



04-B-21

LASALLIAN INITIATIVES IN THE PHILIPPINES (2)

ANIMATION OF LAY ADMINISTRATORS AND FACULTY

By necessity as well as conviction, our schools have implemented the appeal of the 1966 General Chapter that "lay teachers should be completely involved with the whole life of the school: with catechesis, apostolic organizations, extra-curricular activities and administration." (Declaration 46,3) What our Brothers identify as a more urgent need is that of sharing with our colleagues the mission and apostolic ideals proposed by St. La Salle. We already share the work and educational responsibility. There is also the critical necessity of integrating them into the mission and spirituality which we have received as a precious Lasallian legacy. This spirit and vision we want them also to be able to call their own.

One initiative was to offer the ideals and program of the association of the *Signum Fidei*. The initial response has been enthusiastic. After a year of preparation under the guidance of Brother Victor Franco, eighteen teachers from the primary school in La Salle Green Hills consecrated themselves in February, 1984 as Signum Fidei members. In addition to regular meetings, retreats, Bible discussions, prayer and Lasallian conferences, the members volunteered their services to open and maintain a nursery school. Now thirty children of the poor receive free instruction every year to prepare them to enter primary education. The parents of these students are also given guidance regarding proper nutrition and health care for their children. Other teachers from other departments and schools have signified their interest in the association. Two members have volunteered to spend a year teaching in our schools in the rural areas where their expertise and experience are benefiting other teachers and students.

On a district-wide level, a series of Lasallian Seminars was implemented during the schoolyear 1983-1984. This series consisted of four half-day seminars conducted for each quarter of the year. The seminars were attended by members of the faculty of all our schools and conducted by a team of eight Brothers. The following topics were discussed:

- a) The Evangelical Itinerary of St. La Salle
- b) The Lasallian Concept of a Christian School
- c) The Founder's Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher
- d) The Ministry of Teaching as Seen in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.

The series of seminars was a preparation for, and will be capped by, a three-day workshop on the Lasallian charism handled by Brother Miguel Campos. In each of the schools the activities, readings, and the culminating workshop are aimed at deepening in our lay staff and the Brothers their awareness of our common Lasallian charism and spirituality. So far the results show that on the part of our co-ministers and co-workers, such an awareness and understanding of the nobility and importance of their vocation as an apostle to the young strengthens their commitment and allows them to situate their "occupation" within a broader, more spiritual context. The activities have increased their enthusiasm for their personal ministry, and drawn the faculty members one step further in the formation not only of a community of learners, but also of believers.

These initiatives have also increased our colleagues' understanding and appreciation of the Brothers' vocation. Brother Cecilio Hojilla has gone around the different La Salle schools conducting retreats at the request of the teachers. As Vocation Director he noticed that with increase in interaction between the Brothers and our religious and lay co-teachers, the latter have become more enthusiastic promoters of the Lasallian vocation among their students.

The Brothers also recognize that the material needs of our lay teachers continue to be a burden, especially since salaries can barely keep up with rising costs of living. Almost all our teachers on the

primary and secondary level are female because it is very difficult for male breadwinners to maintain their families on a teacher's salary. Most schools try to improve salaries. Brother Rolando Dizon, President of La Salle Green Hills, took the initiative of setting up a housing association which was able to acquire bank loans for buying, developing land, and providing low-cost housing for teachers and employees of our schools and those of other religious congregations.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS FOR ALUMNI AND STUDENTS

Other initiatives have been directed towards our students and alumni, especially their personal involvement in projects for the poor and working class. These projects complement the existing programs in our schools such as fund-raising for scholarships, catechetics, and "exposures" to the needy and their social condition. In De La Salle University an alumnus, Miguel Luz, has gotten the help and support of Brother Andrew Gonzalez, the University President, in his work as head of the university's Center for Social Concern. He has succeeded in getting students to volunteer their services for a few weeks to a whole year, working or teaching in one of our rural schools. On the same campus, another group of students have organized themselves into a group to offer their talents in conducting peer-counseling and leadership-training seminars for students in secondary schools for the poor and middle class in the Greater Manila area. In La Salle Green Hills, Brother Augustine Boquer has encouraged the school's popular singing group and band in giving concerts to raise funds for needy parishes and schools. In La Salle Bacolod the college students help out in the city jail, the home for orphans and the aged as part of their theology program.

SUPERVISED SCHOOLS

The Brothers receive many requests to open more schools notwithstanding our refusals because of our lack of manpower and the prohibitive costs of building or running a school. In the Philippines the government does not subsidize nor give aid to privately-owned schools. In this situation the Brothers have developed an alternative — that of supervising schools. A contract is made with a company or a diocese in which the Brothers agree to supervise a school or school system. On its part the company or diocese agrees to provide the material needs of the school, the salaries of the teachers and administrators, the costs of developing and maintaining the school, a stipend for the Brother who will supervise the school. The Brother Visitor assigns a Brother who will visit the school regularly; supervise its operation; recommend the appointment of teachers and administrators; draw up the school's short- and long-range plans. The Brother assigned runs the school(s) as the other La Salle schools.

At the present time Brother Robert Scheiler is completing his assignment as supervisor of the diocesan schools in the diocese of Iligan in Mindanao. Brother Martin Simpson is supervising several schools: one owned and operated by a company which runs a copper mine; another which mines phosphates; another which belongs to a lumber company. While these schools may not have the permanent presence of a community of Brothers in their midst, nonetheless the Brothers strive to share with them the essential Lasallian ideals and practices. The Brothers, lay teachers and administrators of the other La Salle schools extend their help and expertise to the personnel of the supervised schools, e.g. by visiting these schools and conducting workshops or giving seminars. The faculty and administration of the supervised schools also visit the other La Salle schools for seminars and observation trips.

TOGETHER AND BY ASSOCIATION

In the evolution of these initiatives and programs the involvement of the Brothers as individuals and as communities has led to a deeper clarification and identification of our role in the Philippine situation. With our growing number of lay faculty and administrators, the greater involvement of other members of the larger community in our school, and the continuing increase of students who flock to our schools — there is a deeper conviction that we share with many persons the charism of being "ambassadors" to the youth. In this context we see the relevance of our role as "the animating force of the school to which it gives life and direction according to its mission." (Declaration 48,6) These initiatives have had their share of difficulties and problems. But they are also the occasions for unfolding the rich meaning of our faith-commitment to be "Brothers" to our students and colleagues, and the depth of our vow to work "together and by association".

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