

# ★ *lasalliana*

19 - 15 - C - 84

## STATUS OF A NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOL IN JAPAN (2/2)

### 2. APOSTOLIC INFLUENCE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

#### A. Great Influence of Schools in General.

Catholic schools in this country can exert a great influence upon youth, because of the favored position of schools in Japanese society. Education in Japan is exceedingly schools-centered. The greatest part of the child's education is entrusted to and expected of the school. School education is often more valued, and may exert a more lasting influence than education in the family. For most Japanese children, school becomes the center of their lives. Sports, recreation, interest in cultural activities and the like are centered in and around the schools. Such activities contribute to the great influence of the schools. This academic influence upon its students will be all the greater as the school is considered a "good" school – this is, a school which succeeds in placing a high percentage of its graduates in good universities. If a Catholic school, besides being a "good" school in this sense, also gives a sound character formation, it will exert an even greater influence than other schools, public or private.

#### ● The Ground-breaking Apostolic Influence of Catholic Schools.

To understand and evaluate the nature of the apostolic mission of Catholic schools, the methods, limits and results, one has to take into consideration four elements: a) the present situation, b) the apostolate of the Church in Japan, c) the educational situation and d) the psychology of the Japanese people.

The educational situation at present, with large numbers of students flocking to Catholic schools, surely opens up vast possibilities, but at the same time the psychology of the Japanese people sets limitation to the kind of apostolic work which can be achieved in Catholic schools. It would therefore be a great mistake to evaluate the apostolic influence of a Catholic school in Japan merely by the number of students baptized.

All agree that Japan is a very difficult mission. Actually the progress of Christianity is slow; the Japanese are in no particular hurry to be baptized. The propagation of the faith is still in the ground breaking stage. And however important it may be to promote the direct apostolate, it may be equally if not more important to disseminate Christian ideas throughout the country sound ideas about man, the family, society, etc., which are "praeambula fidei." This is where our Lasallian schools are able to fulfill a most important mission, «since, therefore, the Catholic school can be of such aid to the fulfillment of the mission of the people of God and to the fostering of the dialogue between the Church and mankind to the benefit of both, it retains even in our present circum-

stances the utmost importance.» (Gravissimum educationis, 8)

It is an established fact that through the work of the Catholic schools, knowledge of Christianity, and Catholic influence has been carried far and wide into families and influential circles to which perhaps the Church would otherwise not have had access. To mention but one aspect, more than one thousand and two hundred graduates from our school in Kagoshima are now medical doctors, not to mention the University professors, lawyers etc. The Bishops of Japan have often publicly recognized this far-reaching apostolic influence of the Catholic schools, saying that missionary work in such an education-minded country as Japan would be impossible without good Catholic schools.

#### ● Propagation of the Faith in Schools

The propagation of the faith among non-Catholic students should not be narrowly interpreted as meaning direct proselytizing. «A La Salle Brother is a Catechist by profession so catechism should be taught to all students.» It must be realized that hardly any of the children entering Catholic schools are sent there by their parents to become Christians. The parents, Catholic or not, are interested in the academic and "moral training" given by the Catholic schools, not ordinarily in religious instruction as such. Apostolic "pressure" results in an antipathy and an impeding of the apostolic influence of the school. Naturally, all the Brothers wish to increase the number of Catholics in their schools. But at present the indirect apostolate seems to be the more important, and care must always be taken not to obstruct this apostolate by too direct or indiscreet methods. The work being done at present will bear fruit in the second or the third generation. When His time will come.

#### B. Apostolic Influence on Various Groups

##### 1. Upon the students

Apostolic influence is exerted upon the students through: The ethic course. This course given in Catholic schools aims at instilling in young minds sound moral principles and at developing the power of moral judgment. It produces in many students the desire to study religion more profoundly, and thus prepares the way to baptism.

Practical training in every life. Talks are given regularly on practical matters by the Principal, teachers, invited speakers. Thus the students over a number of years develop sound moral habits and attitudes.

The religion course. This course is on a voluntary basis. By experience it seems to indicate that freedom in this matter will produce better results in the long run.

Religious activities. Optional attendance at Holy Mass, religion-inspired activities such as charity drives, Christmas Baskets etc., may help to drive home the idea of Christianity. Here again the reputation of the school will add to the Christian spirit.

##### 2. Upon the family.

Schools can exert a very great influence upon the parents of the students. If a school has again a good reputation, the parents will follow almost blindly any directive given by the school. Talks given to the parents by the school authorities or outside speakers, are well attended and usually produce great effect. Some parents who marvel at the remarkable improvement in their children's behavior may want to know the spirit and the religious basis of such character-training.

Conferences on educational subjects often develop into courses on religion and lead some parents to baptism. Since Catholic schools enroll many students from the better families, professional men, such as doctors, lawyers, professors, etc. who might not get acquainted with Catholicism otherwise can get such information through the school. These men in turn through their contacts often communicate their information to others, and thus knowledge of Christianity is spread.

### 3. Upon other educators

Principals and teachers of other public and private schools often visit Catholic schools and consult the teachers on educational matters. They might be interested in the method used to train character, often ask about the religious basis upon which this program is built. Frequently they return determined to apply some of the Catholic principles in their own schools. Public school teachers and teachers of other private schools often send their own children to our schools.

### 4. Upon society at large

Catholic schools often get attention in the press. Various ceremonies the cultural and athletic activities especially Universities entrance results appear in prints and published all over the country.

Our schools being known as La Salle and Catholic the attention is then focused on the Catholic Church.

### 3. ADMISSION OF CATHOLIC STUDENTS INTO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Article 798 of Canon Law states the obligation of Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools. The Catholic schools themselves have therefore a correlative obligation to accept Catholic children. However, as with any obligation stemming from positive legislation, practical circumstances may render the fulfillment of this obligation difficult or almost impossible. At present, because of the educational situation in Japan, it is simply impossible to give every Catholic child an opportunity to receive education in a Catholic school.

Limits are set by the number of students that can be accepted and by the academic standard which Catholic schools must maintain in order to recruit good students and continue to exert their missionary influence. If a school, for example, were to accept every Catholic irrespective of his scholastic ability, it would lose its reputation for being just and objective. This being known, the Catholic parents would send their children to public schools instead.

We try to give every possible consideration to Catholic applicants having the greatest welfare of the Church at heart. If we were to accept all Catholic students without passing the entrance examinations, the school authorities as well as those Catholic students would be despised by non-Catholic teachers and students. The school would lose its prestige and there would be a decrease in the enrollment. Financially speaking it would become quite a burden not receiving any help from the diocese and being a private school very little from the Japanese Government.

### 4. LASALLIANS FACING REALITIES IN JAPAN

Frustration. A Lasallian engaging in education in Japan may experience a deep frustration upon realizing that although his Congregation has established and is administer-

ing the school, he may not in many cases be so free in this administration as in his home country. This because he has to reckon with the limits set by law, by local custom, the composition of the lay staff (most of them non-Catholic) in the school etc. One must realize on what legal basis private schools are granted approval to operate in Japan. They are granted their charter on the basis of an act of endowment, called in Japanese "kifukoi". Through the "kifukoi" the property of the newly established Catholic school is legally separated from the ownership of the founding religious corporation and is administered by a new school juridical person. The school can thus be considered as a part of the educational setup of the country. Religious teachers should be careful in thinking or speaking too much in terms of "our" school. They should rather consider themselves as Japanese educators working in the educational framework of this country. As for local customs, regulations, teachers' opinions, etc. any attempt to disregard these and operate the school alone or on the pattern of their home countries would be fatal.

Non-Catholic teachers and students do not immediately perceive the greatness of the religious as such. They often evaluate a Brother only as a person and as a teacher.

The Brothers have been asked by the Lord to work in a milieu where human relations in the beginning at least, may not be very rewarding. Students and parents do however appreciate the devotion of religious teachers and on occasion express their wholehearted gratitude. That came into focus last year when one of the Brothers was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Rosette Golden Rays by the Japanese Government with the Imperial Seal.

*Expert teaching.* If a Brother is an expert in his field he will be duly appreciated by the staff and the students, and it will greatly increase his influence.

*Availability.* A Brother should always be available for consultation, student guidance or teachers' conferences, and make every effort to attend all school activities.

*Teaching of religion.* The long school hours (six days a week) and the many extracurricular activities present a difficult problem. Religion courses have to be wedged into a tight schedule. Time can be found, however, if one is willing to adapt himself to conditions.

*Evenness of temper.* East is East and West is West. No doubt many things will annoy a Brother when he comes to Japan. As elsewhere a man who gets angry is the loser.

*Unity among the Brothers.* It is essential to preserve unity among the Brothers living in community and in a school. The least sign of disunity among them will be noticed by the staff and students to the great detriment of the apostolic aims of the school.

### Conclusion.

In Japan the educator's motto should be to work quietly day after day, in great humility and patience, with great charity and kindness for all. Results, sometimes very rewarding, will appear in God's appointed time. «In order to respond to this divine plan and also to situations of distress similar to those that the Founder knew, the Institute desires to be present to the world today as part of the Church's work in spreading the Gospel.» (R. 11)

**Brother Marcel Petit**