

SOCIO-CULTURAL ANIMATION AT THE SAINT CHRISTOPHER AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE (2)

SPIRITUAL ANIMATION

Masseube Saint Christopher, being a Catholic School, religious animation there has by no means a neglected place. Still there is always room for improvement.

The "Big Family" spirit which was given to this place from its very inception, even after some forty years, is still maintained today in spite of the considerable increase of its boarding department.

The Brothers' community has been the "leaven" and remains the "dynamo" and the "soul" of this institution with regard to the students as well as with the team of teachers. A great number of lay teachers have joined into the work of the Brothers' community now that the latter has gone down so much numerically. Still this view of religious education is shared by the majority of the teaching staff so much so that the cooperation is close and effective, and this explains the reality which is St. Christopher's today.

Moments of Lasallian spiritual formation sets the rhythm of life in the school for the parents, by certain meetings called by the Brother Director, for the teachers, either at the beginning of the school year or during the course of the year, and also for the older students by regular meetings and contacts with the Brothers. The Mass on the Feast of the Ascension, the school's official festival day, allows us to reach in an outstanding way a great number of persons, parents and friends, and indirectly, is for us an auspicious time for passing on this Spirit which animates us and which leads us to advance.

For the teaching staff (which is composed of some twenty lay teachers and Brothers) there are six to eight times a year, where we take out two hours to work, reflect, share our

thoughts, and pray together in order to weld our team more tightly together and not be content with the professional and disciplinary aspects of our teaching but to breathe a new soul into all of our educational activities, based upon the Gospels. For two years we worked on the Old Testament, keeping alive the connection between it and our present era. For the last two years, we took "Gaudium and Spes", the Church in the world today, which is not without its close relations to our life as Educators in the Faith.

For the young, the hours of "CULTURE AND FAITH", or CATECHESIS, are still an element of formation which we hold on to. The rhythms of the classes are different but we relish these privileged moments which are for the Brother his Mission of priority. The chaplain, as well as a priest from the outside, help the five out of eight Brothers who teach catechism, administrators as well as teachers. The young people of 14 and 15 years of age are guided toward the Sacrament of Confirmation which is a phase of deepening and commitment in the life of Faith. There is also the Youth Eucharistic Movement (M.E.J.) which reaches a number of youths, and there are regular activities which oblige the students to get involved in the work of problems existing outside of the school.

Every other Sunday, the students remain at the college and we have two Masses because the chapel is too small to accommodate 600 pupils. We see to it that all the students attend because it is the only religious activity we are called upon to celebrate together. This initiative was well thought out and discussed many years ago in consultation with the parents, older students, the teachers, and, of course, with the Brothers themselves.

There are religious services by class level on a voluntary basis, according to the liturgical season and the presence of the youths in school.

At present the atmosphere is not conducive to the religious plans and practices of twenty years ago, so we must restudy, reformulate and adapt our Faith Education to the youths we accept into our schools. This is a problem we have had to face especially in recent years. Because we are working together in a common apostolate with Haute Vallée du Gers, to which we belong, we ought to adapt our instruction to counteract the "bad faith" which is becoming ever more prevalent.

ANOTHER NEW PROJECT

The Brothers' community up until this time has always been intertwined with the school. (We use the same buildings). The community was completely immersed in the care of the young, the good running of the school and its activities. Perhaps we have been "sinning by excess". This was so much so that the community was perceived by the youth only in its professional work; our life of "Consecration" completely escaped them.

To remedy this situation, we have taken over a small section of a building which has

become "the residence of the Brothers Community". The Brothers will thus have a place to live a meaningful community life together. The community will be able to invite, and receive, others and will be able to share our life with them. Thus we will have more visibility with regard to those who live around us. We can even go so far as to say that "we shall be called even more" to this Mission which the Church has confided to us.

Brother Jean-Marie PERILHOU
Institut Agricole St. Christophe
32140 Masseur, FRANCE