



07-C-24

**LASALLIAN
EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY (6):
HOW?
SOME PRACTICAL
SUGGESTIONS**

The real world

Where does all this leave us? Brothers, we do have to be realistic. We do have to be sensitive to the desires and needs of the Brothers themselves. We do have to be serious about commitments made in the past. I am not advocating any kind of recklessness. But I am advocating corporate evaluation, decisions, and action. Permit me to communicate some strictly personal views on the distribution of personnel:

1. I would favor designating a number of our FSC schools in each district, at home and abroad, as schools the Brothers would administer with a number of Brothers sufficient to be a significant animating influence in the Lasallian Family. Please note that I am not talking about the former FSC-lay triangular model of collaboration, but the circular model of Lasallian Family; I am not talking about "Brothers' schools" but "Lasallian schools". Such schools — first - class Christian schools, embodying the values of Lasallian education — can be examples of what Christian education is all about. Furthermore the availability of such schools is necessary for the many Brothers who want to work in schools that are explicitly Lasallian and administered by the Brothers themselves. Maintaining a number of excellent Lasallian schools, therefore, contributes to the mission of the Church and at the same time responds to the interests, talents, and aspirations of a number of Brothers.

2. I would favor maintaining a strong commitment to the institutions we presently have for the service of the poor, of immigrants, of youngsters with behavior problems, etc. This commitment implies a willingness to provide the specialized training that Brothers in such institutions need.

3. I would favor giving high priority to our colleges in the United States.

I am convinced that Catholic higher education is an important element in the mission of the US Church and that many Brothers have a gift for contributing on this level. At the same time we must participate actively in the continuing search for the meaning of the Catholic college and university and commit ourselves to strengthening the identity and character of our institutions as Catholic. Furthermore, I believe the Brothers in the US can help the Institute articulate the relationship of the FSC to higher education, an articulation that has not yet been done on the Institute level.

4. I would favor district commitments of FSC communities to collaborative efforts of long or short duration, at home or abroad, with dioceses, parishes, lay groups, or other religious institutes, in schools and other educational projects, giving priority to needs of the poor or disadvantaged or to the need for Catholic education in remote areas. We already have a number of such commitments. Others could be created. Some could be joint ventures of two or more districts.

The price to pay

Obviously, Brothers, the fourth and fifth possibilities cannot become realities if we are paralyzed by present commitments. That is why I suggest that while we renew and strengthen a number of our commitments, we reduce the number of Brothers or withdraw them completely from some others in order

to make possible other ventures at home and abroad. Such moves would have to be preceded by careful planning, but planning that terminates in decision and action within a reasonable period of time.

Lasallian educational ministry: concluding remarks

Brothers, in my opening remarks, I said that our understanding of Lasallian Educational Ministry is determined in large manner by the image of the Brother of the Christian Schools that we embrace and by the model of FSC ministry that emerges in reflection on that image.

I have posed four questions concerning Lasallian Educational Ministry: by whom? what? for whom? how? My answers are conditioned by the image of the Brother and the model of Lasallian Educational Ministry that I embrace. I think that my understanding of the image of the Brother is consistent with the Founder's and with the decisions of the last two General Chapters. One can embrace the same image, however, and certainly disagree with specific remarks I have made. But if your image of the Brother is fundamentally different, then your model of Lasallian Educational Ministry will be different also. I think there are in fact several models of Lasallian Educational Ministry operating among us because we have not as a group made our own the image and model embraced by the chapters.

Vision and Commitment

Brothers, from time to time, people ask me whether as a result of my experience these past eight years I am optimistic or pessimistic about the future. My response is that whether I am optimistic or pessimistic is irrelevant. What my feelings happen to be has nothing whatsoever to do with what the future holds. I respond, however, that I have hope that the Brothers of the Christian Schools will continue to be a power at the service of the young in the years ahead. When I use the word hope I mean a vision of the future and a commitment to make that vision a reality. What I have talked about today is my interpretation of the chapter vision of what the Brothers are all about and can be all about for a long time to come. Without vision we die. But vision means nothing if we are not committed to making it a reality.

That special something

Two years ago the St Paul and Minneapolis District invited a panel of non-Brothers to tell the District Assembly exactly what they thought about the FSC. They did just that. They didn't canonize us, but they certainly affirmed us. One of the panelists, a non-Catholic woman in the St Mary's College psychology department, described a certain special something about the Brothers — something that shows itself in genuine brotherly love for and dedication to the students, a love which young people catch and to which they respond. This particular teacher was responsible for an exchange program with our De La Salle College, in Manchester, Britain. She said that what amazed her was that the St Mary's Students talked about their Lasallian experience in Britain in the same spirit. I don't know what it is, she said, but there is something special about you.

I think she's right. I entered the Brothers in 1951 because of that something special I experienced in the Brothers in Memphis. That something is still there. It is that precious heritage we call the Lasallian charism. It is the gift of Lasallian Educational Ministry which we have received from the Lord — a gift we have received for others. It is a ministry wherein, De La Salle tells us, we have to touch hearts. "Thank God, he says, for the grace He has given you in your work of sharing in the ministry of the apostles... Take pride in your ministry by making yourselves, as St Paul says, qualified ministers of the new covenant" (MTR VII).

Brother John JOHNSTON
Vicar General
Rome