



08-C-30

PASTORAL CARE OF YOUTH IN THE CONTEXT OF LASALLIAN SPIRITUALITY (1)

«If the meeting did not devote as much time to Lasallian Associations as to lay staff, it was through shortage of time rather than lack of interest. It was indeed evident from the discussion that the associations are experiencing the spirit of renewal in many areas. It is affecting former pupils, parents and sympathizers and is evidenced not so much by campaigns for a numerous membership as by an increased interest in the Founder and in the Brothers and by increased generosity in sharing our mission. It is more especially groups of young Lasallians who are making their presence felt in a number of regions and with a pronounced inclination to prayer, brotherhood and the cause of justice.

To speak of a Lasallian spring would perhaps be an exaggeration or too rhetorical. But it is true that «something» is taking place under our very eyes. The discussions enabled the representatives of areas where such movements are occurring to inform those where they are not of the apostolic interest aroused and to show them that it is possible everywhere provided that one takes the local circumstances into account.» (P. 26-27).

In the document just quoted, it is affirmed that «'Something' is taking place before our very eyes» and it is important to see it and discern it with clarity. When the Brothers Visitors met in 1981 they did not have time to analyze the theme, as affirmed by the General Council, but since that time until 1985 many things have happened which will give a much more significant importance to the theme in the forthcoming General Chapter.

What is this Lasallian Youth Movement, with its various names, styles, and methodologies, which seems to be spreading all over the Lasallian world in such a significant manner? How far can those Brothers go, without falling into a trap, who try to «free themselves» from big and complete structures so that they may serve the poor better? Is it not a new attempt to continue to forbid the young to get involved with the local church? What does that have to do with being a Lasallian?

Without doubt, these questions, and many others, could be asked at this time by those of us who are working and by those simply witnessing the development of these Lasallian youth groups which often strive, even without the help of the Brothers themselves to establish a faithful enthusiasm for St. De La Salle.

Youth Pastoral Work and the Brothers

This article is being written in Argentina, at the very southern tip of Latin America, a continent which, since 1978 has established two priorities in a joint apostolate: the option for the poor and the option for youth.

We in no way exaggerate when we say that this is an option in which the majority of the population is united, seeing that the greater part of the population is young and poor.

Pastoral care for the young, in one form or another, has always existed in our Institute. Nevertheless, what is really new is a definitely Lasallian profile in the style and formation of the very leaders of these movements. Let us look at some of these characteristics.

My district, during the last chapter, set up Youth Pastoral work as a priority area and assigned two Brothers on a full-time basis to take charge of the emerging MOJULA, as this movement is being called by the youth. The principal task was to form leaders (animators, counselors) who would arise from among the Brothers (especially, the young Brothers) at first and then among the older students.

Little by little, the style of this very Youth Pastoral went on affecting other areas of the District and mutually enriching them by reflecting on what has been accomplished in each one of these (the Apostolate of Adults, Education, Catechesis, formation, etc.).

The entire district gave its explicit support to this «model» apostolate, in the meeting of all the Brothers of the District in 1984.

Lasallian characteristics of the lasallian movement

What seems to give the meaning and solidity to the Lasallian Youth Movement is its possessing a spirituality and a mission.

The Profile of a Lasallian Animator

Our youth leaders, who are anywhere between 16 and 24 years of age, at present, possess these characteristics:

- A great love for the Founder and a more or less good knowledge of his life.
- A life of faith expressed by a frequent and lively consciousness of the presence of God, daily reading of the Gospels, attendance at the Eucharistic celebration and sacrament of Reconciliation.
- A «plan of life» which is centered on the love to follow Christ in some virtues which He practiced or in the practice of a particular aspect of each of them, which is transformed into an important element of discernment.
- Active service to the Movement expressed in the weekly participation in the community meetings, in the preparation and animation of the younger groups, participation within the activities organized for the strengthening of the life and and commitment of our Movement.
- A disposition of service to the Church and her People, particularly to the most poor which is expressed in the realization of «Lasallian Service». Lasallian Service is the name given to the mission carried out in the rural areas, far from the large urban centers, camps and outings for poor boys and girls, support for poor schools or poor neighborhoods of the city, in many campaigns of solidarity, leadership courses, etc..
- Participation in pastoral activities on the local Church level as well as on the national level.
- A desire to be helped in their own personal spiritual growth and discernment, which is often neglected because of the lack of counselors or Brothers who understand these matters and are willing to get involved in them.
- A sincere attachment to the Brothers' Institute and its works. It is an attachment which does not prevent them from being critical in situations which they cannot understand or find in contradiction with the life of the Brothers.

A Common Mission

The movement assumes distinct types of commitments in keeping with the mission received from God through our Founder, Saint John Baptist De La Salle. These activities differ according to the needs of the place and the abilities of the groups. Among these, we consider that the most important ones are helping slow students with their school work, catechizing their own companions, the children in areas near Lasallian centers, help given to children's homes, etc..

Other possible activities:

- COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, that is, those done as a group, not individually. Planned, carried out, and evaluated as a group.
- CHRISTIAN-ECCLESIAL, that is, something beyond mere philanthropy or good fellowship.
- EVANGELICAL-EDUCATIONAL, that is, engaged in what we refer to as the ministry of the Word, in harmony with Lasallian spirituality.
- DIRECTED ESPECIALLY TOWARDS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS OR TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF PASTORAL OR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS.
- CARRIED OUT PREFERABLY AMONG THE POOR.

These activities are carried on by the older of the members of the movement but are supported in various ways by the younger groups.

Following the example of the Founder, their activities have the mark of authenticity by being gratuitous.

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