



06-C-19

**LASALLIAN
EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY (3)
By whom?: The Lasallian Family;
new role of the Brothers**

For some three hundred years the Brothers have received, lived, and passed on the Lasallian ideal, aided for a number of those years by men and women collaborators in an important but secondary role.

A CHANGING MODEL

This traditional model of FSC-lay collaboration has virtually collapsed everywhere. It neither can nor should continue to exist. It is not merely a question of a diminished number of Brothers. It is more the call to full apostolic participation of all Christians, and the willingness of so many well-formed, highly motivated men and women to respond positively to the challenge.

As the percentage of lay teachers in US Catholic schools has increased (from 8% in 1944 to 75% in 1982) we have progressively shared positions of responsibilities. Yet at the same time many of us felt frustrated, perhaps demoralized, that Brothers' schools, as we once knew them, were things of the past.

But lay teachers as well as Brothers have wrestled with the implications of this dramatic change. Many dedicated lay teachers in the FSC world are expressing the desire to participate not only in positions of authority in the school, but also in the Lasallian spirit and FSC tradition. The 40th General Chapter studied this development, calling it the Lasallian Family Movement, and strongly encouraged it. What has happened in recent years is nothing short of remarkable. Numerous districts of the Institute have organized frequent and effective workshops and retreats for lay collaborators in Lasallian spirituality and ministry. The response has surpassed all expectations.

There is a high degree of desire and readiness for identification with the Lasallian tradition. US Toronto participants in the Mexico World Congress were amazed to hear teachers, parents, young people speak of "our" Founder and of the spirit of faith and zeal in association.

The older model of FSC-lay collaboration — a triangular model, if you will, is yielding to a circular model. On points of this circle are the Brothers, the administrators, teachers, staff members, parents, former students, board members, friends, benefactors, students themselves.

A NEW FSC ROLE

In this circular model of Lasallian Educational Ministry, the FSC have a crucial role to play, but a different role from the past. This role is to animate, that is, to give spirit, support, vigor, and zest, to move to action, to encourage. We exercise this role of animation not only as individuals, but as communities. Determining precisely how is an essential moment in the process of formulating the Community Annual Program. Our communities ought to be "impact centers", giving spirit to the Lasallian Family, sharing, as the trained Lasallian disciples we should be, the richness of our heritage. We claim no special holiness or academic or professional superiority in virtue of our lifestyle; but we do claim this particular role of animation in Lasallian spirituality and Lasallian Educational Ministry.

Brothers, I know that what I'm describing is feasible only in FSC schools. But when we work in collaboration with other religious institutes or in other non-FSC schools or non-school apostolates, we can still represent personally and communally the values that constitute Lasallian education.

BY WHOM? THE LASALLIAN FAMILY

I want to insist that nothing I have said indicates in any way a "watering down" of the FSC vocation. We must avoid all ambiguity and lack of clarity with regard to FSC identity. The Brothers, on a point of the Lasallian Family

circle, have a distinct identity as consecrated men. Nevertheless, the answer to the question BY WHOM? is not: Brothers of the Christian Schools with lay collaborators. The answer is rather: the Lasallian Family animated by the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

WHAT?

"The end of the Institute is to give a Christian education to children". (Rule of 1705) General Chapters throughout history, including the last two General Chapters, have strongly reaffirmed this orientation.

ELEMENTS OF LASALLIAN EDUCATION

The topic assigned me — Lasallian Educational Ministry — prompts us to ask whether there is in fact a specificity to Christian education that can legitimately be called Lasallian. I think there are clearly discernible elements in our tradition that make it possible for us to speak of a Lasallian expression of Christian education: attention to persons; special concern for the economically poor and for all "down and outers"; commitment to excellence; creative and adapted education; dynamic religious instruction and pastoral service; promotion of justice and peace; faith-filled and zealous teachers in association.

The composite of these elements gives us a picture of WHAT of Lasallian Educational Ministry. I'm not concerned whether other religious institutes have an understanding of their mission that is similar. We do not define ourselves in terms of who we are not, but in terms of who we are and what we are all about.

It is this understanding we want to share with other members of the Lasallian Family. For the next few minutes, however, I am going to focus specifically on our own relationship to Lasallian Educational Ministry.

THE MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

"It is true to say that the Brother exercises an apostolate whenever he truly educates" (Declaration, 41). The Institute has always given the central place in this Christian education. But it has never dissociated the teaching of religion from the rest of education, or devoted itself to religion alone. There has always been the concern to link the work of evangelization with growth in education and culture (Declaration, 40).

We are ministers who are educators; we are educators who are ministers. Our vocation requires that we be well-trained, professionally and academically, that we be life-time students. It demands also that we be prepared sufficiently in theology or religious education to be instructors of religion, as well as pastoral animators. While the teaching of religion will not always be feasible, it should be considered normal activity for the Brother. We cannot accept lack of adequate preparation as an excuse for not teaching religion. We have to remedy the lack. And there is no country in the world where continuing education in religious education or theology is so readily available.

MINISTERS TO YOUTH

But more than teaching of religion is required in our mission. We are called to be youth ministers, experts on youth, specialists in helping the young grow in the life of faith. Whether we are teaching religion or not, we can be actively involved, part-time or out-of-school time, in campus ministry, in the prayer and liturgical life of the school, in leading youth groups of prayer and Christian service, in helping with youth retreats, in counselling and spiritual direction of young people.

In some countries today there are full-time district-level administrators charged with the promotion, animation, and coordination of pastoral ministry in the schools of the district. The overwhelmingly positive response of young people to these movements is a clear indication that they are looking to us, Brothers of the Christian Schools, for help in growing as Christians.

But I repeat, Brothers, that Christian education is our ministry; the pastoral animation of the young is one dimension of that ministry. To reduce the mission of the Brothers, as some are inclined to do, to pastoral service is to opt for an apostolic scope far too narrow to be in any sense healthy.

Brother John JOHNSTON
Vicar General - ROME