

# ★ *lasalliana*

15 - 17 – D - 29

## SOME THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM A GROUP OF TEACHERS

We are a group of lay teachers from the "Istituto Arti & Mestieri" of Turin, a school which runs industrial technical courses, as well as courses at secondary level, up to the end of the 4th year.

We felt challenged by the Message of 41st General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and we would like to share with you briefly and somewhat spontaneously some thoughts that came to mind as well as some suggestions.

### SOME THOUGHTS

1. The serious way in which the Message speaks about a "Lasallian family" made a profound impression upon us and a welcome one: we understood it not as a metaphor, but as the description of a deeply human and Christian community which responded to the needs of a specific vocation which was to be found also beyond the confines of the Brothers' Institute.

2. The Message describes a Brothers' community not in hagiographical terms but realistically, and for many of us this was something new and moving.

This is how we saw the community of the Brothers of the Christian Schools:

*A community which had solid foundations:*

- \* in its fidelity to its Lasallian origins;
- \* in the effectiveness and capacity for work of the Brothers;
- \* in its rediscovery that a religious community is – a community which is loving and which prays;

- a community which is available (chastity);
- a community which is poor and for the poor;
- \* in its role as a non-priestly vocation which is present as a leaven and which gives service.

*A community which does not hide its problems, but which seeks to:*

- \* redefine its specific vocation in the present day world and Church;
- \* give greater importance to the vows in a world that does not understand them;
- \* make itself understandable to young people (lack of vocations).

*An Italian community which seeks to:*

- \* establish a position for itself in a country in which it is at risk because of financial difficulties and the power wielded by those who control finances.

- \* give a more evangelical response to those who thirst for values, truth, freedom and love, a thirst so prevalent in schools in Italy.

3. 1. We are very grateful to see that we lay teachers are no longer thought of simply as "lay stop-gaps", or as "a work force you make use of when there aren't enough Brothers around". We understand that we are full members of the Lasallian Family, because of our vocation as teachers, Christians and fellow-workers in the Brothers' apostolate, with all the rights and duties that this vocation. By the fact that we are here and now doing the will of God, we are also "called" "here" and "now".

3.2. Consequently, we feel that it is urgent and crucial to take steps to:

**A.** Become aware of what a specifically Lasallian vocation implies at the present time;

**B.** Bring with us into the Lasallian Family values that are specifically ours:

- availability and personal friendship;
- professional competence;
- sensitivity to the signs of the times;
- enthusiasm and experience;
- witness (by words and actions) of our confi-

dence in the Lasallian vocation;

- efforts to make this vocation understandable to young people ("fostering vocations").

**3.3.** We feel we have the "right" to involve the rest of the Lasallian Family (the Brothers' community in the first instance) in our "problems":

- the devaluation and disqualification of the person of the teacher in modern society, and the frustration that this brings;
- financial problems;
- loneliness and isolation in an ever increasingly soul-destroying society, and sometimes in a "bureaucratic" Church;
- poor professional career prospects within the Catholic education system;
- And so on...

## SUGGESTIONS

The above thoughts have led us to make a few suggestions which are not intended to be original, but which can be seen as a sort of follow through on a community or institutional level of many things which are already being done on a personal level here and there.

Some of the following suggestions could be put into practice quite quickly; others are medium term projects; while others still are long term projects which would take much longer.

**1.** Above all, we lay teachers feel it is urgent for us to establish a closer spiritual contact with the community of the Brothers: we sometimes get the impression that the wealth of their Christian upbringing, religious wisdom and prayer is all locked away in a safe.

In practice, we look for:

- opportunities to meet them so as to be able to think and pray together at important times in the liturgical year;
- a chance, to the extent that this possible, to join in Brothers' community prayers;
- a chance to work out with them ways to offer help to pupils (also former students, parents, older pupils...);
- contact with Brothers in charge of fostering vocations;

- contact with teachers who used to work with the Brothers, but who now work in other schools, with a view to extending the influence of the spirit of St. La Salle.

- closer contact with other groups in the Lasallian Family (former students, Signum Fidei).

**2.** On a strictly professional level, we lay teachers feel a need for:

- meetings or courses on a regular basis to study Lasallian pedagogy in action.
- the possibility to update teaching and learning methods together with the Brothers, extending this possibility also to former colleagues.
- involvement in schemes Brothers have organised locally like extra tuition for pupils behind with their work, reception centres, etc.
- studying with the Brothers the needs arising from "new poverty" and finding truly Lasallian solutions.

**3.** With regard to decisions that need to be taken concerning the running of school, we feel it is important to study the question together (taking into account, of course, expertise and position in the school) in order to find solutions in the following areas:

- ordinary, everyday problems (allocating pupils to classes, choice of courses, timetabling, staff involvement, etc).
- the problem involved in establishing a small, stable group of lay teachers who, with the Brothers, can provide continuity for our teaching establishments.
- the problem of schools which are in danger of closing down or of losing their identity because of financial or staff difficulties, and thus depriving the "poor" of the "bread" they need.

There are other suggestions we could make, but we had better stop there: it is all very well to make suggestions, but to do something about them is not so easy.

What is important is to begin to work together, trusting Him who loved us first.

*A group of teachers from the  
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