Lasallian Reflections

No. 3b | Brothers of the Christian Schools | September 2001

The Rights of the Child

[Adaptation of a prayer service by Brother Raymond Suplido of the Philippines]

Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

Reading from "Urgent Educational Needs" in *Circular 447: The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter* (1 October 2000), p. 26

"The United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989) is an internationally ratified agreement to oppose the exploitation of children and young people. Although the Convention was recommended by the 42nd General Chapter (*Circular 435*, p. 23) and again in [Brother Superior's *Pastoral Letter on The Defense of Chrildren, the Reign of God, and the Lasallian Mission* (1999)], its contents are little known and understood by Brothers and Partners. [Furthermore, we note that] cultural norms are not always consistent with the articles of the *Convention* [and that] children often are not sufficiently aware of their rights under the *Convention*."

Song As appropriate [for example, "Whatsoever You Do"]

Our response from the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), the Superior General's *Pastoral Letter* (1999), and *Mark 10*

All: "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (*Mk* 10:14).

Reader One: "State Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life" (*CRC,* N° 6).

Reader Two: "Tragically, society today lacks a moral consensus concerning the right to life of children before birth. Millions of unborn children are aborted every year…and…UNICEF declares that during the last decade two million children have been killed during armed conflicts" (*PL*, pp. 13, 18).

All: "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (*Mk* 10:14).

---

* The **"Convention on the Rights of the Child"** is available in Acrobat Reader (.pdf) format in the Online Publications section of our web site: www.lasalle.org

Reader One: "State Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child" (*CRC*, N° 6).

Reader Two: "Alarming numbers of children are victims of poverty not only in economically poor countries, but also in economically developed countries…While poverty affects children of all ethnic groups, it strikes primarily those of the so-called 'minority' groups, including immigrants and refugees…One hundred fifty-million children can be considered illiterate" (*PL*, pp. 13, 14, 17).

All: "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (*Mk* 10:14).

Reader One: "State Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will…" (*CRC*, N° 9).

Reader Two: "Many children suffer when the slow rate of economic growth drags down wages, particularly when they are from single parent families…The United Nations estimates that there are more than one hundred fifty-million street children in the world, with the number rising daily. They range from age three to eighteen. Forty percent of them are homeless. The other 60% work on the streets to support their families" (*PL*, p. 14).

All: "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (*Mk* 10:14).

Reader One: "State Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has the care of the child" (*CRC,* N° 19).

Reader Two: "Female children face particular disadvantages... Among girls, there is a high rate of mortality and illiteracy…Female children suffer frequently from domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, rape, and even murder. Millions of children, both female and male, are victims of sexual abuse, often accompanied by physical abuse. The abusers are sometimes, it is sad to say, members of their own families or trusted friends" (*PL*, p. 15).

All: "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (*Mk* 10:14).

Reader One: "State Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance, and facilitate the child's active participation in the community" (*CRC,* N° 23).

Reader Two: "Twelve million children less than five years of age die every year in economically developing countries…The condition of many of the disabled defies description. Some are victims of physical or sexual abuse and of alcoholism…[Some] disabled adults are present in centers designed for children and teenagers…they are there because they have nowhere else to go" (*PL*, pp. 16, 17).

All: "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (*Mk* 10:14).

Pause for quiet reflection

from "Guidelines" in *Circular 447*, p. 26

- *"Brothers and Partners need to be more aware of the contents of the Convention."*
- *"The implementation of the Convention has to be adapted to local conditions."*
- *"The Lasallian educational mission should concentrate on children whose rights are not protected."*
- *"The response of the Brothers and Partners to the demands of the Convention must be inspired by Gospel values."*

Reading

from *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*, N° 40.5

"The word of God does not fall out of the sky as an abstraction on anonymous individuals; it comes [illegible]r by way of a human experience to which it is joined, by which it is clarified and deepened. It is not in books or in words that the young first encounter the God who calls them, but rather in the one who catechizes them."

Our Response

adaptation of *2 Corinthians 3 & 4* from Brother Nicholas Hutchinson's *Lasallian Prayers* (1980)

All: We are ambassadors for Christ.
It is as though God were appealing through us;
and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is:
be reconciled to God.

Side One: As Paul says:
You are a letter from Christ,
drawn up by us,
and written not with ink
but with the Spirit of the living God,
not on stone tablets
but on the tablets of your living hearts.

Side Two: Before God, we are confident of this through Christ:
not that we are qualified in ourselves
to claim anything as our own work.
All our qualifications come from God…

Side One: And we with our unveiled faces
reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord,
all grow brighter and brighter
as we are turned into the image that we reflect.
This is the work of the Lord who is Spirit…

Side Two: For it is not ourselves that we are preaching,
but Christ Jesus as the Lord,
and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

Side One: It is the same God that said,
"Let there be light shining out of darkness,"
who has shown in our minds
to radiate the knowledge of God's glory,
the glory on the face of Christ.

Side Two: We are only the earthenware jars
that hold this treasure,
to make it clear that such an overwhelming power
comes from God and not from us.

Side One: We are in difficulties on all sides,
but never cornered;
we see no answers to our problems,
but never despair.

Side Two: We have been persecuted,
but never deserted;
knocked down,
but never killed.

Side One: Always, wherever we may be,
we carry with us in our body, the death of Jesus,
so that the life of Jesus, too,
may always be seen in our body.

Side Two: Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit;

Side One: As it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be forever. Amen.

All: We are ambassadors for Christ.
It is as though God were appealing through us;
and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is:
be reconciled to God.

Pause for quiet reflection

adapted from *Circular 447*, pp. 26-27

- *Do I cooperate with any local organizations that work for the promotion of the rights of children?*
- *How alert am I to detect when children's rights are violated?*

- *How prompt am I in informing local authorities about these violations?*
- *What am I myself doing to ensure that the rights of children are better understood and their application better assured?*

Prayer of intersession

[Response: *Lord, hear our prayer*]

- *for whom or for what do we pray?*

Closing Prayer

adapted from Brother Jean Pungier's *Ministers of Grace*, p. 42

All: If we destroy what oppresses others and
if we raise up our down-trodden friend,
the darkness of our struggle
will be as bright as the noonday sun.

Then our feet will learn how to dance,
and our dance will discover the world of tomorrow.
Our dance will discover God's world.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle, pray for us.

Live Jesus in our hearts, forever!