

★ *lasalliana*

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A COMMUNITY OF FAITH AND APOSTOLATE

(University of «El Bajío»,
Leon, Mexico)

«God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.» (John, 3:16-17).

The beginnings of the community

Our community began in October 1988 after two pastoral sessions directed by some married people. Among them was a professional, Ing. Jaime Palacios C. At this time, the community was composed of 14 university students majoring in Hotel Management and Tourism, Computer systems and Veterinary Medicine. The group held two meetings per week with these married people in order to prepare for entrance into pastoral work. In February 1989 it gave its first retreat.

Since it is very necessary to be well prepared and to grow in the Lord, the community itself made another retreat in May of the same year. However, this time it was a «Charismatic Initiation» session: i.e., an introduction into the movement of renewal in the Holy Spirit. Thus the group became Charismatic. From then on, the community meetings became prayer meetings and in this way adopted its own style of spiritual growth.

In June, the first Charismatic retreat took place in the University, only this time it was open to the entire student body. Earlier ones had been restricted to specific groups. 30 students attended, and decided to join our community. This enlarged group began to meet at two o'clock in the afternoon, which was the most convenient time for everyone, given the diversity of class schedules.

In October, another such retreat was made available, and this time 70 more students with a variety of majors attended. They also joined our community.

At present we have 90 members, all students of the University, and even a few alumni. It is a community

of young people for young people divided into 5 ministries. It is led by three general coordinators plus a coordinator for each ministry, all under the general direction and with the support of Father Alfonso Garcia, a priest of the Order of Missionaries of the Holy Spirit.

The ministries of our community

The ministries we have at present are:

PRAYER: This supports all the activities of the community through dialogue with Our Lord and Our Mother Mary. Our special focus in this area is continuous prayer for the sick.

MUSIC: Its principal purpose is to praise the Lord. This group selects the songs for Masses at the University chapel, meetings of the community and for retreats.

LITURGY: Preparation of the liturgies are designed to make known the Liturgical Year as well as to enhance the meaning of the Mass. This group assists the priest, chooses readers, presents the petitions, and arranges for the presentation of the gifts at the Offertory of the Mass.

WELCOME AND SERVICE: This group assures a cordial reception to those attending the Mass, retreat or other University activities. They prepare the site to be used and see to its cleanliness and order.

EVANGELIZATION: This ministry gives the retreats. Its principal purpose is to "evangelize the baptized"; i.e., to bring the good news that Christ is alive! He is the Savior and Lord of all who receive Him.

Each ministry holds its own meetings, usually from 1 to 3 per week. There is a general meeting of all ministries from 2-4 p.m. on Wednesdays.

Evangelization

At this point, we will try to explain how this evangelization is carried out.

In order to decide on the time for each session, the community prays in order to discern which would be the most appropriate date. With the date set, the next step is to prepare those yet unknown whom the Lord will choose to meet. This is done by inviting individuals indirectly with expressions like: «You may be seeking, but there is also One who seeks you», etc. If the person is interested, he/she is told when the next meeting will take place. All the while, the committee for the ministry of evangelization is praying to discern who will be the ones to lead the session. The choice is made by a discernment on the part of the three general coordinators and the coordinator of the ministry committee. When the decision is announced, the chosen evangelizers begin to prepare the specific theme of the Kerygma.

The Kerygma is the first news that Christ is living, that new life is growing, that it is an experience of faith, that it is really **the** good news and that it is the power of the Holy Spirit at work.

It is a **new life** because whoever has met Christ and has felt the first thrill of liberation is not only different but totally new.

It is an **experience of faith** because it is by faith that God manifest Himself to us in many ways.

It is really **good news** because the Gospel is news. It is the joyous proclamation of the salvation of each man through the death, resurrection and glorification of Christ Jesus.

It is **the power of the Holy Spirit** because through Him we belong to Christ. He gives witness to Christ in our hearts and enables us to proclaim Him as our Lord. It is He who enriches the community with a variety of fruits and charisms to proclaim the Gospel with power.

The object of this presentation is to try to begin, with the power of the Holy Spirit, a kingdom of justice and love in which men, as the people of God, can live here and now with that new life given to us by Jesus.

The Kerygma comprises nine themes:

1. The love of God
2. Sin
3. Jesus Saviour of the world
4. Faith and conversion
5. The kingdom of Jesus
6. Toward a new life
7. The promise of the Father to you
8. Pentecost today: the Holy Spirit, His fruits and charisms
9. Community, the body of Christ.

Each theme is developed by two evangelizers who must also give witness by their own lives to the change the Lord has wrought in them.

The retreat lasts two days, generally on a Saturday and Sunday. During the retreat there is a renewal of Baptismal promises, renunciation of esoteric practices, astrology, etc., and a public proclamation that Jesus is the Lord of our lives. Both days, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed the whole time and the Prayer Committee (ministry) maintains a continuous vigil. There are also dynamic group sessions as well as discussion periods to clarify points of doubt and uncertainty. A prayer for interior healing is offered for all who are making the retreat. It ends with the Holy Mass and the imposition of hands as a sign of the effusion of the Holy Spirit.

Our experiences

Within our community, the Lord has manifested Himself in various ways through the different gifts and charisms with which the Lord has gifted us. For example: the gift of tongues, prophesy, visions, interior healing, prayer, and in most of us, the gift of the word of the Lord through the reading of the Bible.

Once the whole community was asked to pray for a young man who had just been diagnosed for leukemia. During two general meetings, we prayed for him, that the will of God be fulfilled in his regard, but we had complete confidence that He would hear our petition that he would get well. We had all had an experience of His wonderful love and we wanted our brother to feel it also. A week later, at our general assembly, we learned that, having completed his courses of study, the young man was completely cured. Our merciful Father had heard our prayer and performed His work of love.

Plans for the future

For this semester, we plan another retreat for initiates and also one for continuous formation. These latter retreats foster growth in our knowledge of the faith as well as closer union with God. God willing, it will be on initiation to the Scriptures.

The Prayer Ministry will begin visiting hospitals and nursing homes. As a Lasallian group, we will work in the missions of Durango and Saltillo. We are remodelling a hall which has been assigned to us as a chapel. We intend to combine Lasallianization with charismatic activities through the formation of new communities in our sister schools. We consider Evangelization as the specific apostolate of Lasallianism. In all this, we have the authorization of the Institute through the Superiors of the Congregation and the District.

INDIVISA MANENT

**In the name of the community,
Ing. Edel Maria Espino Ledezma**