

SOME INDIVIDUAL LASALLIAN APOSTOLATES

One apparent development in the Institute, at least here in the United States, probably elsewhere as well, seems to be an increase in the number of Brothers who, as Rule 16b says, «are called upon to work outside the establishments conducted by the Institute.» How much of this is actually an increase, or something new in the history of the Institute, probably needs further study. Perhaps also it is only a transitory phenomenon, but again it may be a significant facet of the evolution that our Institute is going through at this time. As Rule 3 says, «The Institute also explores other possibilities (than schools) for teaching and educating more adapted to the needs of time and place.» In any case, it seems worth while to publicize some examples of great work that some individual Brothers are doing «outside the establishments conducted by the Institute.» Two such examples are given in this presentation.

The first is Brother Jeffrey Gros of the St. Louis District who lives in the Good Shepherd parish elementary school community of our Brothers in New York City and is a full-time Assistant General Secretary of the **National Council of Churches of Christ/USA**. He is Director of the Commission on Faith and Order, a counterpart of that Commission of the World Council of Churches, and has held that office since 1981.

As stated in the current Standing Rules of the Council, the purpose of the Commission on Faith and Order is «To enable communions to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goals of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in the common life in Christ, that the world may believe.» (Currently the Council is undergoing some reorganization, which may change the titles and the assignments of its commissions.)

Brother Jeffrey became interested in ecumenism in 1963 while studying the Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II and teaching the subject to his high school religion class in Memphis, Tennessee. In this city the

Brothers' schools always welcomed Protestant and Jewish students, a policy that grew into an ecumenical commitment following the Council. On the advice of the Brother Visitor Brother Jeffrey took courses in Protestant theology and later earned a doctorate in systematic theology from the School of Theology at Fordham, the Jesuit University in New York City. He has been twice reelected for three-year terms to his position in the Council. As Director of the Faith and Order Commission he has organized and supervised the work of the Commission which is composed of fifty representatives of the different churches that hold the belief that Jesus is Savior and Lord. Members are nominated by their churches, ratified by the Council's Nominating Committee, and elected by the Governing Board. The Commission meets twice a year. An Executive Committee, composed of twelve members of the Commission, selected in the same manner as Commission members, meets in between meetings of the Commission, or more often as needed.

Besides exercising leadership of the work of the Commission, Brother Jeffrey among other duties organizes a program of studies in ecumenism, is a frequent speaker at the councils of the different churches, edits studies on ecumenical issues, plans various seminars, and writes articles for theological journals and periodicals.

Clearly his work is Christian education, but not limited to a classroom in a single school, college, or university. He is reaching out to a much more diversified and extensive population, one that is at the cutting edge of the growth of Christianity in the world today. Reflecting on his experience in ecumenism over the past 25 years, Brother Jeffrey says, «We are only just beginning to realize the impact on the commitments of the Council in our own Roman Catholic ecclesial life and spiritual development. Our ecumenical partners have the same burden of educational, relational, and renewal tasks before them. ...Many personal enrichments and spiritual graces have come from prayer, from caring people, and from study in the ecumenical movement. But the greatest sign of the Holy Spirit's presence these years is the renewal that has been wrought in the Church, and that is promised among the churches – a direct result of the call to unity in Christ.»

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Another example of special apostolic work by an individual Brother «outside the establishments conducted by the Institute» is the work of Brother Gerard Frendreis. In one sense he is part of an Institute work established in 1981 by the eight Districts of the United States, the **Christian Brothers Investment Services, Inc. (CBIS)**. This agency manages the financial resources of religious communities, dioceses, and educational institutions. The President of CBIS is also a

Brother, Michael W. O'Hern, of the Chicago District. Currently CBIS is managing over \$600 million. The primary purpose of the management is to safeguard and promote the funds of various religious institutions. Closely related to this purpose is making sure that the investment of these funds conforms to the ideals of Christian social justice.

Brother Gerard is a member of the Baltimore District and lives in the Hudson Catholic High School Brothers' Community in Jersey City, New Jersey. His office is located in New York City where he works with the other nine staff members of CBIS, including Brother Michael. He is the one who is responsible to see to it that the \$600 million are invested in accord with Christian principles of social justice and concern for the poor. To assist him in this work Brother Gerard represents CBIS as a member of the Interfaith Center as Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), and among other things, as a subscriber to the Investment Responsibility research Center (IRRC). Incidentally, the ICCR is a part of the National Council of Churches of Christ where Brother Jeffrey carries out his ecumenical work. Brother Gerard's job is to keep informed of how the investment of the CBIS funds is actually being used. To do this he must continually study the reports of ICCR and IRRC, attend their meetings, represent CBIS at meetings of the corporate stockholders of corporations in which CBIS funds are invested, know what these corporations are actually doing, and speak up and vote at these meetings, in order to represent the Christian values of CBIS; he also goes directly to the executive board meetings of these corporations to explain and request appropriate action on particular issues.

Some of these issues are: raising money for housing, for small businesses, credit unions; promoting fair employment, product safety, quality, and equitable marketing; monitoring and championing environmental concerns; taking action on behalf of South Africa and third world countries (e.g., debt reduction and human dignity); speaking up on life ethics (e.g., control of genetic engineering, birth, life maintenance, death, and other medical issues), etc., etc.

Brother Gerard holds an MS degree in Mathematics Education from Duquesne University, an MA degree in Applied Economics from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and has completed all the courses and comprehensive examinations for the doctorate in Finance at the Wharton School. He was an instructor at the Wharton School and at La Salle University before becoming the Financial Advisor and "Social Activist" for CBIS. In this position he is a member of a three-person team that is responsible for all the decisions related to the investment of the funds that are managed by CBIS. He is also Editor of Principles, a "Letter of Socially Responsible Investing" that is published for the clients of CBIS about eight times a year, explaining all the action taken by CBIS on behalf of social justice in the management of their funds.

The Pope's encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* speaks of the "structures of sin" (§'s 36, 37), and in particular «the all-consuming desire for profit» and «the thirst for power»... «at any price» which adversely affects the development of the poor of the world. Often well-intentioned Christians feel powerless to do anything about these structures, e.g., action of nations, economic cartels, multi-national corporations, etc. CBIS has acquired a level of power, especially in cooperation with the Interfaith Center on Corporate responsibility that gives it the opportunity to work ecumenically, to direct some of the action in these structures. Brother Gerard has the training and the enthusiasm, as well as the pedagogical skills to guide the exercise of this power as a work of Christian education.

There are at least a score of other individual Brothers in the United States who are exercising similar educational apostolates. They are exploring and creating «other possibilities for teaching and educating» that are «adapted to the needs of time and place.» They seem to be a sign of the vitality of the Institute in our world today. If there is an interest, maybe their work and similar work from all the countries of the world should be presented in the future.

Brother Augustine Loes