

IMPLANTING THE LASALLIAN IDEAL IN AFRICAN CULTURE

1984 Session
of the Lasallian African Union

Last August the Lasallian African Union held its fifth session since 1975 in the Senior Seminary of Koumi, Burkina-Faso, on the theme of inculturation of the Lasallian Community. It brought together about twenty Brothers from the different French speaking Districts of the African Region (RELAF). A twenty page report gives the essentials of the business discussed during those few weeks. With the approval of Brother Vincent Rabemahafaly, General Councillor, and of Brother Dominic Samne, Regional President, we give the following summary of the report.

The Lasallian Community from its origins.

Starting with the "Meditations for the Time of Retreat", Brother Miguel Campos helped the participants to reflect and meditate on the Lasallian Community as it was from its beginnings:

- a community inspired and supported by the living Word of the Gospel,
- caring for the most abandoned,
- with the apostolic objective which is attained through the ecclesial functions exercised by the Brothers,
- a community with living structures capable of maintaining it and enabling it to attain its end,
- a community which organizes itself as a corporate body and chooses Superiors to guide it towards its objectives in fidelity and hope.

Brotherhood and evangelization.

Father Sidbé Sempore, O.P., dealt with this aspect of community during the third week. Forms of community exist in traditional society (village, family, clan) supported by structures designed to preserve the values by which they live. How do we regard these communities in the light of the Gospel and what can we, or should we retain from them to help us to live the evangelical brotherhood recommended to us by Christ who has given us this mission?

Conclusions

During the first three weeks Brothers worked in groups or in general assemblies. Gradually facts emerged, questions were asked and discoveries made. Thus a consensus was arrived at and convictions were formulated in the form of a profession of faith as follows:

We, Brothers of Africa,

- assembled from 3rd to 31st August, 1984 in an ordinary meeting of the Lasallian African Union,
- having reflected, meditated and prayed during this time on the community of service founded by St. John Baptist de La Salle and on African society and its values,
- aware that the implantation of our religious family in Africa must take place through the assimilation of these values, purified and enlivened by the Good News of Jesus Christ, believe in John Baptist de La Salle as someone human and accessible and inviting each Brother to become so;

- who urges us to make him alive today, here and now, in our conversion to God and through the mediation of the poor,
- whose God is a mysterious God, not to be domesticated, surprising, showing himself in events, taking us by surprise, intervening at the moment we least expect,
- who, through his Brothers, together and by association, answers the call to a mission of salvation in favour of African youth,
- who invites us to be faithful to his charism, to keep it alive by interpreting present reality in the light of the Gospel,
- who invites us in the diversity of races, ethnic groups, cultures and languages, of life styles and apostolic commitments.

For the Community we believe:

- that it is the living God and the action of God that creates the Community. It is God who called us, and our Community is born of Divine Providence. If we exist as a Community in Africa it is thanks to that Word and to the action of God.
- that a Community is composed of persons having each his culture, his formation, his nationality, his character...
- that the Word calls the whole Community to renewal through a permanent conversion of its members and a disinterested love.
- that in Community difficulties have always existed. Instead of dividing they should stimulate each one to pardon, to understand, to practice patience, to be indulgent, to practice mutual charity...
- that the Community should be attentive to the individual Brother, making use of his talents in the sharing of responsibilities, teaching him to respect differences and helping him to live "together and by association".
- that the Community Project, established and formulated by all its members, is the appropriate and efficacious means of assuring the vitality of the Community. It should be evaluated and revised periodically.
- that the Community is called upon to be open to its milieu by agreeing to share its goods with the poorest of the locality. It is by committing ourselves to the struggle against poverty that we live the poverty of the Gospel.

Special attention should be paid to Brothers in difficulty:

- the isolated, the ill, the timid, the emarginated... The Community must try to really know the members of its family.
- that the Brother is called, not for himself but for others. His mission is to announce the Gospel in the footsteps of, and with the charisma of de La Salle, whose mission was the Christian education of youth. God has confided young people to us for their salvation. We are therefore workers for the Kingdom.
- that in the face of materialistic ideologies and a civilization fascinated by possessions and action, the search for solutions to the problems of African youth is urgent and compels us to live to the full our spirit of zeal in action and prayer.
- that because of our efforts to adapt our community life in order to respond, in an evangelical manner, to modern needs and because of the kind of relations we cultivate with those we encounter, and because of our life style, our ministry and our ideals, we can attract young people.
- that the life of prayer is an essential dimension of the life of a Brother, that it is in renewed Community prayer that the Brothers tell Christ of their apostolic needs and receive from Him light and benediction, and that the Brother who neglects his spiritual life is no longer Lasallian.
- that the source from which de La Salle drank has not dried up and will never cease to satisfy the thirst of his sons throughout the ages.

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