

work, they also begin philosophy courses, to be completed afterwards in community. There is also a secondary aspirancy with studies corresponding to the training college.

Young Brothers in community have frequent guidance sessions as arranged by Brother Visitor. They are all members of one or other of the district commissions, and many are active in youth and vocations ministry, whilst others work in formation schemes. The District has decided that it must have at least one Brother trained in guidance for every group coming out to community.

In fact an important aspect of all formation is the systematic spiritual and psychological guidance which has led to the ballanced attitude and perseverance of the young Brothers. To achieve this the guides have all received personal, professional help and have followed formation and guidance courses.

The formation commission ensures that the various stages have unity of purpose and they evaluate the system and make necessary changes. At the moment we are adapting the Institute book "The Guide to Formation" to our needs.

UNITY MEANS STRENGTH: TOGETHER AND BY ASSOCIATION.

INTRODUCTION.

There have always been groups of lay people, guided by the brothers in Latin America, who have helped in their work. Inventiveness is matched to needs and has given a special flavour to what we now call "Lasallian Family in Latin America". Family is an apt word in our continent, because the people are affectionate and outgoing, so it is no surprise that this new "Lasallian Family" concept has flourished with God's help.

HISTORY.

Three important Regional meetings were significant to the Lasallian Family here:

1. A meeting, organised by the Brothers Visitor in Mexico, 1981, took place in Conocoto, Quito,

Equador in 1983, and led to the integration of Lasallian spirituality and mission as practised by Brothers and lay people. There were 24 Brothers, one priest and 21 lay people present from every district. The meeting aimed at sharing the various undertakings realised by the different districts. A common Lasallian spirit and togetherness were engendered, and the participants determined to continue studying what is meant by "Together and by association" in the educational centres.

2. A Lasallian Family workshop, organised by RELAL, also took place in Conocoto from 12 to 22 October, 1989, whose main objective was to study the February 1989 Letter on the Lasallian Family, produced by the General Council in Rome. There was also chance to compare Lasallian Family notes with other districts, in order to have a joint plan, some having excellent schemes for the formation of lay Lasallians, others organising Lasallian spiritual weeks of high quality. 19 Brothers and 32 lay people attended this workshop.

Some district schools are entirely run by lay people, who have integrated with the district in question. In general, the districts work with three sets of seculars: teachers, former students and parents, the history of whose foundation plays an important part in the varied activities to which they are committed.

3. Meeting of the Commission for the Lasallian Family (RELAL): 17 to 23 February, 1992.

The fifth Assembly of RELAL, in March 1991, brought up the question of establishing a Regional commission to study the tasks of seculars; this was counted a priority. Therefore in February 1992 this commission, together with the youth, vocations and educational ministry commissions, met to work out a Lasallian project plan for Latin America, and how to carry it out. It was realised that the RELAL Lasallian Family has so far involved chiefly teachers, and efforts, in some districts more than in others, are being made to encourage educators to use Lasallian educational methods and spirituality. We have been disappointed by the former students' minimal involvement in pastoral ministry and by the fewness of animators among them. Therefore our campaign in the next few years will be in that direction, for quite a number of secular, non-teachers, will become interested given the incentive.

Our schools and colleges certainly are crying out

for communities of faith who believe in Our Lord and who will announce the Good News of liberation in every sphere. This will come about only if Brothers and lay people of every walk of life live with the same spirit nourished by the heritage of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

Brother Pedro Fernandez
*Coordinator Regional commission
of the Lasallian Family.*

FORMATION METHOD FOR SECULAR LASALLIANS.

The district of Porto Alegre began its efforts to coordinate the work of lay people and brothers in 1971, and the work had two phases.

The first phase was from 1971 to 1986, in which the work was centred on schools, and still continues so in adapted form.

The administrative basis of the above was the regular meetings (CELS) for prayer and reflection in the Lasallian Educational centres, and which have continued unabated for 21 years with representatives, Brothers and seculars, from all the schools of the district. What they suggested was followed through by the schools. The philosophy behind the schools was also studied and commented on in the publication "Entegração". The Agenda Escolar was also set up, as well as "Lasaliadas": an interschool sports programme. During this phase were founded EPEL and ENEL: provincial and national Lasallian meetings for educators.

As time went on, the meetings wavered a little, as though going round in circles, without achieving their objectives. Was this through lack of depth and spirituality, or from concentrating on reflection and action, without fulfilling the deeper needs of persons?

The second phase began in 1987, to which the documents of the 1986 General Chapter of the Brothers gave great impetus: the Message to the Brothers, the Letter to the Lasallian Family. This phase concentrated on the Lasallian Family, spirituality and educational ministry according to De La Salle. The commission for the Lasallian Family was set up, with Brothers and Lay folk as members, and aiming at spirituality and apostolate and the formation of lay Lasallians. This is now in its fourth

year. The plan aims at making people grow as Christians and persons, with an initial, then a deeper acceptance of Lasallian mission and spirituality. One hopes to evolve the elements of Lasallian mysticism: faith, fraternity and service, by a series of experiences, with requisite methods, content and festivities from time to time.

Basic formation comprises three stages spread over three years: initiation, development and completion, followed up by optional, permanent formation programmes, which go even deeper if need be.

The plan comprises semesters at three levels: personal, group and district. Each semester begins with a week's district session. In the following semesters, formation continues in one's work place or in work places common to several schools, with prayer and study sessions directed to the apostolate. This constant deepening is the basis for the growth of persons.

At the end of the second semester there is a retreat of three days, during which a "rites of passage" ceremony takes place, as a step to the next stage and an occasion to renew one's commitment.

To help clarify the plan, we now print in tabular form the stages of the programme:

STAGE	DISTRICT LEVEL PROGRAMME.	LOCAL LEVEL PROGRAMME.
INITIATION	Two formative meetings. One retreat.	Two semesters of further study.
DEVELOPMENT	Two formative meetings. One retreat.	Two semesters of further study.
COMPLETION	Two retreats	Objective and Subjective Synthesis.

Certain points for the reader's interest

1. There is a systematic, continuous process of formation, not just courses.
2. Emphasis is on spirituality and knowledge which is its foundation for living as persons, Christians and Lasallians.
3. The animators are fully convinced of the objectives, spirit and plan.

4. The Brothers' presence is essential, but lay people must be part of the animation and counselling team.

5. Candidates have to be well chosen and prepared, and it is important to have good counsellors and coordinators.

6. Great progress is noted in the persons being trained, especially after stage one.

7. At the request of lay people, a new group is at the planning stage called "Lasallian Associates", opened up as a result of art. 303 of canon law and by the Letter to the Lasallian Family.

8. The biggest challenge to the process is not the lay people but ourselves, who are searching for the meaning of our identity as Brothers, given this new role of lay people.

Brother Pedro Ruedell
*Formation team of the Lay Lasallian,
Porto Alegre District.*

PRESENCE OF LAY PEOPLE: WEALTH FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORK OF DE LA SALLE.

— *Could you please let us know a little of your background, sir?*

My name is Nestor Jose Ribet, born in Buenos Aires on 19 March 1948. I have been married to Isabel for twenty years, and have six children, the eldest of whom is married and has presented us with our first grandchild.

— *How long have you been connected with La Salle affairs: the Founder, the Brothers, their work?*

I have known La Salle since childhood, even my father being a former student of the Brothers, and myself being from the San Jose de Flores primary school. I then went on to take education in Marin de San Isidro College run by the Brothers. My early recollections are happy ones. For me the Brother was

a friend who always seemed to be around, helping me out with his skill and knowledge. I was in fact surprised at their knowledge and the happiness with which they spoke of God and La Salle. During adolescence, I found support and counsel and a homely atmosphere with the Brothers. It struck me a lot, though at that time I did not realise the new face of the church that they represented. Those were the Vatican Council years. I learnt to be a teacher, with the Brothers giving the example of closeness, love and generosity to their students.

— *What were the steps in your career in those years?*

My first job, in 1966, was as 2nd form master in the San Jose de Florida primary school. I then went to my former school of the same name, and for six years I taught the youngest children, whilst following university law courses. From 1970, I was a teacher and catechist at intermediate level. From 1973 I was director of studies, and in 1977 was appointed first lay headmaster by Brother Visitor Jorge Chappuis. At the end of 1984, Brother Genaro, Provincial, asked Isabel and me to make the big step of becoming Director General of De La Salle College, Buenos Aires, where I am very happily working now.

— *In your remarks at the 5th CREL meeting, we noticed how identified was your ideal with that of La Salle. How did you become like that?*

From my journey of discovery of the life and charisma of La Salle, I recall certain fundamental high points:

— The La Salle of my childhood, idealised, always surrounded by children. That is the La Salle of the Holy Picture.

— The student-teacher days and the impact of learning about La Salle the teacher, rather by intuition than from planned courses, the La Salle who was an innovator, even a revolutionary for his time.

— When I reached young manhood, I was beginning to be aware, slightly at first, but with personal curiosity, the commitment of certain Brothers who were friends of mine, like Brothers Combes and Genaro.

— Reading the Document of the 1966 Chapter "The religious Educator..", a course given in Buenos Aires by Brother Alfredo Morales, and especially, in

1975, a study week on the spirituality of La Salle, directed by Brother Miguel Campos, opened up perspectives of a La Salle who is calling us Lay People actively to take part in the Brothers' work.

— The District of Argentina is really opening up to the idea that lay people and Brothers are on the same route. The Lasallian study weeks with their careful study of the documents of the founder and of the congregation, show us that the original philosophy of La Salle is for lay people as well as for Brothers.

— *This means that you have received quite a lot from La Salle?*

Exactly, a great deal. A deepening knowledge of education within and for the family, living it in fact. I have joy in sharing with my family what it means to be Lasallian. It give me strength when I take on new responsibilities. I support my family through it, and have acquired great friends along the route. Especially I relish the school and its link with the church.

— *What has been your part?*

I think I have offered enthusiasm, strength and competence. I think that I have enjoyed and been interested in all the tasks I have been asked to do, and I have done them responsibly. I also think that as a husband, father, layman, I have shown that work can be a ministry and not just a job. I know that I can help the Brothers and lay teachers in taking on more Lasallian work, which belongs to the Brothers, but also to their secular colleagues, who are of the same family.

— *Recent texts of the Institute speak of the greater number and involvement of lay teachers in Lasallian work. This will result in a new style and even a new kind of presence of the Brothers in their work in cooperation with lay teachers. How do you see this double presence and how would you like it to be?*

I see that the presence of lay people will allow a real commitment of the Brother, who having handed over to lay people the running and animation of schools in city centres, can go as a vanguard of the church, and extend a generous hand to the least fortunate members of society.

— *How do you look on the presence of lay people in Lasallian works?*

It is wealth for the church and the De La Salle congregation, provided we are really committed. We

should not be "spare wheels" nor an extra leg for a falling-down table. I think we are a sign of a church which calls us to be active members of the body of Christ, becoming rich through this vocation and convinced of the value of the faith and of shared mission.

— *The new situation is not without its challenges. Given this, how do you look on the structural and day to day relationships between Brothers and lay people?*

From my experience, I recognise that all kinds of relationships exist between lay people and Brothers. Some result in mutual confidence, help and affection. Some are still signs of that stratification of the church which we would like to see changed. But I am glad to notice new experiences of Brothers and lay folk attempting to share not only the task, but also the faith. As for sharing structures, I believe that ways have not yet been found of assuring a kind of life which does not confuse nor blur each special vocational identity. I think that this is an area where we lay people and Brothers have to do some thinking, and I personally hope that the next General Chapter will shed some light and hope on this subject.

Néstor José Ribet, a layman involved in Lasallian education.





Work by the Argentinian Nobel Prize winning artist Esquivel, depicting the 500 years of Evangelisation in Latin America, with its witnesses and martyrs, a story of which Lasallian educational work is an integral part.