

THE MISSIONS AND LASALLIAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE

(2/2)

BASIS FOR MISSIONARY WORK

1. **Age:** 21 and over.

2. **Duration of service:** 3 years or more.

3. **Health:**

The voluntary worker must have a thorough check-up by the doctor. The climatic and sanitary conditions, as well as the food in the Third World, are totally different from the ones we know here and not all volunteers can master them. A number of bites and stings and infections are inevitable. Therefore it is imperative to be familiar with all the possible antidotes to ward of illness and disease.

4. **Maturity:**

4.1. *Personal:*

*"Life is like a small rice shoot;
transported, it grows elsewhere."*

It is extremely hard for the volunteer himself to judge what level of maturity he has reached. Those with whom he associates and who are with him all the time ought to be able to see and gauge his maturity, his tolerance, honesty, how he reacts to the group, his open-mindedness, his work threshold, how he fits into living with others, his desire to get on, how level-headed he is and how strong he is in the face of fatigue and failure.

4.2. *The mind.*

*"If man's spirit dances badly
God silences the drum".*

There are many unforeseen events in everyday life. Accustomed as we are to living in set social patterns we are psychologically tuned in to them. However, once there is a change of continent, social habits and relationships, frequently it occurs that some problems and traumas which have lain dormant in the subconscious come bobbing up to the surface. For this reason it is important that the volunteers, are not of a tense, nervous disposition but rather well balanced; that they have not suppressed their weaknesses but rather that they have come to terms with them. Everything that is tightly bottled-up like that, in the end will explode.

4.3. *Spiritual.*

*"Love oneself like mouth and hand;
if the hand suffers, the mouth blows on it,
and if the mouth aches it is the hand that cures it."*

The secular missionary who wishes to form a part of a Lasallian mission project has as his starting point a Christian and religious experience which he has lived-out with a group of fellow workers and which has supported him from one enterprise to another. Therefore, it is not solely a question of participating in the development of projects and human growth in the sphere of profane studies. Missionary work is above all a work of evangelising carried out by the community. The volunteer renews this role which the Church has had as a cherished tradition from the very beginning.

4.4. *The economics.*

*"God scares away the fly
from the animal with no tail."*

Very often our mental picture of economics is conditioned by the First World; that means we live in a world of "abundance and waste". It is true that there is the threat of unemployment but not even this problem has the slightest element of comparison with the economical situation in the Third World. For this reason missionary life depends on "economic maturity" capable of accepting the renunciation of safety and everyday commodities without losing the joy of living.

What security has one to give up? Among other things a comfortable home, a monthly salary, a well-stocked market capable of keeping the mission well-provided with all it needs for its work. A missionary community's economy is simply to provide the bare necessities of life. Funds to support the community normally come from donations and the salary that a particular missionary might receive; for example, a teacher registered with a school.

5. **Professional.**

"You don't make your bow during the battle".

It does not suffice to offer oneself as a volunteer "to supply what is lacking". Nor is "good will" enough to join in helping adults to read, for example. It is essential to know HOW to set about teaching those adults to read and write. Many of the branches of knowledge and the qualifications obtained here at home are not of any use over there. Very often ability to perform simple and elementary tasks are of the utmost importance, whilst specialist expertise can be of no value.

A multifarious, inter-disciplinary training is the best way to guarantee help to the Third World. This training given to the volunteer should be as full and all-embracing as possible covering more ground than technical or university specialisation.

5.2. *Religious preparation.*

*"There are people like smouldering wood:
one has to throw them into the fire to set them alight."*

A volunteer would be unable to blend-in with an enterprise like that of the Lasallian missionary life if his living faith was

puerile and feeble . It is important to possess a growing faith, a faith shared with others, one expressed in prayer: a faith that has led one earlier to embark on other ventures; a faith nourished by the sacraments, in junior Eastern celebrations; in reunions, in work-camps...; a faith, likewise, strengthened by Bible study and by the reading of books which strengthen the realisation of being Christian.

5. 3. Pastoral preparation.

"Make use of the right means to achieve the goal; a finger can't wash a face."

A possible professional contribution made in the fields of teaching, building, agriculture, medicine... is imperative: that's obvious. Nevertheless, all this is only a part of the work. The voluntary worker who assists on a Lasallian mission also takes an active part in pastoral care; the training of catechists, religious instruction for infants, juniors and adults, help in the liturgy etc. This, naturally, calls for previous training and experience. A good way to achieve this is by assisting the Brothers in their pastoral work in the colleges and parishes... and by taking part in the many day-courses, and longer ones, for the training of catechists; these are organised fairly frequently at different venues within a given District.

6. Contact with those who remain behind.

6.1. The Christian Community at Home.

"One arm can't encircle a baobab tree".

It often happens that many Christian endeavours come to light, and develop, among groups of friends, catechists and fellow students, who have evolved into Christian communities through the constant sharing of their faith together. A missionary enterprise can be another outlet for a group to adopt and help, through the services of one or several of its members.

The community decides:

- What undertakings it will accept.
- How they will be fulfilled.
- Who will accept the many responsibilities.

In such an undertaking there are two areas of responsibility: that of the missionary and that of those who remain behind. All has not been accomplished with the training, the departure and the journey to the mission. The volunteer is "the envoy", that is to say, he is the representative of the home community. This is, consequently, the beginning of an exchange: those who stay at home support the volunteer by their prayers, their letters, their financial help, their news, etc. He, in return, keeps them informed of his missionary work, its difficulties and successes. He informs them of the use that is made of contributions received and he tells them about the progress of his religious experience. In this way,

the volunteer is far from being alone, but rather, he is a symbol of the presence and the life of a whole community who accepted the call from God.

6.2. The secular missionary and the Brothers.

"The intelligence of one single person is like a bag full of holes."

The volunteer takes part in a Lasallian mission because he has lived in a Lasallian environment where his vocation has developed. He is part of a team of Brothers and can count on the support of the Brothers of the District. The volunteer brings to the Lasallian mission his own personal ministry; a service complementary and distinct from that of the Lasallian religious.

The Brothers of the District, through the Secretariat of the Missions, accept all the responsibilities that go with all missionary works:

- training of candidates
- preparation for living in community with all that that entails: work, prayer, human relationships
- assessing the adequacy of the candidate for each of the missions
- the official backing of the missionaries
- constant support for the missionary communities.

7. Missionary attitudes

"Those who sail in the same canoe think alike."

EFFORT to integrate one's own cultural life and faith into the new social-cultural and religious milieu.

RESPECT towards the people and their surroundings: they have an identity and motive force all of their own.

TO AVOID the temptation to apply pressure to speed up projects, and to destroy thoughtful planning.

TO UNDERSTAND that evangelisation and improving the lot of mankind are the work of a team.

TO ACCEPT: that evangelisation and improving the lot of mankind are the work of a team.

TO ACCEPT the specific missionary enterprise undertaken by the envoy sent out to do the work.

INTEGRATION with a venture that is much greater than one's own work and set plans.

Brother José Manuel Sauras.