

THE MISSIONS AND LASALLIAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE

(1/2)

For some years now a number of young people have been wondering whether they could make a more worthwhile contribution to the missions than by just giving a donation. With a certain amount of reluctance and not a little fear, but at the same time showing great willingness, they offered their services to work for a period of time in one of the Lasallian missions. Since then five youths have committed themselves for three years and have gone to a Lasallian mission to assist in spreading God's word.

At the present time there are in the District of Bilbao several groups of Old Boys (some are university students, some already in employment) who meet every month to study the question of missionary vocation. Some of them are already fairly decided on the idea of offering their services for a period of several years as Lasallian Voluntary Workers, on a La Salle mission.

What is a Lasallian Voluntary Worker? What do we Brothers offer these young people? What criteria do we consider necessary? What demands are made of these young Old Boys in accepting this missionary work? What challenge does this desire of commitment, that these young people show, present to the Brothers?

IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF:

1. Escaping from problems.

To undertake missionary work in order to sidestep personal problems – whether consciously or unwittingly – is a mistake. Everybody at some time or another meets with family problems, upsets at work (stress, strikes etc.) and costly re-adjustments, in one way or another, to our modern

way of living. To run away from, rather than face up to, these situations is to betray an attitude of mind completely inconsistent with the missionary vocation. The only consequence would be to carry the problem from one place to another. But even more, the trouble one is escaping from here only becomes more acute there, and the problem becomes even greater. To enjoy missionary work one has to have experienced the joy of having committed oneself previously to other enterprises.

2. Searching for Adventure.

Often the missionary was associated with exotic countries, adventurous journeys, tribes whose customs were quite unknown in Europe... The missionary was looked upon as a research worker and mistaken for an explorer. But that all followed from the main task which was to evangelise. The missionary life isn't just another experience for idle, bored westerners; the missionary life is a commitment to spreading the Gospel.

3. Projecting a False Image.

In the interweaving skein of social relationships each individual presents himself in a certain light to others. Our manner of acting is noted in a certain way by all those around us; these concepts of ourselves create an image which is the presented to us. But this image of ourselves which others present us with does not always please us. It is then that we are tempted to build another image of ourselves, more attractive but false. As a result one embarks on ways of behaving which seemingly reflect attitudes of mind and feelings which really are foreign to us. Yes, the image has changed. But now it is wrong to assume that "actions are the expression of a way of being and of feeling".

Missionary life is an undertaking which starts from the premise of what one really is, and not from the image which one would like to portray.

4. Allowing oneself to be used by political and economical organisations.

The voluntary worker arriving in the Third World enters fully into an arena of powerful ideological and economic interests. Almost as a matter of course the countries of the Third World are sought-after prizes by the great powers who see in them the possibilities for the furtherance of their political views and as an untapped source of economical enterprise which makes the rich, richer, and the poor, poorer. Taken up, as the missionary is, by his preference for working with the poor, he runs the risk of being caught up in rivalry between the forces of the two ideologies. And all the good work for freedom and human advancement that might materialise as a result of this involvement, will be the fruit of a living faith at the service of the weakest.

IT IS A QUESTION OF.

Living out a Christian challenge.

A time comes when some young people, buoyed up by the demands of their own developing faith, offer themselves to be of service by way of some Christian venture. Just now there are in our La Salle centres a good group of youngsters who have undertaken a variety of things: some have become

group leaders in work-camps during the summer, some are catechists who work with the Brothers in parish and college groups; others devote themselves to try and better the lot of tramps and down-and-outs in the towns; they try to lessen the friction between rival groups of gypsies living in town areas; some have finished their schooling in a La Salle school and have become teachers with the same Lasallian mentality in La Salle centres; some have even decided to become De La Salle Brothers; others have taken steps on the road to the seminary to become priests; and some of the girls have also decided to enter the religious life.

So then missionary life could be a worthy option to bear in mind by the young when considering the whole range of Christian good works. In fact the interest shown in this subject by many is quite surprising.

Following their training as teachers, doctors, engineers, mechanics, veterinary surgeons... and as a result of actively living out their faith, some of them could impart new life into the Church's missionary work.

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