



**REPORTS FROM THE PARTIAL ASSEMBLIES HELD IN THE 11 REGIONS OF THE  
INSTITUTE  
AND THE REPORT FROM THE  
2<sup>ND</sup> INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF YOUNG LASALLIANS**

September 2006 Rome

The Partial Assemblies held in the different Regions of the Institute reflected on the themes which were suggested to them by the International Commissions on Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor and the Lasallian Education Mission. The themes were enriched during the Inter-Capitular Meeting of May 2004 and approved by the General Council on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2004.

Agenda items for the Partial Assemblies

**I. Association – (Documents of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter, Propositions 1, 2, 3 and 4)**

1. What is the regional definition of Association? What is the meaning of Association in the Region?
2. How is it lived out in the regional reality?
3. What does Association teach us about the identity of the Brothers and the identity of the Lay Associates and the way they complement each other?
4. What encourages Association in the Region?
5. What are the challenges to Association in the Region?
6. What is the vision of a desired future for Association in the region?
7. What steps should the Region take to make this a reality?

**II Educational Mission – (Documents of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter, Propositions 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16).**

1. How is the Lasallian Educational Mission lived/expressed in reality in the region? This should include the following: relationships with students/ those served, management of institutions or services, approach to students/ those served, organizational structures, authentic service to the poor, etc?
2. What are the emerging needs, attempts at innovation, challenges to the Educational Mission?

3. What encourages or strengthens the Educational Mission?
4. How do you vision the future of the Educational Mission?
5. What steps should the Region take to make this a reality?

### **III. Organizational Structures – (Documents of the 43rd General Chapter, Propositions 5, 6 and 11).**

1. How have the new organizational structures helped the Educational Mission?
2. How can these structures be strengthened?
3. What are the implications for leadership as a result of these structures?
4. What are the implications of these for the formation of those involved in the mission?

All of this could be arranged according to the following schema:

- Realities and trends
- Obstacles and challenges
- Vision
- Plan of action

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ARLEP (Agrupación regional lasaliana de España y Portugal)

CANADA FRANCOPHONE

FRANCE

ITALY

PROCHE ORIENT

PARC (Pacific Asia Regional Conference)

REBIM (Great Britain-Ireland-Malta Region)

RELAF (Région Lasallienne Africano-Malgache)

RELAL (Región latinoamericana lasallista)

RELEC (Région Lasallienne Europa Centrale)

USA-Tor (United States – Toronto Region)

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF YOUNG LASALLIANS

# **ARLEP**

## **REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, April 2006**

### **1. Geographical area included in the partial Assembly (ARLEP). General context.**

#### **1.1 Geographical Areas**

- 7 Districts and 1 Sub-District
- In Europe: Spain and Portugal
- In Africa: Equatorial Guinea, Benin, Ivory Coast, Togo, Conakry, Guinea

#### **1.2 ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-POLITICAL-CULTURAL AND FINANCIAL FACTORS**

##### **1.2.1 SPAIN - PORTUGAL**

###### **Socio-Cultural context**

1. The person is the central unit of organization in reality.
  - Subjectivity predominates
  - Personal growth is based on interpersonal relationships
2. Adolescents and young people are exposed to external stimuli that make difficult the cultivation of an interior life.
3. There is sensitivity for human rights, the rights of children, the care of the environment, solidarity...
4. There is a rich multicultural and multi-religious reality.
5. There is great economic development.

###### **Education**

1. Students are aware of their personal dignity. Their education allows for their human and Christian maturation.

2. Students demand more emphasis on the emotional and relational than on organizational aspects.
3. There is more care for learning than for teaching
  - The school ought to be an area of life
  - Teachers ought to incarnate values
4. Teachers sometimes have problems in their teaching and in some cases they do not feel recognized nor valued.
5. There has been a transference of educational responsibilities from the family to the school.
6. There has been a universalization of education at obligatory levels.
7. There is general access to university training.

### **Childhood and Youth**

1. There is ethical relativism.
2. There is weak, manipulable thinking.
3. Enjoying the present moment is important.
4. There is fragmentation and incoherence among facets of the person.
5. The limits of respect are very vague.
6. There is lack of support for a healthy sense of self-esteem.
7. There are few demands and standards in one's work.
8. There is a scarcity of values.
9. There is appreciation of family and friends on the part of young people.

### **Family**

1. There are single-parent families.
2. There is religious ignorance, both in terms of doctrine and commitment.
3. Although there are some problems, the family continues to be strongly rooted in society.

### **The Promotion of Justice**

1. There is a great effort on the part of Christian institutions in favor of the promotion of justice.
2. This is one of the countries with great numbers of its persons who work outside its borders, and also with great numbers of volunteers, especially young ones, and missionaries.

### **The Religious Climate**

1. There is a sensitivity to false transcendental-inducing substances.
2. The importance of the experiential-emotional for developing spirituality.
3. Devaluation of the sacramental.
4. A distancing from the institutional Church and its hierarchy.
5. There is strong support for popular religion, especially in some areas.

### **Other**

1. Xenophobic reactions.
2. There is a trend toward fundamentalism in certain social groups.
3. There is a difficulty in accepting cultural and linguistic pluralism, etc.

## **1.2.2 Africa (See the RELAF report)**

### **2.1 THE EDUCATIONAL LASALLIAN MISSION**

#### **2.1.1 Analysis of the Situation**

##### **Realities:**

1. There is good acceptance of the formation that is offered by means of courses that refer to shared mission, the leadership of centers, Lasallian identity, and school pastoral ministry.
2. There is a rapid and progressive decrease in the number of Brothers in schools.
3. There is a group of young people who identify with the Lasallian project and who wish to continue their commitment in it.
4. There is adaptation of Lasallian pedagogy to social (ethnic realities, religions, languages...) and cultural changes (multiculturalism and mixed cultures), and to social (a society of knowledge) and educational reality (school for everyone) at the present time.
5. There is a significant group of Brothers and lay persons who are aware of their mission and they are generously involved in it, based on a new form of relationship.
6. Even though there are fewer Brothers, the number of Lasallians has increased considerably and we are expecting greater educational offerings of greater quality.
7. There is an insistent demand for change and modification in the teaching-learning model.
8. The “education for justice and solidarity plan” is being implemented.
9. There is special attention being paid to the educational service of the poor in formal and non-formal settings.
10. Lasallian NGOs are being re-evaluated.

##### **Obstacles**

1. The bureaucratic school structure.
2. There is discouragement among certain teachers as they see many obstacles in the lives of youth.
3. There is a group of Brothers and lay persons who feel the decrease and the aging in a number of religious in mission, and mental barriers are created and a resistance to change.
4. There is a difficulty, on the part of some teachers, to understand their work as a vocation.
5. Educational legislation: many changes in a short time, in accord with politics.
6. Different ways of understanding the family and its values, sometimes in contradiction with our own.
7. Social awareness that the school does not respond to socio-educational needs and expectations.
8. Silence and a poor interpretation in some social areas of the activities of Christian teachers.
9. Difficulty in balancing these two phrases: “being evangelically significant” and “development of the processes of educational quality and effective management.”
10. Current social characteristics (consumerism, hedonism, laicism...) in juxtaposition with a human and Christian education.

#### **2.1.2 Vision: Guidelines and Lines of Action**

1. To take care of the initial and ongoing formation of Brothers and lay persons.
2. To be original and creative in order to give pertinent pastoral responses in updated language.
3. To put into practice the explicit criteria for performance in published documents on multi-religions, multiculturalism, and immigration.

4. To put into practice the evaluation instrument on belonging for a school in the Lasallian school network.
5. To transform our educational centers into “inclusive” centers.
6. To encourage quality educational management in our centers.
7. To implement didactically Information Technology and Communication (ITC) in the educational environment.

### **2.1.3 Action plan**

1. To coordinate communities and non-formal educational works.
2. To build and to promote an Inter-District community, open to experiential formation of leaders in pastoral ministry, whose primary objective would be to open new paths for evangelizing the young.
3. To make real in our centers with concrete proposals, each of the methodological approaches reflected in the document “The Regional Project of Evangelization”: “welcoming,” “closeness,” “listening,” “accompaniment,” among others.
4. To renew our Vocational Pastoral Ministry Program, based on criteria expressed in the document "The Pastoral Ministry of Vocations in ARLEP," drawn up by the Regional Pastoral Ministry Commission.
5. To create a Regional Sub-Commission of Directors of the Lasallian Educational Center Network, within the Regional Educational Commission, as a springboard for reflection, coordination and development of Lasallian administration.
6. To develop a system of Institutional Assessment that would assess the degree of belonging of a center in the Lasallian Center Network.
7. To draw up the "Integrated plan for basic and ongoing formation."
8. To facilitate formation for administrative and leadership roles in centers and in the District.
9. To systematize, facilitate and enable, the theological and pastoral training of Lasallian teachers, giving them a key part in the design and carrying out of these formative processes.
10. To organize the "Saint John Baptist de La Salle Chair" as a forum for reflection and study on the Lasallian Mission and educational service of the poor, according to the guidelines of the 43rd General Chapter. Universities in the Region would assume the organization and subject matter of this Chair.
11. To propose a project of education during leisure time and free time.
12. To create and maintain a virtual space within the Regional web site, to increase inter-relationships and to share teaching and pastoral resources.
13. To draw up an innovative didactical plan based on cooperative learning that especially promotes evangelization.

## **2.2 ASSOCIATION**

### **2.2.1 Analysis of the situation**

#### **Realities:**

1. There has been considerable effort made since the 1980s in evangelizing pastoral ministry and the different courses in institutional formation, which has facilitated the understanding of Shared Mission and Association.
2. In Districts, there have been a countless number of meetings dealing with formation, forums, District Assemblies...which have helped in reflecting on Lasallian Association.

3. There have been four events marking our journey towards Association: The Third Lasallian Week in Santiago (2002), the Ninth Regional Assembly (2003), EUROCELAS (2004), and the First Meeting of Associates (2005).
4. The group of 48 lay persons who made an explicit commitment of Association and the three "Signum Fidei" Fraternities.
5. The existence of a significant group of lay persons who, although they have not made an explicit commitment, consider themselves as de facto Associates.
6. Different initiatives of meetings and discussions: Assemblies and District Mission Councils, Commissions on Association, meetings of Brothers and lay persons, Shared Mission teams, Lasallian Christian communities, a reassessment of former students, the Signum Fidei Regional and European Assemblies...
7. The taking on of responsibilities on the part of lay persons, both in District leadership and in leadership positions in educational centers.
8. The need of associates to experience living together, sharing...
9. An increase in the number of persons who, without being involved in the teaching profession, have an educational vocation: Christian, sports, and cultural groups.
10. The birth and development of many Christian communities.
11. Incipient experiences of mixed communities of Brothers and lay persons.

#### **Obstacles:**

1. Among the Brothers:
  - a. Ignorance or lack of clarification of concepts.
  - b. Confusion between Lasallian association and leadership in educational centers.
  - c. Difficulty in being a welcoming community of reference for lay persons.
  - d. There is little preparation in communities to receive lay persons.
2. Among lay persons:
  - a. Ignorance or lack of clarification of concepts.
  - b. Difficulty in understanding Association on the part of some teachers due to their lack of formation and Christian commitment.
  - c. Diversity of degrees of commitment.
  - d. Many obstacles having to do with the labor-professional situation and those aspects considered by lay persons to have a "spiritual" character.
  - e. Difficulties for members of Signum Fidei in finding their place in this new framework after the General Chapter.

#### **2.2.2 Vision: Guidelines and Lines of Action**

1. Consolidate Christian communities that already exist into centers and create new ones.
2. Continue informing about and clarifying this process to Brothers and lay persons.
3. Continue proposing explicit commitments of association.
4. Continue and intensify the formation of Brothers and lay persons in Lasallian identity, stressing the importance of theological formation and basic training in the Bible.
5. The accompaniment of Brothers, associates, and lay persons.
6. Draw up guiding criteria for Association.

7. Share with lay partners the responsibilities of leadership at different levels (local and District), in different areas (educational and pastoral ministry) and in Shared Mission processes and Association, offering them appropriate formation.
8. Awaken in Lasallian lay persons the awareness of integration and a sense of belonging to the District and to ARLEP, as a unified mission and an openness to the universality of the Institute.
9. Promote the dedication of the Brothers to direct service of the young in schools, the pastoral ministry of vocations, the formation of lay persons and Brothers, accompanying faith communities, participation in new initiatives for the service of young people at risk and far from faith and the presence in organizations having to do with Catholic schools.

### **2.2.3 Action Plan**

1. Draw up a comprehensive plan in District Councils and Ministry Councils as to the future of our works, keeping in mind the criteria of convergence and restructuring.
2. Create a process of Association for ARLEP that the meaning and the minimum requirements for belonging and commitment to the mission of the Institute.
3. In each District, make more precise the role of the Brothers' community and of Christian Lasallian Communities as they face the new reality of Shared Mission and Lasallian Association. Establish and organize communities as points of reference for Associates, partners, and young Lasallians.
4. Appoint six lay Lasallians from ARLEP (one per District) who can follow a specialized formation process, so that they themselves can be future leaders and formation personnel.
5. Take on the promotion and accompaniment of Christian groups and communities of teachers and the process of Association in the Region.
6. Promote meetings of lay associates.

## **2.3 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES**

### **2.3.1 Analysis of the situation**

#### **Realities**

1. For more than 20 years in ARLEP we have embraced shared initiatives in all Districts:
  - The Conference of Brothers Visitor
  - Common services
  - Regional commissions that have dealt with aspects of consecrated life, the educational mission, youth ministry, vocation ministry, etc.
  - Attention to and missionary service in the Sub-District and in other Regions of the Institute.
  - Common plans and activities in initial formation
2. In 1999 the Regional Assembly and the Conference of Visitors echoed one of the guidelines of the General Council with respect to the reorganization of Regions. After the 43rd General Chapter, ARLEP began to develop a "Plan of Convergence."
3. This plan of convergence has as its goals:
  - To increase the vitality of the Brothers' communities and of the educational communities.
  - That the educational mission be carried out with quality and surety since a process of the decrease of Brothers and a significant increase in lay persons, with whom we are sharing the mission, has begun.
  - That priorities of the mission be taken care of and that there be a demand for joint efforts.

4. This process of reflection and design, carried out on both the District and Regional levels, reached its peak at the meeting of District Councils that was held in Liria in December 2005.

### **Obstacles**

1. A fearful reaction to change.
2. Difficulty in motivating these changes in Brothers' communities and in educational communities.
3. Difficulty in designing a process that allows for full participation on the part of everyone.

### **2.3.2 Vision (Guidelines and Lines of Action)**

1. That the Region develop a Common Mission Plan which would include:
  - A plan for evangelization
  - A plan for pastoral ministry
  - A way of dealing with the needs of the poor
  - A design of management models required by new situations
  - A response to the European reality of the Institute that is oriented towards the constitution of a single Region.
2. To define a new District model which at the same time would:
  - be a space for the unity of the Mission
  - be an organization for the leadership of the Brothers and the communities
3. To find a model that will help us to express clearly that we are part of a Church of Communion in which lay persons are major players
4. To revitalize and not just maintain what already exists. United we will generate more life than if we are dispersed and we will be able to confront new challenges.
5. That the model that will be built will allow for a new, in-depth understanding of the role of the Brother and of the lay person.
6. To draw up a communication plan to encourage information and involvement of Lasallian communities in the process of restructuring based on convergence.

### 2.3.3 Proposal for restructuring ARELP over the course of the coming years

UNTIL JULY 2010		AFTER JULY 2010	
<b>7 DISTRICTS</b>		<b>1 COMMON DISTRICT</b> <i>(with geographic sectors)</i>	
Works in <b>Equatorial Guinea and the Gulf of Benin</b> <b>Direct INVOLVEMENT</b> <i>(With progressive withdrawal)</i>		Works in <b>Equatorial Guinea and the Gulf of Benin</b> <b>Another Form</b> of connection	
<b>1 Regional Coordinator</b> <i>(With limited powers)</i>		<b>1 Regional Visitor</b> <i>who will assume the powers of the VISITOR</i> of the new common District <i>(governmental area )</i>	
<b>7 VISITORS</b> managing	<b>7 Districts</b>	<b>AUXILIARY VISITORS</b>	who lead the geographic <b>SECTORS</b> of the 1 common District
<b>8 AUXILIARY VISITORS</b>			who lead <b>MISSION AREAS</b> of the 1 common District
<b>7 District Chapters</b>		<b>1 COMMON DISTRICT CHAPTER</b>	
<b>1 Assembly for Brothers in ARLEP</b>		<b>1 MEL Assembly for the common District</b> <b>1 District MEL Council</b> <i>MEL Sector Organizations</i>	
<b>1 MEL Assembly for Arlep</b> <b>6 District MEL Councils</b> <b>6 District MEL Assemblies</b>		<b>1 MEL Assembly for the common District</b> <b>1 District MEL Council</b> <i>MEL Sector Organizations</i>	
<b>1 CONFERENCE OF BROTHERS VISITOR</b> <b>7 Visitors + 8 Auxiliaries</b>		<b>1 “COUNCIL” of BROTHER VISITORS</b> <i>1 Visitors + Auxiliaries</i>	

<b>6 District LEADERSHIP TEAMS</b>		<b>1 DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM</b>	
<b>7 District Councils</b>		<b>1 Common District Council</b> <i>(Visitors and Councilors elected by the Chapter)</i>	
<b>NETWORK OF CENTERS</b>	<i>which manages 6 District teams</i>	<b>NETWORK OF CENTERS</b>	<i>which manages 1 common District team</i>
			<i>which manages SECTOR teams</i>

## **FRENCH-SPEAKING CANADA REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, March 2006**

The regional assembly of the District-Region of French-speaking Canada was held on 25th and 26th March 2006, at our Residence De La Salle, Laval (Quebec). Brother Claude Reinhardt, General Councillor, was present. Forty Brothers and Associates involved in our works or connected with them took stock of the social context and present situation of our District and studied the main themes that will be the object of the international assembly in Rome: the Lasallian educational mission, Lasallian association and the organisational structure of the mission and of association in our District.

### **1. SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE MISSION AND PORTRAIT OF OUR DISTRICT**

#### **A look at society in French-speaking Canada**

- 83% of the population is Catholic. The rate of religious practice is between 1% and 20% in rural areas and less than 5% in the large urban milieus.
- Over the last 15 years or so we have seen a combining of parishes into larger pastoral units. Churches have become too numerous and almost empty and the financial resources are insufficient.
- The vocations' crisis is evident in religious communities, both male and female. Priests have grown old and relief is practically non-existent in the major seminaries.
- Traditionally our public schools (run by the government) allowed for the teaching of the Catholic religion as part of the school programme. Even more so, such teaching was assured in our private schools. But, since 1998-1999, the public system no longer provides either religious education or pastoral activities. Parishes are ill prepared to take over because the tradition is lacking and there are few volunteers sufficiently prepared.
- Young people live in a post-modern society which favours individualism and living in a world of unbridled consumerism.

- The young are often the victims of broken families and divorce. This does not favour healthy living at the affective level.
- There is a high rate of suicide, especially amongst young people between the ages of 19 and 24.
- The birth rate is lowest among the Canadian provinces, and one of the lowest in the world with 1.4 children per family.
- However, we see a large number of young people maintaining very high ideals, mainly with respect to the environment, international solidarity and missionary cooperation. We sense amongst them a great desire to make sense of their lives.
- A fairly large number of young people say they are believers and admit that they believe in prayer, but we do not find them in church nor in youth groups.
- Quebec society, especially in the big cities, has become a reception ground for numerous immigrants, many of whom are practising Catholics from Latin-America and Haïti.

## **A look at the District of French-speaking Canada**

### **Our situation**

- We are a District of 203 Brothers with an average age of 78.6.
- We have 96 Brothers who are over 80 years of age, 94 between 65 and 79, and 13 between 40 and 64. In our works, 130 work as teachers and administrators and 41 are pastoral care co-ordinators and activity leaders. Out of this total of 171 men and women collaborators, 14 are Associates. Young Lasallians, about fifty at the present time, are in a period of re-organisation and recruitment.
- We have 19 community groups.
- 10 Brothers still work in our former missions in Cameroon, Haïti and Japan.
- 2 non-government secondary schools are administered by administrative councils on which there are Brothers. In these two schools, there are Lasallian teams (Brothers, Associates and Partners). One of these schools is run by an Associate
- We have 2 centres for education in the faith (Villa des Jeunes and Notre-Dame de la Rouge). The two centers are run by Associates. There we find educational teams made up of Brothers and Associates. During the summer, these two centers hold holiday camps for young people.
- Another camp, Camp De La Salle, is to be placed on an operational footing throughout the year. The objective is to provide an education in the faith.
- Some Young Lasallians have set up some “Week-end camps” to allow children and adolescents from single parent families to have an experience of group living. The Christian dimension is present in them.

- In collaboration with other religious communities and some lay people, we maintain certain roles in a detoxification centre for young people and in a Centre to help migrants with their homework.
- In the District, two Brothers receive a salary. All the others are retired and/or sick. Several Brothers seek involvement as volunteers in works that are educational, pastoral or in solidarity with working class milieus. Some Brothers are in active service in our infirmaries, in running the District and our local communities.
- We have not had any new Brothers for at least 20 years, except Brother Daniel Morin who joined us 9 years ago. Brother Daniel made his final profession in September 2004.

The challenge for our District is to ensure that, in spite of the limitations of age and the health of the Brothers and with the support of our associates and of the Lasallian family, the Lasallian mission in French-speaking Canada continues and that there is a revival of vocations.

## **2.1 LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION**

With the coming of the 1960s, the presence of the Brothers in schools changed radically. Both male and female communities of religious teachers saw themselves deprived of their role as those first responsible for, and leaders in, the world of education. From the 1970s, the Brothers who were still working in public schools, were hired as individuals. A group of Brothers then withdrew from the public school network to teach in the few colleges that belonged to us or in the quite new network of inter-community institutions which was, subsequently, to form the private school network. Other Brothers chose to create new works: running pastoral care centres, summer camps, services for the poor, etc.

### **ALWAYS AT THE SERVICE OF THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION**

Broadening the field of action of the Brothers changed nothing in the primary mission of the congregation: the human and Christian education of the young and, in a privileged way, of the poor. The school was no longer the only place in which the Brothers operated. As the years went by, the number of Brothers diminished and lay people, in increasing numbers, worked with us in the works of our District. In addition, shared mission was being promoted more and more in the Institute. The role of our lay partners has become more important and they have been invited to share the Lasallian mission, and so to place “salvation within reach of the young”.

For a decade already, the Lasallian mission, in our District, has been a shared mission. Brothers and lay people have been working together in works which are a response to the great Lasallian values: the young at the centre of our concerns; the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ; marked preference for the service of the poor; constant research for adaptation to new needs; a mission carried on “together and by association” by Brothers and lay people.

The current picture of the mission in our District is of a mission which takes diverse forms: organising pastoral care, schools, reception and supervision of the young, summer camps, receiving families, being present and of service to immigrants, to the helpless and to young people in difficulty, etc. There are other characteristics of this mission amongst us: it is creative and inventive, bringing dynamism and hope, lively and capable of responding to the new needs of the young, but it remains fragile. Unanimously, Brothers and lay people give priority to the educational service of the poor.

## Our strengths

- **The Lasallian educational plan of the District, *Never Alone Again*.** This educational plan was developed by a team of Brothers and lay people. It represents one of our strengths seeing that it has been adopted by everyone and that each of the works is busy applying to its own educational project the values it embraces. It is an invitation to each and everyone to the service of the young, together and by association, to bring the Good News to life, by the unambiguous proclamation of Jesus Christ.
- **The evaluation of our works.** The team of Visitors has proceeded, with the help of a professional, to an evaluation of all our works to determine the importance given to evangelization, on the one hand, and to the young who are poor, on the other. Those in charge of the works have used the results of this systematic evaluation to take stock of their presence to young people and of the formation envisaged for these latter. The raising of awareness was shared and is binding on all educational teams.
- ***Belief itineraries of the young people in Quebec*.** University research has been conducted on the faith development of the young: children, adolescents and young adults by a research professor, of the faculty of theology and religious sciences of Laval University, Father Gilles Routhier. Staffs of our different works contributed to that research. The major findings coming out of this research provided valuable directions for the different kinds of operation in the environments in which our works have taken root.
- **The place given to the young: the young at the centre of our Lasallian educational plan.** On the one hand, the presence of Brothers and lay people who share the Lasallian educational mission is felt in two secondary schools, depending on various practical details. On the other, this presence has found new outlets and new expressions, but always in the service of the young and with priority for the young who are poor and those from families with a modest income. Our fidelity to the young is one of our great strengths and it gives direction to our educational mission.

**Responses to the needs of our environment.** In spite of fewer and fewer resources in Brothers and of their average age, the District is managing to set up, thanks to the support of Associates and collaborators, new forms of service to the young: centres for human and Christian formation; assistance to the young who are having difficulties in school or for the offspring of families on a low income; projects to intervene on behalf of immigrants; reception of persons in unfavorable circumstances; etc. All the associates, both Brothers and lay people, remain attentive to the needs of the young who were not taken care of by any official institution.

**What Brothers and lay people need to do to make a better response to new situations.** There is always the need to undertake consistently a re-reading of our experiences and commitments, to refocus the ‘why’ of our actions, to serve as best we can the Lasallian educational mission. We must ensure or support equally the social, pedagogical and spiritual formation of the persons committed to our works, trying, like De La Salle, to imitate the figure of Christ the Educator. We must be mindful of the different kinds of poverty and campaign for social justice. In the short term, we must anticipate the formation of those personnel responsible for training, to give ourselves the necessary resources for the basic and continuous formation of our teams.

**Challenges to be taken up** – These challenges are in line with the needs we identified.

- In our works we have to announce Jesus Christ, taking up the challenge of evangelisation in a society which is more and more multi-ethnic, burdened with the weight of unbridled consumption and development in which young people have trouble in finding their place.

- We also wish our existing works to ensure a presence and a place for poor and helpless young people and that this remain a constant preoccupation for us.
- Likewise we wish to work at maintaining the Lasallian educational mission as a vital priority in all our present works or in new works in response to new needs.
- To take up the challenge of formation in our District, we must give priority to the formation of those responsible for formation. This is an indispensable pathway

## 2.2 ASSOCIATION

Lasallian association for mission now has its own story in French-speaking Canada. As a result of the 42nd General Chapter of 1993, Lasallian partnership developed in our District and particular care was brought to the formation of lay partners in our works. The Brothers were aware of the increasingly important role the latter held with us in dealing with the young. A lengthy discussion was held on “together and by association” with our lay partners. Then a spur was given to our initiative by the 43rd General Chapter in 2000 by its invitation to create “discussion groups on ways to share the Lasallian charism with the educators and young people of other religions” (Proposition 2). Some sessions dealing with Lasallian formation have been held. Some Lasallian teams have brought Brothers and lay people together in our works.

Undoubtedly, the most decisive element has been the creation by our District Chapter, in 2004, of the Commission for Association (COMAS) which applied, in part, proposition 5 of the 43rd General Chapter bearing on the creation “of a structure charged with the Lasallian educational mission in which all participate with a deliberative voice”. The members of our Chapter chose to create a commission whose primary responsibility was to take charge of Association so that it could be set up under the best conditions for French-speaking Canada. Its mandate called upon it to draw up “an adapted programme of Lasallian formation”, to devise models of involvement within the Association for the mission and to prepare a commitment ritual. This commission has worked at promoting Association in the District and especially it emphasised that Association was the concern of and involved the Brothers as well as the lay Lasallians.

The first requests for Association were expressed during 2005, the Year of Association in the Institute. COMAS organised formation sessions for the young candidates for Association and it prepared The Associate’s Guide. The first Associates made their commitment on 1 September at the Villa des Jeunes and the second group of associates committed themselves on 10 September at the launching of the new academic year 2005-2006 at our Mont-Benilde Secondary School. At the moment, the District has 14 Associates, men and women. Further applications have been presented in 2006 and should lead to some commitments as Associates for the Lasallian mission in our works.

The effective presence of Association in our District is considered by all as an important step. The principal quality that all recognise in it is the fact that it allows Brothers and lay people to work together in the Lasallian educational mission. Likewise it enables us to become aware of how sound was the initial intuition of De La Salle and how pertinent it remains for our day. It develops in the Associates, Brothers and lay people, the feeling of belonging to a work of the Church and the feeling of solidarity, “together and by association”, to bring the Lasallian charism alive. Among the Brothers it is a source of dynamism in the community. For all, in particular for the lay Associates, it is extremely comforting and stimulating to note

that Association for mission links the Associate locally to a work and more widely to the District responsible for that work and that, through the District, Lasallian Association forges a bond with an international Institute in which other Associates, Brothers and lay people, share the Lasallian charism and extend it.

### **Our strengths**

- Association has contributed to a feeling of belonging, of cohesion, of solidarity between Brothers and lay people throughout the District. In each one there exists a stronger and stronger conviction that shared mission is the concern of everyone. The involvement of each one is thus a strength guaranteeing the fulfilment of the Lasallian mission.
- One of the strengths of our Association rests on the competencies and qualities of the Associates, Brothers and lay people, on the dynamism of each and on the commitments made by each one in favour of young people, especially those who are helpless or in difficulties.
- The presence of young associates is a special strength. In addition to instilling a new dynamism, these young people think up new kinds of response to the needs of other young people. They represent the future of the Lasallian mission in French-speaking Canada.
- In the District there have developed places of belonging, opportunities for coming together, which are beneficial for the life of the Association. They meet the needs of each and stimulate the creative and inventive imagination.
- Another strength of the District lies in the setting up of networks which are woven within and between the works. The strength of each team lies in what each member brings to it and it profits from what other teams in other works experience, imagine, create and share on the District scale. The process resulting from it is put at the service of the mission.

### **Needs of the Association**

- The first need expressed in a unanimous way is the necessity of developing the Lasallian formation of the associates, Brothers and lay people. There is insistent emphasis on the need for continuous return to the original sources and for individual and group accompaniment. The first step in formative intervention consists in sharing within an educational team the personal resources of its members. The formation programme devised by COMAS is to guide our plan of formation.
- The development of leadership is revealed as equally necessary both for our works and in the groups with which we mix. Associates, Brothers and lay people, must assure an active presence, one adapted to the places in which we operate and to the young who frequent them. They must be rallying points for the mission. Means must be taken to feed their dynamism and the effectiveness of their operation.
- We have the obligation of being infectious. We must increase the number of persons invited to share the Lasallian mission and, even more, the number of associates committed to the mission. Associates, Brothers and lay people, must fearlessly issue appeals for Lasallian vocations, including the vocation of the Brother.

### **Challenges to be taken up**

Our challenges connected with association are already present in the needs identified.

- The development of formation and devising for associates tools for forming Lasallian values and for what the mission requires.
- A strategy to breathe new life into Lasallian youth.
- Research the means that enable everyone to live together for the sake of the mission.

## 2.3 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Following the General Chapter of 1993 which asserted that shared mission would be brought about by Lasallian partnership and that a sign of the times had to be seen in it, the District of French-speaking Canada chose, as a first step, the formation of our partners. Since 1995, international and regional sessions have been organised on De La Salle, his spirituality and his pedagogy. In 1998, a committee made up of Brothers and partners, called the Partnership Committee, was formed. Its mandate was to signpost the connections between shared mission and Lasallian partnership. As a response to the 43rd General Chapter in 2000, a Commission on the Lasallian Educational Mission and Association (MEL/AS) was set up in 2001 its terms of reference being to “encourage and support the process of development of association for the educational service of the poor” (Letter of Brother Louis-Paul Lavallée). A second commission, the Youth-Action Commission, received the mandate of drawing up a youth action plan and to build an instrument capable of guiding our involvement with youth. The labours of this second commission have produced a high quality document, the Lasallian Educational Plan for our District, *Never Alone Again*, with its three major thrusts: “In the service of the young” or the young being the focus of our educational activity; “Together and by association” or strength and union for action; “Live the Good News” or the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ.

Our District Chapter of 2004 gave relief and a boost to the MEL/AS and Youth-Action Commissions by creating a structure requested by proposition 5 of the same General Chapter, “a structure charged with the Lasallian educational mission in which all participate with deliberative vote”. The members of our Chapter, wanting to set up the most favourable conditions for developing the Lasallian educational mission and Association, decided on the creation of two commissions, the Commission on the Lasallian Mission (COMEL) and the Commission on Association (COMAS). This apparent separation of mission and association had no other objective than to facilitate taking a better grip on these two basic realities of the life of our District. In fact, these two commissions have different mandates with regard to their principal responsibilities, but are complementary in their actions.

COMEL was directed towards the educational mission carried on in our works. Its mandate was to study the overall apostolic activities of the District, to promote the Lasallian educational plan and to help each work to establish an educational plan inspired by it. It was intended to encourage the formation of Lasallian teams and to prepare tools, to help them to give substance to the vision of faith, fraternity and service in the mission and also to make known what each work is coping with. Entrusted to it was the careful accompaniment of young Lasallians in their search for new forms of involvement in the mission.

COMAS received the mandate to take care of those persons who were, “together and by association” to work at this mission. It had to implant Association firmly in our District. Its very first priority was to take charge of Lasallian formation for the Associates, Brothers and lay people, and for the overall Lasallian family. A formation programme was drawn up following consultations with experts and formation sessions have been held over these last two years. In the second place, it was to prepare the steps to be taken in view of involvement in the mission. It has put together an Associate’s Guide taking up the admission criteria defined by the last District Chapter, suggesting a commitment ritual and some model commitment formulas. Likewise, it has realised that it was entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the organisation and coordination of prayer meetings and festive gatherings for the whole Lasallian family.

To boost the pastoral promotion of vocations, a third commission, the Pastoral Commission for Vocations, was named to back up a small team of three Brothers and to give fresh inspiration to the pastoral care of

youth and that of vocations. A centre for receiving and organising pastoral care, the Lamplight, has been opened and a booklet has been prepared on *Lasallian Vocations*.

## **NEW PERSPECTIVES**

The actual experience of COMEL and COMAS over the last two years and the work accomplished have led to the realisation that the establishment of the Lasallian educational mission and association for the sake of mission was resting on sure foundations even if they are still fragile. The District Council judged that the moment had come to combine the two commissions into one, the Commission for the Lasallian Educational Mission and Association (COMELA), by giving this new commission the merged mandates of the two originals, namely the vitality of the mission, the development of association and the organisation of a lively milieu for Lasallian youth, the best guarantee of relief in the District. This rearrangement avoids a certain amount of doubling up and, moreover, it is a better response to our available resources in personnel.

To satisfy the need for logistical support, the District Council has set up an office for the Commission for the Lasallian Educational Mission and Association (COMELA). The person in charge, under the authority of the Brother Visitor, will be actively involved in the works, will circulate information, will produce promotional documents intended for Lasallian youth teams, will act as liaison person between the internal and external authorities in the District, will assist the young Lasallians in their projects and will help in planning and organising formation programmes.

Lasallian youth will be the object of particular attention. It represents the source of supply for association in our District. Father Gilles Routhier, one of our associates, has agreed to take on the position of youth counsellor with the young Lasallians. Helped by a committee, he will supervise the recruitment, organisation, involvement in projects and other activities of Lasallian youth.

Another major preoccupation will be with us over the coming years, the pastoral care of vocations. The experience of the “desert” that we have been living for many years concerning vocations, is urging us to take concrete steps to invite young men to share our educational mission, by committing themselves as members of our Institute. Our Associates and young Lasallians, both male and female, will join us in including among Lasallian vocations the vocation of the Brother.

# **FRANCE (GREECE, SWITZERLAND, FRANCE, DJIBOUTI) REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, July, 2006**

## **BACKGROUND**

New social and economic conditions pose, for France and Europe, the question of different ways of being poor, while insisting strongly on education, in particular on-going formation.

Technical innovations oblige wage earners to be much more adaptable in this ever-changing world of work. And they ask new questions about inequalities and the exclusion of certain ones from the world of work. Mastering the computer is, these days, an important factor in gaining access to the employment market.

The values of equality and fraternity, not always conforming to those of the market, are replaced by:

- competition, individualism;
- consumption, money;
- personal development.

## **NEW FORMS OF POVERTY**

According to the definition of poverty people use, in France, in 2003, there were between 3.6 and 7.1 million poor people. Between 1.5 and 2.9 million households were in this situation. France had between 1 and 2 million poor children, according to the criteria.

The forms of poverty seem to have changed since the beginning of the 80s. It is no longer simply a matter of “monetary” poverty, but something deeper, the progressive destruction of the bonds that used to exist between individuals and the rest of society.

## **MIGRANT POPULATIONS**

Even if other western European countries are worried about immigration, France has been, for a long time, a country with a very high rate of immigration. According to the National Institute of Demographic Studies, the number of immigrants in France would be about 4.5 millions.

Travelling People: It is very difficult to know precisely the exact number presently in France. The number 450,000 would be closest to the truth.

Even though 60% of adults cannot read, nevertheless they want their children to go to school.

The number of isolated children in France:

According to certain sources, there is talk that there were 40,000 young persons wandering the streets of French town in 2004.

Children are the first ones affected by problems related to immigration. Officially, there are between 15,000 and 20,000 affected every year.

### **The REALITY OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM in France is very uneven these days.**

Secondary education for all, driven with determination by National Education since the sixties, has resulted in an overall expansion of education.

School has become the place where individuals are socialised.

*Teachers see the following on the increase amongst students:* lack of motivation, processes of ‘tuning out’ in school, lack of interest, disruptive behaviour and acts of rudeness.

*National Education is seen as being incapable of responding to today’s challenges:* equality of opportunity, serious educational failures, professional integration.

*The certificate has become an indispensable asset and being without it is a real handicap.*

*The school no longer has the monopoly in passing on knowledge*

*The training-employment relationship has become, little by little, the cardinal principle in the educational politics of teaching.*

### **STIGMATISATION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

Another reality of today’s teaching, noted in a report of the General Inspectorate of National Education in 2003, and confirmed at the European level by the OECD, is a discrediting and downgrading of the status of teaching as a profession.

### **TRENDS**

*A/ Parents seem to have to become more and more involved in the school life of their children.*

*B/ A tendency to open schools in summer for children who do not go away during the holidays, and also to serve as a support for students in difficulties.*

*C/ A trend to showing preference for cross-disciplinary teaching and developing links between the different streams.*

*D/ The important role of boarding schools, as much for the parents as for the various parties in National Education, is beginning to be encouraged again.*

### **FAMILIES**

- In spite of all the changes, the so-called “traditional” family largely holds the majority, but the size of households and the number of children have shrunk.
- Today, the family is organised around the child and no longer around the ‘head’ of the family.
- Blended families are on the increase, with some parental duties rather blurred.
- Therein is often found the cause of the lack of reference points among the children.

- The family is still considered, in France, as a privileged place of protection, favourable to affective and cultural exchanges and, in spite of these changes, family values show a tendency to be coming back in comparison with the years of the 80s.

## **EVOLUTION OF BEHAVIOURS**

Some new behaviours which are tending to become common:

- An absorbing professional life
- Passing on family values has become more difficult
- The competition with “secondary groups” (friends, clubs, discotheques) and television which socialise in a different manner
- The greater knowledge of the children compared with parents poorly educated regarding the rapid changes in society
- Economic difficulties which complicate the carrying out of family duties
- Excessive numbers of extra-school activities

Importance of family/school cooperation

Mounting violence

*Some particular points:*

- Children are more often left to their own devices.
- The role of grandparents.
- Weakening of the sense of responsibility amongst adults

## **RELIGION**

In all European countries, a big drop in the influence of religion on individuals is being observed together with a greater recognition of liberty of conscience.

- Religious practice and membership in decline.
- Greater individual permissiveness.
- Individualisation of beliefs.
- Detachment from certainty in favour of a sense of doubt.
- Various beliefs are making gains, notably among the young.

Some values are coming back among the young in recent years such as: respect for authority, fidelity in relationships and standards of good manners

Signs of a renewal of Catholicism are showing: the importance of spirituality, of experience, the situation of the outcasts, of the pluri-religious and of the universal.

## **MISSION**

## **REPORT ON THE SITUATION**

1. There is a way of taking a blinkered look at the institution without considering any global dynamic not part of the school setting.
2. There is a compartmentalisation among the courses of study of the separate teaching units in institutions.
3. Need to enter into relationships: many things exist and are not communicated
  - The administration has little time for long-term planning; it is handling matters of the moment
  - Difficulties in communicating (transmitting, reflecting, thinking together and deciding)
  - Difficulties in communicating on certain expressions: to educate/mission/spirituality
  - Absence of the Lasallian network in the public debate
4. The Lasallian heritage holds us to asking questions in view of young people in trouble
  - The need to pass on this heritage to keep its memory alive
  - The need for taking into account the difficult situation among the young, in families and on the level of adults working in the institution.

## **ANALYSIS**

- The Head of an institution and his team play a vital role. They need to be mentored.
- The risk: to let themselves be locked into the present, the pressing, the administrative, the law or the rule. It is apparent that there is a need to leave space for critical assessment (self-evaluation) and research into what is new.
- People expect the school to be able to do everything: the school should state clearly its areas of competence.
- The complexities with which our institutions are confronted call for greater consistency between saying and doing (on the level of individuals as well as of institutions). It must be noted that, generally, Lasallian institutions enjoy a good image. They are perceived as being “for the people”.
- Our schools are still too closed in on themselves. There are insufficient strong partnerships with the youth environment, with what goes on outside school and with associations.
- It could be interesting to develop research into financial partnerships (sponsorships).
- There is a necessity to take persons into account in their “substance”, their real situations (families, unemployment, violence and suffering).
- An educational project implies getting people, whether young or adult, “moving”. We see some people prepared to be involved, some young persons can be mobilised for action (for instance humanitarian). Experience shows that you must dare to ask (and diversify the appeals).
- Is not a new way of being present in the institution waiting to be devised for the school to be truly a life-giving place?
- Pastoral care is connected with everything that takes place in the School: it shares in building up meaning. It is a reminder that there is no education without recognising the person under all his aspects.

## **DIRECTIONS**

1. A network breaking new ground
  - AMEL encourages all the organisations that have already put innovating actions in place and invites the others to follow the same path. The network is committed to take means to set up other innovations.

- in line with proposition 13 of the Brothers' Chapter, the network is to choose to invent or develop, with a variety of partners, a preferential and innovative work for young people in trouble. This may become a benchmark and tool for raising awareness.
2. A network developing its communications policy to:
    - make known successful and/or innovative actions and allowing for their interchange (site, data bank);
    - model these actions with the help of the Secretariat for education, with the aim of encouraging a transfer;
    - canvass the media with the view to expressing opinions in the public debate on educational questions.
  3. A network expanding its policy on human resources:
    - detecting the vocation and competence of each one;
    - accompanying and forming young people in the network with a view to integrating them as teachers or youth workers.

## **ASSOCIATION**

### **REPORT ON THE SITUATION**

- The term association does not seem to be clearly defined for many persons.
- Different partners:
  - Association is lived in very different ways, due to the diversity of the actors in the educational communities and their personal paths.
  - Can each one find his place?
  - Young teachers represent an important issue: acceptance and training
- There are definite organisations for experiencing association:
  - Local Councils for Lasallian Organised Activity, Lasallian teams, leadership councils, school councils.
- What promotes association:
  - Acceptance, conviviality, times and places for exchanging views.
  - The role of the head of the institution.
- Obstacles:
  - Administrative and ecclesial constraints, failure to revitalise Lasallian teams, values circulating in society.
  - Importance of the role of the head of the institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

#### **Assets for Association**

- Our tradition, the itinerary of John Baptist de La Salle
- The international experience of our network
- The investment of numerous persons
- Experiencing a certain conviviality:
  - Acceptance encourages the Association dynamic

- Welcoming young teachers in particular
- Regional and national gatherings

### **Obstacles to Association**

- Even if we are getting away from it, the period of hiding when we did not dare to state our identity has left its mark on us. From this come difficulties in positioning ourselves spiritually.
- We are facing some administrative and ecclesial opposition:
  - Formation of teachers, difficulties in recruiting, the ‘public service’ attitude
  - A certain tendency towards simplification by means of unification
  - Difficult relationships with some diocesan authorities

### **Challenges for Association**

- Let people speak, bring all the actors into the conversation: allow each one to express a view, a commitment...
  - Without running the risk of exhaustion – accept that certain ones will never join in the process – do not seek to make everyone an associate, at any price
  - Without forgetting certain staff groups ( often , the teachers were privileged)
- Acceptance of a wide range of progression, diverse degrees of personal commitment
  - In drawing up a plan, start from the needs of persons rather than the opposite
- Be willing to become involved
  - Embark upon a process of evaluation, firstly personal. To make sense of what has been going on. Learn to know one another, to understand one another. Among colleagues: listen to one another, advise one another.
  - Get over the fear of embarking on a process of reassessment
  - Adapt our plans for the long term – confirm appointments in spite of changes in personnel.
- Put Association back into its original setting: “Keep schools together and by association”
  - How can a leadership council do that in school today? What body of Lay People is there to experience that? How can “Association” be experienced today?

## **DIRECTIONS**

No.1

**Clarify the meaning and objective of Association in the light of the Lasallian tradition and authentic recent experiences**

No.2

**The Head of the institution and his leadership council bear, as a community, the responsibility for putting into practice the Lasallian Educational Plan in all its ramifications.**

# STRUCTURES

## REPORT ON THE SITUATION

- There are many structures with a certain number of deficiencies notably in what concerns:
  - The circulation of information, communication between structures.
  - The accompaniment of persons, acceptance...
  - The interpretation of the structures is not the same according to: the place one occupies within those structures and/or the degree of Lasallian membership of different people.
- The importance of “leadership teams”, the “place” favorable to facilitating acceptance, accompaniment and education of the whole person...
- There is not always consistency in what is proposed in the structures for Lasallian training.
- Positive reality of the inter-establishment Lasallian teams.
- We are also preoccupied with:
  - Educating the whole person. What elaboration of the spiritual dimension for each one?
  - What does “spiritual dimension” mean?
  - Responding to the challenges of adults in trouble: we are helpless in relation to the staffs and the parents are overwhelmed.
- Making service of the poor a focus of innovation and commitment.
  - At the level of the Network we have no person responsible for innovation.
  - We do not have a culture of looking for money.
  - On the local level: vocational high schools are in danger.

## ANALYSIS

### *Challenges*

- Certain systems are non-existent
  - A system for passing on to educational teams a dynamic of pedagogical experimentation based on trends and practices in France or elsewhere in Europe and throughout the world.
  - A system for accompanying disorientated adults (teachers, parents)
- Certain practices have to evolve
  - Meetings of leadership teams
  - Building up Lasallian training courses into a dynamic of initiation and taking on the message of the Founder besides passing on knowledge.
- Passing from a structure led by the Brothers to a structure led by the Lay people raises questions of availability, mobility and of taking account of the uniqueness of states of life.
- Can our network initiate, design some collective works? How do we go about duplicating that on the human and financial plane?

### *Assets*

- The diversity within our network is a treasure to be put at the service of the institutions.

- Our traditional practice of regular appraisal enables us to take stock of what is being done and to do so at all levels.

## **DIRECTIONS**

1. The MEL Assembly asks the supervising council:
  - to initiate a process for annual self-appraisal of the various local and national organisations in the Lasallian network; the final assessment of these self-appraisals will be tabled at the next MEL assembly.
  - to devise the most enlightening presentation possible of instances of the network for all the parties involved.
2. The MEL Assembly asks the La Salle Association to take better account of the schools in the Lasallian network preparing students for the baccalaureate from the point of view of pedagogical, pastoral and educational leadership and the training of present and future heads of schools.
3. The MEL Assembly asks that thought be given and action taken together with the vocational and technical schools to ensure the permanence of an educational service which is a priority for the Lasallian network.
4. The MEL Assembly asks the La Salle Association
  - to draw up an inventory of the state of repair of our boarding schools.
  - based on today's educational needs, encourage the setting up of an innovative boarding school plan.

# **ITALY**

## **REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, July 2006**

### **1. GENERAL CONTEXT**

The social, cultural, civil and economic context in which the Lasallian institutions operate in Italy is that of a very developed, strongly laicized society, in which within a brief period of time traditionally shared family and religious values have diminished; in our society religion was lived more as a membership/belonging, rather than as a personal choice.

The expectations society places on the school are therefore numerous: the school is often asked to substitute for the family, to enliven shared values, to be the formative setting necessary for seriousness of purpose in relationships and in work which the Italian “state” school sector at this time is not always up to offering families.

The Catholic school, in general, and the Lasallian school, in particular, plays an important role in this setting, not so much in a quantitative sense, for in fact the percentage of students in Catholic schools is rather low compared to that in state schools (6%), but rather in the qualitative sense for the excellence of its educational program.

The Lasallian school has succeeded in developing and in becoming fully a part of Italian society, offering the values of our own tradition, therefore cultural formation, academic success, human and spiritual formation of the child, promotion of social justice, witness to truth, help to those less fortunate and very weak.

In Italy the Catholic school, and even the Lasallian one, suffers from an unresolved problem, that is, the freedom a family truly possesses to choose a Catholic school for their children. Such freedom of choice, guaranteed by the Italian Constitution, is in reality denied by the fact that a family must pay the entire cost of educating their child in a Catholic school setting. Such a situation does not allow for enrolling a child in a non-state operated school, especially for that group of students who belong to families with low-middle incomes; however, thanks to the efforts and hard work of the Brothers and of numerous voluntary initiatives

and of Lasallian solidarity, a certain percentage of students who would not be able to attend our schools are able to do so and to enjoy the resultant educational benefits.

National guidelines on the basics of formative offerings are the norm within which the Lasallian school must operate. Lasallian institutions cover the entire spectrum of academic cycles, from early childhood to high school; however we are not present on the university level.

In general young children and teenagers in our schools belong to the middle and upper middle class of Italian society: they therefore have all the means necessary to live a comfortable lifestyle, but often they experience solitude and disorientation.

In these situations our schools are often called upon to establish a positive educational environment together with the family, becoming the vehicle not only of academic knowledge and experience, but also offering group-oriented experiences outside the school realm, educating for values of collaboration, justice, mutual respect, solidarity and service, and spirituality.

Our schools are looked upon by Italian society not only as centers of academic excellence but as holistic, integral formation of character centers as well.

## **2. THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION**

### ***THE ACTUAL SITUATION***

The Lasallian educational mission of “leading youth to Christ” in Italy has a pluralistic secular tradition and is lived today in more than thirty Lasallian educational centers.

Lasallians are responsible primarily for animating a number of Catholic schools for young children and teenagers from 3 to 19 years of age, as well as two university residences, a therapeutic community for drug addicts, a center for diversely gifted youth, youth pastoral activity, different professional formation centers in collaboration with the Catechists of Jesus Crucified; they also take part in the tutelle of a ministry for young immigrants.

Lasallian schools are chosen by families more for their academic quality rather than for their evangelical and pastoral programs.

The Brothers have to deal with progressive aging which impacts on innovation in the area of education and on the diversity of apostolates; this also renders participation more difficult in permanent continuing formation programs for the reenlivening of the Lasallian charism.

The Province is involved in the reorganization of ministries and in the presence of the Brothers therein, this with difficulty.

The Brothers, furthermore, are the administrators of the schools and thereby the employers of the lay teachers: this, for many Lasallians, is still considered an obstacle for a truly shared mission.

Lay teachers are faced with confronting:

- a certain instability in work due to administrative and financial problems as well as the reorganization of Lasallian schools;
- a lower stipend, facing a heavier work commitment, this vis-à-vis that of the teachers in state schools.

In our Province, Shared Mission is the result of a long journey that has taken different paths and speeds depending on the educational centers and it needs to find a new means of existence and a renewed system for a qualitative way of being that favors Association.

## ***THE CHALLENGES***

The Lasallian Educational Mission (MEL) in Italy is looking for new possibilities:

- to look for a renewed presence of those Brothers no longer directly involved in the apostolate.
- a new form of administering works and the Lasallian Educational Mission on the provincial level; not only entrusting collaborators with positions of responsibility for academic courses or leadership roles, but also involving them either in provincial animation of the mission or financial administration as well.
- formation: assured primarily by CELAS, of other courses and now of a Master for Christian Educators, this has to be experienced by both Brothers and Lasallians who wish to concretely share the mission; a formation that is not only intellectual, but also one that helps each person read their own lived experience to positively impact the work in Association for the educational service of the poor;
- a new educational and pastoral animation of the schools: to overcome the simple action of substituting, to rediscover the ministry of living out and announcing the Gospel both in the school and in the culture, to evaluate the pastoral action of our educational centers with particular attention paid to the “unknown area of justice” so that it may take its place in every academic curriculum;
- the choice, formation and accompaniment of teachers, especially of those to whom particular roles of responsibility are given.
- to find alternate ways of funding for the administration of schools and for an authentic service of the poor;
- to rediscover Lasallian schools as church related establishments overcoming positions of mutual separation and distance.

## ***ACTION PLAN***

For the Lasallian Educational Mission to progress it is necessary to:

- opt for a formation that:
  - permits a common understanding of the Lasallian Educational Mission which allows for a visible profile in Italian church and society;
  - promotes the usage of a shared vocabulary;
  - supports those Lasallians called to assume positions of responsibility;
  - promotes new initiatives for the educational.

service of the poor and for pastoral and evangelizing activity.

- Make real the Provincial Pastoral Plan so that each Lasallian ministry and all the components of the Lasallian Family realize a unified plan in their evangelizing and animating actions.
- Create faith communities centered on a knowledge of the Gospels, on celebration, on sharing projects and on fraternal relationships.
- Plan together, Brothers’ community – Teachers’ community – Lasallian Associations, new initiatives and apostolic activities to live out the Lasallian Educational Mission (MEL).
- Promote the Lasallian Youth Movement as a gathering in which young people can live, outside of school, a life of faith, fraternity and service for defending the Rights of Children (Minors).

- Open up, working together with the Lasallian Family, inclusive communities whose ministry is directed to those youth who live on the margins of society and the church.
- Create “neighborhood after-school programs” for the support of children denied access to quality educational programs.

### **3. ASSOCIATION**

#### ***THE ACTUAL SITUATION***

The present situation of Lasallian association for the mission in our Province is the result of an intense labor in which the Brothers have worked, even in the past, for the purpose of associating laypersons to our mission. Today we can say that a significant number of persons share in Lasallian spirituality and the educational mission and are involved in formation programs and live in fraternal relationships with the Brothers’ community, Association however is still a process of being grouped around the Brothers; we cannot state that association really is a significant factor in the administration of our educational works.

Actually we are witnessing a progressive involvement of many teachers who share the Lasallian charism and who even take part in local formation experiences. The assumption of educational responsibilities is stimulating the process of association among collaborators.

Lasallian association for the mission in our Province has had varied developments over the course of time, but today however shared experiences of responsibility among Brothers and Collaborators exist in all our Lasallian institutions; we can clearly state that the affirmation of an associative frame of mind for Mission is gradually becoming an integral part of collaborative effort.

#### ***CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES***

- Some Brothers and numerous Associates feel disoriented because they experience difficulty in changing either their prior formative mind-set or the loss of their own identity in the process of association.
- On the Associates’ part, there is an apprehension noted that the associate will be modeled on the Brother, a sort of “Brother without vows.”
- The path to Association in our Province is called to overcome the gap between Lasallian teachers and non-teaching Lasallians; to challenge ourselves with a strong demand for formation despite facing a lack of capable and available formators and role-models; to accept the challenge offered not only by the demands of a spiritually integrated life and fraternal sharing, but also by the administration of educational works which becomes ever more demanding.
- It is necessary to overcome the conviction which leads the associate to confuse gratuity of service with vocational choice and which could make Association seem available only to those persons free of family responsibilities and/or who enjoy a personally satisfying economic situation.

#### ***OBSTACLES***

- Many Brothers and Laypersons have difficulty understanding clearly the meaning and the actual content matter of Association; they are not “against” Association, but they do not always feel involved in it.
- It is necessary to clarify that Association for an Associate has to be in harmony with the responsibilities involved with one’s own family life in order to avoid opposition, breakdowns and misunderstandings.

## **PROSPECTIVES**

What can encourage ASSOCIATION in the Province?

Formation not only for Laypersons but also for Brothers in which they must deal with a meaningful change of their traditional understanding of mission.

The possibility of providing opportunities for challenging and sharing gatherings, experiences of fraternal life, relationships marked by cordiality and mutual esteem that encourage people to consider association as a worthwhile dimension in promoting the Lasallian mission.

Research and development of a *calm and fraternal atmosphere marked by transparency, of respect and mutual esteem*, which thereby creates a rapport of true community allowing association to realize itself in concrete forms.

The *example, daily shared experience*, consistent and open, of the Brothers and of other Lasallians favors the creation of intentional groups of associates and of on-site forms of Association for the Mission.

## **ACTION PLAN**

To guide and move forward the process of Association for the mission, the Province has established the following directions:

- The Associate is a person or group of persons who have a stable, organic and meaningful rapport with a Lasallian institution and who recognize in their own life the calling of the Lord (vocation) to accomplish the educational mission together with the Brothers;
- The Associate is a person of faith who finds daily nourishment in the Word of God;
- The Associate must have journeyed collaboratively in the Lasallian Educational Mission (at least five years):
- The Associate has subscribed to an initial and continuing path of formation, the Council on consecrated life holds one of the following formative plans acceptable for associates:
- Participation in centralized formation courses organized until now by the two former Provinces of Turin and Rome such as the CeLas courses.
- Participation in the presently existing formation course of studies known as the “Master for Lasallian Educators.”
- Participation in the Lasallian Family summer formation programs.
- Participation in other documented formative courses of study.
- The Associate lives fully Lasallian community and fraternity.

- Acceptance of the call by Brother Visitor and his Council.
- Public profession of faith and adherence to the Lasallian Educational Mission.

## 4. STRUCTURES OF ASSOCIATION

### *ACTUAL SITUATION*

Presently Lasallian Association for the Mission is presented, in our Province, with several forms that can be considered “structured.” They are the result of the journey of “association in practice” lived by the Brothers and their Lay Collaborators.

**The ‘Casa di Carita’:** An association for professional formation directed by the Province of Italy and the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and the Most Holy Mary Immaculate. Brothers and Catechists are part of the Administrative Council of the Association.

**The Italian Lasallian Family:** National association of numerous “local Lasallian Families”, present in most Lasallian educational centers. This group is the physical expression of the association of Brothers with Laypersons for the Lasallian Educational Mission in Italy. On the national level it is under the leadership of a lay President and is an officially recognized legal entity. On the local level, it brings together and coordinates all Lasallian associations (Lasallian volunteers, alumni and parents, above all) and those most involved in the mission (Brothers and Teachers).

**Signum Fidei:** The movement is structured on the national level with a national head (a Brother) and with the presence of several regional coordinators. It is part of the international Signum Fidei movement and responsible for the formation and life of the individual members who, with a request to the Visitor, live out a lifestyle in accordance with the guidelines of the Movement while engaged in a specific task.

**Lasallian Youth Movement:** Established in 2002 the youth movement unites and coordinates young Lasallians by means of a group of young people elected as leaders by their peers (they constitute a Council).

**Those responsible for academic courses of study:** The Province has given the responsibility for academic courses of study to a significant number of Lay Collaborators. They themselves have participated in the specific formation programs for which they are responsible.

**Forms of Participatory Administration:** In several small institutions a participatory administration by Cooperatives and Brothers exists. In these experiences the Brothers are responsible for the educational sector, while the Cooperative is responsible for the economic and financial administration involved.

### **Movements**

The movement toward formal association has had great success among Brothers, Parents, Volunteers, Students, Friends ... Lasallian Association among Teachers encounters major difficulties, above all when it is proposed in a formalized manner. In our Province, Lasallian Association is presented as a grouping of Collaborators beside the Brothers, as a supportive and complimentary force in their work, and not yet as an autonomous and independent association among laypersons who hold the same goal/finality in view.

### ***OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES***

The path to formal association, in “structured” forms, has met and still meets with resistance and not a few difficulties.

These can be summarized as follows:

In some situations within the Province reflection on association has been seen as a “novelty” imposed externally, like a dynamism that wishes to modify established settings.

A number of Brothers look upon the structured forms of association with misgiving, judging the forms weak and of little effect on the mission.

Teacher ‘turn over’, periodically heightened by the ‘flight’ toward better, more assured working conditions presented by the state educational system, limits the development of association among Teachers and has an effect on formation programs.

The fact that the proposal for association is sometimes perceived as a request for greater volunteer involvement risks rendering the actual implementation of associative structures in mission and administration weak and uncertain.

Even the fact that the administration of educational centers at this time, is centered on, in the sense of responsibility, only on the Brothers: tends to make association appear as simply an extension and prolongation of the mission of the Brothers.

The programming of meetings for the formation of Laypersons and Brothers has to take into account the reality of significant distances and the availability of financial resources to sustain long periods of time away from one’s educational setting.

### **FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**

#### ***ORIENTATIONS***

The main need noted by the Province of Italy is to seek out and form Collaborators who are able to assume progressively leadership roles of cultural animation, of educational and teaching responsibility and, in a short time, even the administration of educational centers.

The next need is to create a Provincial organism which “unites” those responsible for courses of study and, in the future, network the Directors and those responsible for Lasallian institutions with the Province of Italy.

It is urgent that the Italian Province promote Lasallian Association among teachers, either by means of structures geared for formation (CeLas, Master, ...) or by means of selecting and forming individuals who appear more attentive and involved in carrying out the responsibilities of educational centers so that they can, in autonomous ways, create forms and ways of association among themselves.

### ***ACTION PLANS***

The Province of Italy commits itself to promoting intentional groups of associates present in each institution, especially among Teachers. The path toward association foresees formation, gathering in an intentional group and their formal recognition by the Visitor and his Council.

## **PARC**

### **REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, December 2005**

### **Organizational Structures**

#### **1. Situational Analysis: Realities, trends, obstacles, challenges.**

The situational analysis is captured in the introduction which highlights the vast geographical, cultural, social, faith, political, educational and social diversity of the PARC Region.

While some sectors are experiencing a growth in vocations to the Brothers’ way of life, the overall reality is a diminishing number of Brothers and an increasing number of lay people engaged in the mission and the organizational structures at various levels across the Region. In some sectors the trend is for the Brothers to expect to be involved as key personnel in organizational structures while in others an increasing number of lay people are involved and expect to be involved.

The call of the 43rd General Chapter for the involvement of lay people with “voice and vote” in areas of mission at all organizational levels has been heeded by some sectors but not all. This is reflected in the various Mission Councils or similar bodies established in some sectors since the year 2000. These Mission Councils reflect the call of the 43rd General Chapter with their membership representing that statistical proportion of lay to Brother. This reality is reflected also by the presence of lay delegates at District Chapters and Assemblies where they are accorded “voice and vote” on matters related to mission.

The various elements of the diversity of the Region may be seen on the one hand as “obstacles” or may on the other hand, be viewed as “challenges.” It is fair to say that the vast geography itself is an obstacle to organizational structure but modern means of communication invites a challenge which can be overcome. Whatever the organizational structure, the availability of finance for whatever structures at regional level compared with the needs of the mission in the Region is a major challenge.

At the regional assembly, various issues arose with respect to organizational structure. There are issues which could be read as “obstacles” or “challenges” with respect to; the role of the Visitor, clarification of roles, the identity of the Brother, ownership of the heritage and intellectual property, accountability, representative and inclusive governance, legal structures, legal liabilities, national and state law, authentication of the mission, succession planning, leadership formation and training; to name a few.

A few illustrations out of the above issues will suffice to illustrate. At present the role of the Visitor is defined by Rule mainly in terms of the responsibility of the Brothers and their mission in a given District/Sector. The responsibilities of the Visitor need to be redefined given the ever increasing role of lay collaborators in the mission and the call of the 43rd General Chapter to accord “voice and vote” with respect to mission,.

Legally and canonically ownership in whatever categories one defines is invested in the Trustees of the Brothers in each sector. In those sectors with a declining population of Brothers, what are the legal and canonical requirements that need to be put in place to ensure the continuity of the mission? There is variance in the law and legal liabilities across country, state or provincial boundaries with implications yet to be examined by the Institute.

If a particular work or service is to be branded “Lasallian”, then someone or some body needs to authenticate this and review it from time to time.

The continuity of the mission calls for succession planning for leadership and management along with the formation and training which accompanies same. This is an issue for the Brothers and lay collaborators alike.

## **2. Vision**

The regional assembly, while not deliberating specifically on vision, included same in various discussions around “Association” and organizational structure. In order to move forward, PARC has to be vision-driven. While it was recognized that vision is vital at regional level, it was noted also, that this must be present at the international level and it is anticipated that this will form part of the agenda of the international assembly. This vision needs to be developed in a spirit of lay-Brother collaboration and grounded in the mission of the Institute.

## **3. Action Steps**

Delegates discussed and recognized the need for sometime in the future to establish a Regional Mission Council, Regional Team (composed of Brothers and Lay Partners) or some other structure reflective of the demography of those engaged in mission in PARC. The structure would look into the issues recorded above through listening, reflecting sharing and formulating an action plan for consideration and implementation.

## **THEMATIC CONTENT: LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION**

### **1. Situational Analysis: Realities, trends, obstacles, challenges.**

Based on a study conducted on the Viability and Vitality of the PARC Region in 2004, a total of 122 schools, 101 non-formal training programs and 22 orphanages/dormitories were being run by Brothers and Partners in the Asia Pacific region, catering to a total of 159,653 clients.

The same study reported that "...the number of schools in PARC particularly in Hong Kong, India, and the Philippines show an increasing trend in the last ten years. Non-formal training programs and orphanages/dormitories have likewise increased in all the sectors of PARC particularly in India... In school ministries, especially in the Philippines, there is a clear increase in the number of students served from 1993-2004. The only exception is Sri Lanka that posted a slight decrease in the number of students in their schools. In non-formal education ministries, except for Myanmar, there is likewise an unmistakable increase in the number of clients served in all sectors with such ministries. Over all in the region, there seems to be a slight increase in the number of clients in orphanages and dorms; however, this increase can only be attributed mainly to the numbers in the Philippines, India, and Japan. If past trends are made the basis of future projections, a further increase in ministry clients is to be expected and this will require a corresponding increase in service personnel, both Brothers and Partners."

Of particular concern to the Lasallian Educational Mission in the PARC region is the reality of the growing gap between the rich and the poor, the diversity of the poor in the region and the emerging new poor. Lasallians in the region are constantly challenged to listen to the voice of the poor. There is a slow but steady movement towards direct service to the poor through new and creative initiatives which are client-centred and flexible with respect to local conditions. Brothers and Partners are well aware that although they cannot do everything, they can still do something concrete to address poverty in the region. Thus, there is a need to redefine and clarify the Lasallian Mission with reference to the new faces of the poor so that the mission is seen in terms of lifestyle rather than work.

This clarification of the mission must take place in the midst of the political, social, cultural and religious diversity and tension of the Asia-Pacific region. The question of how evangelization will be conducted in a multi-faith environment needs to be addressed. Given the trend towards religious apathy and religious fundamentalism, the political limitations and government policies in different contexts, consumerism and individualism, loss of respect for human rights, assertion of ethnic identity, and the increasing globalization, all these contribute to a difficult and challenging environment for the Lasallian Educational Mission. With a large percentage of non-Catholic teachers, staff and students in Lasallian schools in the region, the unique gift of Lasallian spirituality finds fertile ground. An additional challenge is for Lasallian educators to develop in our clientele skills for social, political and cultural analysis, making full use of new communications

technologies to allay fears for the future and to be proactive in maintaining the integrity of the Lasallian Mission.

Aside from the external environment, the internal environment is of great concern, particularly with respect to the ability and willingness of both the Brothers and Partners to adapt and create new ministries. With the increasing demand for responsibility and accountability and the need to develop new strategic partnerships, the question of who authenticates the mission arises. To resolve this, stakeholders in the mission must agree on the responsibilities they shall accept, on the new decision making and organizational structures they will create to give voice and vote to all, and on the degree of involvement of partners in these new structures. The successful promotion of teaching as a vocation is critical and must involve the induction and formation of new teachers into the mission. It is also important that everyone realize that change takes time.

Finally, a major concern is the availability of resources for mission and formation. Preparation for and the implementation of the Lasallian Educational Mission requires financial and human resources and the growth of our apostolates place an increasing demand on existing resources. This partly explains the great differences in the rate of development among Lasallian institutions in the region. Addressing this concern will require greater sharing of Lasallian resources and restructurizing the structure of PARC.

## **2. Vision (orientations and directions)**

Lasallians in the Asia Pacific region see themselves addressing very concretely the issue of the poor and of social justice. This will require deep reflection on how much we contribute to structural injustice and long-term visioning so that we actually respond to the needs of the poor and new areas of poverty through our education for social construction and educational reforms.

There will also be an increasing movement towards spirituality, cutting across religious and ethnic boundaries. Parallel to this will be the movement towards better corporate governance of our educational institutions, with emphasis on accountability, transparency and corporate social responsibility.

These shall be done through dialogue and greater listening to one another, recognizing that changes happen in small communities. This shall also be accomplished through the establishment of new partnerships, leading to greater interdependence and broader participation of different sectors. Technology will be utilized to move forward and assist in constant innovation.

## **3. Action steps.**

During the Asia Pacific Lasallian Social Action Workshop in 2004, the assembly decided to develop mechanisms that will disseminate information on social action programs in the region. This included a website, an e-group and a manual on social action. That assembly also decided to mobilize more lay Lasallian volunteers to greater involvement in the mission through international conferences on volunteerism, curriculum integration, formation and support programs for volunteers and a volunteer internship program.

The Pacific Asia Regional Assembly of 2005 has proposed the establishment of a Regional Education/Mission Council that will look at the way the Lasallian Educational Mission is implemented in the region. This will run parallel with the current study of the restructuring of PARC.

<b>Table 1 - Number of Ministries and Their Clients</b>						
Sector/Country/Year	Number of			School Ministries	Non-Formal Trng. Prog.	Orphanages & Doms
	School Ministries	Non-Formal Trng. Prog.	Orphanages & Doms			
<b>District of ANZPNG</b>						
1993	25	1	1	7730	0	75
2000	22	2	0	7500	290	0
2004	22	3	0	7532	385	0
<b>District of Colombo:</b>						
<b>Pakistan</b>						
1993	7	2	0	3390	163	0
2000	7	2	1	3600	190	88
2004	7	4	1	3800	293	52
<b>Sri Lanka</b>						
1993	9	2	1	17100	85	225
2000	7	3	1	14300	99	175
2004	6	3	1	12052	112	151
<b>District of Penang</b>						
<b>Hongkong</b>						
1993	10	0	0	300	0	0
2000	12	0	0	400	0	0
2004	20	0	0	500	0	0
<b>Malaysia</b>						
1993	0	1	0	0	0	0
2000	0	2	0	0	0	0
2004	0	3	1	0	0	0
<b>Singapore</b>						
1993	6	0	0	8278	0	0
2000	6	0	0	10185	0	0
2004	6	0	0	10624	0	0
<b>District of the Philippines</b>						
1993						
2000	36	0	1	89093	1870	20
2004	47	17	2	98778	1917	30
<b>Sub-District of Myanmar</b>						
1993	0	0	0	0	20	85
2000	0	1	0	0	104	76
2004	0	4	2	0	0	67
<b>District of Vietnam</b>						
2003						
<b>Delegation of India</b>						
1993	6	18	4	2101	2698	457
2000	7	46	8	2616	3460	834
2004	9	64	12	3122	4765	949
<b>Delegation of Japan</b>						
1993	2	0	1	1889	0	63
2000	2	0	1	2034	0	70
2004	2	1	1	2284	0	70
<b>Delegation of Thailand</b>						
1993	3	1	0	9000	70	75
2000	3	1	0	11000	80	95
2004	3	2	2	12000	90	80
<b>TOTAL</b>						
1993	68	25	7	49788	3036	980
2000	102	57	12	140728	6093	1358
2004	122	101	22	150692	7562	1399

## **PARC REGION ASSOCIATION**

### **1. Situational Analysis: Realities, trends, obstacles, challenges.**

The statistical reality in PARC reflects that of other Regions in the Institute insofar as lay people are the majority engaged in the Lasallian mission. While there is a growth of the Brother cohort in some sectors this is not reflected across the entire Region. However in some sectors there is still very much a “Brother-centred” mindset and varying degrees of commitment amongst Lasallian Partners. There are concerns and fears for the future of the mission with the respect to the numbers of Brothers, the ongoing availability of lay persons, the identity of the Brother, the diversity of cultures and faith backgrounds, the gap between the rich and the poor.

Some of the implications of these realities call for a greater communication and negotiation between the various parties engaged in the mission. Additional responsibilities and accountabilities will be placed upon lay people. Who will constitute “the heart, the memory and the guarantors?”

There are various emerging trends with respect to “Association” in PARC. While there is a decline in the number of Brothers, the need to recruit Brothers by Brothers and lay partners is a priority. There is a growing trend to move from “Brother-centred” thinking and practice to “mission-centred” thinking and structures. It is time to move from “shared mission” to “our mission.” The formation of lay partners and Brothers in collaborative ventures is a growing trend in some sectors and yet to be fully developed in others. There are emerging creative initiatives for the poor and the emerging poor, eg the victims of natural disasters. There is sharing of both human and financial resources across the Region. There is an emphasis on vitality and viability in the current restructuring process across most sectors.

Sectors that have the most complete formation programmes are also the ones that possess the better structures for collaborative participation by lay partners and Brothers alike. In some sectors, however, the dominant criterion that prevails is that, as long as there are Brothers to fulfill certain functions, they are not given to lay people. This is paternalism that is opposed to the basic principle of Lasallian association. However the development of association is bearing fruit in the new forms of communion for the mission between Brothers and Partners as indicated by the formation of collaborative community for mission projects, the volunteers movement, and Signum Fidei to name a few examples.

Association presents many challenges both in its need for definition and in practice. There is need for clarification between the Brothers' understanding of "association" by vow and the extended all inclusive meaning of "association." This definition must focus clearly on the mission and calls for a change of mind set, especially amongst some Brothers in the Region. At present there is a dual understanding of "association"; one for the Brothers and one for Partners. This gives rise to levels of belonging with some more important than others. To be an associate is NOT being a member of the Institute like a Brother. Once there is a clear definition then more and effective formation programmes need to be planned and implemented.

There is a definite need to read the "signs of the times" within our respective socio-cultural and faith contexts, and within this milieu, define the dynamics of Lasallian community and forms of participation/belonging according to Partner identified options. There is an ongoing challenge to deepen Partner commitment to the mission such that it becomes an integral part of life, rather than a separate work to do. A further challenge calls for a review and realignment of organizational structure and policies to realize Partner empowerment to have "voice and vote" with respect to mission.

## **2. Vision**

"Association" invites visioning, strategic planning and the reorganization of existing structures or the development of new structures. While Mission Councils or similar bodies have been established in some sectors, such are not universal in PARC. A call for a PARC Mission Council surfaced during the partial assembly. The visioning process calls PARC to take the vision and outcomes of the international assembly and inculcate them, taking cognizance of the vast diversity of the Region as outlined elsewhere in this report. A vision calls for a move from distinction of roles or vocation to all working equally for the mission. A key question asks whether we are repairing an old house or building a new house? PARC sees itself in a state of transition and this transition requires tolerance, dialogue and communication at all levels.

## **3. Action Steps**

The partial assembly did not outline specific action steps as such according to the principles of action planning. Delegates emphasized the need to understand the mission and its context in PARC. It is only when this is realized will we be in a position to talk at depth about "association."

# **MIDDLE EAST**

## **REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, November 2005**

### **1. General context of the Middle East (District)**

#### **I – General Reflection**

The District of the Middle East runs school institutions in the following countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel/Palestine, Egypt and Sudan. These countries have strong political regimes, far from western-style democracies, apart from Israel and in part Turkey and Lebanon. Arab culture marks these countries except for Turkey; in Lebanon western culture retains an influence. Apart from Israel they are developing countries, with great economic and social problems, considerable differences in levels of life, causing a gap between the different social classes. Violence, terrorism, war and tensions of every kind hinder the development of these countries. There are no reliable statistics on unemployment; it is very widespread, leading to a large percentage of people “occupying themselves” with odd jobs to earn their living. Often a migratory movement of the rural population towards the cities goes on and thus creates overpopulated and miserable little urban ‘islands’.

#### **II – Childhood, youth, education, the family**

Apart from Lebanon and Israel, families remain large and the population is increasing very rapidly especially in Egypt, Turkey and the Sudan. Western pressure to reduce births by family planning is having very little success. On the other hand, as soon as a family becomes educated the birth-rate drops. The infant mortality

rate has enormously decreased over the last 30 years thanks to the development of medical care. In Israel/Palestine, in Lebanon and to some extent in Turkey, there is schooling for all children; in Egypt and Jordan there is still a very high percentage of illiterate people; this is even more serious in the Sudan. In most of these countries the official school system is also substandard. This is the result of the poverty of the country, the lack of means and the lack of competent teachers. Education essentially falls on the family. The family structure is more solid than in the west but divorce has increased and the need to find work often keeps the father from his family: he goes to work in another town or overseas (to the Gulf States).

### **III – The promotion of justice**

In many countries in the Middle East, the regimes in place do not allow a militant commitment to justice. The secret services are highly organized towards maintaining and safeguarding the orientation of the party in power. The right to criticise, freedom of the press and expression do not really exist. The rights of man, of children, of women do not get people mobilized. There are so many other urgent priorities to deal with in order to be able to live. However, in Turkey and in Israel this promotion of justice is better accepted.

### **IV – The religious climate**

Turkey is a lay State but Islam has a very strong effect on everyday life; the same situation exists in Israel where the Jewish religion brings with it the hardening of Zionism. The other Arab countries are in varying degrees very marked by Islam which is the State religion for most of them and where religious freedom is not recognized or accepted as it is in the West. There is the problem of the Christian minorities just being tolerated. Furthermore, with the development of religious fanaticism and of terrorism, which have spread very much over the past 30 years, inter-religious relations have rapidly deteriorated. Between the divided eastern Christians also, there has arisen surprising sectarianism. It is the search for recognition which keeps bringing up the eternal question of the existence of these minorities.

### **V - The Lasallian presence**

The Institute has been present in this part of the world for more than 160 years; it was first present in Turkey then in Egypt. Then 20 years later it was the turn of Palestine and Lebanon. Our presence in the Sudan dates from the opening of a community in Khartoum in July 2003.

If, in the beginning, the coming of the Brothers was primarily for Christians of all rites and confessions, the taking in of Muslims and Jews did not present any problems. The dialogue of cultures and beliefs was already being lived right from the beginning of the Lasallian presence in the 19th Century, not without difficulties, of course.

## **THE LASALLIAN EDUCATION MISSION**

### **1. Analysis of the situation**

- Pedagogical and educational sessions and meetings support MEL in all the Sectors.
- The Lasallian centers help to develop the Lasallian spirit but we lack competent Lasallian formators in the domain of Lasallian formation, The worry of not going farther in Lasallian reflection with the Egyptian Christian teachers because we are addressing ourselves to both Christians and Muslims.
- Taking care to gather the Christian teachers together from time to time to support their faith: recollections, prayer...is a positive point.
- The education mission is also being lived by means of diverse activities or movements; some of these are aimed at Christians only.
- Attention is given to pupils in financial difficulty.
- The presence of two centers for mentally handicapped children in two establishments in Egypt is a source of richness for MEL.
- The Lasallian presence at Bourj-Hammoud, in Lebanon, in the village of Bayadeya, in Egypt and solidarity with the most deprived in Turkey as well as the different activities of literacy and development in all sectors, is a positive point for MEL. All this shows care for the educational service of the poor and explains the support of the District of the Middle East for the new foundation in Khartoum.
- Efforts to increase awareness of the rights of the child have been in place for some years, but we need to pursue and develop this aspect of our mission in all the sectors.

### **Tendencies**

- Developing diverse educational aspects without confining ourselves entirely to questions of teaching and pedagogy.
- Using new technologies. Modernizing pedagogical practices.
- Reinforcing youth movements (human and spiritual).
- Creating a formation fund at District level.
- Doing more to educate towards acceptance of others, tolerance, justice and peace.
- Creating a spirit of exchange between the different Sectors.

### **Obstacles and challenges**

- Lack of initial and ongoing formation of teachers.
- The political tensions in the Middle East do not help the development of sharing, meetings and formation.
- Education in Christian values in spite of the increase in fanaticism in the region.

## **2. Perspectives and lines of action**

- To develop formation in the Lasallian spirit.
- To find a structure which allows us to take better care of pupils in difficulty.
- To ensure a good quality of teaching and , at the same time, to support the poor in our establishments.

- To circulate information.
- To ensure an ongoing formation which is extended to all the partners: priests, catechists, those in posts of responsibility and educators.

### **3. Plan of action**

- Exchange of information:
  - The creation of a communication committee.
  - Internet support.
  - District Bulletin
  - The creation of a web-site for:
    - Establishing links between the sites of the Sectors and the establishments.
    - Spreading information.
- The building up of a pool of competences from the different Sectors for the benefit of the entire District by means of a seminar which would bring together representatives of the Sectors in order to exchange ideas on original experiences.
- The creation of centers for the handicapped in Amman and in Lebanon.

## **ASSOCIATION**

### **1. Analysis of the situation.**

#### ***Realities:***

- The recent setting up of a MEL Council in Lebanon and in the Holy Land/Jordan, in addition to that in Egypt.
- Solidarity between the Sectors permitted the setting up of the Mission in the Sudan.
- Teamwork between Lay persons and Brothers in all the Sectors and at District level.
- The Assemblies by Sector and that of the District are concrete signs of Association.
- The majority presence of lay Lasallians with some Brothers in all our works.
- New and important links between establishments at the level of each Sector.
- New links beginning to be developed between the Sectors.
- The support of Brothers/Lay Lasallians for diverse movements: Scouts, MEJ, Signum Fidei....
- The continued call from Lay Lasallians (whether holding posts of responsibility or not) to the Brothers to remain present in MEL. This shows a healthy understanding of association.
- The creation of centers for handicapped children, the insertion of two communities in working-class areas in Bayadeya and at Bourj-Hammoud and the departure to the Sudan are the fruits of Association.

The commitment of the Young Lasallian Volunteers who have gone to Khartoum, is also a form of Association.

***Tendencies:***

- The awareness of the Brothers of the Lasallian Mission of the Lay Lasallians.
- Reflection in association of Brothers and Lay Lasallians in all domains.

***Obstacles and challenges:***

- The level of awareness and commitment is varied and limited. Some people are very committed but one is forced to always rely on the same ones.
- Certain persons in posts of responsibility do not share sufficiently and this does not help to promote working together or participation.
- There is not sufficient circulation of information.
- The drop in the number of Brothers.

**2. Perspectives and lines of action:**

- To unify the definition of terms.
- To develop the feeling of belonging and the involvement of all.
- To distribute the MEL booklets to the educational communities.
- That Association should not be limited to the top of the pyramid but should extend to everyone, developing confidence and complementarity between all.
- To make Lasallian formation evolves.
- In view of the small number of Brothers, to continue to confide posts of responsibility to Lay Lasallians with a letter of mission from the Br. Visitor.
- To ensure that Association is lived at all levels: Brothers/Lay Persons and Lay Persons/Lay Persons.
- To continue and further develop reflection with regard to our mission towards the Muslims in our establishments.

**3. Plan of action:**

- To set up a commission for the translation and distribution of essential MEL documents.
- To transmit what we have experienced, at Association level, during the District Assembly, to all our educational communities.
- To set up meetings and formation sessions to study and make people aware of the concrete application of Association in our everyday work.
- To make Lasallian formation evolves. To be inventive and creative in order to give it a dynamic and profound form.
- To maintain the solidarity between the Sectors which has already permitted the implantation of the mission in the Sudan.
- To make the term “Associates” more concrete by means of a sign and a particular approach.

## **Structures of organization**

### **1. Analysis of the situation.**

#### ***Realities:***

- The MEL Council is a structure which essentially stems from the school establishments and helps in running them. This organization has been gradually set up in all the Sectors.
- The Councils of Directors have their place in reflections and the taking of decisions.
- The different committees (Directors Council, Management Council, Formation Committee...) help in the good running of MEL.

#### ***Tendencies:***

- The setting up of the MEL structures has been carried out in a spirit of confidence in order to serve MEL
- Care to reinforce the links between the different Councils of the Sectors as well as with the Centre of the Institute.
- To associate Lay Lasallians and Brothers in the general policies of the Sector and of the District.
- To take the risk of freeing up competent persons to work in the domain which they have mastered.
- To generalize structures at all levels.

#### ***Obstacles and challenges***

- Difficulties in finding new people to take positions of responsibility in running MEL.
- The educational and teaching personnel are not aware of the structures of MEL

### **2. Perspectives and lines of action**

- The ongoing formation of management personnel and animators.
- To intensify the link with the MEL structure of the other Sectors and of the District.
- To put in writing the precise aims and the role of each council and to send it to Brothers and Lay Lasallians.
- To make the organigramme known to all the Partners.
- To set up a MEL Council at District level.

# **REBIM**

## **REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, April 2006**

### **1. The Lasallian Educational Mission as it is expressed in REBIM**

#### **1.1. Management of Schools and Pastoral Centres:**

The Brothers as Trustees and legal owners of the educational property determine what kind of school /centre they run. They decide what their purpose is in establishing or maintaining the centre and what they expect to achieve. The founding intention is reflected in the school/ pastoral centre Mission Statement drawn up following consultation between the Trustees, the Board of Management, Parents, Teachers and Students.

### **2. The realities, trends, obstacles and challenges to ‘Lasallian Association’ for the above mission in REBIM** views of School Principals, Teachers, Pastoral Centre Leaders, Buttimer Graduates, Brothers, Members of District Councils

#### 2.1. Definition of Association: *there were many definitions and below are some.*

- Antonio Botana’s – Participation in the Lasallian charism: A sense of togetherness, energy giving; the taking on of an identity; an openness which liberates and motivates one to share in the mission of giving a human and Christian education to young people; a sense of having a common purpose and bond.
- Association is the coming together of people who are inspired by the Lasallian charism. They bring their individual gifts to their own Lasallian ministry and to those with whom they are associated in order to promote the aims and purpose of the Lasallian mission.

- Association is an inspiration for greater zeal for the mission. It is a support for living out the Lasallian spirituality daily. It is the basis of personal and professional development.
- Association is very much about prayer, starting each day praying for the school, for the leadership to touch hearts and minds. Prayers are associated with Lasallian spirituality.

## 2.2. How Association is lived out

- Brothers are the Heart and Memory of the Institute – In Ireland they are involved in BoMs, the Shared Mission Team; facilitating meetings between different groups; providing support for new projects and initiatives to improve the quality of the educational experience young people receive in the schools and pastoral centres.
- There is a gentleness/cordiality in relationships between Brothers and those who work with them, between staff and between staff and pupils.
- Special occasions: open days, school annual awards, Founders Day (e.g. staff making a formal declaration of commitment to the Lasallian mission).
- In Great Britain, association is more about transferred mission than shared mission. The main concern is to find ways of developing the Lasallian charism in schools where there are no longer any Brothers.

## 2.3. What encourages Association

- The strong sense of working with the Brothers and meeting an identified need i.e. the spiritual formation of young people
- Pastoral teams coming together for Lasallian formation, prayer and reflection and sharing of good practice and resources
- Formation programmes through Teacher Induction, On-going whole school staff encounters with Shared Mission Team and presentations from Buttimer personnel on the Lasallian Educator
- Providing interested and committed teachers with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the Founder, his life, pedagogy and spirituality through participation in the Buttimer programme.
- Networking – the Brothers have facilitated/ provided opportunities for coming together e.g. Annual National and International Lasallian Leadership conferences
- Leading young volunteers in summer projects in Africa.

## 2.4. What the challenges are to Association

### 2.4.1. Society values and trends

- number of non practicing Catholics, indifference to Church;
- falling levels of faith commitment in staff
- so few Brothers and possibly none at all in the future
- in Ireland the movement towards the formation of a single trust for the management of schools which are owned and run by other religious orders
- defining / reimagining the Catholic School

## 2.5. What is the vision of a desired future for Association in the District?

- Laity to assume more responsibility and provide leadership to service changing and developmental needs of young people.
- Heritage and charism is valued by staff
- Core values, especially quality teaching, promoted in the schools
- Focus on youth – Initiation into Lasallian World through Lasallian Youth, etc.

## 2.6. What steps should REBIM take to make this a reality?

- Focus on what gives energy to Association and let go of what does not share the Lasallian spirituality, methodology and ethos beyond the existing Lasallian groups: communication means sharing Jesus' story, De La Salle's story and our stories.
- Plan for a culture of association ...deepen concept of Association among school staffs through formation, resources, communication
- Develop Formation Programmes to meet the needs of young leaders, Districts / Region plan for integration and diversity ... cluster group meetings and reflection days
- Establish guiding principles with enabling conditions for the operation of Lasallian Schools / Centres
- Explore new forms of Association We need to foster the development of local Lasallian communities (of various kinds) in as many places as possible, looking for different ways to strengthen links between Lasallian groups, supporting and nurturing new developments like LAMB.

## **RELAF**

### **REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, March 2006**

Organized in 1977 with its own Statutes, RELAF became a Region in 1987 and named its first Regional Coordinator in 1989. RELAF includes all of continental Africa including islands and extends over 5,000 km. from north to south and over 6,000 km. from east to west. The Region has 430 Brothers of whom 226 are African born and 204 are from overseas. The latter come from many countries: Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Spain, the USA, France, Great Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, Vietnam etc. They thus represent a wide range of nationalities which illustrate the international character of the Institute and bear witness to the possibility of a universal brotherhood in the Church and in the world. This diversity puts into practice the ideals of collaboration and interdependence.

Although poor in material goods, the Institute in Africa is truly rich in its youth. This richness is a little fragile and carries a call for conversion, in spite of its considerable vitality.

#### **The Lasallian African Region includes:**

- 5 Districts: West Africa( Burkina Faso, Niger); Antananarivo( Madagascar); Douala (Cameroon, Chad); Kinshasa (D.R. Congo); Lwanga (Ethiopia/Eritrea, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa).
- One Sub-District: Gulf of Benin (Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin, Guinea-Conakry).
- One Delegation: Rwanda.
- 2 Sectors: Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique.
- There are also 3 Sectors attached to the Region of France: Egypt, Reunion, Djibouti.

## **Our Regional Services.**

These services illustrate our unity and our collaboration. This interdependence develops stronger association.

- Three Novitiates are functioning at present:
  1. The Novitiate of Eritrea
  2. The English-speaking inter-African Novitiate of Nairobi (Kenya).
  3. The French-speaking inter-African Novitiate of Bobo-Dioulasso(Burkina Faso)
- Two inter-African Scholasticates are functioning at present:
  1. The English-speaking Scholasticate called “Christ the Teacher Centre”, opened in Nairobi in 1992, attached to the Tangaza Institute. It offers an academic, theological and pastoral formation to 36 Brothers of the Christian Schools as well as to Brothers and Sisters of other Congregations, all studying full-time.
  2. The French-speaking Scholasticate called CELAF-Institut, opened in Abidjan in October 1991, affiliated to the ICAO (Catholic Institute of West Africa) which became the UCAO (Catholic University of West Africa). It offers courses in theology, catechesis and education to 40 Brothers of the Christian Schools as well as to other Brothers and Sisters and lay persons.

## **Vocations ministry and initial formation**

One can distinguish a series of phases: since 1976 the vocations ministry in RELAF has gone through successive phases of passive waiting and uncertainty, of hesitation and experimentation. But there was an awakening beginning in 1982. Since that date, we have seen an increase in vocations, even though the number varies from one sector to another. In general, it is an undeniable fact that most of the Brothers believe in the existence of Lasallian vocations.

## **Our Institute in the context of African cultures**

Africa is a continent with thousands of cultures and even each African country is a constellation of numerous cultures. As new scenes for the mission of the Church, these Cultures hold the attention of the Brothers in RELAF. This reality is a leitmotiv of all the Lasallian meetings.

A number of Brothers have been called upon to animate sessions on inculturation. Our schools are truly places where representatives of diverse cultures gather. These schools ought therefore to become places of a real meeting of cultures. In fact, one could say that RELAF is composed of Brothers belonging not only to many different nationalities but to a big variety of cultures. Such is the challenge for the Brothers of RELAF: the call to be an educator in dialogue between several cultural groups and to incarnate the religious life of the Brothers more deeply in the local cultures. The task is huge. Carrying it out demands from us a solid faith and a profound intelligence.

## **A general outline of the problems of education and pedagogy**

Designated by UNESCO as the continent of illiteracy, Africa is facing serious problems in education, and linked with those, difficulties in pedagogy. Education also takes place outside the school, but since it is a question here of the education of the young, we will limit our remarks to school and para-school education. We often hear remarks such as:

“The study level of the pupils is low”, “They are not well educated”, “The school is in crisis”. Many African universities are in a state of tension and conflict. The students are putting up resistance. It is a sign of latent malaise and discontent.

The Brothers ought to be attentive to these troubles in order to mobilise all their energy and their talents to collaborate with society in ensuring that the young receive the education to which they have a right.

### **Three thorny problems**

1. The recognition by the State of its duties with regard to private confessional education. There is at present no recognition of this kind. On the contrary there seems to be a desire to eliminate totally this category of education. For example, government subsidies are paid irregularly or reduced (by 2/3 in the last five years in some countries).
2. The relative youth of the members of the teaching profession and their inadequate formation.
3. Since teachers are not well-paid the teaching profession is not held in high esteem. This is one of the causes of instability in the teaching body.

### **Changes to be put into practice**

Among the Brothers:

To invest considerably in the preparation of formation personnel. The Brother of the Christian Schools is called today to be an animator, a coordinator, a unifier. This presupposes a solid and multi-disciplined formation. Our Scholasticates in Abidjan and Nairobi have accomplishing this as their ambition, nourished and motivated by a strong Lasallian spirituality. Our mission is a shared mission, “together and by association” with Lay Lasallians. At the heart of the dynamic possibilities of the Lasallian Family, we ought to give proof of our creativity: Brothers and Lay Lasallians are partners. In this domain, we need to undergo a conversion.

At the level of mentalities:

The changes which affect our African education system demand from us a realistic and effective awareness of our objectives, which includes an experience of suffering. The evil which is striking Africa today is in the mind; we ought to get rid of it. The changes which are called for demand a spirit of innovation and of research.

### **The Lasallian Family in Africa**

#### **● Associations of Past Pupils**

Some associations of past pupils which exist here and there in the Region, were very active in the past. To develop a more Lasallian identity, these associations are looking for a better method of organisation. They find themselves in a waiting situation and need the Brothers to assume a new role to awaken a new spirit.

#### **● A formation based on the facts**

Since 1987, the notion of Lasallian Family has become more explicit. The Brothers are more aware of this evolution. Certain sectors have taken specific measures. But it was a CLAF session in 1991 which led to a better understanding and ended in more precise commitments to action. The 17 Brothers and 13 Lay Lasallians present at the CLAF session in 1991 are almost all now the main people in charge of animating the Lasallian Family.

- **The members of Signum Fidei**

In the RELAF Region there are 8 members of Signum Fidei who have made their consecration and 18 other members in Madagascar and Rwanda.

- **The Lasallian Sisters**

The Guadalupana Lasallian Sisters have 9 postulants in formation in Madagascar.}

- **The Young Lasallians**

There are groups of Young Lasallians in six sectors, helped by a number of young Brothers who are interested in this movement.

- **The formation of lay teachers**

The need has been felt for a more dynamic policy and programme. Here is a new effort being asked of the Brothers of RELAF: to develop the ministry to our teachers and other lay colleagues in a more systematic way. Some sessions have been organised here and there, but there is a threshold to be crossed between occasional sessions and a deeper and more extensive programme.

- **Request for a Regional Commission of the Lasallian Family**

It remains truer than ever that we need a Regional commission of the Lasallian Family for a better development of the Lasallian charism in Africa, the sharing of the Lasallian Mission is not something that can be improvised, it needs a sensitization, a conversion but also serious initial, professional and ongoing formation. RELAF should take up the challenge of social justice towards our lay collaborators, and promote and enhance the profession, occupation and vocation of religious or lay educators.

**RELAL**  
**REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, March 2006**

- a. Three Sub-Regional Assemblies were held in March 2006.
  - North Sub-Region (Mexico, Central America, The Antilles).
  - Central Sub-Region (Bogota, Ecuador, Medellin, and Venezuela).
  - South Sub-Region (Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina-Paraguay, Porto Alegre, Sao Paulo).
- b. At these Sub-Regional Assemblies, delegates were chosen to draw up the Regional document. This summary document was drawn up in Caracas from April 5 to 7, 2006.
- c. A common methodology was used and four topics were deal with: analysis of the reality, Mission, Association, and Structures of Association.

**1. From the “Analysis of the Reality” portion, the following was stressed:**

- Increase of poverty
- Family disintegration
- Youth disorientation
- The inequality of women
- Systematic, growing, and unstoppable migration
- Disenchantment with politics
- A growing deterioration in education and little esteem for the work of men and women teachers.

- On the Church level, occasionally the language, lack of coherence, generate distrust, apathy, and a lack of credibility, especially among the young and the poor.
2. **The topics of Mission and Association** were tackled from the viewpoint of pastoral ministry, organization, management, formation, and resources.
  3. The topic on “Structures of Association” was looked at from the viewpoint of participation and availability, the structures themselves, relationships, and communication.
  4. **Action plans for RELAL** were made, for the Districts, and there was emphasis on the basic conditions necessary for structures of association:
    - Democratic participation, equal conditions for all, Brothers and lay (men and women) at all times, including finances.
    - Strengthening of efficient and effective communication.
    - A clear organizational chart.
    - Leadership promotion.
    - Establishment of work plans in accord with what was approved during the MEL Assemblies.
    - Ongoing reflection and analysis on Association and its implications.
    - Initial and ongoing formation centered around Association for lay persons and Brothers.
    - Accompaniment of Brothers and lay persons, on the part of District entities, as regards Association.
    - Ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of plans and programs as well as their ability to promote community.
  5. During this process of reflection among lay persons and Brothers we have grown in fraternity and commitment. But we are also aware that Association is thought about equally in all the Districts and we are moving forward with some questions and some fears:

From the lay perspective:

- Will we lay persons have the boldness to take on Association by ourselves?
- What risks are we willing to take in this process of Association?
- Are we convinced about what we say about Association?

From the Brothers' perspective:

- Will we Brothers be sufficiently open to engage in this process?
- What will we do when one of us clings to a position that is contrary to Association?
- Are we able to respect the authority of a lay person?

**Fears and questions** related to new structures:

- Replacing a traditional structure with another one that will end without responding to the expectations on Association.
- Those structures will again become rigid and will choke the “charism” of Association.
- To create closed structures around the Lasallian world that make difficult Church-communion, and may choke critical thinking and limit vitality and creativity.
- That the process of Association might be weak and fragmented, that it might turn into theoretical and transitory discourse.

**Questions regarding the Mission:**

- Is the process of Association a transparent one or is it impervious to personal interests or groups of Brothers and lay persons?
- What criteria should we have for topics relating to the management and the administration of resources produced in the educational mission of the centers?

6. The main emphasis was on:

- A clear and preferential option for the poor.
- An accent on values that will allow a lifestyle where solidarity and service are fundamental elements.
- The explicit proclamation of the Gospel which creates a climate within the school for sharing and embracing the Good News and to go about creating community and commitment within the Church.
- The importance of quality and systematic formation for men and women teachers.
- The explicit integration of Lasallian institutions of higher education in the development of the educational mission in the Region, especially in the field of research and design.
- To continue taking significant steps so that Association for Mission might become a reality in the Lasallian world.

## **RELEC**

### **REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, April 2006**

#### **CONTEXT**

The RELEC Region comprises Belgium (two Districts), the District of Central Europe (Austria-Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Germany and Holland) and the District of Poland.

Apart from Poland, the Church and religious congregations in this part of Europe are very much affected by the evolution of contemporary society, especially by a noticeable decline in religious practice and in the decrease in the number of priests and religious. These various Districts are making preparations to entrust the responsibility for the Lasallian mission to lay collaborators who are motivated to ensure its continuance.

These countries, with the exception of Romania, are members of the European Union, a new structure of a continent in process of radical transformation.

Europe! Of what are we really speaking? More than 800 million people look upon themselves as Europeans. 435 million of them live in the 25 States of the European Union.<sup>1</sup> However the boundaries to the East of the continent are not rigid: Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine are often considered as being part of Europe. But, from the point of view of geography, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and eventually Greenland have

---

<sup>1</sup> L. Halman, R. Luijckx & M. van Undert, *Atlas of European Values*, Tilburg, 2005, p. 14ff.

as much right to this claim. Greenland is a dependency of Denmark, whilst Iceland has closer ties with U.S.A. Turkey and Azerbaijan, not sharing the Christian roots, are often seen as being “too far East”, even though the majority of the Albanian and Bosnian populations are Moslems.

The EU has got to the point of breaking the historical balance mainly between the States and the Christian Churches, with the Jews still suffering the bloody consequences of the Holocaust. With the probable inclusion of other Eastern European countries and Turkey, the Eastern Orthodox Churches and Islam will be included in the Union. It can be expected that, within a few decades, the frontiers will be pushed further back beyond what is thinkable today. What, then, will be the new European identity, when it does not spring from ethnic or cultural sympathies? Up to the present time many boundaries have been maintained separated from realities which from a certain point of view are considered to be irreconcilable. In order to integrate the one-who-is-different, a demanding evolution will be needed to outstrip historical prejudices, to allow people to be won over by others, going beyond differences and to see themselves as equals on the basis of co-responsibility and solidarity for a project and of co-habitation within the same geo-political reality.

Since half way through the 20th century, the “old continent” has ceased to be recognised as the centre of the world, as the scientific, cultural, political and ideological reference point for the other continents. The economic, military and political centre of gravity has moved towards the United States and Asia. And the former balances of power, in Europe, are becoming meaningless under the impact of internationalisation and globalisation. Will this slow movement at reconstructing a solid entity from the economic, political and socio-cultural point of view succeed in building up a specific and qualitatively decisive influence on the world stage?

Europe is a *special case*. For more than 50 years – in continuity with the rational approach of Modernity and the Enlightenment – numerous studies in sociology and the psychology of religion tried to describe the appearance of secularisation. It is a development which can be seen especially in Western Europe.

No other continent has been affected by such distancing of itself from institutional religions, whether it is Catholicism or Protestantism.

This phenomenon also attracts attention in relation to other ideological systems and on other continents, amongst intellectuals and people economically emancipated, but, in general, on the other continents, such as the United States and Latin America or Africa, Catholics and Protestants do not abandon the practice of religion in droves. When belonging to a particular Church does not meet the expectations of the faithful, either they change Churches or they move to Pentecostal communities or the sects, or they become part of native syncretistic churches.

In Europe, Catholics and Protestants do not change their Church or religion (only a minority of persons does so). In cases of disappointment, another kind of shift takes place: the majority, especially among the younger generations, abstains from regular religious practice, but maintains a formal and selective membership. This fluctuation unfailingly sparks off consternation and perplexity on the part of ecclesiastical authorities; there is considerable divergence in the interpretation of the observations and their meaning.

In spite of that, institutional religion in Europe has by no means disappeared. A few signs provide the evidence.

- It appears that some attitudes specific to a religion persist and continue to direct, at least implicitly, the life choices and scale of values of the populations. Up to the present time, European society is still influenced by its religious past.
- Certain large religious demonstrations – given publicity in the media – maintain and arouse a definite interest.
- It turns out that the charismatic potential of the Church offers an environment for (adult) persons searching for a direction in life or a religious affiliation.
- When asked about the great ethical, social, cultural, medical, political and economic questions, the Churches do not stay on the sidelines. By virtue of the positions they take, they can introduce a qualitative difference with regard to the dilemmas experienced at the heart of contemporary society.

This development denotes a major break with regard to the situation of three centuries ago. J. B. de La Salle set his initiative in the bosom of the Catholic Church in France. Church and State were closely linked as guarantors of the continuity of that society. Consequently, education frankly planned the integration of Christian and ecclesial faith in the life of the children: education for citizenship in the name of God and rooting human beings in the divine life. The whole plan of life was set within the Church. The Brothers' community was completely devoted to that end, all the while accepting its socio-political presuppositions. The separation of Church and State, as introduced into France by the secularisation (1905), a consequence of the Revolution, set up a different kind of society. In one way or another, the whole of Europe has been influenced by it. If, on the one hand, the Church lost its "absolutist" influence and if many ecclesial institutions deeply rooted in social life found themselves reduced in their activities and ambitions, on the other hand, they gained by concentration on their specific evangelical and pastoral mission. They found that they were forced to choose other strategies to have an impact on society.

Faithful to their pragmatic genius, the Brothers adapted as much as possible to the political and administrative decisions of the separation of Church and State and succeeded in finding a niche for their establishments in strategic places in accordance with their mission. But at the same time, society becoming more and more "pluralist", new situations called for deep reflection and a different pedagogical and pastoral approach. The "subjects" – children, youths and their parents – more than in the past, exercised their right to liberty of conscience, thought and action in all domains. The social status of religion has changed in a society which has become non-denominational.

The Institute was founded in the aftermath of the renewal of the Council of Trent. The Counter Reformation made its presence felt right up to the 20th century. Vatican Council II took great care to include the transformation which came about as a result of Modernity and the Enlightenment. By concentrating on the "signs of the times", on contemporary man, the bearer of the Holy Spirit, openness to the world has led to noteworthy initiatives. Since Vatican II, dialogue has deepened in the direction of collaboration in the areas of major problems in ethics, medicine, politics, social justice, respect for man, religious freedom and in the development of a new kind of ecumenism.

Jean Boissonnant emphasises the importance of really modifying perceptions.<sup>2</sup> In a certain manner, he said, God made Europe. Christianity gave the continent its foundational values and its first institutions. But then, Europe got rid of God through the great philosophical currents, the schisms, through setting up secular institutions. Today, Europe is trying to take on a new entity within a globalised world, and God no longer belongs to it. God is not European!

## **1. LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION**

The RELEC Region includes the two Belgium Districts (North and South), the District of Central Europe (composed of the following sectors: Austria-Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Germany, Holland) and the District of Poland. It presents a full range of different possibilities for Brother-Lay collaboration.

This can be simplified in the following manner:

1. An educational mission passed on definitively by the Brothers to an Association composed exclusively of Lay People (Vlaams Lasallians Perspectief: District of North Belgium).
2. An educational mission entrusted, by a renewable mandate, for a specified period, by the Brothers to an Association composed, in the majority, of Lay People (Association of Lasallian Schools: District of South Belgium).
3. An educational mission entrusted to a mixed Conference of Brothers-and Lay People: Austria-Hungary
4. A recent mission in the school setting: sharing the mission and its responsibilities is in its infancy and will have to be consolidated: Romania. Slovakia and Poland.
5. An educational mission without any Lasallian supervision: Germany and Holland.

In addition, according to Districts, the implementation of the mission takes on

- either a bottom-up approach
- or a top-down approach.

The Districts of RELEC are confronted by the following alternatives:

- either to see the Lasallian vision as deserving to continue inspiring the educational mission, and in this case, to make sure that there is continuous up-dating and resourcing;
- or accept that the mission become less and less visible and explicit.

Certain Districts have become clearly committed in favour of the first option, with the aim of ensuring the permanency of the Lasallian mission, even after the departure of the Brothers.

It is the responsibility of the other Districts to take, right from today, the steps called for if they want to avoid the disappearance of the educational mission as such.

### **1.1 Situation**

#### **1.1.1 Lasallian vision**

---

<sup>2</sup> *God and Europe*, Paris, 2005.

1. Our inspiration comes from the example of John Baptist de La Salle and from his inspiration, Jesus Christ. To preserve this spiritual base, aim to keep alive the profound spirit to be sought in the dynamic sources.
2. Five calls come from this
  - 2.1. With this inspiration as starting point, all educators are called to give personalised attention to each child/young person in his totality, so that he can develop and become a free and responsible individual.
  - 2.2. Equally, they are called to give every chance to their students, especially those most vulnerable, today's most disadvantaged, by offering them more opportunities. It is a matter of a differentiation with special attention to the most disadvantaged, a kind of positive discrimination.
  - 2.3. They are also called to establish and maintain a "warm" climate, a fraternal relationship among colleagues, with the children/young persons and with the parents...
  - 2.4. This vision can not come about except with the participation of everyone, including the students. To participate means: to take on, in a real way, responsibility for the policy of the school, by co-operating with all the schools in the Lasallian network.
  - 2.5. This vision likewise calls for a broad openness to the outside world, through attention to what is happening beyond the walls of the school: teacher renewal, massive changes in the media world (the transition from mass media to the media of the masses), what is going on in other continents. It is about a call to contribute to greater fairness, equality, emancipation and liberation.

### **1.1.2 Actions carried out**

- 2.1. Educational meetings, gathering together all persons involved: those in charge, teachers, students, parents, organising authorities.
- 2.2. Training for specific groups: separate sessions for students, teachers or Principals. Where necessary, external experts are brought in.
- 2.3. A mentoring service aimed at helping teachers and Principals and based on Lasallian inspiration. Their task is evolving from purely technical help into essential support for the content of the Lasallian network. What's more, the mentoring service is an indispensable asset in positioning ourselves with regard to other congregations and those responsible for Catholic education.

In this manner, action is spreading like a drop of oil. Beginning teachers who become acquainted with our modus operandi learn the value of our vision. You could say that this conviction is transmitted by osmosis.

### **1.1.3 Challenges**

- 3.1. A lack of knowledge/awareness of the Lasallian vision.
- 3.2. The difficulty of becoming aware of what Lasallian identity is without experiencing it: the process is clearly more important than the product.
- 3.3. Political constraints of two kinds:
  - Constant changing of the requirements of the law, which entails extra work for the staff;
  - A tendency to centralisation (combining schools), which brings an additional load and difficulties in safeguarding the identities of the combined institutions.

- 3.4. The importance of support (moral, in areas of human and financial resources, logistical) on the part of the Brothers. Will it be possible to continue the assurance of this support when the Brothers are no longer present in the “Region”?
- 3.5. The evolution of society in general, which requires that the school makes sure to adjust constantly to what is evolving:
  - the increasing number of problems which the school is supposed to take on,
  - the development of new skills (for example in the media field) on the part of staff.
- 3.6. Evidence of a certain lack of availability by teachers providing proof of a certain tendency to individualism and a government service mentality.

#### **1.1.4 Directions**

- 4.1. Ensure training I /awareness of the Lasallian vision
- 4.2. Make sure to safeguard the identity, Lasallian values in a context in perpetual change (adaptation)
- 4.3. Invite staff members to take part in activities in which they can gain concrete experience of the Lasallian vision
- 4.4. Strengthen exchanges between those in charge of the educational mission and the congregation of the Brothers:
  - in the school communities where the Brothers are still present,
  - at the District level,
  - at the heart of the international authority of the Institute.
- 4.5. Be recognised as a valuable partner by the other congregations and by Catholic education as a whole.

## **2. ASSOCIATION**

### **2.1 Situation**

#### **2.1.1 Understanding**

As John Baptist de La Salle himself and his teachers formed an association to carry out a plan to which they wished to devote themselves completely, today, in our Region, some persons inspired to work at the education of children and young people are committed to teaching and education in the Lasallian spirit and linked to the international Institute. They do this without feeling any necessity to set up any contract other than the willingness to continue the mission following the inspiration of John Baptist de La Salle. And they do this within their own vocation.

It is in this spirit that we read and understand the idea of association adopted by the General Chapter of 2000.

#### **2.1.2 Participation**

John Baptist de La Salle usually involved the principal Brothers (probably the Directors of schools) in developing the pedagogical and spiritual policies and the practical management of the schools. Participation, in the sense of taking on responsibility for the management, supposes – at least implicitly – the presence of a fairly well developed sense of association.

In several Districts in our Region, a group of committed persons, inherently attached to the Lasallian cause have taken on, are taking on and will take on responsibility for the educational and spiritual enterprise.

Effectively, at the present time, a group of lay people is managing the network so as to ensure the presence of Lasallian schools and works in Catholic education<sup>3</sup> and to ensure a qualitative difference. The Brothers in these Districts declare that they solidly support this move.

At the present time, these groups of committed people are recognised and appointed by their District. The Districts involved are aging and in the not too distant future – according to present forecasts – will cease to exist.

### **2.1.3 Care for the poor**

Nowadays, how is this initial charism expressed in our Region which has always had a missionary spirit? Concern for the poor is partly shown in our Region by welcoming the stranger. Entire educational communities have tapped into the immigration problem and have successfully carried off a difficult conversion bringing about the acceptance of these children and young people, often the most disadvantaged. These communities have found a unifying initiative in this approach to the stranger

Care for the poor beyond our Region – formerly expressed in the missionary spirit of our Districts – finds concrete expression today in the support (financial, twinning, visits...) of the poor in Africa but also other continents and in Eastern Europe which has scarcely and with difficulty come from Communism.

Following John Baptist de La Salle who based himself on the Gospel to educate the poor and deprived, Lasallian schools in our Region remain open to the needs in this area within our Region as well as in other parts of the world. With the intention of making this mission a reality, many Lasallians hailing from different Lasallian educational communities unite to plan activities – and in our eyes this is one of the challenges of association.

### **2.1.4 Formation**

In our Region, formation brings together education and spirituality and is presented in different ways in each District. Previous generations of teachers knew the Brothers well as students or through working with them as teachers. They are aware of the atmosphere and know the meaning of our identity and our origins. It is different for the young Principals and teachers who have only just discovered the Lasallian perspective. In this situation a more specific and systematic initiation is most desirable.

But who will do the training in the future? Today's formators will have to have successors in a relatively short time...

---

<sup>3</sup> This concerns especially the Districts of Belgium North and Belgium South. In Belgium, Catholic education is looked upon as part of the public service and, because of this, is subject to certain constraints imposed by the government of the Community affected.

What will be the content of the formation? That remains to be defined even if we already have an initial structure: the Founder, the charism, the Educational Enterprise...

### **2.1.5 Secularisation**

Our society, more and more secular and pluralist and without the religious framework of yesteryear, represents a huge question for a Christian school. From all the evidence, it raises the question whether it is possible, today, to maintain the Christian dimension of our commitment. It is as if, in our Region, De La Salle had to reinvent his work...

## **2.2 Directions**

### **2.2.1 Leaven in the dough**

We see coming into existence or growing, in our various establishments, small pockets of several persons who are totally committed to the Lasallian mission and recognised as sharing in the Lasallian spirit by those in charge or their peers: they are those educators who have a lofty opinion of their work, available to the children and young people, bringing them love and expertise. These few persons are like leaven in the dough. It is right that they be given the means of getting together to develop in a real way this feeling of association, of Lasallian "community".

### **2.2.2 New witnesses**

For some years now we have been witnessing a new phenomenon; the merging of schools. It could well be that this is a blessing rather than a loss, in the sense that we are invited to make clearer our specific aim and work it out further in really new circumstances.

### **2.2.3 Appointment**

In relation to point 2.1, we request that the appointments made by the Districts, be made (when the moment is right) or confirmed by the Brother Regional Visitor or by the International Institute.

### **2.2.4 Formation**

The Region reckons on going more deeply into this problem in view of setting up mini training courses. Already at the present time, but more so In the future, we are conscious that the problem of the different languages will be a thorny question.

### **2.2.5 Secularization**

Secularization is a challenge for Christians in general and for Lasallians in particular. Today, in our Region we are not enlightened by a dazzling sun but, more or less everywhere tiny flames are giving some light and they are not flickering, they are borne by witnesses whose real commitment is solid. We believe that these new witnesses must be encouraged and supported!

### **3. Structure and Organisation**

#### **3.1 Situation**

It is delightful to see that an increasing number of organisational structures are being devised in which lay people are being invited to take a more important part and are being entrusted with more responsibilities. This evolution is obviously occurring at different rates: in one District this process has already reached the stage of a group reflection and is more advanced from an organisational point of view than in another. But everywhere lay people have displayed serious efforts to offer times of Lasallian training to various intentional groups.

In addition, there is evidence that basic teaching is being treated less and less as a poor relation. That way, one of the pillars of the Institute remains more firmly justified.

The new participative structures being set up want to be worthwhile: people must feel challenged; we do not want to impose or forbid anything. Thus we hope to be able to work in the long term at renewal and attracting younger teachers: the lay people must also work at finding “novices” to assure continuity.

#### **3.2 Directions**

One important question concerns the “guarantor”: as lay people can we be recognised one day by the bishops as agents of the Institute in what concerns the educational mission?

On this topic, the starting point is the desire to develop and give form to the relationship between VLP/AEL and the international Institute in the future European Region, to the satisfaction of both parties.

We note that with dioceses discussions relating to recognition and appointment by them too often comes down to debates about means, finances, influence and power.

Although the District has delegated responsibility for the mission to us, it is, however, difficult to integrate VLP/AEL into the organisation chart of Catholic education. In itself that is not a problem – we are proud of our roots – but it is truly, in a sense, a case of “being a structural hostage” in Catholic education. To avoid being made a hostage, we need an explicit place in the organisation chart of the International Institute and in the European Region. VLP/AEL.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the Institute and the European Region must now make sure that the task of communicating no longer always passes through the Brother Visitor

---

<sup>4</sup> VLP: Vlaams Lasalliaans Perspectief (District of North Belgium)

At the MEL international meeting in October 2006, there will be 2/3 lay people. We look upon this proportion as a courageous step, but it is at the same time a reflection of reality. Statistically speaking, there will come a time when 90% of the “workers in the mission” will be lay people. What will that then mean for those Brothers still active, who have established their community life under the banner of the mission? Will the Institute still want to give more responsibility to lay people? On this topic, one particular aspect is women’s participation in the mission. They do not yet appear clearly in the structures, nor in reflection on Lasallian spirituality and mission.

Work needs to be done on consciousness raising which will be able to give expression to a model of development of “together and by association”. As a minimum, direct communication between the organisations of involved lay people affected by this topic and present in Rome seems to us to be recommended.

We are absolutely delighted that the MEL International Meeting is to be autonomous and self regulating and that the options and decisions taken there, by reason of the status of this international Assembly, will be decisive.

We have also understood that the General Chapter of 2007 will, in fact, have its own agenda focusing more specifically on aspects concerning the Brothers. In this way, the contribution of lay participants will imprint a marked style on the updating of MEL, taking into account concrete local circumstances, cultural as well as religious and societal.

In conclusion, lay people wish to show their willingness to take on responsibilities vis-à-vis the Institute and at the same time let the Institute profit from their work.

# **USA-TORONTO**

## **REPORT OF THE PARTIAL MEL ASSEMBLY, November 2005**

### **1. General Context of the Geographic Region**

The analysis here includes the United States of America and the Canadian Province of Ontario where the Region has a Delegation and one secondary School.

The educational systems of the two countries are very different. In the USA, education is locally governed within in each state. Taxes on property support education resulting in wealthier areas having better funded schools. There is no direct support for private education, although some states allow support to parents of private school students and limited support of certain programs. In Ontario, Catholic schools are publicly funded. Private Catholic schools that are not governed by the local board get no support as is the case of our school in Toronto. Therefore, schools in our Region must charge high tuition and raise significant amounts of funds.

The Region has seven universities that are eligible for federal and state student loans and some grants. Like all private universities, a massive effort in recruiting new students, finding financial support and raising funds is needed to make the institutions viable and competitive in a tight market for students.

The Region also has three child-care systems for young people with difficulties with the law and family. These institutions do receive support from state sources.

Although Catholic schools enjoy a good reputation, the number of students attending Catholic schools in the United States is declining. Inner city Catholic schools struggle without government support to provide a strong Catholic education for minority and lower income students. A recent study of teen religious attitudes commented: “Catholic schools have grown into college prep academies with competitive admissions standards and hefty tuition rates, serving the more privileged of their communities, whether Catholic or not, and are more dedicated, by demand of parents, to getting their students admitted to prestigious colleges” than teaching religion. (Christian Smith et al. *Soul Searching*, Oxford University Press, 2005)

### **Children and Youth**

In both nations, youth are highly influenced by the media and tech cultures resulting in a kind of homogeneous youth culture that is post-modern in many ways. Frequent use of technology through I-pods, blogs, and instant messaging has resulted in strengthening the youth culture as something different from the mainstream. This media also individualizes knowledge and interests creating non-hierarchical, or non-expertise sources of knowledge. What is read on a blog carries the same weight as what is read in a textbook.

Among the poor, in minority groups and among many immigrants, there is steady undercurrent of crime, often drug-related in both urban and rural areas. In Toronto, there has been an increase in youth crime especially gun crime where that had been less common.

Yet, there is a searching for community, sometimes virtual, among young people and with that an interest in spirituality and a hope of making the world a better place.

### **Family Life**

The situation of families is almost identical in both countries. While there is great discussion about family values, family life is constantly being redefined. In Ontario and in the United States the divorce rate is 37%. Single parent families in both nations are about 16% of the population. Ontario allows same-sex marriage. Only one U.S. state has same- sex marriage while six states in the USA have same-sex civil unions not recognized by the other states.

Families of all types live very busy lives and rarely have meals or recreation together except for vacations. Conversely, many parents follow their children’s lives in school and activities very closely and look to playing an important part in their educational and recreational lives. The individualism of North American society takes a toll on families and often people search for some kind of family values to come from the cultural or political society rather than from themselves.

### **Promotion of Justice**

In both Canadian and American society, there is a stronger sense of justice than in past eras. Awareness of native populations, immigrants, racial minorities and the disabled has resulted in legal rights being extended to them in various ways. At the same time, these populations still are marginalized economically due to the lack of opportunities.

There is a strong involvement in private volunteerism. Many organizations promote social justice activities and opportunities for service in the home country and abroad. In the United States there are government-sponsored programs, Peace Corp and Americorp. The Canadian Bishops sponsor the Development and Peace Group. In our Region we have a growing Lasallian Volunteer Program for post university students. Curriculums in Catholic schools have a course on Catholic Social Teaching and service-learning groups.

Canadians and Americans are generous with their wealth and give to many causes. The challenge is to distinguish between justice and charity so that the causes of injustice are not merely assuaged by charitable acts but corrected by social justice.

## **Religious Climate**

In our Region, the religious climate differs somewhat between the two countries. Canada may be a more secular society similar to Europe while the United States has an overwhelming number of people who consider themselves believers and religious (90%) although actual Church attendance is down. Fifty-two percent of the American population attends church services at least twice a month. This number is a decline from past decades. In both countries the Catholic Church is increasing in numbers and is the largest religious group. Religion in Canada is seen as something private and religious intrusion into the public sphere is usually challenged. The same is true in the United States, but in recent years some religious groups are pushing for a place in the public sphere.

Only 20% of Catholic school age children in the United States attend Catholic schools. In Canada where the government supports Catholic schools questions have been raised concerning the quality of Catholic education in the schools.

A recent study, *Soul Searching*, cited earlier, found that U.S. Catholic teenagers scored the lowest of all religious denominations on a measure of religiosity and knowledge of their faith. The authors call the youth approach to religion *Moral Therapeutic Deism* which is described as believing generally in God, striving to be happy, and needing God only when there are problems. Students tend to follow their parents in expressing membership in the Catholic Church, but they have little interest in or knowledge of its teachings and traditions. The authors have found that the Catholic Church in the U.S. expends the lowest amount of resources on youth ministry than any other denomination.

## **2. Thematic Content**

### **2.1 Lasallian Educational Mission**

#### **2.1.1 Situational Analysis**

There is strong commitment to and enthusiasm for the Lasallian mission and working in Association among Brothers and partners alike. A rediscovery of the story of St. John Baptist de La Salle has brought energy and focus to the mission. Many find the mission engaging both within and outside of the classroom, finding that it takes what is merely a job and transforms it into a vocation.

A variety of facets of the mission are emerging, including grade schools, San Miguel schools, child care and youth services in addition to high schools and universities. A sign of the attractiveness of the mission is schools that never had Brothers interested in becoming Lasallian schools. While this diversity of ministries is a positive sign of the vitality of the mission, it also presents a challenge in keeping a clear and common sense of purpose. The expansion of ministries has financial implications and may be spreading resources (both financial and human) too thin. As new ministries emerge, others are close to closing.

Strong progressive leadership of both Brothers and lay partners is seen as a strength of the Region. Many also point to an increase in the number of lay leaders assuming responsibility for the mission. However, a feeling we are over reliant on the Brothers to provide leadership persists. There is great district-Regional collaboration and a movement towards more of a Regional identity. Many Lasallians express a great deal of hopefulness while at the same time feel a degree of uncertainty about the future of the Lasallian mission due to the diminishment of Brothers and economic concerns.

Rising tuition is edging many schools away from affordability. A reliance on tuition as the major funding source for schools threatens a commitment to the poor. Complicating matters is the competing need to offer fair and just wages to employees. In addition to moving away from the poor, rising tuition also risks the diversity of our schools as minority students may be excluded because parents cannot afford to send their children to Lasallian schools. Finally, a tension exists in the quest for educational excellence, a tension between having a challenging academic curriculum and having support systems for poor learners. Many fear that Lasallian schools will become elitist.

There are nearly 100 Lasallian schools and educational ministries in the Region that are conducted quite effectively and in consonance with the Lasallian Mission. While many of the Region's schools are at risk of becoming inaccessible to the most poor, many of those same schools have undertaken significant efforts to maintain accessibility through generous financial aid grants made possible by benefactors.

In addition, many schools are recommitting themselves to service of the poor and a focus on social justice. The expansion of the San Miguel and similar schools is seen as a positive response to the call of the mission. There is much support for San Miguel schools both within and outside of the Lasallian network.

Some find that the Lasallian mission is a welcoming and inviting dimension of the Church. The institutional Church is seen by some as an obstacle to a full expression of the mission and its empowerment of the laity. For example, the diocesan officials may not recognize emerging structures that would continue advancing the Lasallian mission once the Brothers leave. Others point to the struggle of St. Mary's Press to remain faithful to the mission while producing quality religion textbooks. There is a firm belief that the Lasallian mission, with its focus on evangelization, is greatly needed by the American Catholic Church in the face of growing secularization in American society.

All of the Lasallian educational institutions are governed by Boards of Trustees composed of mostly lay people. These boards are non-canonical but legal structures that are emerging rapidly as the primary guarantors of the Lasallian Mission in those institutions. In order for the Lasallian mission to continue to advance and thrive, formation of Brothers and lay leadership, boards, faculty and staff, students, and families is a critical need. In particular, a lack of board formation is a threat to the mission. The accessibility of

Lasallian formation and its affordability is a challenge facing many lay partners. Partners find it difficult to commit to a length of time away from their family responsibilities. Once individuals complete formal Lasallian formation, a need emerges as to how to sustain the spirit of the programs once they have returned to their ministries.

Clearly, challenges exist as the mission advances in the U.S./Toronto Region. Consensus seems to point towards a need to clearly articulate the Lasallian mission and promote it. Unclear language, particularly in distinguishing between Brothers and the laity, is an obstacle. The lack of a Regional plan and a strong identity of District are obstacles to addressing many challenges facing the mission in the Region.

### **2.2.2 Vision**

The Lasallian Mission of the 21st century, animated by the Holy Spirit, is part of the Church's work in spreading the Gospel. (The Rule, Article 11) The Lasallian mission is carried out by the Lasallian Family who "together and by Association" evangelize by making the Gospel a living reality in the lives of young people and their families, especially the poor.

Lasallian ministries are committed and empowered educational faith communities that form their members as educators who provide a quality human and Christian education and who seek out those who are abandoned by society and who advocate for justice, leading them to the salvation God has meant for all.

Lasallian ministries are first and foremost relational. They are also life giving and accessible (socio-economically, culturally, geographically, and in schools, academically) to all.

Lasallian ministries also include a diverse variety of non-traditional educational outreach programs to help young people receive an education and a place in society.

Lasallian ministries respond to the signs of the times in creative fidelity to the movement of the Holy Spirit to advance the mission.

Lasallian ministries work collaboratively with those interested in and committed to the Lasallian educational mission, seeking and accessing resources at the appropriate level, inside and outside the Lasallian network, according to the needs that arise.

All those who seek Lasallian educational opportunities should not be hindered because of economic need.

### **2.1.3 Action Steps**

We recommend that the Institute create systematic, comprehensive, and flexible formation programs that would be accessible to a large a number of Lasallians, particularly for Districts and Regions unable to provide this.

We recommend that the Institute promote leadership at all levels by qualified and competent lay Lasallians and encourage Districts and Regions to do the same.

We recommend that the Institute emphasize the relationship of evangelization to education of the poor as being key to the Lasallian charism.

## **2.2 Association**

### **2.2.1 Situational Analysis**

Lasallian Association is alive and well. More and more lay partners are embracing the mission and seeking ways to become more deeply involved in it and associated with other Lasallians. Lay partners demonstrate a strong respect for the vocation of the Brothers throughout the history of the Institute and honor the vows Brothers make. At the same time, there is a strong sense of the Spirit at work in Lasallian institutions calling lay partners and Brothers together to create a fuller understanding of Association.

People are seeking a sense of belonging and see Lasallian Association as a way to fill this longing. Others are seeking a way to remain faithful to the institutional Church and see the Lasallian Association as a meaningful sense of community and extension of the Church. Lasallian Volunteers, Lasallian Youth, and formal Lasallian formation programs strengthen, nurture and enrich Association.

A new understanding of Association is emerging with a sense of urgency. Lay partners and Brothers are forging new ground in multiple settings and expressions as together they seek Association, often in very diverse geographical locations. Association among partners and between partners and Brothers is being lived experientially before actually defining it. A degree of experimentation is taking place as individuals come together and make decisions about Association, at once being faithful to the Lasallian ideal but also making the ideal responsive to their particular lived realities. In these emerging expressions of Association, lay partners are increasingly assuming leadership for them. It is increasingly true that lay partners are inviting and including their families, even when those families are not directly employed in Lasallian ministries.

As an understanding of Lasallian Association emerges, the diversity of expressions across the Region becomes an obstacle as well as a gift. The term itself is used frequently and sometimes indiscriminately without a deeper understanding and appreciation of its meaning. The great variety of Lasallian ministries and their complexity may require a broad interpretation of Association and could hinder the move to arrive at a common language.

The varying needs and expectations of those seeking Association make it difficult to come to a formal expression. For example, limited time, limited formation, and varying levels of personal commitment become impediments to formal Association. Communication is a factor as well. There exists no formal vehicle of communication to link groups together to share experiences and lessons learned. There is a lack of resources and support provided to groups as they gather for Association.

There is considerable confusion surrounding the concept of Association for partners as regards the current movement's impact on the Brothers' understanding of their own vow.

In addition, the institutional Church and some of our own public are more apt to recognize the formal vow of Association of the Brothers than Association of the lay partners. Without a sense of empowerment, formalization or legitimization, lay expressions of Association may be hindered.

Lasallian Association as it emerges must be seen as a movement of the Holy Spirit within the Institute and not as a drawing of the curtain on the Brothers. Emerging Association is an evolution, not an end. As such, there is mutuality as Brothers and Lay Partners join together to respond creatively and faithfully to the Lasallian vocation and the movement of the Spirit.

Inherent to Association is a spiritual dimension. It is not an “add on” to the Lasallian mission but an essential element. However, the various levels of commitment to the mission make Lasallian Association appear to be voluntary. Some lay partners see themselves as merely employed by Lasallian ministries while others seek a deeper commitment. In the face of this unevenness, it will be difficult to determine “membership” or develop criteria. How will families be included? Will the place of women be honored and promoted? How well are those of other faith traditions welcomed and included?

A common form of Association and ways to formally recognize or legitimize it stands as a challenge. A structure or organization to support it will also be crucial. Formation is essential and ways to sustain the transformation experienced during formation programs is necessary. New models emerging from the various Districts should be advanced and promoted. There is much creativity and great hope. Association is about building for the next generation. Formal Association for partners will need to find resources and support outside of the Brothers’ structure if it is to be authentic and have a future.

### **2.2.2 Vision**

Association is a response to a Spirit-filled call. It is relational, guided by faith and celebrated by living the Gospel values. It is action-oriented, a continuation of the specific educational mission of St. John Baptist de La Salle to provide a Christian, human education to the young, especially the poor.

The Lasallian family invites all constituents into Association and celebrates rituals that welcome them into the Lasallian mission. Association manifests itself at the local level but reveals the universal Lasallian mission.

A variety of expressions of Association, locally and Regionally, supports the mission and responds to the needs of the times. In any form, Association has clear guidelines to aid its members in living the charism of St. La Salle. Association carries mutual responsibility and ownership, and it requires commitment over time.

Structures exist to support and create a network for the various forms of Association that are in place and evolving.

### **2.2.3 Action Steps**

We recommend that local communities continue to develop their own vital, emerging expressions of Association while at the same time, there be a formal collaboration at the district/Regional/international level

to define Association and develop clear and measurable criteria in order for these new forms of Association to remain faithful to the Lasallian mission.

We recommend that all expressions of Association be honored and that there be no hierarchy of Association among partners, associates, affiliates, and Brothers.

We recommend that Lasallians accompany one another to facilitate their progressive growth in and expression of their Lasallian commitment, but in accord with their own situation, stage of life, discernment of their ongoing call, and needs of the mission.

We recommend that the Institute continue to explore Brother Antonio Botana's "Solar System" model and other possibilities to examine Association for mission with creativity and openness.

We recommend that the Institute welcome, celebrate, and nurture the diversity of emerging forms of Association and not ignore, thwart, or abandon grass root experimentation during this formative period.

We recommend that the Institute serve as a clearinghouse to disseminate forms of Association emerging internationally and that it make this information available to the Region, District, and local ministries.

## **2.3 Structures**

### **2.3.1 Situational Analysis**

There is a great deal of enthusiasm and energy for new ways to relate to the Lasallian mission and a seemingly unstoppable momentum for new structures to support it across the Region. Structures give definition to the organization and assist in holding people accountable. They organize individuals in a way that focuses the work and ministries of individuals. In other words, structures exist to further the mission. In creating new structures, it is necessary to first define and clarify the need and then design structures around it.

There is a general sentiment that current structures are not adequately supporting the mission. However, adaptive changes have been made to the Institute from its inception and that spirit of change must continue today. The present structure is evolving from one that was geared towards the mission based on Brothers to one in which the mission includes both Brothers and lay partners. For example, Mission and Ministry Councils, lay animators, and mission effectiveness councils are adaptive structures emerging from existing realities. Ministries are creatively being adapted in non-traditional ways. Examples include the new charter schools in Chicago, St. Gabriel's in Philadelphia, and Ocean Tides that make use of government support.

Traditional District structures are dissolving as the three Districts of the East Coast and the Toronto Delegation look to create a new form of District. Institute structures that have served us well in the 19th and 20th Centuries seem to lack the capacity for today due to diminishing human and financial resources. Consequently, current District Structures sometimes hinder the effectiveness of the Region's leadership and planning to render effective service. Current structures need to adapt to the demographic realities facing the Brothers and their colleagues.

Leadership structures are also evolving. There has been an expansion of ministries while at the same time the number of Brothers has declined. As a result, there is an increase in the number of lay partners in leadership roles. Fortunately, formation programs have been effective, reaching a large number of people, and providing consistent Lasallian formation for lay leaders. Going forward, formation programs must prepare lay partners to the degree that they will be able to ensure the depth and quality of formation programs and assume the leadership of them.

However, board formation has not kept pace in the same way as the role and function of boards has changed. It is also the reality that board members are not always chosen for their commitment to the mission. Some districts are addressing this by developing criteria for board membership and developing board formation programs.

While there seems to be a general feeling that existing structures are not keeping pace with current and emerging expressions of the mission, it is also true that a degree of fear and inertia may hinder the establishment of new structures. While some feel frustrated with a slow pace, others feel comfortable with a slower pace of change. There is security and identity in the current organizational structure. There is also some fear that changes may negatively impact the Brothers' identity and vocation. Some partners are comfortable with the Brothers having final control over the Mission and Association and fear a future with few or no Brothers. Again, while some Brothers and partners sense a need for change, fear of the unknown can also hold back any progress.

The language of structure itself is an obstacle. Current ways of talking about structures is uneven, inconsistent, and fuzzy. It is difficult for some to imagine new possibilities and think outside of the existing organization. Going forward, it will be necessary to understand and define the relationship between new and emerging structures.

At some point, civil and canonical law will require close scrutiny and may limit new possibilities for change. There are questions about whether the Church's hierarchy will allow new ways of organization and governance of the Mission. On the local level, dioceses may be unable or unwilling to accept and recognize new leadership structures, roles, and responsibilities. Finally, the autonomous nature of the Districts may impede movement towards change.

On the level of practicality, time and resources may hamper the development of new structures. Among some, there is a sense of urgency, a view that existing structures hold back and restrict the mission as it is being lived out. New expressions of Association and new ministries are arising rapidly, often before ways to support them are created. A perceived lack of financial resources also looms largely as an obstacle. Sustained funding for newly created structures is uncertain and will need to be a priority as planning proceeds.

### **2.3.2 Vision**

In the 21st century, structures, whether adapted from existing models, or completely new will be created within the local ministries, districts, and Regions in response to the Lasallian mission. They will seek to connect, to validate, and to empower all Lasallians in the ministries they serve.

The new structures for mission and Association need not exist within current district or Regional frameworks. New structures will adapt to present realities, and will allow creativity and fluidity in the living out of the mission.

The new structures will serve and sustain the mission in light of limited and changing resources, and increasing needs. These new structures will continue to involve and engage all Lasallians in living the Lasallian mission.

### **2.3.3 Action Steps**

We recommend that the Institute investigate the nature of districts and Regions and reexamine the way Regions are demarcated and defined.

We recommend that the Institute clarify the relationship between the Mission and Ministry Council and the District Council and between the Visitor and the Mission and Ministry Council concerning authority and responsibility.

## **REPORT FROM THE 2<sup>nd</sup> INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF YOUNG LASALLIANS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION Rome, July 25 – 30, 2006**

## **1. Lasallian Educational Mission**

### **1.1. Analysis of the situation**

#### **1.1.1. Realities**

We participants in the Symposium (young people between 15 – 35 years of age), are committed in different aspects of the Lasallian Educational Mission that include various areas:

- Volunteer programs of varying lengths with indigenous people, physically challenged people, the fourth World, social education, re-incorporation into society, camps with children and young people from schools, with marginalized children and young people, animating Christian reflection groups, leisure activities...
- Lasallian and other kinds of formation... (i.e. with religion teachers)
- Participation in District, regional and international structures: as part of the District Council, the national team for pastoral ministry, regional groups for the animation of youth movements, local pastoral ministry teams, on administration teams in schools, on the International Council of Young Lasallians, with communities of Brothers or other lay people...

- Involvement in pastoral activities with children and young people, summer camps, catechesis with children, leisure time monitors, Christian groups, accompanying young people, missionary conscience-raising...
- Organizing youth gatherings at the District, regional and international levels...

### **1.1.2. Obstacles and difficulties**

Among the obstacles and difficulties for the Lasallian Educational Mission the participants in the Symposium highlighted the following:

- Low level of participation by some in the Lasallian programs.
- Lack of communication and coordination between the youth groups on the local, District, regional levels in some places.
- Scarcity of economic resources in some Districts does not allow us to carry out some activities and commitments we have assumed.
- Lack of support by lay people and Brothers in some Districts and/or areas.
- Lack of recognition of the work we do as young people on the part of the administrative structures for animation in some Districts and areas of the Institute.
- In some cases, a lack of leadership as points of reference and encouragement to continue our Lasallian commitments.
- Lack of opportunities for Lasallian formation, pastoral ministry, voluntary work... in some Districts and Regions.

## **1.2. Vision**

As participants in the Youth Symposium, we believe that we ought to promote the following kinds of activities:

- Increased relations between Brothers and lay people in educational – pastoral activities and in formation.
- Offers of short-term and long-term volunteer programs and the formation necessary to allow volunteers to respond to those in need.
- Make better use of Brothers and adult lay partners to accompany youth groups.
- Greater commitment in the defense of the rights of children by promoting conscience-raising activities and by denouncing abuses.

## **2. Association**

NOTE: Based on the analysis of the work done in the regions during the Symposium to prepare this report, we point out that terms such as Shared Mission and Association are, in most cases, far from the reality of young Lasallians. Or perhaps it might be more accurate to say that young Lasallians make no distinction between Lasallian Educational Mission, Shared Mission and Association. For this reason, much of what follows is a repetition of those aspects already presented in the section dedicated to the Lasallian Educational Mission.

## **2.1. Analysis of the situation**

### **2.1.1. Realities**

We participants in this Symposium share the Lasallian mission in many different ways:

- Participating in both Lasallian formation and others kinds of formation opportunities, prayer, youth ministry, retreats, Christian reflection groups, life review groups...
- Attempting to respond to the signs of the times within the reality of the marginalized.
- Participating in pastoral ministry with children and young people.
- Accompanying and welcoming children and young people who have family or learning problems...
- Participating in missionary projects in the Third World.
- Promoting Lasallian Youth gatherings on various levels: Holy Week retreats with youth, District, regional and international gatherings, marches, pilgrimages...
- Creating resources for Lasallian pedagogical formation for other young Lasallians.
- Building community with Brothers and lay partners.
- Building Lasallian Christian Communities.
- Attempting to practice the values of FAITH – FRATERNITY – SERVICE in our daily lives.
- Participating in middle term and long-term volunteer experiences.
- A few instances of associating to a District.
- Maintaining relationships with other young Lasallians all over the World through new technologies of communication.

### **2.1.2. Obstacles and difficulties**

Among others, we participants in the symposium point out the following obstacles and difficulties to association and sharing the Lasallian mission:

- For many of us the difficulty to understand the separation between the expressions Lasallian Educational Mission, Shared Mission and Association.
- Insufficient use of new Technologies of communication to maintain relationships among us.
- In many areas, lack of opportunities that help alumni continue their commitments in the schools once their studies are over.
- Lack of a forum to share mission with Brothers and adult lay partners.
- Lack of structures to promote association among young Lasallians.
- A rather widespread lack of the awareness of the need to create networks for ongoing contact and communication among ourselves. These could break down the local, District, regional, ethnic or even religious barriers...
- In many cases, lack of presence and accompaniment by Brothers in the youth groups as a means of spreading the charism.

## **2.2. Vision**

Among other, actions, we participants point out the following:

- Guarantee Lasallian identity among the older students so that they can commit themselves to activities related to the Lasallian Educational Mission once they leave school.
- Promote reflection and work groups among alumni.
- Promote Lasallian volunteer experiences at the international level to break down District and regional barriers.
- Reflect on ways of transmitting the content of the expressions Shared Mission and Association in terms that are accessible for us and show us real examples of how we can live these two realities.
- Think of some type of association of Young Lasallians to the institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at the District level that is different from that of adults.
- Offer more Lasallian volunteer experiences lived in community of Brother with a concrete commitment to the Lasallian Educational Mission in favor of the needy.

### **3. Organizational Structures**

#### **3.1. Analysis of the situation**

##### **3.1.1. Realities**

The structures of the youth movement in the different parts of the World is quite varied, some that have existed for a long time, others that seem to be struggling to establish even a minimal structure. The following examples come from the information provided by the participants in the Symposium:

- Local, District and regional youth associations.
- Youth ministry centers.
- Retreat houses.
- Centers or halfway houses for re-integration into society.
- Groups of lay people: Signum Fidei, UMAEL, Third Order, and Alumni...
- District and regional Lasallian Youth Commissions.
- International Council of Young Lasallians.
- Scout groups.
- Missionary awareness groups.
- Associations for the defense of the rights of the child.
- Lasallian formation courses, leisure time, animation of Christian groups...
- Christian communities.
- Catechumenate programs.
- ...

##### **3.1.2. Obstacles and difficulties**

Among others, we point out the following obstacles and difficulties regarding the structures of youth groups:

- In many cases, a lack of material resources.
- In some areas of the Institute, a lack of representation of youth people within the local, District and regional structures.
- In some cases, a lack of support by the Brothers.
- In some situations, a lack of structures Lasallian formation, volunteer, or ministry programs...
- A lack of communication between the groups within a District, or within the region in the majority of cases.
- In some cases, a lack of recognition on the part of existing youth programs.
- In some Districts and/or regions of the Institute, a lack of communication with the International Council of Young Lasallians.

### **3.2. Vision**

Among the actions proponed by the Symposium to guarantee the existence of a structure for Lasallian Youth at various levels, we point out the following:

- Create the necessary Lasallian Youth structures where they do not presently exist.
- Creation of a network of youth groups at the local, District, regional and international levels.
- Carry out Lasallian Youth Gatherings at the, District, regional and international levels.
- Guarantee the presence of young Lasallians in structures for animation at the local, District, regional and international levels.
- Improve communication between the International Council of Young Lasallians and the local, District and regional structures.
- Offer formation programs adapted to the reality of young people (study, work...).