

Circular 245

The Institut of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and Education Today Five colloquia towards a more informed understanding.

General Conclusions

The conclusions are of two kinds: the first ones are related to the process of discussion, the second ones are related to the important trends which are impinging on the educational arena such as we have seen during these past six years.

I. With regard to the process of discussion

1. Rereading reality.

This is an Institute custom: John Baptist de La Salle ingrained it in us and we find it continually throughout the last three centuries.

John Baptist de La Salle was not a sociologist nor was he a specialist in social analysis; but his priestly concern developed within him a great attentiveness to situations and events and a pertinent imagination to carry out specific choices (dealing with persons, relationships, methods, decisions, reticence) strategically in accord with the purposes indicated in his program.

The rereading of situations is at the very center of the Lasallian process; we cannot escape it. Carrying out the colloquia has shown that this rereading must be done while keeping in mind four interdependent elements. We would point out that each one of them can be treated as a separate element for purposes of discussion, but it is quickly evident that each element needs to be connected to the other three.

The four elements are:

- the end of the Institute;
- specific realities of the contemporary world;
- basic texts and history;
- humble, simple, significant and legible practices carried out by Brothers and by their collaborators.

This having been said, there is not one reading of reality but there are readings of realities. Clearly, if one looks at reality based on the Lasallian view alone (with its historical roots and mission awareness) one might have the illusion of understanding reality rapidly, clearly and effectively as well as the forms of updating which are capable of transforming it in order to make it conform to our Lasallian nature. Only a strong central mentality concerning our Lasallian identity would produce this tenacious illusion.

The reality of situations is very complex and requires - without denying who we are and what our mission is - abandoning the center of things and examining them with a minimum of formality and at a distance. And for that purpose one excellent technique is to assume the successive point of view of the rest of the elements which, along with ourselves, make up the reality which we all experience together. So

then we have a methodological requirement that makes us understand that other readings of reality are possible and legitimate and which, finally, our worn out eyes should rejuvenate if we want to perceive the works of God today: God ceaselessly creates new things and his knocking on the world's door has previously unknown forms. It is the other specifics (systems, persons, organizations) which are going to help us in rejuvenating our view of the context in which we live together.

2. Changes and ruptures

- The general context of our realities is marked by change. This is the very essence of our society. We have no reason to be sorry about this. We are caught in a fluidity of information, experiences, wants, unexpected back and forth movements produced by financial murmuring, natural disasters, a political decision made at one end of the planet, readily available new technologies, scandals, a product promoted over the airwaves, etc. The general mentality of our contemporaries and even of ourselves is immersed in a widespread feeling of that which is provisional, precarious, an unexpected outbreak. Why? This is the result of the interdependence of nations, societies and economies. From now on we are no longer alone. The consequences of this are considerable for our structures and our undertakings as Institute. Our action plans have now been changed.
- Often we are accustomed to notice gaps, deficiencies and contradictions in our training and educational situations. We then look for corrective activities in order to apply them voluntarily according to our clear and well-known purposes. This lineal strategy based on a cause-effect relationship has its value but also it has its own surprises (adverse effects, a partial view, focusing on false issues, easy solutions, hiding the deepest causes...).
- Yet another type of strategy could restore the balance between analysis and action. It is also necessary to keep in mind the interests, ideals, the open or hidden purposes of our collaborators and the components of the systems that surround us and that shape reality as well as ourselves. They shape reality often more intensely than we do because they are rooted more deeply in persons, customs, lifestyles, basic interests and other more commonly shared elements. We find in all of this a deterministic mechanism. The first four Colloquia were constructive in this regard. Our ideals and our educational and Christian strategies may be very beautiful and bountiful; but they are counter-productive if we have not placed them again in their general context made up of family relationships, new technology, financial interests, urban or popular contexts.
- But this should not give us cause for alarm. Effectively, we find some Brothers and Lasallians in all places throughout the world who have integrated this way of analyzing the complexity and doing it along with all sorts of their colleagues and creators of restlessness. But the power and the witness of our educational initiatives bring that price with them.
- At the same time, all this can be topped off by a healthy questioning that we force ourselves to look at (institutions, processes, signs, lectures, commitments) and which perhaps no longer is part and parcel of the origins because the world changes and life is replete with ruptures. And this deals with persons as well as with organizations.

3. What we are demonstrating

We are talking about the understandability of what we are doing in the educational area. How is the message that we are emitting received? Our intentions may be abundant but what do our collaborators say? This issue was often raised during the Colloquia. And it is an important one. In effect, we are not a multi-nation entity which develops its educational tapestry wherever it will. In the world of education we are a voice that has something specific to propose; and that should be done by means of a powerful witness which is not always subject to an impressive, strong institution which is sure of itself; Gospel practices teach us something else.

Here is something which forces us to undertake a renewed discussion about implementation and site location, methods, solidarity, functioning, personnel, etc. In each Colloquium Brothers who came from all over the world reminded us of the witness of humble, simple, modest educational processes which are seen by the poor and by the rich.

2. With regard to powerful trends which impact the educational arena

While listening to the members of the Colloquium, observing the reactions of experts who had come from the five continents to deal with the task by making use of other pertinent studies, little by little we saw some important trends surface - trends which seem to pervade the general environment today, the environment in which young people, families, the Brothers, Lasallians and other collaborators live and in which the process of human and Christian education is carried out and to which we have consecrated our lives.

Those trends seem to be in practice on the five continents. Obviously they are represented in different ways and their presence does not have the same import in all places. Nevertheless, during the course of the 5 Colloquia, the participants were able to underscore them and recognize their influence on educational practices.

Those trends are clearly seen from the perspective of a Lasallian prism which looks at the world in a particular way and especially at the world of education. Other observers probably would not have been able to sense the same degree of urgency on this point, but our view finds its legitimacy in our specific mission and in the objectives that this analysis can bring to bear with more precision. We have identified 6 trends that seem to condition our educational efforts.

- A - Supervised finances - Money - Violence
- B - Migration - Wandering - The Marginalized
- C - Individual acts - Collective conscience
- D - Families - Man/Woman - Parents/Children
- E - Young people - School - Formation - Educators
- F - Search for meaning - Doubts - Wisdom

A - Supervised finances - Money - Violence

- Societies are becoming more and more organized, supervised, subject to financial rules dictated by international organizations which transcend borders.
 - The way in which finances work is not understandable for the majority of people: multi-national entities absorb, buy and sell at the world level for reasons that escape even a minimal understanding.
 - Nevertheless it is easily understood that the engine for all this financial agitation and which alarms everyone is, quite simply, the domination of power over the markets, over consumer customs, over the monetary flow which travel by means of stock markets and by immediate electronic techniques.
 - Money has become the center of concern because its necessity is imperative and no one know how to act or think apart from it. It is the first criterion for relationships, commitments, lifestyles, the taking of power.
 - Therefore national governments (the very G7) have less and less room in which to maneuver: international organizations dictate their laws. In this way democracy becomes devoid of content and nations are at the mercy of some financiers and masked players.
 - All of this fosters the development of parallel, illegal finances which permit many to survive and a smaller number to become rich. Corruption is carried out on all levels and infects all societies.
 - ✧ In poor neighborhoods, each is permitted to establish a certain type of “justice” and to limit the development of violence towards those who have nothing, or who escape to the network of social organization or the law of the market and the formation of expendables.
 - ✧ In the megalopolises antagonistic groups are allowed to find a modus vivendi which the official doctrine of social equality does not feel itself called to establish. Each entity, then, has need of someone poor who in turn has need of someone who is poorer than he is...in order to consolidate his power and to realize small benefits which will allow him to survive. Because quite simply survival is what is at stake; what is moral has nothing to do with anything here.
 - ✧ On the trans-national scale clandestine corporations with identical interests are being established in order to go forward in the operation imposed by banks, governments, international organizations, multi-national entities..., all of them with an appearance of official legitimacy and of which no one knows anything about to the point where they take advantage of this opaqueness of the world economic system.
- These corporations transcend countries and blur the former North/South separation. From now on the North is in all the places where the South is and vice-versa. These secret corporations with common interests are rushing headlong into new forms of consumerism and they are present where easy money is king (drugs, tourism, prostitution, the clothing market, electronics, forging industries...). Who can escape them?
- There they are then, finally, all the necessary ingredients for the explosion of sporadic, sudden violence, apparently irrational, that the social organization cannot foresee and about which causes are not sufficiently known in order to anticipate and control them; very often one is obliged to repress without really understanding.

This phenomenon little by little bores into even organized societies which, by their very organization, are the most vulnerable when facing the development of violence which casts into doubt the future possibility of “human togetherness”.

B - Migration - Wandering - The Marginalized

- Financial precariousness, the search for work, ethnic conflicts, wars which leave entire families strewn by the highways, children left alone. More and more refugees are concentrated on the borders. And it is predicted that within 30 years, there will be created 10 border cities which will be centers for misery and violence, while 90 other cities will develop, especially in the southern hemisphere.
- In many countries the cities are exploding. They receive immigrants from within and without who arrive with many needs but without the competent authorities having had time to plan and to organize services and indispensable structures. These cities are growing out of control and they juxtapose very diverse populations, whose codes of “human togetherness” are not adapted to one another, if indeed they do exist at all.
- Today people live amidst a generalized precariousness and their future is unforeseeable. Psychologically a sense of wandering pervades the current mentality, beyond the imposed migrations. No longer is it known where the permanent and the solid are rooted: work is precarious, the political situation is precarious, marriage is precarious, relationships are precarious. More and more persons live with a sense of the immediate, the passing, the ephemeral, with a free-flowing of information, they sense that which is impalpable, multiple, consumable, throwaway. They have a sense of a life governed by insecurity and one which no longer has traits of an historic drama that has its stages, progression, orientation, duration; but life shows a semblance of a tragic future that cannot be overcome, that is imposed and which inclines one to say with resignation: “What has to happen will happen”. We are no longer in a tension towards the future, something inherent in Christianity, but we are faced with a cyclic concept of time, which is proper to paganism. This is our destiny!
- In addition, certain societies are in a certain way so marked and regulated that they provoke a defensive reaction: individuals tend to escape, enjoy themselves, once in a while they deny the daily subjection and its routine. The year is then measured by vacation, happenings (games, sports, demonstrations), surprising meetings, unexpected events, singular events (Carnival, Halloween...), former rhythms...as a way of forgetting the boredom and the organization of modern society.
- But this may also give rise to the commonly shared sense of an imbalance between real life and a dreamed life, between a real or an imagined marginality. More than others, young people from all environments are aware of this marginality.
 - ✧ In the very poor areas: they experience it physically and every day they see social images that stir up insolence in them.
 - ✧ In the middle class: they transport it in their imagery because unemployment is waiting for them and the social position of their very own parents can vacillate abruptly the next day. They themselves are not certain of being able to get a firm grip on the social scale.

✧ In the privileged classes: they feel it in the depths of their being because, they who have everything, have never had to fight in order to live or to really exist. They are afraid that tomorrow they will turn into dust, because of their lack of resistance and fight they have no consistency in these areas, but only an outward appearance of human beings.

There is a collective schizophrenia that lies in wait for everyone and which is fed by publicity, television serials, a certain type of cinema, Internet services, courtrooms, videos...

C - Individual acts - Collective conscience

- Societies are required more and more to keep individuals in mind. It is not enough for them to administer to groups, but they ought to take care of the diversity of persons within those groups. Relationships between strengths and conflicts are more difficult to administer.
- This is not the only consequence of what is unwillingly called "individualism" and the fact that it is a conquest in which Christianity has itself played a role should not be surprising. All societies have not assimilated this as yet.
- It is also the result of being more respectfully aware of persons, their subjectivity, their personal choices, their expressions, desires, their freedom. It is now understood better that the person has dignity and that he should realize a process of individualization. But all societies do not subscribe to this idea yet.
- In spite of everything, that personal process often appears to be risky and dangerous. In effect, the great philosophical and religious stories might be thrown out, unappreciated, made relative and, as a result, the individual finds himself very much alone in facing the great issues that pursue him. And truth is fragmented into points of view, philosophical references no longer structure research, relativism pervades everything and the individual becomes discouraged, closes in on himself or abandons the internal process which he had begun with courage.
- Nevertheless this individualization does not wipe out the need for encounters or the need for others. On the contrary the formation of "tribes" has been noted, groups with like affinities, groups which are interested in searching for intimacy, solidarity. Even in the big cities, some neighborhoods are organized as a type of "village", each one contributing his originality and coming away with security and recognition.
- Thanks to the means of rapid communication each one has the possibility of being open to the world's problems in greater ways. Entire countries, entire continents are capable of being emotional about and sensitive to some distant squalid conditions, to the point where an emotive and concrete solidarity is encouraged and which is remembered for a long time.
- But, if solidarity exists, it nonetheless is difficult to maintain this in the long term and commit to a lasting effort of discussion about the structures and causes of injustice, misfortunes and conflict. Instant unity is also one aspect of "entertainment" and of "wandering".
- To conclude let us note that little by little a common conscience is being developed: human ecology is becoming a concern:

- ✧ Man, his dignity, his freedom, no matter his location;
- ✧ The abandoned and socially excluded;
- ✧ The sick, the feeble, the victims;
- ✧ The planet and what we will pass on tomorrow to our children;
- ✧ Deprived and exploited populations.

This common conscience unites men and women from all tendencies and from all religions. It probably expresses what is most authentic about present-day humanity and it allows for a reasonable hope.

D - Families - Man/Woman - Parents/Children

- All societies are worried about the FAMILY. Everywhere the family is being shaken up and the causes are many: unemployment, migration, consumerism, means of communication, individualism, the loss of ethical and religious points of reference...The forms of the family institution are changing and sometimes the forms mix with one another. Certain discussions would lead one to believe that the FAMILY is disappearing. On the contrary, this is not true.
- In effect, when there are more difficulties, so much more does the FAMILY become the point of reference, the last refuge for protection, where to take shelter in order not to die. It is guarding or rediscovering one of its primitive purposes: to be the first and last place in which to survive. All societies are alike in this no matter what great technical and social progress has been achieved. But when certain family societies can no longer maintain their children and they toss them into the street, those family societies cry out in desperation and they are seen as dispossessing their very dignity and their reason for being; the drama is complete.
- As a result, all societies have a keen consciousness of the family reality and its basic value. They know that the will to live has its origin in the family, there it places its trust, as well as in others and in the future. They will also attest that within the family are the roots of violence, exploitation, hate. Therefore they very often permit a considerable effort to be made to sustain families, to help them and to protect them (social aid, legislation, juridical devices, legal recognition...). International organizations have worked very hard in this respect, supporting efforts by countries and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) which fight for the right of families and children. Little by little they create the conditions for an international conscience.
- But individuals are not far behind. Each knows very well that his personal work of humanization depends upon the family reality that he builds by means of changing forms and sometimes successive forms that are given to him to live, pushed by the circumstances and encounters that pile up as never before in human history.
Therefore we look after the development of considerable activity in order to give human meaning to family reorganization, to the new "adoptions" between marriages and children from various families, to technical resources for assisted procreation and to the freedom to procreate. We see in all this a gigantic effort to not merely put up with the event but, based on the event itself, to build a life that has meaning, that allows for the finding of paths towards humanization and to develop immense resources of human conscience and its creative possibilities.

We can perceive in all this a co-creative participation in God's work.

➤ Within this environment the Church has much to say to contemporary man. Unfortunately the Church might be interpreted as a judge and not as a companion who helps one along the journey and to make new journeys. The means of communication greatly simplify the Church's discourse, but she herself does not always hit the mark in her formulation and at times one can get lost in the labyrinth of a complex thought. But beyond the language difficulty or the grasping of issues, don't we feel here the most radical struggle foretold by the Gospel?: the struggle between the "world" and the Kingdom, between darkness and light. This struggle penetrates deep into the hearts of men until reaching the most vulnerable part: that part in which relationships are created which lead to talent, possession, life, death. And the first place for this human and Christian struggle is precisely within the family. The Church cannot be but interested in this. And neither can Christian educators.

➤ At the center of the family, obviously, is the married couple. No other era in history has scrutinized with such determination male-female relationships in terms of their usual studies, but also in terms of what was previously unknown with regard to family life, social life, the concept of association and even in the life of the Church. This is in part due to the progressive disappearance of traditional social roles observed in certain favored societies, but it is also due to a general sharpened consciousness of the basic role of women in social activities.

Clearly this basic role is not new. On the other hand, the awareness of this role which is becoming more and more clear is relatively recent. It is clear that there is a certain resistance to this in certain areas, there is evidence of some unrest in male societies which want to protect themselves...but groups of women are being established that want to take up the reins of the future of communities, build new financial relationships, new networks of solidarity, a new social understanding. The next century will tell if the planet is administered better by women than by men.

➤ In some places in the world the role of women has become the predominant issue especially in the life of the family, which diminishes or takes away the role of the father. Single parent families are a common phenomenon and many women are becoming accustomed to living without a husband, thus creating families where a man does not enter the picture. These female societies are shelters where the imaginary and a sense of stillness are exacerbated to the detriment of distancing by means of difference and law. Education should keep this in mind.

➤ These important relational issues (male/female relationships, heterosexuality, homosexuality, fusion, separation, single parent families, adoption, homosexual families, bi-sexual relationships with regard to the child, etc.) are often lived out in a rough type of arrangement that is entrusted to the good will of individuals. An exaggerated respect for persons and situations keeps one from providing instruments for discussion and discernment on the philosophical, anthropological, theological and spiritual order.

This general observation is also valid for young people (adolescents and young adults) who find themselves abandoned while facing structure questions involving sexuality, otherness, the development of love, acceptance of the child. The Church and the Christian school must transmit their messages as part of the basis of these issues.

➤ On the other hand, all of this has an impact on the parent/child relationship. On one side adults argue almost in isolation concerning relational issues previously unknown while on the other side children are being shaped by means of communication, the street, friends and merchandising initiatives. Sometimes it seems that there is an impassable trench separating parents and children.

But, although the interests and mentalities may collide, children always hope for much from their parents, even when they have failed in their mission. In the majority of cases children and young people expect their parents to watch over them and offer them some words: they are eager for this type of communication and although there may be confrontation, it always serves to give them structure. Parents should foster this conviction which may give them strength and trust as they deal with their children.

E - Young people - School - Formation - Educators

➤ In the area of formation and school, parents search for what is best for their children. They ask the school for quality instruction and training; they invest in the school and they often request that the school fulfill the role that they themselves do not accomplish within the family.

➤ School and educational programs are very much dependent on the social concerns of countries. Three realistic aspects can be underscored among these which sometimes get hidden beneath a barrage of ceremonial lexical trappings:

- ✧ The financial need for markets with their technological wars and hunt for intelligence;
- ✧ The need for filling jobs and obtaining employment;
- ✧ The need for a social relationships which one must create or regulate,

keeping in mind the displacement of populations, some frustrations expressed in the means of communication, the conflict between cultures and their opposing interests.

These three anxieties are the continual concern of political leaders; they compress their long-term educational and humanistic approach, they impose continual reforms which discourage educational agents and discredit the efforts of those who are in daily contact with children in places of training.

➤ But at the same time one observes the abandonment of commitments on the part of leaders of poor countries who no longer invest in primary instruction and who are disinterested in the layers of the population from which they cannot expect to receive a profit in the short term.

These policies are criminal: for a long time they have thrown obstacles in the future of entire regions. All the more so because they begin to sacrifice first and foremost the education of girls and women. In effect, the educational policies that have been laid down in favor of girls and women have experienced an undeniable cultural progress and a lasting change.

➤ To some degree everywhere middle school or secondary school instruction (high school and institute level) is the weak point in educational systems. The children come full of energy and they are bored at these levels; they have the impression that they are wasting their energy while achieving nothing, doing useless

exercises for an uncertain future (employment or unemployment?) as they finish their schooling which very often will not provide them the economic means to enter society or to marry and raise a family.

➤ This is why they settle in a social “no man’s land” that has its own set of rules, culture, signs, and which feeds into the electronic culture, fashion and music. In that context the school tends to become an unavoidable life space that young people turn to more and more in order to transform it into a place of encounter among friends, a place of interchange, a place of experience. They are able to forget that they are within a place of culture and formation.

➤ But if they are encouraged by responsible adults, young people learn to make themselves protagonists in their own schooling and education. They long for this because to some degree everywhere, they have a culture of discussion, critique, negotiation. It is possible for them to create within this culture dynamic “positive” educational environments albeit in the measure in which organization, necessary obligations and numerical balance maintain the human dimension.

➤ Given all this, the great number of students should not be forgotten who -in silence - every day give up middle education, disgusted by structure, by difficult relationships, by a sense of repeated failure and by the uselessness of their existence.

This phenomenon tends to increase in countries where a diploma and social position imperceptibly corrode human relationships. Sometimes this leads to child suicide; often they take their own lives without explanation, leaving parents, friends and teachers abandoned.

All of this expresses a primary truth: everywhere, young people wish to encounter adults. They want to meet educators and persons who are human, not just teachers.

So then, will the job of teacher change naturally? We are not speaking only about giving students a summary of knowledge and information (available in libraries and by means of electronic devices), but of putting into their hands critical instruments for discerning, differentiating, judging, highlighting, choosing... This is the ability that the teacher is called upon to have today. Obviously that teacher will also know how to listen, receive, raise up, integrate and respect. The teacher in this way becomes a mediator of knowledge, respectful of human journeys. Thus the evangelical pedagogy can proceed.

F - Search for meaning - Doubts -

➤ The freedom of persons and the respect for their free will is a belief which is nearly universal; all countries make reference to it although their practices may be dubious. Nevertheless that belief from the Enlightenment more and more affects the great traditional religious systems and especially those which - like Christianity - have established hierarchies and beliefs.

There is a great mistrust towards these systems and they are designated as free-thinking. All the more reason that it is suspected that they are the ones who promote wars and conflicts in the name of divinities or superior beliefs. And in fact, a

superficial examination of the international situation tends to demonstrate that many power, interest and ethnic conflicts have their origins in supposedly religious causes.

➤ But some hope that the established religions might be a factor for peace and concordance, softening some of the doctrinal, moral and other aspects pertaining to discipline. Religions would therefore be a new inspiring wisdom for “human togetherness”. But many others no longer have these dreams: nothing can be expected from religious systems, but one has to expect everything from individual transformation and the network of good will which inhabit the earth.

Therefore a strong attraction is observed - among the middle and privileged classes - toward like groups, adept at psychological, spiritual and bodily techniques, inspired in former pagan discourses which were believed to have disappeared and about which St. Irenaeus of Lyon seemed to have pronounced definitive words. At the same time this reveals a great personal uncertainty, but also an authentic thirst for spirituality.

➤ This personal uncertainty has its origin in the abandonment of the “great stories”. Now modern man is faced with himself and he searches his very self for meaning which will lift him from himself: he has a taste for the eternal but he is incapable of realizing this by himself.

Then everyone asks him for help and this upsets him: he is bombarded by different information that gives witness to a multitude of values, ideals, lifestyles that come and go at the beck and call of different styles. His reasoning with its critical, philosophical, theological, scientific equipment...was not prepared for life; therefore he no longer has a natural guide to make judgments with a minimal of common sense.

➤ Many of the more popular religious groups also feel attracted by new, more agile systems which are closer to their existential difficulties. They are looking for a warm atmosphere, security, a close solidarity that will minimize the hard knocks of destiny and the growing insecurity which is the result of various migrations occasioned by poverty, unemployment, exploitation and natural disasters.

➤ Contrasted with this, the approach of the Catholic Church seems distant, complicated, abstract and focused on problems. In reality its approach is broad-based and it deals with basic problems in detail (life relationships, economic balance, political systems, faith/reason issues, approaches to life, death, work, the unique vocation of the human being, the contribution of religion to “human togetherness”, scientific progress, solidarity...) but this urgent discussion is not sufficiently circulated and neither do thinkers, popular leaders, executive authorities, nor even Christians themselves and especially Christian educators take advantage of this approach.

➤ Nevertheless societies, one after the other, realize perfectly well that religious sentiment and religious culture have a social role that affects the collective memory of nations but it also affects “human togetherness”. It is a basic challenge if humanity wants to have a future.

Even the more secular societies have shown interest in recent times in the culture of religion and they are reintroducing it in school programs.

➤ In addition, an important mixture of cultures, strengthened by communication methods, approaches religious systems, becomes familiar with them, compares them and simplifies them. This puts entire populations into a relationship which were formerly thought to be separate, distinct, original. It deals with forms of living and

fulfills the encounter between more complete human persons thanks to its more authentic religious practices. True discoveries are made between systems as well as between persons. And little by little religious systems talk to one another and listen to one another. Sometime they irritate one another. But a new way of thinking about other religions is springing up and a new syncretism is being established.

➤ Finally, many young people who are at the same time critics with regard to the great religious traditional systems, are asking religions about the meaning of life and about its contribution to the universal “human togetherness”.

They enjoy only the religious approaches that respect the individual and his freedom, that have a minimal number of doctrinal and hierarchical rules and that interfere in the least possible way in their personal ethics.

Nevertheless religions, which present model men and women who have clearly surrendered themselves to others, even the very gift of themselves, always produce the same fascination. And in those cases young people are capable of being united to them.

These are the most important conclusions as perceived by the Colloquia Committee. Nevertheless these conclusions cannot achieve their objective (the second proposition from the General Chapter of 1993) if they are not taken again, re-read, dealt with and re-interpreted by each Lasallian community. In effect, if the Institute is one, it is also diverse in terms of its local expressions; the mission is the same but the children and young people we meet are distinct; global analysis can help us to observe better the current educational landscape, but our specific responses depend on our own environments. For this reason this Bulletin of the Institute is above all a working instrument.