



02-O-01

INTERVIEW WITH BROTHER SUPERIOR GENERAL

From the beginning Brother Superior has encouraged and supported the publication of "Lasalliana" and follows its development with keen interest. We thought the moment had come to ask him to explain his reasons for encouraging our efforts and his interest in the project as part of the general Lasallian renewal movement.

1. "Brother Superior, you were present in Lyons in September, 1982, when the joint Institute - Lasallian Associations decided to produce the Lasallian leaflets, later to become "Lasalliana". From the start you strongly supported the project. Could you tell us what your motives were?"

Brother Superior: "The meeting to which you refer revealed, once again, a movement which is taking place in many areas where the Institute exists and is at work. It is the increasing number of people who feel affection and admiration for John Baptist de La Salle and his work and who want to get to know better the meaning of the Lasallian message for the world to-day.

It is only natural that persons and groups who share this interest should seek publications of quality containing serious studies which would deepen their knowledge and guarantee its authenticity. There are already many publications which provide reflections, information and commentaries on St. John Baptist de La Salle but the authors of these publications experience, themselves, the need for more ample and authoritative information on the Founder and his message.

To meet this need we formed a group of Brothers who, having a thorough knowledge of the Founder and easy access to sources, could write and publish regular articles for those who are interested and feel the need for such authentic information. This is precisely what the team responsible for "Lasalliana" is doing so I am happy to support and recommend their work and the aims they have in view."

2. "Brother Superior, we are now approaching the end of 1983. The Lasallian movement, comprised of lay people interested in the spirituality and educative practice of the Brothers, is spreading widely. How do you see the development of the movement?"

Brother Superior: "I consider this movement positive, relevant and urgent. Without exaggeration I think these qualifications justified. The development is positive because it is a sign of progress in the understanding of and respect given to de La Salle and also because it penetrates deeper into those layers of society associated with the Brothers.

I have had the opportunity of being present at the inauguration of the movement and have seen its development in many different parts of the world. I believe that in this development we can see clear signs of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit.

It is a relevant development because it co-incides with a movement becoming general in the Church — the growing awareness of the essential role of lay people as the people of God — a movement firmly founded on the teaching of the Gospel.

It is an urgent development because it is the only means of facing the immense tasks which confront and challenge us. How else can we serve the young and the poor, promote justice and find solutions to problems identical with those which inspired and called forth the founding zeal of St. J.B. de La Salle.

For all these reasons which I have stated more than once, I see in this movement a great motive for hope at this moment in the history of the Institute."

3. "What suggestions would you make so that after a promising start, the movement does not lose impetus and continues to give satisfaction to those who joined it?"

Brother Superior: "Briefly, I would limit myself to proposing what is of immediate application. We must take care to nourish the movement with genuine and precise ideas based on the inspiration and message that de La Salle left us by his example and in his writings. We must not invent a fictional de La Salle in

place of the historic Founder. The first feelings of affection, spontaneous, empirical and emotional as they are, must be deepened, strengthened and supported by an exact and well-founded knowledge of the man.

We must also provide the members of the movement with opportunities for exercising their enthusiasm in a concrete way. Practical projects must be envisaged and planned to put into effect what Lasallian thinking and the Founder's teaching suggest for helping those in need and guiding youth along Christian social lines. A movement which confines itself to speeches and thinks that progress consists in rhetorical proclamations, is condemned to an inglorious demise. It has none of the characteristics of the initiatives of St. John Baptist de La Salle."

4. "Brother Superior, how do you see the role of 'Lasalliana' in this movement?"

Brother Superior: "I think the answer lies in what I have already seen of "Lasalliana" and its relation to the movement. To avoid being jeopardised, the movement should be given clear, dynamic ideas, of proven authenticity and in keeping with the reality which we are trying to get to know better. The achievements by which it will become known and strengthened must be based on sound principles inspired by truth. We hope that 'Lasalliana' will provide such ideas in plenty, together with motivation, data and facts capable of communicating the personality and thought of the Founder and capable, also, of suggesting initiatives in accordance with his teaching.

May 'Lasalliana' become a source of inspiration and courage by making known the spirit which should animate the movement and graft it more firmly to the venerable Lasallian tree."

5. "What recommendations would you give to the editorial committee and to contributors to 'Lasalliana'?"

Brother Superior: "The group is composed of competent people who have had a long and thorough formation. The manner in which they have already begun their work is evidence enough that they know what they are doing and are capable of succeeding in their task. If there is one point I would like to stress, it is that they develop a team spirit. That is the way to honour and put into practice the Lasallian motto, 'Together and by association'. It is the best way to ensure good results from an undertaking that we hope will be fruitful and enduring.

As a recommendation I would, also, express a wish that this enterprise just begun, will be continued with unflinching determination. One always has a doubt or a fear that an undertaking which begins with the highest hopes, may later become routine, less interesting, less inspiring and less rich.

As for technical advice I shall only say this: I have complete confidence in the ability and experience of the members of the production team."

6. "Could you suggest to readers of 'Lasalliana' how best to profit from it?"

Brother Superior: "I congratulate the readers of 'Lasalliana' who have made its acquaintance and that of its contributors from the moment of its first appearance. I know that a large number of Brothers were looking forward to such a publication to increase their knowledge of the Institute and deepen their understanding of the Lasallian spirit.

I would like them to welcome and use these leaflets as a means of extending their knowledge of, and increasing their love for, our holy Founder whose work they appreciate so much. As I have just said, they should use them as an instrument of work rather than as a means of satisfying their curiosity, however legitimate. 'Lasalliana' should not be too hastily relegated to the archives but kept within reach so that this collection of information may introduce them to the saint and his work. The leaflets should not be treated as work of erudition but as examples of witness to be carefully studied and from which conclusions should be drawn for the Brothers' own lives.

What I am saying is that the leaflets could, on occasion, be used as subjects for meditation and as an encouragement to greater dedication to the redemptive work of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

7. "In conclusion, Brother Superior, what relevance, in your opinion, has such a publication to the life of the Institute to-day? How does it relate to the Brothers' contribution to education in the modern world?"

Brother Superior: "I think I have already answered these questions in saying what such a publication means to us. Because of the crisis of identity which, in recent decades has troubled and continues to trouble so many congregations, including our own, we recognise more clearly than ever before that a thorough and precise knowledge of our Founder and his doctrine is the best guarantee of, and stimulant to, a renewal of fidelity and vitality.

That we may respond to the demands of our age to be inventive and creative, without compromising our fidelity to our spiritual heritage, the message of de La Salle must penetrate more deeply and take more definite shape in the minds and hearts of all of us who profess to follow him, as well as in those who wish to share in the action which his message inspires.

I sincerely hope that these leaflets may be of help to the thousands of people who seek a better understanding of Lasallian values and of the spirit of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

God grant, through the intercession of him who is our Father, our Founder and our Guide that these Lasallian leaflets may awaken a new spirit of generosity in favour of those whom St. John Baptist loved and served so well — the young and the poor.