



08-B-39

## THE LASALLIAN APOSTOLATE IN THE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OF THE USA

In the United States of America, the Brothers operate seven institutions of higher education:

Manhattan College (NY), La Salle University (PA), Lewis University (IL), St. Mary's College (MN) Christian Brothers College (TN), College of Santa Fe (NM), and St. Mary's College (CA). In these seven post-secondary institutions, there are a total of 169 Brothers, who with a large number of religious and lay colleagues are engaged in educating 21,500 students.

These colleges, several of which were founded well over a century ago, represent an authentic expression of the Lasallian charism. They were begun at the call of the Church, as expressed by American bishops and clergy, and in response to «signs of the times»: the need of the immigrant American Catholic Church for institutions to preserve the faith of young Catholics and to enable them to take their place in American society with competent intellectual and professional preparation.

They continue in existence today, in spite of the unfortunate conflict over the «Latin question»; they are an important part of the American Catholic educational enterprise as well as of the Brothers' apostolic work, as Brother John Johnston, Vicar General stated in his address to the United State/Toronto Regional Convocation in August, 1984:

«I would favour 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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».

The Brothers' colleges offer degrees on the Baccalaureate and Masters' degree levels. These degrees are in almost all academic and scientific disciplines. All the colleges have teacher education programs, to prepare instructors for elementary and secondary schools. Candidates for the Institute receive their baccalaureate-level training at the Brothers' institutions for the most part. Higher degrees more often are earned by the Brothers at other Catholic and secular universities.

The principal source of operating revenue for these colleges and universities is the tuition paid by the students: they are aided by government grants and loans available to those who need financial aid to pay the college costs. Through this means, along with assistance from funds solicited by the colleges from benefactors, large numbers of low income students are being educated at the Brothers' colleges and universities.

The Brothers' colleges and universities are today fulfilling the call of Pope John Paul II when he spoke to representatives of American Catholic higher education at the Catholic University of America in 1979:

«...to be what it ought to be, a Catholic university must set up among its faculty and students, a real community which bears witness to a living and operative Christianity, a community whose sincere commitment to scientific research and study goes together with a deep commitment to authentic living». John Paul II.

The Holy Father's call to *community* is one to which the Brothers can respond with all the richness of our tradition of living and working as a corporate entity in the Church. Members of the Institute have been characterized as having a basic character of community, resulting from the nature of our apostolate in common, and from our concern for persons and for the needy. This communitarian emphasis affects the manner of learning, the growth in faith, and the way of living on our college campuses.

Certainly a concern for community is shared with other religious groups and the dioceses who sponsor Catholic colleges, but the Brothers' approach has a unique Lasallian cast. It is derived from the presence and witness of the community of Brothers on campus, who bring to the college their spirit of faith and zeal, together with a profound concern for the disadvantaged and the poor, in whatever guise such may present themselves. This is expressed by the manner in which the Brothers and their colleagues strive to build a five-fold community, one that is *caring, just, ethical, theological, and believing*.

### **A Caring Community**

In response to the fundamental call to «love thy neighbor», the Brothers work that their student and all on campus live together in love, concern, respect, and sensitivity. Today's youth, as well as adults, seek an environment where these qualities are present. The Brothers strive to be the guardians of community on campus, with the students as well as among faculty and staff. This serves to counter the natural spirit of competition which exists among students and faculty, and helps all to go out to the «lost sheep»: the poor, suffering, and discouraged on campus.

### **A Just Community**

The Brothers strive that life on the campuses of our colleges exemplifies upright living in every way. Justice is observed, with everyone paying to God, to neighbor, and to self what is due, and each one's rights to his property and his reputation are safeguarded. Certain moral evils can be present to a marked degree on a campus because of the age level which predominates. The Brothers' tradition of «vigilance» is a powerful force in guiding students to moral maturity and preventing dehumanizing actions from holding sway over individuals and groups. They serve to guard the moral health of the community as well as of individuals.

### **An Ethical Community**

The Brothers in the American colleges realize that they must not only see to right living while students are with them, but also do everything possible to prepare them with solid and upright consciences for the future, so that they will «walk in the ways of the Lord» as parents, as citizens, and as professionals. Ethical concerns are multiplying in every field of endeavor. Social justice issues infringe upon almost every academic discipline. It is possible on the college and university level to study intensively the ethical concerns relating to poverty, racism, nuclear armaments, genetics, pollution, and the like. The Brothers bring their ethical and moral sensitivity to these matters and their zeal for a better world into their classes and faculty meetings, and to their personal counseling of students. They play a prophetic role in the campus community in this regard.

### **A Scholarly, Theological Community**

A Brothers' collegé aims at becoming a cohesive community of teachers and learners whose effects are crowned by a high regard for theology, the «queen of sciences». Whatever their academic discipline or administrative role, the Brothers are called upon to be philosophers and theologians. As «Apostles of the Catechism», Brothers individually and as a group on campus, see that theologians are in dialogue with scholars in all fields. They encourage students to confront religious questions and explore the religious dimensions of life. College departments of theology are given strong support. The Brothers are concerned that this area of intellectual study avoids the extremes of anti-intellectualism which might appear under guise of religious orthodoxy, or, on the other hand, religious indifference in the name of academic purity.

### **A Faith Community**

In virtue of their zeal to make faith a pervasive element on the college campus, the Brothers in our colleges strive to form faculty, staff, and students into a community of believers, mature in adult faith and who acknowledge, respect, and strengthen faith throughout the life and learning of the college. This is manifested publicly by worship and celebration, and by the offerings of campus ministry staff who provide opportunity for faith growth through prayer and sharing. All of the colleges give priority to liturgy and prayer opportunities for the Catholic students and staff, while also providing ecumenical events and services for the many non-Catholics who attend our institutions. In many classes, the traditional recalling of the presence of God, followed by a brief prayer, is held in honor.

In addition to their direct efforts for faith growth, the Brothers exert a powerful influence in this regard by their presence on the campus. The witness of their individual consecration and the example of their community life incarnate the mystery of God and His action in the world for all the campus to see. The Brothers thus are «living symbols» of faith.

### **Uniquely American Community**

The Brothers' colleges and universities in the United States have come to be challenging opportunities to carry out the Lasallian charism in an educational milieu which is highly significant to the American Church and to American society. These institutions largely serve the workers' and middle class, but the sacrifices of the Brothers, the generosity of benefactors, and, especially, the financial aid available for needy youth from government sources, enable large numbers of disadvantaged poor, black, and Hispanic youth to attend our schools. These, as well as all the Lasallian students, are empowered to take their place as active leaders in American business, industry, and professional life, as responsible citizens of our country, and faithful members of their Church.

Such is the contribution of the American colleges to the Lasallian apostolate in the world today.

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