to create a vocations culture in our environment, through dynamic processes of welcome and through being attentive to the concerns of young people. At the same time we will be able to counter at least partially those external factors, largely beyond our control, which are limiting new possibilities of life. We know that "God chose the weak of this world to confound the strong" (1 Cor 1:27), and that the secret behind a response to God's call is not to be strong in the eyes of the world, but to have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the gift of a call is answered by a response that is free, faithful and creative, even though it may often be accompanied by the weakness, doubt, contradictions and inconsistencies which are so characteristic of our human condition, "the treasure we hold in vessels of clay". (2 Cor 4:7).

It was perhaps for that reason that our 45th General Chapter declared the year 2019 to be the Year of Vocations for the whole Lasallian Family as part of the celebrations of the tercentenary of the Founder's passing to eternal life. By a happy coincidence, the Synod to be held in 2018



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will be an important attempt to respond to one of the Church's greatest concerns, namely *"Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment"*.

So our commitment will be to "support young people in their existential journey towards maturity, so that they can discern their life-project and realise it joyfully, open to an encounter with God and with people. In that way they will participate actively in the construction of the Church and of society".

That is already our task today. We cannot wait until 2018 or 2019.

The Commission for Lasallian Vocations invites you to work courageously for all vocations and to do it with enthusiasm, overcoming all fears. We can draw inspiration from the poem by Mario Benedetti "Do not give up!":

"...Do not surrender, I beg you, and do not yield! even when the cold pierces, even when fear bites, and the sun goes down, and the wind becomes silent, there is still fire in your soul there is still life in your dreams."

Talking with... Claudio Andreolli *Signum Fidei*



Who is Claudio?

In Spain they say "above all there are values, family and love."

Claudio is a man of our times who fell in love with "values" when still a child. First it was his father, then his mother and then the Brothers, all of whom taught him to treasure and defend the fundamental values of life.

Claudio sought to consecrate his life. His family and that of the Brothers and Lasallians are a fundamental part of his life. He has experienced difficult and even dramatic situations, but they have not been able to change his fundamental belief. When it comes to love, Claudio has always followed the principle of "wherever your heart

leads you" (which is the evocative title of a remarkable book that has sold 9,000,000 copies). It may seem a superficial choice, but that is not the case, since Claudio has always remained faithful to his call.

When did you feel the call to be a member of Signum Fidei?

My answer must be qualified. In 1975, when Brother Paulus Adams had the inspiration to start the Signum Fidei movement (as it then was), I was president of the national association of former students of the Brothers and vice-president of the international association. I often went to Rome and to the Motherhouse. I was one of the first people that Brother Paul and Brother Manuel spoke with regarding Signum Fidei. I recall that the time came when I had to answer their question, "What do you think about it?" I answered that I liked the idea, while being very well aware of the resistance the plan would provoke. (I had already spent six years as president of the former students, and I knew how difficult that task had been.) I was very busy, but then, considering everything and helped maybe by a little prayer, I suggested we should make a start and try it out, following the motto "Who lives it will see." I was present in Valencia for the first meeting

with Brother Paulus and Mr Olivé and several national presidents of Former Students associations (Spain, Italy, Belgium, Monaco and Switzerland). Brother Pablo Basterrechea, Superior General, was also present, as was, I think, Brother Patrice Marey, Assistant for France. I was one of the first group of thirteen to make a solemn promise in Rome, in the Motherhouse. This was repeated in Malta (in the co-cathedral of Saint John) by Ivo Carlos Compagnoni, former student of Niteroi-Brazil, who came to Rome in June 1976, on the occasion of the sixth Lasallian World Congress in Malta. So my vocation to Signum Fidei was born at the same time as the birth of the movement.

What do you like about the Signum Fidei Fraternity?

From the outset, I liked the fact that it was open to lay people and rooted in the charism of the Founder, embodying the spirit of faith and zeal in the Lasallian world and in the Church, as expressed in *Christifideles laici*. It involved lay people who committed themselves by a solemn promise, freely undertaken, to develop that apostolate in the most varied social environments, wherever the faith and spiritual vitality of a believer could find fulfilment.

On what grounds can men and women of today feel attracted to the experience of the Signum Fidei Fraternity?

In the current situation in the Church, there are associations and movements with very rigid rules and norms for participation and unavoidable obligations. This has no doubt allowed them to become enormous enterprises, but it is also a limitation for them because not everyone feels attracted to life experiences of that sort. I can recall, for example, that in recent years we have been discussing the meaning of the word “consecration” within in our Fraternity. To some it seemed too much of a

commitment and it seemed more complicated to explain “consecration” to a new member rather than the expression “solemn promise”. What makes access to our Fraternity easier is no doubt precisely the minimal conditions required for belonging to it, although in fact it is no small thing since the basis of the choice must be a mature and personal faith experience which is far from ‘minimal’ nowadays. Better still is the fact of the link with the esteem and sympathy that go with belonging to the Lasallian charism. Many students, former students, parents, teachers and other staff of Lasallian schools can easily become members, once they are properly informed and understand that Signum Fidei is a vocation journey with solid content and a broad apostolic outreach. It is a privileged way that many men and women, young and old, can choose in order to realize their vocation as *Christifideles laici* in the Church and in Lasallian ministries.



Culture of Vocations

Br. Felix Joseph, FSC



Harvest is Plentiful...

We are blessed with vocations! In many places around the world young Brothers, as well as young women and men are sharing our charism and deepening their call to serve the mission. We are very much alive. The Lord of the harvest continues to call labourers into his vineyard. As Lasallians, Brothers and Partners, we are invited to encourage and walk with young people to listen and respond to God’s loving invitation, “come, follow me.”

An Invitation:

We are all invited to share our passion and “the reason for our hope” in a way that speaks to future generations and reminds all Lasallians—Brothers, Partners, young people, especially those in positions of leadership—of the collective responsibility we have in promoting and sharing the Lasallian charism.

Introduction:

A vocation is recognising and responding to God’s call in our life. It is an ongoing process through which we are called, formed, and sent. It is an invitation that takes root, through encouragement and walking with one another. This culture of call shares a common identity, purpose, belonging and solidarity. It is fully at through cultivation, retention, and transference. *A “culture of vocations” is a setting in which life’s meaning is understood as a personal call to serve the mission in community.* (Cir. 469 - 4.8)

Recently, I wrote a statistical report on formation and vocations. The survey of Brothers in our Institute demands a paradigm shift from us. Many Districts still linger on the past success in terms of vocations and formation efforts. As Districts have restructured it prompted reflection on the future of the Brothers’ vocation and mission. Some communities and individuals struggle to overcome their internal challenges, becoming stagnant with their life and mission. In this moment, we are reminded of the example and witness of our missionary Brothers their “comfort zones” for the Kingdom of God and set on new paths with a renewed vitality.

■ Changes... Challenges... Hopes...

Attentive to the “signs of the times” with many Brothers advancing in age, and their active and visible presence in ministry decreasing, a renewed attention and urgency has been given to the topic of vocations. The 45th General Chapter articulated propositions for the Pastoral Ministry of Vocations and more specifically fostering a “culture of vocations.” We all are invited to ask ourselves, “what have we begun doing individually and collectively as Lasallians to promote this “culture of vocations” for all Lasallians, Brothers, Partners, and especially with the young entrusted to our care?”

“Today’s world, especially that of young people and the poor, needs authentic witnesses of Christian faithfulness, fraternal relationships and a Gospel life with and for others.” (Circular 469) With this call to authenticity, we who embrace the Lasallian charism with deeper conviction also recognize our human vulnerability and those aspects of life which prevent us from fully giving of ourselves and becoming complacent in our way of being. The broader Church, Lasallian family, Brothers and Partners, are challenged to rededicate their energies to promote a culture of vocations, “the entire people of God is responsible for awakening vocations within the Church.”

Challenges like power, prestige and position within our Lasallian life together need reflection and conversion so that we are Lasallians of conscience and compassion as Pope Francis’ has modelled in his exemplary leadership of his own simplicity, humility, poverty and charity.

“In our day Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary “going forth”. Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel.” (Evangelii Gaudium)



Each of these points raises its own challenge. To go to the peripheries, to places in need of the Gospel, we first need to identify those that we can reach. To leave our comfort zone, we have to ask what we could be doing that we are not, and what it would take to make it happen.

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (Mt 28:19). Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries,” but rather that we are always “missionary disciples.” We are expected to live the language of missionary discipleship which goes beyond borders, goes to the peripheries, leaves comfort zones – and in doing so finds the joy of the Gospel.

“We are not in an era of change. We are in a change of era” said Bishop Soto, and with this new era, we are in a time of transition and transformation. We are re-founding and re-committing and renewing. We are in a dynamic moment of our history. Every era needs prophets.

“The Identity and Mission of Religious Brothers today” referred us to be various prophetic services to society. They are namely the prophecy of hospitality as openness and acceptance of the other, the prophecy of meaning of life, the prophecy of the affirmation of feminine values in the history of humanity, the prophecy of the care and protection of life, of the integrity of creation. The prophecy of the wise use of new technologies in order to place them at the service of communication, to democratize information to include the benefit for the most disadvantaged.



These prophetic other-oriented needs recognize “the signs of the times”. The needs are timely. As Pope Francis says fondly, we are called to know “the smell of the sheep”. As men and women of integrity, joy, knowledge, wisdom and fear of God, we *become fire that kindles other fires*. (Lk 12:49).

This fire and spirit within us generously and freely shares our passion, purpose and call with future generations. The impassioned following of Christ, missionary discipleship, evangelical radicalness, witnessing to the primacy of God, evangelical spirituality, intense prayer, apostolic dynamism, missionary enthusiasm, lively communities, simple and open communities, option for the poor, and intense zeal are cornerstones to our vocational journey as Lasallians.

When we authentically and prophetically embrace these traits of discipleship, we are Lasallians without limits. In doing so, we witness the power of our Christian call to discipleship into a personal vocation, living out in a specific way the call to make Christ present in the world of today. As laity, religious and ordained, men and women, we are united together as a charismatic family to continue breathing new life into our charism. Since its beginnings, the Lasallian charism and mission have witnessed a new way being church. Brothers are the visible signs of

witnesses to promote inclusive communion for the mission entrusted to us.

Our Beliefs and Drive.... (Circular 466)

- We believe that Vocation Ministry should be the mature fruit of a Brother's life lived with Gospel authenticity.
- The first motivation and condition for effective vocation ministry is to believe in ourselves.
- We believe that our life as Brothers continues to have, today more than ever, irreplaceable value.
- Young people want to encounter authentic consecrated persons, faithful to the commitments they have made.
- They are not looking for perfection in us but, they do seek honesty and coherence in people who are aware of their own vulnerability.
- We should offer a living witness of our five vows as an option for freedom, in view of a full and happy life, as a journey towards wisdom that helps us to control our inner drives, makes us free, and associates us with the educational service of the poor.
- At the same time, we need to be aware, as our last General Chapter reminded us, that the Lasallian

vocation is lived in different ways and that, as Brothers, we are called to work side by side with and to be the spiritual companions of all those people with whom we share our charism and who, along with us, are disciples of Jesus and continuators of his apostolic mission.

Our Lasallian presence, rejuvenated and renewed with conviction, as committed Brothers and Partners who work together and by association is not only for the present moment but also for the future. While working with young people of varied cultures, ethnic groups, languages and nationalities, our primary focus continues to be to teach the minds, touch the hearts and transform the lives of those entrusted to our care. In other words, the students, young people and people who see us should be able to tell others that “they are our Brothers”. We need to continue to reach out to all with the following elements which are the core of creating and sustaining a culture of vocation.

- Make our attitude and life style contextualized.
- We need to adapt the Lasallian charism, according to the signs of the time, (i.e) Creative living of our charism without losing the core of our spirituality.
- Remove the breach between our way of living and the way we are called to live.
- We need to burn our fingers to bring about communal changes.
- We should focus on personal formation of good conscience, commitment and prophetic attitude, thus become role models, which the present generation deeply craves for.
- Create a space for free thinking and acting of individuals and discerning together with community.
- Positive, happy and healthy relationships and Gospel-based witness. volunteering trips, catechising our missions, and showing our joyful community living.

Conclusion:

“So, He said, cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something. So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish.” (John 21:

6). Let us move from fear to hope. Let us take risks to be men and women of joy, integrity and hope to authentically promote a culture of vocations in our communities and ministries.

Let us all rejoice in this pledge of hope...this bright future...this life-giving dream that invites us to remember always the holy presence of God and to touch the hearts of the young, especially the poor, together and by association. (461)

Questions for Reflections in Communities:

1. Will a well-educated and faith-filled young man who had his education in the Lasallian Institutions / other non-Lasallian Institutions choose to live the Brothers' way of life today? Why? Or Why not?
2. How have we proposed/ invited/shared the Brothers vocation with faith-filled young men in our ministries?
3. Do we need many candidates for our formation houses? If yes, for what? If no, why?
4. Do the parents of students and lay people of our Institutions think of Brothers' life as a meaningful call in today's society?
5. In what ways is association more than simply working together?
6. In what ways do I experience Brothers and Partners “travelling together for the common educational mission”?
7. Do you agree that some of us are afraid to invite young men to join our life? If so, what is the basis of that fear?
8. Name some concrete ways we can develop or strengthen the “culture of vocations” in our Brothers communities, educational centres and District? How do we overcome our fear of asking young men to consider our life?

Vocational Culture Congress

Br. Antonio Dominguez, FSC

What I experienced at the Vocational Culture Congress can be exemplified in an anecdote. A Brother joked with another Brother of a certain age, telling him that they may appoint him Community Animator, in spite his old age. Before the man could react, a young Lasallian said, “Do not say it jokingly, lest I am going to lose a Brother of my “community.” These words summarize the general feeling among all participants. The Brothers are no longer the only ones who form “the community” and consequently the vocational culture is not only for “friars”. There are pastoral theories, different styles and ways of doing, but what brings us together and makes us feel in communion is our feelings.

The community commitment is due to the generation of a vocational culture that involves some people with others. It is no longer a culture of recruitment to be done by Brothers or religious; it means to find and respond to the dream that God has for each one of us.

Thus it is understood that the vocation to joy and love to which God invites us is the first vocation of all Christians, following the constant invitation of Pope Francis.

This idea was one that Amadeo Cencini emphasized in the congress, with sophisticated theologies, but which I, in a very experiential way, can corroborate. As a novice, what I most valued and what I have brought home, at the end of the congress, is the joy of having met people who in my Salle process have been very significant : Scholastics I met as postulants, when I started my discernment in La Salle, former formators who assisted us in the Novitiate, the



legion of Andalusians with their usual jokes, who accompanied me during the postulancy in Seville, the Lusitanian companions with whom I lived the WYD in Poland last year ... Feeling that I am immersed in a family so large and yet so diverse, is exciting and fills me with joy. A joy that is shared and that has been one of the most outstanding features of the Congress.

If I refer to the contents, which for me were of great novelty given my short experience, I would emphasize the understanding of the Vocational Culture as the proper habitat for Pastoral care. To work in pastoral care is not to spend time with young people, to entertain them. It is to try to awaken in them the desire to put all their life in an attitude of response to the One who calls. And that was just another great idea: to enjoy being called / loved, and to know that the One who calls us, makes us, at the same time, as callers of other people, in a chain that reminds me of the famous quote from the Gospel “Which you received for free, give it for free”. God is the eternal caller, that is, the person who never tires of calling man at any place and time, and waits for the loving response of man.

This must be understood, for this is necessary to find the signs in the “mentality, the sensitivity and the practice”.

Among these three signs I was struck by the intensity with which Cencini spoke of the possibilities of our sensitivity, as the basis of our humanity, in which God reveals himself sensibly. From this sensitivity I have already said something, and I cannot help repeating it again, because it is something I have lived to the skin in El Escorial. You could lose yourself, sit here or there, go out, get in ... feeling at all times among vocational Lasallians. It did not matter that you did not know their names, their places of origin ... They were all people “from home”, and we used the same vocational language. I have lived with all of them and experienced a great and intense communion.



We must also highlight the creative use of media at this congress. The house was very appropriate, the hall and dining room spacious and well-conditioned, corridors and lobbies that favored the possibility of sharing in the breaks and were on the way to several activities. The creativity of the organizers, which was reflected in many languages, in the computer display, in the great plasticity of posters and messages; music was always present, whether from the lips of Álvaro Fraile, in Catalan, or in Portuguese ... A Symphony of experiences of communion and joy, which we will remember with the feeling of belonging to the great Lasallian family.

Finally, I keep for myself one of the challenges of the Congress: to spread this culture of vocations in all Lasallian centers.

It is necessary to generate experiences of accompaniment and to challenge the agents of evangelization, not only the Brothers, so that they can feed significant processes in the students and in the young people with whom they relate.

Charismatic families on a journey ... a place for sharing charism and vocation

Br. Nestor Anaya, FSC
Secretary for the Educational Mission

The Union of Superiors General, being convinced of the importance of having different forms of vocation within one and the same "Charismatic Family", has supported the creation of ways for people to meet, reflect, discuss and share experiences of what is happening in all Congregations and Religious Institutes.

Since its beginning, the Lasallian Family has shown itself to be active in this area, initially under the guidance of Brother Jorge Gallardo and currently under Brother Rafa Matas who is a member of the first ad hoc Permanent Commission for the Assembly of Charismatic Families, comprising 3 religious women, 3 lay people and 3 religious men. The Commission meets monthly. Once a year it is expanded to a larger commission made up of people from 40 different Congregations in order to give greater richness and depth to the journey they are undertaking together. In the same way, there is an annual two-day meeting for those religious or lay people in charge of the various Charismatic Families.

I was able to participate in the most recent meeting, and I can testify to the hope it brought me to see how much progress the Congregations are making in this area.

Our Generalate is the location for all these meetings, and on November 4th and 5th 130 people attended the annual meeting, which was structured as follows.

- The opening presentation: "The Charismatic Family from Vatican II up to our times" (Father RinonCozza, a Murialdo priest). This produced a rich discussion and subsequent group work.
- Sister Leslye dek Socorro (Salesian) helped us powerfully to reflect on "Strategies for a common formation within our Charismatic Family".

"...there exists a wider family, the 'charismatic family', involving various Institutes which recognise that they have the same charism, and especially Christian lay people who feel called, precisely because of their lay state, to share in the same charismatic spirit."
Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter "To all consecrated persons", 2014



- There were three more talks: one on the Lasallian Family by Brother Rafa Matas, one on the Family of the Church on its Journey by Sister Fiorella Gargano and Dr. Gaetano Zamitti, and one on the Caracciolina Family by Nicola Caracciolo. All of them helped to enrich our views.
- A sharing of experiences regarding vocation and the mission that is shared intercongregational on the peripheries. This enabled us to strengthen our commitment to the poorest through the “Association for the Children of Kabul” and the project for “Migrants” in Sicily, organised by the Union of Superiors General.
- We finished with a beautiful celebration of the ministry of the Word in our sanctuary near the relics of the Founder, which was the crowning act of our gathering.

Some important conclusions:

1. Every Charismatic Family needs to be clear about its identity as something in which everybody feels they

are active participants. It is a common reference point which generates a sense of belonging, a spirituality, a way of life, a mission.

2. The awareness that we are part of the Church and not a group “apart”. It is the Church that sends us on our mission. The sense of belonging to the Church is fundamental.
3. Have a clear discernment on the criteria for belonging to a Charismatic Family so that we can be recognized as belonging to it.
4. We need to develop and foster a common formation which will bring us more into communion with one another.
5. Encourage occasions for meeting and celebrating our shared vocation joyfully.

Initiatives of this sort will help us develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the vocation of each individual which we share with those who are journeying with us on the basis of the charisms of our Founders.

Our House “Foyer des Petits”. Saltillo (Mexico)

Br. Manuel Ramón, FSC

Saint-Joseph’s House «Foyer des Petits» belongs to the Diocese of Saltillo. It was founded in 1967 and was run by a Board of Administration until 1987 when the FSC Institute assumed responsibility for it. It provides shelter for children and teenagers from 6 to 18 years old, giving them a place where they can live and grow in decent surroundings. They are encouraged to develop as human beings through a rounded education. The Foyer supports them in their studies. It provides them with a moral and cultural education plus technical training and healthy leisure activities.

Currently, there are 75 children and adolescents in the Foyer. Some of them are orphans, others are from dysfunctional families, all of them are poor. In the mornings, they follow the usual times for lessons, and in the afternoons they have very specific activities including house repairs, studies, carpentry, welding, sports, art clubs, laundry, cleaning, leisure time and catechism.

The staff community is made up of De La Salle Brothers, Guadalupana Sisters and full time volunteers who live in the Foyer 24/27. These volunteers are lay Lasallians from different parts of the Republic, and they offer their services freely for one year.



The Brothers' Community was opened in 1987, but the volunteers only joined them from 1999 on. To date, the experience has been shared by 80 volunteers, including two married couples and ten teachers from Lasallian or other schools.

The main work of the volunteers consists in accompanying the children in all their education and activities as support staff. They are also in permanent contact with the families.

The resident children are divided into four groups according to age. Each of the volunteers is appointed to a group of children whom they look after from dawn to dusk. They are with them during their study times and help them with their work. They are also with them during periods of community work and various sporting or cultural activities.

The volunteers share in the community life of the Brothers and Sisters who are involved in the work. They participate in prayers, daily Mass, retreats, days out and celebration. All with a common goal.

Becoming a Volunteer

We accept candidates who have finished secondary school, and to check whether they are suitable to come and work with children, we ask them to provide a supporting file as young Lasallians or from other Catholic backgrounds. They have to have good physical and emotional health, with recommendations from people they know plus the approval of the Brothers in their town, if there is a Community there.

Currently, applications to be a volunteer are submitted to the District central office. They are considered at a meeting attended by those responsible for social work



and by other volunteers. The meetings take place in the second half of each academic year. The meeting looks at the needs and requirements of each establishment listed and at the number of volunteers they need. These are compared with the profiles of the candidates. Once approval is given, candidates are officially informed.

The Community of Volunteers, Brothers and Sisters.

There are thirteen of us. We see ourselves as one Community and that is how we live our daily lives. We have adopted the practice of making formal declarations based on the answers to four questions. How do I feel about living in the Foyer? How can I be of use and service? What can I contribute to this Foyer Community?

How have I developed spiritually?

We share with you below some of our replies to these questions.

What we feel

I feel it enriches me. It is a unique experience, and it has taught me to accept diversity and to combine joy with the will to help others. I learn something every day. For me it is important to share what I am doing with people I never dreamt of meeting. I feel very secure, knowing that I can always count on a Brother to support me. I feel responsibility for sharing a goal with others. I value my Community, because it is large, varied and interesting and it helps me to be faithful in my service to the children.

I value the experience of different cultures in my Community life. I am seeing a very different way of life, and it enables me to learn, explore and discover what the Foyer needs. I share in the diversity, and this has made me grow as a human being by sharing in the experiences and the needs of the children we are serving.

I think Community life is not easy, but I am learning a lot from it and at the end of the day I know that it changes your life for the good. I think that living here is a grace from God which gives deeper meaning to who I am and what I do.

How we can serve

We try to help the children acquire the stability they need in order to develop in three different stages the life they had when they came to our house. I enter totally into Jean-Baptiste de La Salle's way of acting. I joined this organisation for the well-being of each individual child, supporting them in their studies and the development of their personal habits and the ability to live together. We are a Community which serves the Lord in the children with love and creativity. We serve the children and their families so that they can have the resources they need to face life and society. We support their development as individuals in their human dimensions, spiritual, academic, educational, physical, emotional, professional, psychological, artistic and in their Christian formation.



What we contribute

I bring the knowledge I have so that things can be well done. I am a companion and an example of consecrated life for the volunteers who spread joy all around. I bring my vitality and eagerness to participate in activities. I encourage the children, am willing to learn and to accept the mistakes I may make. I contribute my skills which can help the Community and the children. I enter into the care for the children by promoting discipline and academic support. I devote my human experience as a religious. I communicate to the children an eagerness to do things well and to be people of quality. I work to reinforce and enrich the personalities of the children and young people. I contribute my constant presence among the children and promote the general organisation of the house.

How we have grown spiritually

Everyday life in our Community brings me deeper into a life of faith. As a religious Sister, I have learnt to share my spirituality in times of prayer and community sharing. I am happy to have this experience of living as a religious family in prayer and mission. I thank God for my presence in this Community. Our prayer life reinforces our unity. The way the young people and the religious members live together enriches both of us and brings God closer to us. I have learned that prayer needs to be respectful, but that it can be organised in a thousand different ways to make feel that God is closer to us. I feel strengthened in prayer by seeing it in the other members of the Community. I feel closer to God. I see the poor Christ in the service of those in need.

As the person in charge of the Foyer, I have experienced profound growth through my encounter with the God who lives in every one of the children whom I am trying to support. They have become my salvation.



1. History of Establishment

We, La Salle Sisters, in fidelity to the call of the Spirit and the charism of St. John Baptist De La Salle, consecrate ourselves to God in order to exercise, by association, our apostolic ministry of education. The Congregation agreed to take on the Rule, Constitution and Spirituality which St. John Baptist De La Salle had given to the Brothers.

The Congregation of the La Salle Sisters was founded in 1966 by the Brothers of the Christian School in Vietnam to take care of the needs of poor and abandoned children because of the civil war in the country. Shortly thereafter, the first Postulants were selected and trained at the Adran school in DaLat under the tutelage and guidance of the De La Salle Brothers and Sister Marie Albert - Congregation of Divine Providence.

After a testing period, in 1970, Archbishop Paul Nguyen Van Binh gave permission to open training house with six first Novices and marking the birth of the La Salle Sisters Congregation.

In 1973, a group of girls from Thailand were sent to Vietnam to enter Novitiate, they took the first vows in 1974.

On April 30, 1975, due to historical circumstances of the country, the Congregation had faced new challenges. The training of personnel was put on hold. After the country unification, the Sisters of Thailand went back to their country. Some Sisters moved to the United States, some Sisters stayed in Vietnam and tried to persevere finding determined ways of following Jesus and fidelity to consecrated life inspired by the Lasallians spirituality in seclusion, love and hope.

The congregations gradually developed in human resources, facilities, and expanding apostolic works to various regions in the country.

On January 23, 2002, the Vatican approved the constitution of La Salle Sisters Congregation.

On March 11, 2002, Cardinal Jean Baptiste Pham Minh Man (Archbishop of the Arch Diocese of Saigon) signed a decree to officially establish the La Salle Sisters as the Congregation of Diocese right. Since then, the Congregation of La Salle Sisters and its mission was officially recognized.

The Congregation has three different regions in 4 countries.

Vietnam: 14 communities

America: 4 communities

Thailand: 2 communities

Australia: 1 community

At present the Congregation has 107 Sisters, 16 Novices, 23 Postulants, 4 Aspirants.

The Mother House is located in Vietnam.

Mission

- Before 1975: Sisters taught at the elementary school of the Brothers in Vietnam

- After 1975:
 - Opened Kindergarten and Nursery, to focus on poor children
 - Teach Catechism
 - Serve ethnic minorities
 - Visit and offer Eucharistic communion to the sick people

2. The challenges we face in our mission and vocations.

The established decree of the La Salle Sisters to hand over to Congregation a Mission is to serve others by educational work in the spirit of St. La Salle. Therefore, the aim of the Congregation is to bring to children and young people, especially poor children, a cloning education and Christ (Constitution, 3). For La Salle Sisters, the school is the optimal means to accomplish the mission. The Congregation opened schools, classes, kindergarten groups to teach the children when specific conditions allowed.



Seeds for Sowing

Antoine Béland
*International Coordinator
for Young Lasallians*



The cock crows; the sun is not quite up yet. The Lasallian Volunteers of the Mbalmayo community in Cameroun are gliding to their little chapel for morning prayer. They then swallow down some bread and omelette and leave the house in a hurry. The day is beginning with the first rays of the sun in the Mutien-Marie Centre, and the good running of the school relies in large measure on our volunteers, who work alongside the teachers who come in from outside. The day will be exhausting but oh so satisfying for these young volunteers who give up their time without counting the cost!

Like these Lasallian volunteers of Cameroun, more and more young adults throughout the world are choosing to devote a period of their lives to the educational service of children, especially the disadvantaged.

Although volunteer work is something that “doesn’t date from yesterday”, more and more opportunities are available within the Lasallian Family, and more and more people are responding to them. There is also an increase in the variety of forms of volunteer work. Although there is no age limit for volunteers, we focus on young adults, and they form the majority of those who commit themselves freely and long-term in the Lasallian Family. For many of them, their experience of volunteer work proves to be the first step in their vocational itinerary as Lasallians.

Indeed, even though the full-time commitment as a volunteer is often limited to a few months or a few years, it frequently serves as a springboard for entering into the Lasallian charism and making a deeper commitment.

Volunteer experience is an intense training for a deeper Lasallian life of faith, community and service and it marks young people for life. Throughout the Institute, many volunteers follow up their experience by returning to a Lasallian establishment or remaining in contact with one or other of our educational activities, and this is an important testimony to the major impact these experiences have on young people.

In addition, in the course of their experience, the volunteers learn about living in community. They often form mixed communities with Brothers and Lay Lasallians, working in projects mostly destined for very marginalised and vulnerable children. These communities are signs of hope for the future of the Lasallian Mission and they point the way forward.

We sometimes hear it said the society today does not allow young people to commit themselves long-term, and even that they themselves do not want to do so any more. On the contrary, they are longing to be able to donate their time and energy to a cause in which they can believe, a mission to which they feel called. All they ask for is the chance to show that they are capable of it.

Let us give our young people the chance to do an apprenticeship in this Lasallian life of faith, community and service. Let us accept the fact that their commitment may not be forever but only for a phase in their lives. Let us be aware also of the fact that by giving young people the opportunity to do volunteer work, we are sowing the best seed possible which will grow and flourish in wonderful Lasallian vocations.



Pastoral Ministry of Vocations in LEAD

Br. Rey E. Mejias, FSC



Under the leadership of its Visitor, Bro. Edmundo Fernandez, FSC, THE LASALLIAN EAST ASIA DISTRICT (LEAD) takes seriously the concerns about vocations. A Pastoral Ministry of Vocations (PMV) Team composed of representatives from all of the countries in LEAD (Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) was formed in 2012 to establish commitments regarding the future direction of vocation promotion strategies in LEAD.

In addressing the challenge of engaging the Brothers in the District to a more dynamic involvement in vocation promotion, the Visitor continues to challenge the team “to reflect on and continue working on a common understanding of the pastoral ministry of vocations and its implications, especially for the vocations promoters”¹

¹ CIL 2013, Formation Program for Pastoral Ministry of Vocations General Objectives, October 28-November 29, 2013, Generalate, Rome, Italy.



While maintaining the local component of Vocation Promotion, the District leadership is faced with the reality that some countries in LEAD lack vocations. An exchange program of young Brothers, especially from the Philippines and Thailand, doing vocations promotion programs in countries without vocations like Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia has been initiated. Other general programs such as Lasallian Feast Days or Institutional Foundation Anniversaries, among others, involve some Brothers in the District taking part in promoting the Lasallian Vocations most especially the Brothers' vocation.

LEAD recognizes the different cultural realities and contexts of the countries that form part of the District. The Brothers have been encouraged to connect and reach out to each other instead of seeing cultural realities as a

roadblock as they look forward to the future. Thus, the LEAD Pastoral Ministry of Vocations focuses on the following priorities: (1) recognition of the importance of strengthening communities and community life to show support for the entire program of vocation promotion; (2) the need to really work as a team; (3) strengthen the existing LEAD story issues of the Visitor such so that it will now include resources necessary for the promotion of vocations while at the same time adjusting them to specific cultural realities; and (4) the need to have a clear message of support from the leaders at the District level which hopefully could come from someone like the Regional Councilor or perhaps the Superior General or a common statement coming from the Brothers in the District.

There are a number of “best practices” for vocation promotion in areas like creating a culture of vocations, a proactive approach toward vocation promotion, use of media for vocation promotion, and discernment programs.

The LEAD Vocations Team considers these areas as essential bases for promotion and recruitment. Also, the team recognizes the importance of developing a comprehensive organizational structure in each country, developing a strategy for vocational development, and the ministry of presence. It is worth mentioning the various creative promotion platforms like the Come and See Program (Myanmar), youth networking (Singapore), advertisements in Catholic press (Singapore), youth ministry in the diocese (Japan and Myanmar), vocation camps and seminars (Thailand and the Philippines), discerner's workshop (the Philippines), Brew with Bro (the Philippines), KM Zero (the Philippines), and Inter-Aspirants and Contacts' Workshops (the Philippines).

Consistent with countries like Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand, they have formation programs for contacts and aspirants that continue to produce Postulants at the end of the year. Through this current structure in vocation promotion and initial formation programs for contacts and aspirants, LEAD PMV is geared towards creating an effective coordination between the role of vocation promotion and vocation accompaniment or assessment.

It is good to note as a whole that attracting and retaining members at this point of time is also effective if the Brothers don't lose the traditional sense of the religious life in which members live together in community and participate in daily Eucharist, pray the Divine Office, and engage in devotional practices like praying the rosary

together. The wearing of the religious habit, and working together in common apostolates is found to be attractive to young people. In simple terms, most young people today are still attracted to those who show fidelity in finding meaning in life. In the proactive approach of promoting the Brothers' vocation, involvement of the young Brothers-in-formation in special events and programs will increase “face time” of postulants, novices, and young Brothers in first studies with potential candidates. In coordination with the Country Coordinator or the designated country vocation promoter, a group of Brothers has been visiting LEAD countries to help in the animation work during vocation promotion related activities.

The LEAD Pastoral Ministry of Vocations can be seen in the following set-up: (1) All Country Coordinators and Country Vocation Promoters participate in LEAD Pastoral Ministry of Vocations; (2) The Office of the Visitor becomes the center of integration in terms of LEAD Vocations Update through the LEAD Story; (3) The Country Coordinator coordinates activities for opportunities of vocation promotion especially in countries with less vocations by inviting Brothers from other countries to do PMV promotions. Groups of Young Brothers are tapped to lead and animate the District strategy and program outlined in the Local Vocation Team's Plan; (4) The vocation accompaniment or assessment continues to be a function of the country vocation promoter; and (5) Country vocation promoters constantly coordinate the direction for local vocation promotion initiatives. The success of increasing this network in encouraging young men to consider the Brothers' vocation is attributed to the presence of vibrant Local Vocation Teams in schools.

Pastoral ministry of vocations is crucial to the future of the Institute and the continuity of the Brothers' service to the Church.

Pope Benedict XVI mentioned:

“Vocations are not the result of a human project or of a skillful organizational strategy. At their deepest level they are a gift of God”²

Vocations are a gift from God. But this gift is something that we need to condition upon our consciousness and efforts to raise and always rediscover. We need to be convinced that our God is sending us vocations since the Church continues to count upon our presence to educate the last, the least and the lost. For these reasons, the leadership of LEAD considers the promotion of Lasallian vocations, most especially the Brothers' vocation, as a real apostolic priority, not only in written plans but also in providing personnel and material resources. We have to recognize that the Lord is calling us to be more active and be more aggressive in collaborating with the Holy Spirit in the raising up of our vocations. The current PMV efforts may hopefully be translated into concrete measures and become a priority in practice.

Youth ministry and formation activities are not enough. There needs to be explicit work in vocation promotion through



² Excerpt from the message of Pope Benedict XVI, Latin-American Congress for Vocations, Cartago, Costa Rica, from 31 January to 5 February, 2011.



accompaniment. Vocation promoters or coordinators in each country should continue to stir up and animate practical interest in the vocations among all Lasallians and put into effect a plan of vocation promotion adapted to every concrete and realistic situation.

Vocations are promoted by means of, but not limited to: prayer, clear presentation of charism and mission, personal contact with young men, invitation of young men to participate in our works and ministries, making our mission and our saints known through posters, shirts, books, videos, radio, social media, and the internet. But above all, we need to show to young men consistencies in our way of living the vows, zeal and apostolic creativity, openness, and community hospitality.



Why do I want to be a Brother?



I want to be a Brother because I want to give my life and all my energy to God. In a special way, I am attracted to the charisma of the Founder and therefore I want to help the last, the lost and the most needy to give them hope and guide them to find God in their daily lives.

Br. Fady SALAMA, Novice of Egypt.

Why do you want to be a Sister?



I am Mary Theresa Tran Thi Thuy. For me, there are three main reasons to become a Sister. The first reason why I want to be a Sister is to live my Christian vocation. I believe this is my life that God want for only me. Secondly, I have a desire to give myself wholeheartedly to God and others, especially my students. I love children and want to give them the best things which I can. Finally, if I am a Sister, I will have many opportunities to make myself better to serve God and human being in the best way. In general, I do not care what I will do or how happy and sorrowful I get, but I only do God's will and follow it all my life.

Mary Theresa Tran Thi Thuy

Why did i want to become associated?



They say “the ways of the Lord are impenetrable,” and to some extent that is true, since nobody can predict the future and still less the designs of God. But God has given us freedom and the ability to choose. And this unique capacity of human beings, which makes us masters of our times and actions, is a sign of His love.

So it was that in 2008, on examining the way in which the Lord had led me to discover De La Salle, I realized that my commitment to the Institute could be much stronger than just teaching my classes of history and geography. I finally arrived at the point where I could grasp the importance of “a different look” which can enable us to understand the needs of others, to show empathy and to try and respond by finding Jesus present in others. I must emphasize that I had the great good fortune to be surrounded by Brothers and colleagues who were real models of commitment as witnesses to the Good News, not just by their words but by their actions.

I realized that my belated vocation in education was with and for De La Salle. Moreover, that affected the need I felt to find, as far as possible, employment in a commitment. I needed and I still need to have the experience of a community and of prayer to renew me, just as I need a source of nourishment for shared faith and commitment to giving witness to the gospel in my humble task of teaching. In all this, we know that the hope, faith and love which inspire our daily efforts do not fall on deaf ears but support our students throughout their lives on the path they choose day by day.

Ignaci Corresa

Discerning a Vocation in Community

Santiago Juarez

Postulant in the Community of Veracruz (Mexico)

Not long ago, when I was studying psychology in the University of Veracruz, my mother said to me, “you are getting so involved in the Church that you will end up being consecrated to God”. At the time, I just smiled ironically to her and said I was sure my plans for life did not include any idea of joining some congregation or another. I then explained to her that what she was seeing in me was simply the fact that I was putting into practice the things I had learned from the Church and in the university.

On hearing this, my mother remained thoughtful, perhaps even a bit disappointed. As far as I was concerned, I was just starting university and I wanted my mother to understand that I was enamoured with psychology and social care. In time, this led to my working as a volunteer in various establishments. I got to know De La Salle when I was trying to teach Spanish and mathematics to young people of my neighborhood who wanted to gain university entrance. As a student of psychology, I got invited to stay in the Brothers’ Community in the Escuela La Salle in Ayahualulco (México), and during that period I learned about what is involved in pastoral work, and I taught human and Christian education.

When I returned to my studies after teaching, I joined the Institute for Psychological Research in the University, working in the Centre for Social Rehabilitation on family therapy and on therapy for children with intellectual

disabilities. In my free time, I was teaching sign language to deaf-mutes, to enable them to become integrated into regular schooling. On some days, I looked after elderly people in a centre which provided them with occupational therapy.

So why do I call all this “discerning a vocation in community”? And how did I end up leaving it all behind to consecrate my life to God? It was not easy. Although I had spent some time in the seminary training for the priesthood, the idea of going back to a consecration to God was not among my plans which had radically changed in the meantime. I dreamt of having a family, owning property and having a job so as to be able to carry out something similar to what I experienced in the university.

Nevertheless, I did leave it all, because during one of the Holy Week Missions a very poor family showed me by their faith that, no matter what vocation people choose, they are all seeking to rise to an encounter with God through a total dedication of themselves. I recall them saying to me, “God does not want dedication by half measures”.

Initially, I did not understand what they were really trying to say to me, but in time I understood that subconsciously we are all seeking to offer ourselves to God, each in our own situation.

In that family, for example, although they did not know from one day to the next if they would have anything to eat, the life of each of the members consisted in dedicating themselves totally to God through their particular role and work in the family. When I compared them with the families that came for therapy, I realised

that they were all striving for the same thing, namely to centre themselves on God through their interpersonal relations in their particular community, as husband, wife, son or brother.

There were the children who walked more than an hour to get a quality education in the Escuela La Salle, Ayahualulco, or the children suffering from deafness or some other sort of handicap who were trying to meet the demands of society and to have the same education as that enjoyed by other children. There were others who sought ways to become 'normal' by studying for one or two hours after classes, or the young people who met in their local parish to study so as to get into university. For each of these groups, the most important thing was not just the study but the chance to meet one another and find mutual understanding through being together. It was one more way to become acquainted with God through scientific knowledge.

There were the people in the penitentiary who still had a social conscience and were striving to restructure themselves psychologically and to be reintegrated into the community of society in which for various reasons they had failed and had lost their way on the path towards God. Finally, it was in the community of elderly people that I learned that, among the infinity of different paths that exist, people make their choices in uncertainty for a future that is uncertain, but that in the end it is God who is important and what He puts at the service of others through us.

That was when I decided to consecrate myself to God as openly as I could by walking with the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Since individuals will discern more clearly what God wants of them in the context of their particular community, I felt the need for a community which would help me complete my discernment. The aid I was offering to others, thinking it was my ordinary way of life, was in fact God calling me to service, and He was showing it in the little things which initially I did not understand.

Now that I am living with my two fellow postulants in the Community of Veracruz San Juan Bautista De La Salle, I understand my vocation more clearly, and together we are trying to embrace it as people in formation and to love it

day by day with all its challenges and difficulties. I know there is a lot that needs piling up, and on every step of the way we are learning that it is not only our opinions that count but also those of our confessors and formators. As postulants we are learning to live our dedication in community and to see God in others. In this phase in our discernment that we are starting together, we are realising that discernment is a spiritual attitude rather than a decision that we have taken. It supposes that we have chosen what God wants for us, namely to fulfill His will following the example of Jesus guided by the Holy Spirit.

It is a challenge to adopt that attitude, but to carry it out in practice means we must question our current criteria and also (why not?) the criteria of our Brothers. However, this is also a time to deepen our love for God in our Brothers and to express this in our life as religious. In conclusion, all that remains to say is 'thank you' to Brother Ángel Iburguren Aguirre, Brother David Jesús Miranda León and Brother Fernando García Germán for supporting us in our process of formation.



DID YOU KNOW...

Vocation is always creative, dynamic ... when it is in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

Br. Ignacio Alba (District of México Norte) took from the magazine of his District an interesting historical note that, undoubtedly, will attract our attention. It appears in the Bulletin of the Institute of 1930. This is the foundation by a group of Mexican priests of a "Society of

Diocesan Missionary Priests (León -Mexico) under the patronage of St. John B.. De La Salle."

One of its members, Father Landeros, told the Recruiter Brother of the District: "I have the honor, long awaited, to speak at last with a spiritual son of t. John B. De La Salle. I am a disciple of this Saint, as a member of a society of priests who bears his name."

The Society of Missionary Priests of St. John B. de La Salle was the initiative of the Vicar General of the Diocese of León (Mexico) who was a great admirer of the Holy Founder. Its mission was to be missionaries in the diocese and to teach the catechism in parishes half abandoned. The Missionaries of St. John Baptist de La Salle worked through the diocese with gratifying fruits of conversion.

Its existence was ephemeral because the religious persecution in Mexico caused the disappearance of this society. In spite of all this, the society had enough time to give to the Church a Blessed: Blessed José Trinidad Rangel.

My experience of the vocational “Call”

Br. Alvaro Llano Ruiz

The way in which God “Visited” me: my personal experience of the call in a specific context.

I was born into a family that was vocationally educated. My parents had a natural wish to give formation to their fourteen children, and this was shown in the way in which they gave witness to the Christian life and passed it on. Five of my brothers opted for the priesthood. Daily life in our home in the middle of the XX century was based on Christian thinking inspired by the teaching of the gospel and civic morality. In my village of MARULANDA (Colombia), there was a saintly old lady who was well known for her Christian virtues. She was responsible for preparing children to receive their First Communion. When I was twelve years old, I used to help her in this work. It was then that I received the “call” from God to be a catechist.

“The life dream of each individual lies at the base of their life plan, and it



somehow inspires their vocation and mission”

(Anselm Grün, “Los sueños de la vida”, p. 11). I dreamt of being an educator and I began to fulfill the dream when I was thirteen by joining the De La Salle Aspirancy. That was one of the most significant moments in my life.

The way in which the call gradually defined your “Viewpoint”, how you saw things around you and within yourself.

My primary school teacher was my model of an educator. He made me a school prefect, and this role brought me into closer relationship with my companions. The “call” became gradually more visible. The Brother in charge of promoting vocations visited my home.

In the Aspirancy, the four Brothers on the team gave

further direction to my dream to become a religious educator in the manner of Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, who became my abiding model.

In the Novitiate, I absorbed the life of the Founder, and continued this in the Scholasticate through my teaching practice in the school of San Benildo. My first pupils were from a very poor social background, and they put the finishing touches to my definitive consecration. It was a period when my country, Colombia, was starting on a profound socio-cultural transformation, and my contribution to that process was to devote myself to the human and Christian education of my pupils. My university studies in philosophy, theology and education enabled me to have a realistic view of the “changing times” that we were experiencing.

The way in which I changed and was “converted” to a new way of seeing the world and my work, the children, education, the Church.

I had begun my formal ministry and was preparing myself for “perpetual profession”, when two historical events took place in the Church and in the Institute, namely the Second Vatican Council and the General Chapter of 1966-67. In the words of Michel Sauvage, “*We passed from being enclosed and rigid to a utopia of renewal and then to an unexpected revival*”. [The Fragile Hope of a Witness (p. 16)] In that period there appeared *Perfectae Caritatis* and the Declaration on the *Brother in the Modern World*. The Council Documents and the Circulars of our Superiors invited me to reconsider from a gospel point of view the new situations and problems facing the changing world, the new kind of pupils and students and the new kind of educator they needed.

The new teaching of the Church and the Institute acted as a support for me and encouraged me to continue without fear or doubt in my efforts to live out the charism of the Founder St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle.

The way in which I foresee my future, with its challenges and hopes.

Over the past fifty five years, I have shared with my Brothers in Community and in the District my experiences as a teacher in class, as a university student, as a coordinator of former pupils, as college Director, Visitor of the District, guide for the Association of Former Students, all the fullness that the Lord has given me in my mission and apostolate. I operate by presenting them with challenges and giving them hope through my lectures in education in the houses of formation and the colleges. I animate the lives of all involved, the children, the students, the teachers, other staff and the parents. I write articles on the principles of Lasallian education and teaching. I participate in councils and commissions in which I can put forward my vision of Lasallian spirituality, community living and the ministry of education. At the age of 75, I am happy to be serving the Lord in the construction of his kingdom, and I feel completely fulfilled as a DE LA SALLE BROTHER OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

Lasallian Volunteers Club.

De Mazenod College,
Kandana, Sri Lanka

Hasith Senaratne

In 2014, when I was in grade 9, I joined the Lasallian Volunteers Club of De Mazenod College. Now I'm in grade 11 and also the president of the club for the last 2 years.

When I was in grade 8, I saw the car wash organized by the volunteers (fundraiser to help the poor and needy children) and I saw Lasallian volunteers from England and Australia visiting our college. I thought it would really be fun joining the club, but I was not aware of the real service they rendered to the children in need.

We volunteers help the underprivileged children who live near our college, but cannot afford to attend our college. After school hours, we stay behind and teach these less privileged children on a 'one to one' basis (not in groups).



We listen to their 'stories', most of them heart-breaking, talk to them and enjoy teaching them

The majority of the volunteers are Catholics, but we also have Christians and Buddhists.

The poor children are aged 5 to 10 and their parents earn their living as cleaners, sweepers and daily paid labourers.

We know that these children felt loved by us, but more than that we ourselves felt loved. They look forward to coming to our classes, bringing flowers to Brother, staff and the volunteers who are more of an elder brother or sister than a teacher to them. We send them home, after class with packets of milk and snacks.

In 2015, during the Holy Week, we the volunteers washed the feet of these underprivileged children and gave them gifts. Motivated by this act of 'Servant Leadership' service, our college senior staff also washed the feet of the minor staff in front of all the college students.

I'm grateful for this opportunity to actually 'see Jesus' in all these poor and needy children. Helping these poor children make us feel 'rich'.

I learnt that we, the college 'rich' students, with lots of facilities and the 'poor children' who lack basic facilities are children of one and the same God.

I learnt that there is more joy in giving than to keep or to receive.

I learnt that the children who are called 'poor' have lot to teach us.

I believe that 'Volunteerism' can eliminate the barriers created by racism, religion and colour of skin in this world.

Chorus of our 'Lasallian Volunteers' Theme Song:

"Give to those who don't have, share with the needy.

Do it for the love of God and it's our duty"

Our Motto in the spirit of St. De La Salle : "For the glory of God and for the good of humanity"

I wish to thank Bro .Rajendira the founder of our Volunteers' club for starting the club for the first time in our college, for encouraging and motivating us. I'm grateful to my parents and grandparents for their support.

Live Jesus in our hearts, forever.

Thank you.

Living Charism in the Family

M^a Cruz Miquel



My name is Mrs. Cruz Miquel, and I am a secondary school teacher in the Colegio La Salle de Paterna. I am married and the mother of three children. I am from a Christian family and was brought up in the tradition of the faith. I have long been linked to the Colegio La Salle and I completed my school studies there.

When at University, I belonged to the young Christians group which was led by a Jesuit priest. I learned to live my faith in a new way, less traditional and more linked to my own life.

We learned about faith lived in community where there is a sharing of life and prayer and above all of service to others seen as the essence of being a Christian.

I started teaching in La Salle in the academic year 1988-89. I gradually came to understand that working in a Catholic school was also a way to live one's faith and

mission in the Church. In 1990 I married Francisco who was also a teacher in La Salle. As a result we were fortunate enough to be building our family just when we were also growing together in our Lasallian identity and spirituality.

Right from the start, we were both involved in the pastoral work of the college, and for two years in succession we took part in a literacy programme in Equatorial Guinea. The impact of that experience of a world so different from our own daily lives was decisive for our marriage and for our involvement in things Lasallian. We came to understand that the universal dimension of the Church and the educational service of the poor are Lasallian foundational pillars.

Throughout all these years, we have linked our being Christians with our belonging to La Salle.

We have attended a lot of sessions of formation and worked in teams with the Brothers and lay colleagues of the District and of the Institute as a way of living our faith. We have come to know lots of Lasallians, Brothers and lay

people, with whom we have shared friendship, affection, prayer and mission.

From the start, we participated in Lasallian activities together as a family.

Even when they were young, we brought the children with us to Lasallian meetings as far as possible. It was an enrichment for them and part of their education. It made them open to others and ready to show solidarity with the weak.

We believe they gradually discovered the Christian commitment to education by close experience, since they too were students in the Colegio La Salle.

In 2002, we started to journey together with the Brothers of the "Obert Project" Community, which was a new and challenging initiative in community as a reception centre for children at risk of social exclusion. It was with them that we found the new mission to which La Salle was calling us, namely looking for new ways in which to attend to the needs all around us. They were times of hope and of discouragement, of new challenges full of optimism, of fear and suffering, trying things out and making mistakes but keeping on searching until we found the right road. It was a time full of life and a shared faith which inspired us to continue walking forward.

During the academic year of 2003, we decided to make a public statement of our commitment to Association. In this, we were supported by the Brothers with whom we formed our first mixed Community of Brothers and Lay Lasallians. We followed this new pathway together as a

family, so for our children too it was a means of discovering a harsh reality of which they were unaware, namely the world of homeless children. And they also discovered the dedication of Brothers and Lay Lasallians who were ready to take care of those children because of the charism and the mission to which God had called them.

We are currently continuing that work, joining our work and mission as teachers in the college with our volunteer work as educators of homeless children. We are members of a Community comprising Brothers and Lay Lasallians who share faith and the Lasallian mission. In our Community, we are enriched by the two styles of life, religious and lay, and we find strength and light in praying together.

We are ready to face whatever the Lord may put before us in the future, but it will always be in our Lasallian Community.

A Visit from God: a Call

Murphy Ranaivoson



I was the youngest son of practicing Catholic parents and brought up in the faith. When I was still young, it was envisaged that my career would be in the military. That is why I am now a former soldier of the Malagasy army. However, I changed my career when I realized the shortage of truly good educators as compared with the numbers of officers. The change was not at all easy.

It was only by chance that I came across the Brothers of the Christian Schools through the late Brother Marcellin RATOKORIRINGA (Doctor in Theology). Thanks to his influence, I too became a theologian. That was fifteen years ago. Because of his encouragement and especially because of the call of God that I felt when faced with the poor state of education, I am still continuing my struggle in that area.

**I am reminded of my motto
“I have seen the suffering of
my people ... I will send you
...and you will bring my
people out”. (Exodus 3).**

My contact and my conversion

I started by being a member of the University student group called the ‘Dauphin’s of Blessed RAFIRINGA’. They were a kind of Young Lasallians doing university studies in Madagascar. That is where I began to be influenced by the Lasallian spirit.

**The sharing of testimonies
that took place between us
encouraged us to help one
another not only in
deepening our faith but also
in living our daily lives.**

In a developing country like ours, money constitutes a major value. In the minds of some, you study in order to become rich, and everybody, graduated or not, is rushing around in search of wealth one way or another. But you cannot make a fortune in the field of education. All the same, I am quite happy to become rich spiritually and intellectually, with a clear conscience, and to share the little I have. We have strong enemies to fight against in the shape of poverty, political instability, the loss of values and corruption. The war continues and gains strength. Nonetheless, I can rely on my weapons: Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the patron of education, and his son Blessed Raphaël Loijs RAFIRINGA.

I have so many difficulties to put up with in my work: the mistakes of other people, the worn out infrastructures, the resistance to change, the poor quality of the students, interpersonal relations. They are all problems that have to be resolved.

**Fortunately, I remember at
such times that they are all
part of the cross I have to
shoulder.**

Such is our life! Our ideal model, Blessed RAFIRINGA, endured a great deal. Although I am very busy, I flourish in my work. I believe my mission will be accomplished.

The Outlook

I remain unmarried, and I can enjoy my work of educating young people by direct contact with them through university teaching, and indirectly as an administrator of a Lasallian school.

**I still have so much hope
that the quality of education
in Madagascar will continue
to improve, particularly the
education of poor children
of all kinds.**

That is precisely what we are called to and why we are called. We are given confidence by the force of prayer through which we support one another.

1. Burkina Faso – Meeting of the Commission for the Pastoral Ministry of Vocations



Those charged with vocation ministry in the District of West Africa met on Saturday November 12 in the Maison Provinciale. This was the first meeting of the Commission for Vocations and Pastoral Ministry.

Those present were Brothers Kienou François, Dabire Antoine Marie, Toe Paul, Some Gabriel, Traore Denis, Traore Simon Pierre, Somda Innocent.

The first item on the agenda was a review of the current situation of vocation ministry and pastoral care in the Lasallian ministries. The participants then proceeded to draw up an action plan to relaunch their vocations activity for 2016-2017 in the light of the strategic plan of RELAF and the Acts of the 14th District Chapter of West Africa.

The Commission was chaired by Brother M. François, and it drew up a plan and a calendar of actions which will be communicated to the campus ministries across the District.

2. Presence of the Lasallian Guadalupana Sisters in Africa



The Lasallian Guadalupana Sisters are well known in Madagascar where they carry out their mission and have found a big response in terms of vocations.

Following an invitation from the Brother Visitor of the Gulf of Benin, the Sisters have opened a new Community in the Lasallian school complex in Akassato. There are three Sisters in the Community: Laurentia ALPHONSE, Michaëline INDIAMBARATO and Lanti Ortancia OLINIRINA.

On September 8 2016, they also inaugurated a new Community in the diocese of Kabavi (Rwanda). A Mass was held on December 5 (the anniversary of the death of their Founder, Brother Juanito Fromental) to mark the beginning of their educational mission in a school for young people where they also support aspirants to their Community. Here also, there are three Sisters involved: Odette MUKAYGIRE, MarieRémy Emerthe MUKANDOLY and Basilia PÉREZ.

As a result, new possibilities are opening up for vocations to the Sisters in the service of the Kingdom through work in education.

Br. José Manuel Sauras

3. New associates in Italy



During the visit to the District of Italy by Brothers Rafa Matas, General Councilor, and Nestor Anaya, Secretary for the Educational Mission, there was a meeting with all the Signum Fidei and Lasallian Associates of Rome. The meeting included a very moving Eucharistic celebration during which the teacher Associates of the Colegio San Giuseppe renewed their commitment. At the same time two new Associates, Eleonora Munaretto (Young Lasallians Group) and Alessandra Mulas (teaching staff) made their first commitments as Associates.

There was an impressive attendance at the celebration by a fine group of students and parents of the Colegio plus a magnificent contribution from the Parents' Choir. The meeting concluded in a meal in the Colegio prepared by the Associates themselves. This was one more expression of the vitality of our Lasallian vocation. We congratulate the Community of San Giuseppe and the District of Italy as it continues its commitment to developing Lasallian vocations of every kind.

4. Meetings for those in charge of the pastoral ministry of vocations and formation



During the course of recent months, various meetings have taken place throughout the Institute which were attended by those in charge of the Pastoral Ministry of Vocations in their Districts and Regions and by those in charge of Initial Formation.

They were very valuable occasions for sharing experiences and good practice in an attempt to identify the specific needs of existing candidates to the life of a Brother and for doing some discerning about formation programs in the immediate future.

Meetings were held in the following Districts: Sri Lanka (for PARC), Brasil-Chile, Antillas-Mexico South and Mexico North (in Morelia).

The meetings also benefited from the presence of experts in human development and in psycho-spiritual and psycho-sexual needs. Among them were Fathers Selvaratnam (OMI) and Jayamanne (CSSR) at the meeting in Sri Lanka and Mrs. Celia de Juan a specialist in the psychology of the religious life, at the meeting in Morelia. Also present at the meetings to contribute their insights were the General Councillors Brother Ricky Laguda in Sri Lanka and Brother Rafa Matas in Morelia. Other experts included Brothers Felix Joseph, Christy Croos and Joseph Fernando who contributed their ideas on the promotion of vocations and on formation.

Experiences

“In Search”

An experience in vocational discernment

Last November 19-20, as part of the District of ARLEP’s vocational plan, there was a meeting for young people in the process of discerning their vocations.

The experience was great, and it was one of those unforgettable moments which bring light to the soul and make it flourish in openness to life. We were a group of novices, 4 young women and 5 young men, plus our leaders, and we met in the Novitiate community.

Chiefly it was a time of in-depth sharing, but there were also moments for silence and for celebration and for becoming acquainted with the reality of poverty. We were especially touched by the testimony of Sister Rosario from the hostel for abandoned and seriously ill children.

The meeting was intended to be a response to young people in the process of discerning their vocations. They need to share with others in the same situation and meet people who can put markers on the way as a help and as a means of enlightenment. And that is how it turned out for all of us. We thank the Lord for it.

Br. Guillermo Moreno

Expedition for Lasallian Vocations - Brazil

From November 9 to the 19, 2016 there was an Expedition for Lasallian Vocations in Brazil. There were 12 candidates from the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. The expedition had the following objectives:

- To know the stages and houses of Formation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.
- To live formative experiences with the subjects in formation to be Brothers of La Salle.
- To experience living with others.
- To gather information and experiences that can contribute to discernment.
- To share vocational experiences.

The symbol of the **Expedition of Lasallian vocations** was the compass whose cardinal points mean: The north: the search for God; The south: the search for inner life; The east: reaching out to others; The west: the search for life with nature.

Participants traveled with their accompanying persons to the formation houses, the Lasallian educational and religious institutions. They also had experiences with future Brothers in formation to strengthen their vocation. The activities were divided into group dynamics, voluntary work, visits, recreations, sports and walks.

Experiences

Singapore – Vocation Camp

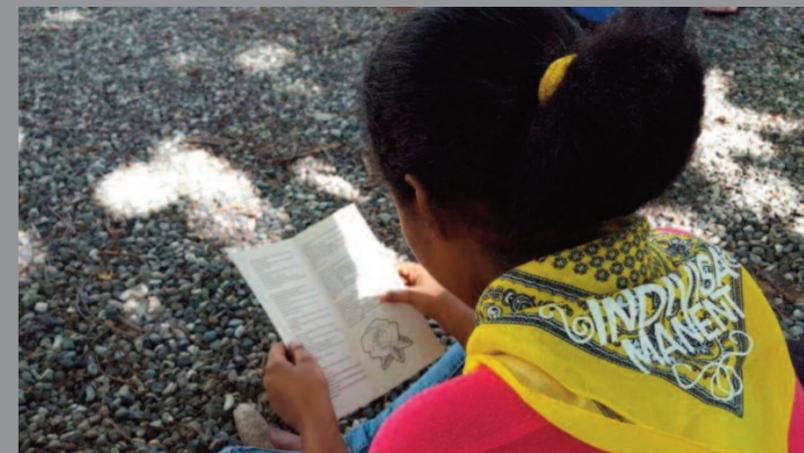
The Inter-country Vocation Team (ICVT) of Singapore held their first Vocation Camp with an appropriate theme, Discovering My Vocation, to young men with ages ranging from 15 to 18 years. Bros. Edgar (Philippines) and Benedict (Thailand) planned and accompanied the boys throughout the 4 days, 3 nights camp from 8th to 11th December.

The days went passed so quickly that the boys wanted more days and eagerly marked down the dates of the next camp in 2017. The Brothers working in Singapore with St. Patrick’s community together supported this camp in whatever ways possible; from sharing sessions of faith, prayer to providing one-to-one redditions. The boys enjoyed this time as they got an opportunity to encounter the Brothers on a personal basis, not one Brother but two Brothers, lasting forty-five minutes each. We enjoyed ourselves tremendously as we centered our activities including cycling, kite-flying and watching movies all on the theme of “Discovering My Vocation”.

Our objective is to plant a fertile seed for them to consider the vocation of a De La Salle Brother. In addition, Singapore had a wonderful Christmas gathering on 11th December. The Brothers in Singapore together with 3 young adults who are discerning the Brothers’ vocation joined us for our Christmas dinner with meals specially prepared by our very own Master chef, Br. Paul Ho. It was a fulfilling week for Singapore as we tried to promote vocations to the young as well as the older adults.

Br. Kelvin Tan, FSC

Vocational Meeting of Youth



Sister Jinnette Cepeda (from La Salle Guadalupean Sisters) chaired the First Vocational Meeting of Youth from the various Lasallian institutions of Mexico interested in thinking about an option for life and to know more about the Lasallian charism. The meeting took place on the Juan Dolio beach in the Dominican Republic on December 3, 2016.

Parmenia Road

Br. Víctor Ramos Carrión
Vocations

***“While they were talking and DISCUSSING, Jesus came and walked with them”
(Lk 24:15)***

God in our life projects presented in close reference to the Pilgrims of Emmaus.

On the first day, we started walking towards the highest point of the region: the community of "La Mesa". We enjoyed a very clear day and so we had the opportunity to enjoy the view of Pico de Orizaba, the highest volcano in Mexico, covered with snow in all its splendor. In this

So we started this experiment. We formed a group of university students from different regions. We integrated the community and began to walk – ready to meet Jesus who challenged us by walking with us.

The meeting point was the Brothers' community of Ayahualulco, in the mountains of Veracruz. There we began to think of the way to follow and the desire to find



community, we were received by a family to have our meal.

In the afternoon the young people prepared a pastoral activity which was then presented to the children for the catechism lesson, and then we shared with the community the "First Posada", the novena of preparation for Christmas. Our young people joined a family at night to share their bread, their roof and their warm home. The next day, in the morning, everyone worked in the simple tasks with the people like cutting firewood, grazing sheep, making round pieces of bread (tortillas), and so on.

We all met again to take the road that brought us to another community where we were expected by a family for lunch. In the afternoon, we presented to the children a pastoral activity in order to participate in the celebration of the Word and the "Posada" with the community. In the evening, we met as a group to share reflections on the experience so far and share the way we found Jesus who was with us on the road.

On the third day, we got up very early to go to the next community. After a walk through the fog, we arrived where a family was waiting for us with breakfast. This morning we had a much calmer rhythm. It was a morning retreat, a stop along the way, not only on the road but a stop along the way of our life just as Saint John Baptist de la Salle stopped in the midst of his confusion at Parménie, where he found the peace he needed.

This moment was the heart of the experience: we young people emerging from our comfort zones to walk with others who were strangers at the start of our journey, sharing food and shelter with rural families (the poorest in the country), suffering cold and fatigue; passing the time of our holidays to live this experience, sharing the games and catechesis with the children ... seeking in the depths of our being what God wants of our lives - just like De La Salle.

After this moment of reflection, prayer and sharing, we returned in the evening to the Brothers' Community and the Volunteers in Ayahualulco. After a bath and the sharing of the experience with the Brothers with whom we live in community, we found ourselves with one last thought: we resumed our reading about the Pilgrims of Emmaus, but now the protagonists of the story were us, those on the road, who were with Jesus who accompanied the children and the peasants; we "understood" the presence of God in the gestures of kindness of the people who received us; in those who discovered together the sharing of the "bread" at the table with the families; and who remembered that their hearts "burned" with the simplicity of the children and the tranquility of the mountain.

On the last day, "they got up and went back". We ended this experience that we lived "together" in order to begin the most important thing: the return. We return to pursue our planned life, but enriched and empowered by "what we have seen, what we have heard", to continue to discover how we can give fullness to the profession we have chosen, to make a conversion that leads to be the best expression of ourselves. This conversion may be the beginning of a serious reflection on the possibility of a vocation to the Consecrated Life. In any case, we will continue to look and walk with those who wish.



Vocations Prayer

Br. Paco Chiva

**“The apostles asked the Lord:
–Increase our faith.
The Lord replied:
–If you had faith, even as small as a mustard seed,
You would be able to say to this mulberry tree:
‘Uproot yourself and be planted in the sea,
And the tree would obey.’ Lc 17, 5-6**

If I had faith, even though it be as small as a mustard seed.

I would begin by declaring war on my own fears and insecurity.

I would cast out of my house those demons of laziness, greed, ambition, vanity.

I would venture out from my comfort zone. I would go beyond my personal frontiers. I would smile more at my knowledge and certainties.

If I had faith, even though it be as small as a mustard seed.

I would share more in community my faith and doubts, my mistakes and successes. I would not worry about showing myself as I am, vulnerable.

I would pay more attention to my personal prayer, I would find times to enjoy silence, and rekindle my spiritual desire.

I would forgive the mistakes of others. I would look more kindly on others and show them more signs of affection.



Br. Paco Chiva

If I had faith, even though it be as small as a mustard seed

I would smile more, be more playful, grow in humanity.

Lord, increase our faith. Touch our hearts.

And we will open wide the doors of our community to welcome visitors and pilgrims in life.

We will be ready to go out to your borders and be of service to all.

We will change our structures to welcome, together and by association, all vocations.

Lord, increase our faith. Touch our hearts.

To spread your good news, to see the treasure hidden within each individual, so that our faces may show your merciful face; and be brothers and sisters to all.

Lord, increase our faith. Touch our hearts.

