

as well as for professional and public life. Their contribution is seen to have been critically important.

Now in Pakistan, the Brothers are few and ageing, and aspirants are few. However there are grimmers of hope and new life, particularly in the desire of the sub-District Council to have the Brothers work in the interior of the Country in some of our schools where living conditions are at their simplest and educational needs most acute. A beginning has already been made with the announcement of denationalizing schools which were vested in the State many years ago.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND THE WORK THAT IS BEING DONE

La Salle English High School, FAISALABAD

Bishop Benedict Cialeo OP, first Bishop of Multan who had by his persistently pressing requests obtained the La Salle Brothers for his English Medium School for Boys in Multan in 1959, felt he had a right, once he had been transferred to Faisalabad, to have them start a similar school in the Peoples' Colony where the school now stands.

The La Salle Brothers took over in September 1961 when Classes 6 to 10 began to function in the present Brothers' residence, pending the completion of the school building where the school shifted in January 1962 and new entrants to classes 4 and 5 were also admitted.

Old Lasallians spread over the world and the country speak of their alma mater in glowing terms. Year after year Matric results of the school hit the headlines. A school seems to gain popularity with examination results in the educational ambience of the Province. It is questionable whether this is the correct yard-stick, in the context of holistic Lasallian education. La Salle speaks for its wholesome mores of typical Lasallian personality formation.



La Salle High School, Faisalabad: basketball court.

The school begun thirty-five years ago includes many priests, doctors, engineers, politicians and teachers among its Old Students. Since 1962, La Salle High School, has brought centre of education. La Salle has a student population of almost 2000 and a staff of 90 men and women. It is now one of the largest schools in the industrial city of Faisalabad and enjoys justified fame.

La Salle High School is instrumental in the establishment of a school in squatter settlements in the sprawling industrial city.

La Salle Urdu High School, FAISALABAD

Following their Founder's wide path of vision, the Brothers expended their apostolic zeal for the education of poor children deprived of the best in life, teaching boys of very poor parents. From its very beginnings of about 30 years ago, today it has grown into a high school and there are prospects of being raised to a higher secondary level. The medium of instruction is Urdu and 98% of the students are from poor Christian families. La Salle Urdu High school for working class and the poor is supported by subsidies from La Salle English High School.

La Salle Higher Secondary School, MULTAN

As mentioned earlier, La Salle Multan was our first establishment in Pakistan. The Brothers came to Multan at the request of the Bishop of Multan who negotiated the project directly with Rome. And so, 11th January 1960 was the official opening, and first official school day in a brand new and very well planned building that had just been constructed.

This school has a student population of over 1200. Brothers work with a tutorial staff of 80 laymen and women. Hostel is mainly for the Christian students who come from very poor families.

The school facilitated social mobility within rather rigid traditional cultures, often helping pupils of the poorest backgrounds to find a more worthy place in society. Stories abound of leaders in all walks of life who proudly attribute their success to the personal interest and patient coaching of a particular Brother.

To meet the overwhelming demand for admissions to the school in the late eighties, the Brothers expanded their buildings by adding a primary school, labs and an auditorium. The school was upgraded to a Higher Secondary School to meet the demands of parents who wished to have their children continue after Matric. The quality education offered by the school is the primary reason for the ever increasing enrollment. The population is over 1200. College section is attracting more students with its offerings and courses. La Salle Higher Secondary School continues to be a leading institution in the City.

A low cost housing project for teachers is planned and is going to help many families. Four lots have been given to maintenance and personnel employees. Seventeen percent of the total school population are scholars – a good percentage being the needy Christians.



La Salle High School, Faisalabad: administration building and Anselm Pavillion-Childrens' Playground.



Albans Academy, MULTAN

Named after the late Brother Alban Morin (a Canadian who was expelled from Burma in the early 60's and joined the sub-District), in the slum areas of Multan Brothers run an Academy which offers nursery and elementary education to the children of farmers and laborers. This school has outreach programmes serving the educational needs of youth living in the surrounding areas. This school is subsidized by La Salle Higher Secondary School, Multan. Recently Albans Academy has been registered as a high school.

The Catechists Training Centre, KUSHPUR

Brothers run this centre to train lay catechists for the six Dioceses of Pakistan. Kushpur is a predominantly Christian community, where Brothers and their colleagues from different vocational callings work together to run the centre. These lay apostles play a critical role in building up the local Church, or the re-birth of its parishes.

Partnership with other dedicated persons, has allowed other types of educational centres and programmes to spring up, to survive or to expand in response to new or continuing educational needs. Kushpur, one of the largest Christian villages in the country, has opened a Literary Centre for catechists' wives to offer programmes suited to the special needs of their people. They also run a literacy centre for the Catholic adults of the village. Sewing is taught for women, and cooking classes conducted for youth, mainly school drop-outs.

A Brother who has directed the Centre almost from its inception has left behind him a magnificent monument in the fine state of the Centre, now crowned by the complex containing a spacious building with lecture rooms, a library, assembly hall, offices, waiting rooms. He was instrumental in establishing an adult literary Centre, houses to accommodate the catechists and their families and the latest addition of a very spacious building for their studies.

Kushpur is not the most salubrious of settings for a Catechists' Training Centre, but what is experienced is an ethos among the catechists which stemmed from the sheer commitment and professionalism of Brother Osmund, who has devoted 30 years of his life at Kushpur. That experience has provided the bench-mark against which future standards would be judged.

Catholic Hostel, KUSHPUR

This is the largest hostel for boys in the diocese of Faisalabad and it is run by the Brothers. Students of this hostel are Christians who come from poor families. They attend St. Thomas' High School which is nearby. In the very near future this school will be denationalized and the Brothers will have the opportunity of taking over its management.

The witness of the Brothers who work in various ministries, their educational efforts and the role of the Lasallian School in the environment.

Young Men Addicted to Drugs

Brother Norman Wray, an American Brother, has been developing a project for the past ten years for young men addicted to drugs. He was inspired to leave the official Technical Institution in a sprawling City where he was serving, in order to explore ways to redeem the many Christian young men who could not cope with the pace and content of the official school curriculum.

His project has now reached maturity and has attracted much attention and interest, and he is presently developing a programme for substance abusers. Brother Norman has been realizing his life's dream in the interior Sind Province. His is a story of vision, stubborn determination, initiative and imagination triumphing over every conceivable disappointment and difficulty. Today the sun shines on his achievement: a well organized centre offering treatment and therapy and rehabilitation for the young unfortunates to overcome the habit. One special Lasallian feature of this project is the emphasis on community spirit and shared vision among the youth.

Originally from the Midwest of the United States of America, Brother Norman Wray has lived in Asia since 1960, hence his ability to merge his skills from the west with those from the vast cultural hinterland of Pakistan.

His personal work in rehabilitating has brought him much acclaim from near and far, with the Church among others

commissioning him to undertake such charitable work for the Christian Community. Even more important is his ability to discover giftedness in others, often the less advantaged. Now and then stories make their way into the media of young people redeemed from futility, even despair, through Brother Norman's intervention, by discerning and developing their gifts and thereby providing themselves with the means of making a living.

The main complex, situated in a farmland in the deep rural interior Sind Province, attempts to provide the substance abusers with facilities as well as developing or restoring their self confidence and helping them to re-integrate into normal society.

It continues to grow and, in a time of economic hardships such as the present, much appreciated help comes from funding agencies and from Church authorities.

Other Schools

Pakistan has four schools which have a Brothers' Community. However there are other Schools in two dioceses where two Brothers serve as Directors of the Education Board of the Diocese. A supervisor, Brother or a lay partner, visits the school often to supervise its academic, administrative and Lasallian programmes; coordinate the continuing professional and religious development of the staff; and maintain the links of the school with other Lasallian Schools. This system of supervised schools incorporates a large number of lay and religious colleagues, and thousands of students into the Pakistan Lasallian Family.

Vocations Ministry

Although over the past thirty years there have been numerous entries into the Brothers - more than ten have received the habit - only three have made their first vows. In recent years a new start has been made and at the moment there are three native Brothers in temporary profession and three novices; there is also a small group of aspirants.

Old Boys

Many of the Brothers' former pupils (Old Boys) have achieved distinction in the Church and in secular professions. The FSC number many priests of the various dioceses among their pupils, and the present Speaker of the National assembly, Mr. Yousaf Raza Gillani, is a former pupil of the Brothers in Multan. There are several other Old Boys who are Ministers of the Regional Governments.

Signum Fidei

The growing awareness in the different sectors of the school community of the Lasallian Family concept was made evident in the mid 80's when the Signum Fidei Association was organized in La Salle High School, Faisalabad. The foundation aims to provide financial aid to students.

At present there are 17 Brothers of the Christian Schools in Pakistan. Of these, three are Pakistanis, 11 Shri Lankans, an American, a Chinese, and a Maltese. To our joy, three more



La Salle High School, Faisalabad: Signum Fidei Group with Brother Baptist Murree.

Pakistanis will join the sub-District after their Novitiate and three are Postulants going through their formation in Pakistan.

Training in common values... spiritual development by different means

Lasallian Brothers have over the years maintained a high level of excellence in education by continually striving for improvement in the field of education. The aim of Lasallian education is not only information but formation of the mind, body, soul and character. This tall order can only be delivered by committed teachers who are also spiritually strong and well motivated to the cause of education as envisioned by St. De La Salle. The teachers begin their day with a short prayer and a morning reflection at the "Teachers' Assembly".

The teachers' assembly is followed by the general assembly for the whole school. Most of the people of Pakistan are very religious, no matter to which community they belong. The students' prayer therefore is appreciated very much as the young scholars begin their day with an invocation to the "God of infinite goodness" to help them through the day, bless their work, family, friends and teachers.

La Salle schools in Pakistan strive to infuse human and spiritual values in the students and sow seeds of respect for all humans. Before they take the attendance, the teachers begin the day by writing a "thought for the day" on a reserved corner of the blackboard. The thought may be anything from a comment on good manners to sportsmanship, anything that will help to improve the students' minds and teach them suitable and refined behaviour patterns. Every class has spiritual politeness periods to polish their manners.

Every teacher who enters a class starts the lesson with a short prayer, "Let us remember that we are in the most holy presence of God." The students greet teachers with an enthusiastic "God bless you" wherever they meet them in school. Even outside the school, teachers recognise Lasallian students by their spiritual greeting.

Every week a student of each class is honoured as the "gentleman of the week", for good behaviour. This is not

something that is done in every school and our students stand out among the others in culture and refinement when they leave the school for college and university education.

There is special emphasis on individual attention being given to every child and the administration tries its best to make each child feel special as a person in his own right. Every child gets the chance to meet the Principal at least once a year on the student's birthday, when he is also presented with a gift, a token of the Brothers' efforts to show individual affection to every student.

Sports and all kinds of extracurricular activities are encouraged to make the students well rounded human beings. To help students with any problems they may have, guidance and counseling sessions are arranged for every student of the school. These sessions are very useful for children in helping them to come to terms with themselves and others.

Parents approve and appreciate the efforts made by the school for their children. Most of the children at the school belong to the majority community, i.e., Muslims. Islam, like Christianity, teaches peace and tolerance, and the brotherly atmosphere at La Salle schools is noticed by all who come to it for the first time.

Most Government schools, unfortunately, due to lack of funds, are in a state of neglect. This has led to the mushroom growth of many private schools, some very good, some hopelessly bad, but mainly set up to mint money for their owners. La Salle schools have come to be recognized as being free from mercenary considerations and the dedication of Brothers is recognized and respected very much in a conservative society which usually regards the minority communities with some suspicion. Students develop a great love for their alma mater and often return to it some years later, with their own children. La Salle has produced some great political leaders, high ranking civil officers, scholars and of course wonderful human beings.

Over the years, the La Salle Brothers have established themselves as committed educationists and are highly valued for the contribution they are making to this society. As all Pakistani schools, La Salle schools aim to meet the demands of national goals through an education geared to the needs of the society, community and country, keeping in mind respect for human life and values. La Salle Brothers aim at providing an



La Salle, Faisalabad: students doing class work.

education which enables students to be productive in a society based on religious values, and keep the interests of their country in view at all times.

The school's motto is "God, Truth and Charity" and every effort is made to cultivate these values in the students.

Views of Former Students

The former students of La Salle schools say that when they go for higher studies they always miss the Lasallian atmosphere and spirit. They feel that in La Salle schools teachers are honest and take good care of their students.

Recently one of our former students, Waqas Ahmed, who passed with distinction getting a position in the Education Board, was invited to speak to the teachers at the teachers' assembly. He said that he attributes his success to La Salle School. The college professors were proud to have him as a student at their institution. He says "La Salle has something extraordinary which can be easily observed by every one."

Former student Rana Muhammad Shahbaz says...

"La Salle High School Faisalabad is one of the best educational institutes in Pakistan. I am an old student of this institution. The main quality that I noticed in this institution was that character building is considered as important as text books. I have an M.B.A. degree and have completed my education comfortably because of the very strong educational foundation laid down by this particular institution. Another thing that I noticed, because it is very strange, is that this institute is run by missionaries in an Islamic country and the good thing is that there has never been any religious conflict here. We work, study and pray with our teachers like we do with our real brothers. Wherever I may go, I shall always be proud of being a Lasallian."

Other older students' views:

"I shall always remember some of my teachers who have developed my thinking ability and made me a good student by encouraging my talents." (Adeel Raza, 9th C)

"I am happy that I can talk to the teachers about any problem that upsets me. Teachers are friendly." (Faisal Baig, 7th C)



La Salle, Faisalabad: school band with Brother Caesar and Mr. Abdul Karim.

What the Parents Say

Often when parents come for admission of their children, the academics has adequate sports facilities and extra curricular activities making their children whole, well rounded human beings. In fact outsiders can see that here children are not only getting education but social and spiritual formation for life. During admissions for the new term, sometimes Brothers are forced to say no, because many people want their children admitted to La Salle school.

A lady who came to admit her child said: "Brother I want my child to be in La Salle because I want the best for my child."

Recently a team from a Government School visited the school and one of the members commented: "Here we can see all the things which help to make a person a better human being".

Dr. Rana Bashir Ahmed.

He is the Principal in a Government College of Faisalabad and the parent of a student of the school. He says:

"La Salle School is one of the best schools in Faisalabad and enjoys a very good reputation. I have had the opportunity to send two of my children for education to this institution. One of my sons had his education from class one to class 10th and he is now a medical doctor. The other one is studying in class 7th. I have had the chance to watch the educational activities of this institution for more than 20 years. I am fully satisfied with the standard of this institution. It is most pleasing that neither of my sons has ever complained about any ill treatment from this institute.

"I also appreciate the social meetings, activities of the school, the administration's meetings with the parents of the students and social workers of the city. The school follows all the educational policies of this country. Most of the students getting education in La Salle School are Muslims. Their religious feelings have never been hurt and there is no clash of any Muslim with the Christians. They are living as one community having a common cultural background. I hope that if this process is allowed to continue and the latest techniques introduced, the standard of this institution will continue to improve in future. I have praise and respect for La Salle Brothers and wish for the further development and prosperity of this institution".

Teachers' Views

"The Brothers know what education is, and treat all students affectionately without considering the differences of caste, creed, or race. They are doing a marvelous job in the field of education. They should expand their educational sphere in the whole of Pakistan".

"...They do their work with great devotion, and show appreciation for us, encouraging us to do better all the time.

They always encourage good work. They stress character formation."

"In this school we are treated with great respect and dignity."
"La Sallian Brothers are just like our own brothers."

"La Salle School has its own identity."

The Lasallian Family Relationships at the Level of Teaching Faculty

The Brothers try to create fraternal feelings among the staff members and often refer to the team of teachers as "our Lasallian Family". Staff parties are held on Christmas and the School Day. It is felt that happy teachers can form happy and satisfied and well adjusted students. Teachers often develop a missionary zeal to impart education and many are also working for the poor students. Every year some of the staff members visit the local lepers' home at Christmastime with gifts.

Many functions are celebrated by the staff as a big family, for example *Christmas Party*, *School Day (De La Salle Day)*. Muslims are always welcome to attend Christian prayers in school if they so wish. The Muslim staff members celebrate their religious festivals with the Christian staff members. There is an excellent rapport and many friendships have been formed between Muslim and Christian teachers.

The Lasallian Family is one big family who share each other's joys and sorrows. On any death of staff members or that of their relatives, or that of a student, the Brothers and teachers visit the house to console the bereaved family. An annual Mass is offered for the dear departed of the teachers. Last year a Muslim student of matric class died in an accident in Faisalabad a few days before the matric results were announced. A mass was offered for his soul. His relatives were present and were very much impressed by the prayers and concern of the Christians.

On the death of Bro. Caesar Navarre, four years ago, many Muslims attended his funeral service and paid tribute to him in recognition of his long service to the cause of education in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

Who are we as La Salle Brothers in Pakistan today?

We are at the heart of Pakistan today, with:

- its teeming millions
- its unprecedented affluence
- its dehumanizing poverty
- its racial and religious conflicts
- its diversity of rich cultural and religious traditions
- its vast potential of young people seeking for just and meaningful expressions of life.



IN AFRICA...

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ ۝ تَنْزِیْلُ الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ اِنْدِ الْعَزِیْزِ الْعَلِیْمِ ۝

غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ
تَلَا

شَدِيدِ الْعِقَابِ فِي الطَّوْلِ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الْبَاقِ الْمَصِيْرُ ۝ صَدَقَ اللهُ الْعَلِیْمُ

Islamic-Christian dialogue

"Commitment to dialogue must also embrace all Muslims of good will. Christians cannot forget that many Muslims try to imitate the faith of Abraham and to live the demands of the decalogue". In this regard the *Message of the Synod* emphasizes that the Living God, Creator of heaven and earth and the Lord of history, is the Father of the one great human family to which we all belong. As such, he wants us to bear witness to him through our respect for the values and religious traditions of each person, working together for human progress and development at all levels. Far from wishing to be the one in whose name a person would kill other people, he requires believers to join together in the service of life in justice and peace. Particular care will therefore be taken so that Islamic-Christian dialogue respects on both sides the principle of religious freedom with all that this involves, also including external and public manifestations of faith. Christians and Muslims are called to commit themselves to promoting a dialogue free from the risks of false irenicism or militant fundamentalism, and to raising their voices against unfair policies and practices, as well as against the lack of reciprocity in matters of religious freedom.

*(Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Ecclesia in Africa",
of the Holy Father John Paul II, n° 66.)*

Historical background

- The Brothers arrived in Djibouti in 1951 and took over the St Charles de Foucauld school attended by French and Djibouti children in more or less equal numbers.
- In 1961, De La Salle school was opened in District 7. At that time, this was a district inhabited by the poor on the outskirts of the town.
- In 1977, the Brothers left the St Charles de Foucauld school. In 1984, it was taken over by the State.
- In 1980, two Brothers began working for the ANJ (National Youth Association). They worked in a centre set up for street children or for those whose parents had no resources.
- This centre included a primary school, a vocational training centre and boarding accommodation.
- In 1982, the Brothers were obliged to leave the centre.
- In 1983, they opened a vocational training centre at Tadjourah, and began providing vocational training at De La Salle School.



1995-1996 school year:
Brother Bruno with
some students from the
professional school.

De La Salle School

- It offers a complete primary school course (7 classes) and a vocational studies class with 13 pupils. It has 300 pupils in all, all boys. Of these 297 are Moslems and 3 Christians.
- The courses provided are in line with official programmes.
The spirit of the school and the values it teaches are reflected in its rules.
- The Lasallian idea of "together and by association" is well accepted by the pupils. They are informed about De La Salle and the work of the Brothers.

Where the teachers are concerned, this process takes place around the electric coffee machine. Ideas are shared more easily during informal discussions than at staff meetings.

The ideal would be to celebrate openly the values according to which we try to live. Such a celebration could never be a religious one.

- In practice, it is almost impossible to exchange religious views except at a very superficial level.

Our teachers are quite prepared to discuss religion: they ask questions about Christians and are critical about the way Islam is practised.

- In connection with the values the school tries to share and practise, the role of audiovisual material is very important in opening minds to new ideas.

- Outside school, there is a noticeable increase in the affirmation of Islamic values, shown in womens' dress, the construction of mosques, and the occasional aggressive remarks from people who do not know us.

- The school has a good reputation. This is rarely openly admitted, but past students who have risen to positions of responsibility and others are proud to refer to their old school.

- Regarding the service of the underprivileged, De La Salle School was initially located on the outskirts of a shanty town and intended to serve the very poor. As time went on, things changed. For one, the outskirts of the town are now some 10 kilometres beyond the school. Its reputation has done it a disservice regarding the service of the poor, despite the efforts of the Brothers.

The vocational studies class added to the primary school in 1983 was an attempt to respond to the needs of failed primary school leavers.

- It is worth noting that any after-school pastoral work is very difficult here.

The very act of opening the school doors after regular hours gives rise to suspicions of proselytism or worse.

Our presence and that of the school in Djibouti is comparable to a grain of sand in a well-oiled mechanism: it helps Islam to stop living as if it alone existed in the world. It gives Moslems a chance to come into contact with believers of a faith different from theirs. The presence of the Church in Djibouti is justified also by its schools and clinics.

The Brothers of the Djibouti Town community.

Extracts from the Rules of De La Salle School (Part 1)

1. Some ideas for living together

1. Living together helps to create bonds of friendship

2. To make fun of a person is to

- * crush him
- * prevent him from growing
- * prevent him from making progress.

3. Everyone is valuable.

No one is without any value.

The most important thing about a person is the way he lives with others, his ideas.

4. To overcome your fear means

- to grow
- to make progress
- to achieve something
- to be daring, even if it's hard.

5. Being tolerant means accepting that others are different

- black or white
- weak or strong
- short or tall
- thin or fat
- Moslem or Christian...

6. In order to live happily together

YOU MUST OBSERVE THE RULES



In the mechanics workshop.

**La Salle school, Djibouti:
All gathered together
to watch the
Olympic Games.**



The Benin Gulf Sub-District

The Benin Gulf Sub-District is spread over three countries: Togo, Benin and the Ivory Coast.

Our apostolic work takes a variety of forms: traditional academic teaching in the college, running an agricultural training centre, a vocational training centre, etc.

Among the religious beliefs or practices to be found in these countries we can mention traditional religions, various Christian denominations, new religious movements and Islam.

When speaking of traditional religions, we must bear in mind, however, "that no one term can adequately define the content and form of African religious sentiment. It has to be seen rather as a system which expresses the relationship between the visible world of man and the invisible world, governed by a creator and by powers which, designated by divine names and seen as manifestations of this unique God, are specialised in all kinds of functions" (Louis Vincent Thomas, *Éthiologie Générale*, p. 324).

The question we ask ourselves is the following: Is it possible to establish any kind of dialogue between the various beliefs, with the pupils and with the local population?

1. The various religious beliefs of our pupils

• *Local beliefs and spiritual nomads*

Some of our students come from backgrounds in which people are still very much influenced by ancestral beliefs and traditions. The psychological make-up of these students is wholly permeated by them. One can say that they represent "deepest Africa".

Others have been fashioned by an environment in which aspects of the western world and of Africa are intertwined. Although these students have, in theory, renounced the religious practices of their background, in practice, they are not free of them. When they have relationship problems or psychosomatic disturbances, they turn naturally to traditional practitioners of spiritism for the restoration of the harmony they have lost. We are not speaking here of the use of traditional medicines which, in some cases, come to the aid of modern medicine.

Another category is made up of students who, by coming to school escape the obligations of the

religious practices of their home background, but who, as soon as they return home, take them up again.

It should be said that the attitudes of people are influenced by the pronouncements of the government of the day on the question of traditional religious beliefs.

This was the case in Benin when, under the Marxist-Leninist regime of Kerekou, there was a campaign against sorcerers. The young people sided with the regime. When the country returned to democracy under Soglo, traditional religious practices were reinstated with much celebration. The culminating point of these celebrations was a week devoted entirely to the voodoo cult in Ouidah. Representatives came from other countries including the black countries of the diaspora, such as Martinique and the West Indies.

Students were all in favour of these events which, it was said, had been organised in view of coming elections.

• *Moslems*

The number of Moslem students varies according to the influence of Islam in a given area. Generally speaking, they are a minority in our establishments.

**St Augustine's College, Togoville.
New classrooms for pupils of various faiths.**



• *Members of other Christian denominations*

Whereas in the past, Catholic and Protestant pupils were numerous, this is no longer so. With the collapse of one-party states and the onset of democracy, the protection of civil liberties has become more important. In Togo, for example, during the one-party regime, only 3 religions were legally recognised: Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam.

Now that religious freedom has been recognised, a multitude of new religious movements has emerged.

While some of these are related to Protestantism, many others are syncretic, trying to amalgamate local traditions with the Gospel message.

This is the case, in Lomé, of the Church of the Saints of God. It has borrowed its liturgy from the Catholics. It runs schools and dispensaries in which herbal remedies are sold. This Church has hit the headlines by founding a new-style women's religious congregation which has confused people's minds in two ways: these new religious make a point of sporting habits similar to those of Catholic congregations (Franciscans, Our Lady of the Church), while, at the same time, it is clear that some of them are pregnant.

In their teaching, the Brothers have taken all these new circumstances into account, as well as changes in religious matters and other questions, by organising a religious education programme covering the 7 years of secondary school.

2. *Our religious education programme*

Given the spiritual thirst, on the one hand, and increasing doctrinal discussion due to the profusion of religious groups, on the other, certain topics have been included in the religious education programme.

By way of introduction to these various topics, pupils in the 3rd year follow a course on "The Phenomenon of Religion". This topic is taken up again, but from a different angle, in the following year, under the title of "Phenomenology of Religion". During the course of this seven-year programme, students study other topics such as:

- The Catholic Church and other Christian Churches.
- What does the Church think of traditional religions?
- Inculturation.
- The Church and Islam.
- The Church and the sects.

Our intention is to give an overall view of other beliefs, especially of those which can be found in our locality side-by-side with those of the Catholic Church. We think it important to explain the characteristics of each in order to avoid confusion.

Here is how we approach some of these topics.

1. *The Catholic Church and the other Christian Churches.*

After an affirmation of the uniqueness of the Christian Church, some historical background is given, which includes the great theological debates, pastoral problems and the great schisms.



The Bohicon school staff during the visit of the Superior General, Br John Johnston.

There follows next a presentation of the Churches which came into existence by breaking off from the Church of Rome. The pupils are informed about the ancient Eastern Churches, the Orthodox Churches and the Reformation. It is pointed out that, despite the great differences which caused the original Church to be split apart, there is now a great drive to promote ecumenism.

2. *What does the Church think of traditional religions?*

The aim of this topic is to explain to students the nature of the traditional religions in their localities so as to help them to develop a critical attitude. There are 4 main stages in our approach to this topic.

- The first invites students to say what they know about these religions, how God is usually envisaged in them, and initiation processes.
- The second stage makes a synthesis of the characteristics of traditional religions, and concludes that the main one is belief in one God.

Liturgical celebration with the pupils in the Brothers' chapel in Togoville.





Brothers of the Sub-District of Benin.

- The third stage deals with relations with the Church.
- * When Africa was first evangelised, the Church did not look kindly on these religions.
- * The important documents of Vatican II.
- * Some significant initiatives of the Catholic hierarchy.
- The fourth stage consists of a series of questions regarding a specific cult found in South Togo and Benin. The main point of these questions is to make the students compare the practice of this cult and that of Christianity.

Speaking of the conflict between the Church and traditional religions, the president of the Vodun Community had the following to say to the Pope during his visit to Benin on the 3rd-4th February 1993: "Stop speaking ill of us in your churches. We're not the followers of the Devil. As it happens, one of my sons is going to be ordained priest in the Catholic Church soon".

Regarding the guidelines of Vatican II, we stress in particular the need for the inculturation of the Christian message mentioned in "Nostra Aetate".

When we speak of the position adopted by the Catholic hierarchy, we refer to the memorable gathering at Assisi on October 27th 1986 to pray for peace. This meeting was the inspiration of John Paul II, and was attended by representatives from a wide variety of religious beliefs including those of traditional religions. A priest from the Nyigbin cult of the Sacred Forest (Togoville) was present at this meeting.

3. The Church and Islam

The aim of this topic is to give the students a knowledge of the main characteristics of Islam to enable them to understand Moslems better and to speak with them without confusing things or making superficial comparisons.

The approach we adopt here is that of a comparative study. It includes defining how God is envisaged, and an examination of respective beliefs, the approach to sacred texts, tradition, religious practices and the role of Christ.

Throughout this study, similarities and differences are pointed out. For example, although both religions are

monotheistic, their conception of God is not identical. Students are taught that it is a mistake to believe that Islam is the religion of black people: Islam, like Christianity, was born in the East. Regarding the persons of Jesus and Mohamed, Christians believe that, once the Word of God became flesh, there was no other Good News to wait for. God has spoken once and for all through Jesus.

Despite basic differences, "we can all live, Christians and Moslems, in the sunlight of the one and only God of Mercy" (John Paul II in Nigeria).

It is interesting to note that some of our Moslem students attend our Sunday Mass on a voluntary basis. The reason they give for going is the highly participatory character of our liturgy and the beauty of our songs and of our church decorations.

4. The Church and the sects.

The aim of this topic is to provide information about these new religious movements, to draw the attention of the students to the possible dangers they represent, and to encourage them to have an attitude of tolerance and dialogue regarding other religions.

The information given deals in a general fashion with the seductive nature of these groups, and the way they recruit and indoctrinate people.

Information is also given in a succinct form about a number of groups according to the category to which they belong: groups based on the Bible, groups originating in Asia, groups in which the religious element is secondary or non-existent.

More detailed information is provided about the independent African Churches.

• Future prospects

All the efforts we are making to respond to the religious challenges that face us as the 21st century approaches are only a prelude to the great task that awaits us.

The more numerous the religious systems offered, the more urgent it becomes to organise a solid, multidimensional programme of religious formation for our students. With a better preparation, they will be able to practise their faith without easily falling prey to the hawkers of illusion or reverting to integrationism.

Given our awareness of the fact that African intellectuals are often attracted by groups wishing to realise in the religious domain Descartes' old dream "to master and own nature", we need to give serious thought to ways of deepening the faith of our students. The groups we refer to - the Rosicrucians, the followers of Eckart, Scientology - are discreetly becoming more active in their efforts to captivate the hearts and minds of people in schools.

To make our work of evangelisation more effective, it is clear that we will have to pool our ideas and practical experience at both a Regional and an Institute level.

Brother Valère Adonsou

**THE LASALLIAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
IN EGYPT, AN ISLAMIC COUNTRY**

**THE LASALLIAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
IN EGYPT, AN ISLAMIC COUNTRY**

Lined writing area for text.

Summer Camp 1996.
Young Christians from
schools in Cairo.





Deprived city districts and regions awareness campaign. Display panel illustrating the needs of children of Upper Egypt made by primary school children.

to show a certain amount of fanaticism. It was a time of massive Islamic proselytism everywhere in the world. We should remember that all Islamic countries had been under colonial domination at one time or another, and this had been identified with the domination of Christianity. Problems began to occur in our schools. If a teacher, for example, tried to make his pupils say some non-denominational prayers together, certain Moslem parents would be sure to complain, saying that these prayers were not Islamic and that it would be better not to say any at all in order not to upset the children.

In 1983, all schools in Egypt were obliged to provide a place where Moslem students could pray. You can imagine how we felt about this obligation! The place provided for these students, more often than not, was the smallest and the most remote that could be found so as to discourage its use. It was not because we objected to prayer, but because often these places, more than anywhere else, encouraged displays of fanaticism.

Regarding fanaticism, it has to be admitted that we Christians and religious were just as fanatic as they when we were free to act as we wanted. Even now, in some instances, crucifixes are left on the walls of classrooms where instruction in the Islamic religion is given. This is a lack of respect for other religions.

When girls wearing veils first appeared at a school run by women religious, they were immediately sent home by the headmistress. Officials from the Ministry of Education forced the headmistress to re-admit these girls, veils and all, saying: "But, Sister, you yourself wear a veil as a sign of your consecration. How can you refuse this same privilege to these girls?"

Religious instruction is obligatory at all levels of education, and to gain access to university, students must pass an examination in their own religion as part of the baccalaureate. There are cases where students are officially Moslem, but whose family lead Christian lives. It is not possible for a student to follow a religious course of his choice. The course he follows is dictated by the religion of his father which is indicated on his identity card. Real dramas have occurred. There was the case of a student who refused categorically to follow Islamic instruction courses because, even though he was officially listed as a Moslem, he was a practising Christian and went to church. He was forced to submit.

Why are there Christians who, officially, are Moslems? One of the reasons for this is that Christians cannot inherit from a Moslem, according to the Islamic law in force in Egypt. People sometimes become Moslems in order to be able to inherit. We can illustrate this by something that has happened to at least two of our pupils.

The mother of a pupil comes to us one day to tell us that her husband has died. Soon after, another woman appears and says that she also was the wife of the dead person. It then comes to light that, without telling his wife, the man had become a Moslem in order to be able to marry a second wife. As a Moslem, he had the right to have 4 wives. The husband's family identity card includes 4 pages where, should the case arise, he can indicate his 4 wives and the children he has had by them. With the death of her husband, the Christian wife discovered the existence of another legitimate wife who, unlike herself, could inherit. Neither the Christian wife nor her children could inherit. In a situation such as this, it is tempting to adopt the only solution possible - become a Moslem.

Secondary school pupils: visit to a working class district in the suburbs of Cairo.



At the present time, we make no distinction in our schools between our Christian and our Moslem pupils. The children themselves, however, especially the younger ones, keep the distinction alive by saying such things as:

- "You're a Christian. You'll go to hell".
- "You're a Moslem. You'll go to hell".
- "You're a Christian. You can't play with us".

In these cases, it is up to the teacher to explain to these little children that God loves all of us, etc. There is no guarantee that such words convince all our pupils. There is sometimes a lot of fanaticism in the homes of both our Christian and our Moslem pupils.

The proportion of Moslems and Christians in our Lasallian schools varies from school to school. In three of them, the proportion is 60% Christian and 40% Moslem. In three others, the proportion is 70% Moslem and 30% Christian, and the atmosphere is somewhat different.

As a means of maintaining a Christian spirit in our establishments, we choose Christians for positions of responsibility. Sometimes, certain Moslem teachers feel cheated, believing they are more competent than the Christian who has been promoted.

Our Christian pupils are involved fairly frequently in family dramas. Society does not provide equal opportunities for Christians and Moslems. This obviously has an effect on our Christian pupils who, as a result, sometimes develop psychological problems and become fanatically anti-Moslem.

Some Orthodox priests manifest little openness to interreligious dialogue. This can affect our Christian pupils, 80% of whom are Orthodox Copts. These priests tell them that all Moslems will go to hell, and that "whoever believes and is baptised will be saved". No amount of discussion can change their views.

In conclusion, we can say that Moslem and Christian teachers and pupils live in harmony. Clashes are rare. We have never or almost never converted a Moslem. For the last 30 years, we have never set ourselves this aim.

We can say also that the Christian school is the best place for Moslems to get to know Christians and to appreciate them. The same is true vice versa. This is why the Catholic Church has always maintained that the Christian school has a very important role to play in Islamic countries.

Brother Jacques Boulad

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Blood Donors Day, held every year in November. Many senior students and young former students take part.

LE DAHER DE LA SALLE COLLEGE, Cairo

A Lasallian school for Christians and Moslems

Le Daher De La Salle College in Cairo has 1,500 pupils who range from kindergarten age to that of school-leavers. It has also a special section for 60 mentally handicapped children. The fact that this school is in Egypt, means that it offers a very special educational framework for the promotion of peaceful co-existence between a variety of Christian denominations, and between Christians and Moslems. Catholic teaching establishments normally enjoy more freedom, relatively speaking, than specifically ecclesiastical institutions such as parishes or convents, because they are not normally suspected of proselytism.

The State educational system is very much exam-orientated. Despite official declarations, this encourages cramming and private tuition, which is becoming increasingly common, and devalues schools and the teaching profession. Religious education is strictly controlled and given separately to Christians and non-Christians. Various means are taken in the College to promote common values among all the pupils, whatever their faith, as well as among the teachers during courses organised for them.

1. Pastoral work with pupils

At De La Salle, as in the other Lasallian establishments, teachers, in particular those dealing with middle school pupils (between the ages of 12 and 15), are encouraged to adopt the "Lessons in Living" scheme. This consists in organising one lesson a week for the whole class on topics of their choice which offer an opportunity to broach various subjects to do with personal growth and various aspects of life in society. At the same time, these lessons seek to promote values such as tolerance, charity, brotherliness to counterbalance the spirit of intolerance and fanaticism.

These lessons are complemented by cultural visits and other activities which are open to all pupils. For example, a Moslem teacher takes a group to see first a historic mosque and then some churches in the old part of Cairo.

Each year, celebrations are organised for all the pupils of the College, who take part in them as their age allows. There is, for example, the Annual Day for Peace, at the beginning of January, and St La Salle's feastday.

The College social committee organises a number of activities. These include collecting food in all the classes of the College, which is then taken by senior pupils to hospitals where it is distributed to the poorest patients. Each year, a day is organised when the older pupils give blood. They are often joined by numerous former pupils. Pupils of several neighbouring schools are invited to contribute also.

Money also is collected regularly for the support of poor schools. For two years now, a "Week of friendship and sharing" has been held, during which all pupils are given an opportunity to meet various humanitarian or social promotion associations.



St Joseph's School,
Khoronfish,
kindergarten.

Specifically Christian movements such as the Scouts and the MEJ exist in the College, but other movements open to both Christians and Moslems are encouraged.

The College could be compared to a crossroads. In addition to running a section for mentally handicapped children, the College serves as the headquarters for two national associations for social development: the Ecumenical Literacy Committee and the SETL (Association for the training of teachers of the mentally handicapped). It makes its premises available each week to mostly Moslem children from the locality, and hosts innumerable other groups which use the premises to set up exhibitions, run various sessions and celebrate Christian feasts. Its summer club and guest accommodation service are used a great deal by young people.

2. Formation of the teachers

Overall, 60% of all our students are Christian, and about 20% of our teachers are Moslems. All the teachers were involved in drawing up a document stating the educational aims of the College. Among these are included various Lasallian values such as education in the faith while respecting other beliefs, and condemning fanaticism.

Teachers are strongly encouraged to take part in social training activities organised for the pupils. It soon becomes clear that generosity or selfishness are not restricted to any one faith.

Every two years, formation sessions are organised for the new teachers of the 6 Lasallian establishments in Egypt. Moslem teachers attend just like their Christian colleagues and are introduced to Lasallian thinking.

Christmas and Ramadan offer an opportunity for friendly celebrations to which all the staff are invited.

For some years now, the Lasallian Centre in Cairo has made its formation sessions available to non-Christian teachers also. While a deeper understanding of the faith is one of the areas covered, it is still clear that Christian teachers need a more specific type of formation which will enable them to learn about the basic elements of Lasallian spirituality.

Experience has made us aware of a vast number of educational means at the disposal of all teachers. They are not much different from those used by most other educational establishments, whether Lasallian or not. What we consider essential, however, is the spirit which inspires everybody. This spirit begins to

grow in the kindergarten. It is a spirit shared by the doorkeeper, the school bus supervisors and those in charge of the various sections of the College. It is revealed as much in the way teaching is given as in the choice of educational priorities. Each day we learn to live more fully according to this spirit.

Brother Yves Lecocq

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ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL, KHORONFISH, Cairo

For 40 years now, St Joseph's School, located in a poor district of Cairo called Khoronfish, has been serving its local community.

Tuition fees are still relatively low, so each year we have to organise a fund-raising scheme to meet annual school budget requirements.

Our concern to serve the poor as a priority extends to Moslem families as well as to Christian ones.

The headmaster, an Egyptian layman, explains how he sees relations between Moslems and Christians in society and in school:

"In society, relations are quite good at work and at neighbourhood level. The Islamic movement is quite strong at the moment, which means that, when disputes occur between the two communities, relations become very strained.

Christians feel threatened in a country in which the vast majority of the population is Moslem. They no longer feel at home in a Moslem country. Some wish to convert to Islam.

In our school, it's just the opposite. The atmosphere is largely Christian. Most of the teachers and pupils are Christian. This does not prevent us from respecting the minority. School activities are open to everyone without distinction (competitions, school feasts). We run the "Lessons in Living" course in all classes. These lessons are given by both Moslem and Christian teachers, and all children follow them.

One of the principal points we stress in our teaching, which is intended for everybody, is mutual respect for others and their differences. All teachers are treated in the same way, as, for example, when there is a wedding or funeral in the family. It is noticeable that many of those who defend human rights in the country have had some contact with the Christian schools.

It is a great opportunity for me to work in a school such as this. I am encouraged to deepen my faith, and to ensure that my children are strong too, so that they can resist the onslaughts of Islam in schools and in the mass media.

Five years ago, the school was completely rebuilt on the same site. It provided an opportunity to set aside a 260 square metre area for a vocational training centre for the young people of the locality, and especially for the young unemployed and for school-dropouts without a future. Teaching in this centre is

In the centre of the photo, Mr Michel Choucri, Headmaster, at the opening of the new St Joseph's School, Khoronfish, in April 1994, in the presence of Brother Superior.



At the end of a day spent deepening their faith, young Christian and Moslem leaders pray together.





Solidarity campaign:
all pupils of the school are asked to contribute.



Solidarity campaign:
sending help to flood victims, November 1994.

based on observation and practical experience. Each course provided by the centre (domestic electrical installations, air conditioning, coil winding for motors) includes 100 hours of instruction, two thirds of which are given over to practical experience.

In this centre, we wish to provide new opportunities for many young people whose future is bleak because there is nowhere where they can exploit their potential."

Youth movements

St Joseph's School makes its premises (playgrounds and indoor facilities) available to the locality for educational activities involving, in particular, children and young people. It encourages such movements as the J.O.C. (Young Christian Workers) and the Midade (Apostolic Movement for Children). These movements offer an opportunity to form children and young people, taking their own lives as the starting point. To avoid hurting the feelings of the Moslems, the J.O.C. is called "chabiba" in Arabic (Young Workers), and Midade is known as the "Movement for Children".

Here is what some of those in charge of these movements have to say about relations between Christians and Moslems in these movements:

"In society, relations between Moslem and Christian children are not always very good. Usually this is the fault of parents, who say: "Don't go around with them". Where young workers are concerned, the situation is different. Those who work in the same workshop normally get on well with one another, because they all have the same aim: to earn their daily bread. The school is a good place for young people to meet. They talk to one another, ask one another questions about their religion, even if they do not always say the truth. Christians are glad to meet one another. This is probably a reaction against the increasing Islamisation of society, through the mass media, for example.

It's different in these movements. Children or young people come together each week for a short time and for a common purpose: to change something in their lives or in society. And they trust one another.

Many of the children and young people who belong to these movements do not know or practise their religion. This encourages fanaticism and mutual hatred based on mutual ignorance.

Bringing these children and young people together in the same group offers them an excellent opportunity to get to know one another and to work together (cleaning up the locality, for example).

Formation sessions, publications, feasts are so many important ways of improving relations between the two communities. A whole day is set aside regularly for group organisers to help them deepen their faith and reflect on their commitment to the movement on the basis of their respective sacred texts (the Bible or the Koran). The day ends with a period of shared prayer. This is a unique experience.

There is a lot of talk about religion in society, but nothing is said about its relation to work or life. Movements are important because they can establish a link with them. When people speak about our rights and our role in society, some call us communists, that is, people without any religion.

As persons in charge of these movements, we have to deepen our understanding of our faith and of our relations with others, whether Christians or Moslems. We are called also to improve relations between children and young people".

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

On May 10, 1994, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as president of the Republic of South Africa in the lovely amphitheatre formed by the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

To the assembled guests and the watching world he said:

"Today, all of us do, by our presence here ... confer glory and hope to newborn liberty. Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud.

...We, who were outlaws not so long ago, have today been given the rare privilege to be host to the nations of the world on our own soil. We thank all of our distinguished international guests for having come to take possession with the people of our country of what is, after all, a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity.

We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination.

Never, never, and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another... The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement.

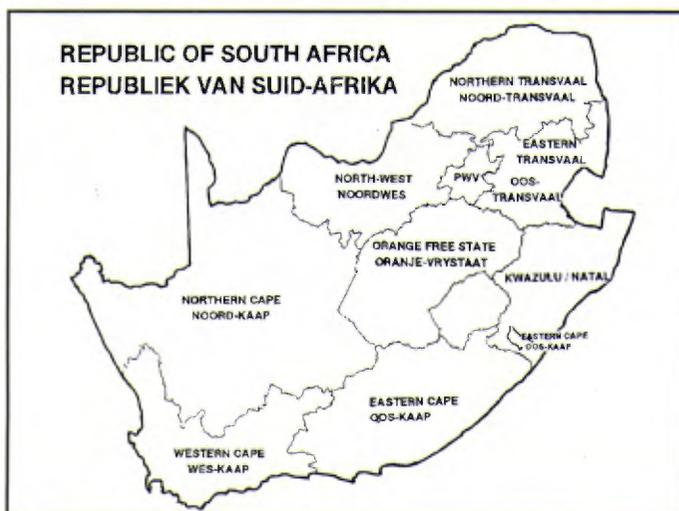
Let freedom reign, God bless Africa!"

In receiving the credentials of the first papal nuncio to South Africa, President Mandela recalled his meeting with Pope John Paul in Rome in 1990, which he described as a privilege, when the Pope had showered his delegation with gifts. Presenting his credentials, Archbishop de Paoli said he would do all he could to further strengthen and foster good relations between the Holy See and South Africa. He told the President that since 1922 the Holy See had been "a constant witness to the historical transformation of your country."

Under the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the former homelands and so-called self-governing territories have ceased to exist and so the map shows the boundaries and names of the nine new provinces. Further, the PWV Province, the country's smallest but most-thickly populated, has been renamed Gauteng (the place of gold), and the Northern Transvaal, the country's poorest and least populated, has been renamed Northern Province.

The results of South Africa's most recent census, taken in October 1996, will not be known before 1997, and so the latest available count of the country's Christians, non-Christians, the unspecified and of no religion among the Blacks, Whites, Coloureds and Asians, made in 1991, are given here.

Br Joseph Kiely
(white beard) with
George, Austrian
teacher, and students
attending Tsholofelo
Community College



DEMOGRAPHY

Religion / denomination by population group in 1991				
Religion/denomination	Blacks	Whites	Coloured	Asians
Total	22,193,310	5,061,785	3,280,548	986,799
Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk	1,064,709	1,595,021	563,783	
Gereformeerde Kerk		119,859		
Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk		246,188		
Anglican Church	647,268	291,679	232,493	4,635
Methodist Church	1,384,046	333,926	94,833	1,861
Presbyterian Church	308,028	89,922		834
Congregational Church	238,065	315,092	129,104	
Lutheran Church	686,219		81,161	1,618
Roman Catholic Church	1,790,160		233,364	13,800
Apostolic Faith Mission	135,697	225,046	63,005	
Black independent churches	6,968,084			
Other christian churches	1,436,617	725,875	713,283	79,260
Jewish/Hebrew		65,373		
Islam			157,801	166,609
Afrikaans churches				1,375
Full Gospel Church				21,677
Hindu				385,679
Other non-christian churches	31,498	7,050	5,675	6,895
Unspecified and no religion	7,502,899	1,046,754	1,006,046	302,420

Lasallian Ministries in South Africa

Br Joseph Kiely with teachers and students, showing their handiwork at Tsholofelo Community college.



TSHOLOFELO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The plight of families in a squatter camp adjoining the Mission in PHOKENG, and the Southern African Catholic Bishops' pastoral plan, COMMUNITY SERVING HUMANITY, provided the Brothers and others with a new mission and orientation towards the poor which called for a positive response. These families were resettled in Boitekong where they built their own houses, mostly tin shacks.

Sr Georgina Boswell, of the Sisters of Saint Mary Magdalen Postel, trained local health volunteers, set up a clinic, and put a medical scheme in operation. And with the help of generous donors, Br Joseph Kiely built a community college on a site blessed by Bishop Kevin Dowling, CSSR, and where Br John Johnston, Superior General, turned the first sod. The college was officially opened in January 1996. The following page has further information about the college. It has special games, crafts, study, etc. programmes for handicapped persons. It is non-political, non-denominational, non-profit making, and is already proving a boon to a people in straitened circumstances.

Tsholofelo College: some facts and figures

The college comprises three schools.

- *The Day-School* which enrolls 170 students runs from 6.00 am to 1.30 pm.
- *The Afternoon School* with 100 students runs from 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm.
- *The Night School*, 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm, enrolls 700 students.

The curriculum offered at the schools includes academic, commercial and engineering subjects. Technical subjects will be offered to as far as the N6 level.

Such practical subjects as leatherwork, upholstery and gardening are also provided. To these add computers, aerobics and drama.

In response to popular request, the college also provides sewing, knitting and crochet.

Students come mainly from the Boitekong community.

The regular staff is complemented by a number of overseas volunteers. Mankwe Christian College also provides some teaching staff.

NEWSPAPER AND RADIO

Both these enterprises were born on February 11, 1990, the day Nelson Mandela was released from prison. WEST, at first an A-4-size newsletter, developed into an 8-page tabloid-sized paper in black and white. Radio Mafisa went on the air in June 1996. Newspaper and radio were started by Br Finbarr Murphy who explains: "Our rationale is the fact that media work is educational work. It has the backing of Bishop Dowlin. And for me training young people in a post-high-school situation for journalism represents a very important apostolate. It is a form of education. The next stage will be to hand over the newspaper and radio to the young Blacks whom we have trained, and I will be extremely happy to hand over this entire project to these young people. They are not exclusively Catholic at all; they're from different churches, but they're all Christian, and the constitution of our non-government organisations named TALENT, is Christian, but that does not mean that we exclude Muslims and people of other faiths. It means that we are Christians, but that we dialogue with others in a Spirit of Faith."

Radio Mafisa is a Christian Station.

Under the heading Mission Statement we read:

CHRISTIAN, "Let them know you are Christians by your love, by your love."

We don't preach! We bring Gospel values to bear on issues of social justice, peace and democracy; we propose, not impose; we're ready to dialogue with all faiths in a pluralistic society.

Each Sunday morning Br Finbarr Murphy speaks on the Gospel of the day for about half an hour on Radio Mafisa.

On Sunday evenings he again speaks about the Gospel of the day to the community, teachers and boarding students at Phokeng. This is an exercise they all look forward to and one for which they are grateful to Br Finbarr.

WEST

Editorial Comment

Tsholofelo – hope

At a time when university graduates sell sweets or do hairdressing for a living, fingers are pointed at the curricula offered in our third level institutions. From a strictly utilitarian point of view, degrees and diplomas have become useless - tickets to unemployment.

Tsholofelo Community College, TCC, in Boitekong near Rustenburg, is therefore a most welcome alternative. Its varied curriculum shaped from local needs, provides that vital link between education and employment.

With its unique balance of practice (praxis) and theory, TCC seems to offer a model that can be replicated elsewhere. MEC Goaretelelwe could facilitate the process if she chooses to push for certification. In our view, the college on its own merits, deserves no less.

(MEC = Member of the Executive Council. M Goaretelelwe is Minister of Education in the North West Province).

Prophets or Profits?

A newspaper is motivated in one or other of two main ways: by money, or by a commitment to social justice. A profit-driven paper will rarely criticise big business. Why? Because the paper might lose adverts. It will seldom criticise the ruling political party either, because that party is supported by big business. But the paper will claim to be politically neutral! However, remember all papers need money to survive.

Take this newspaper. It grew out of the struggle and still tries to stand for the disadvantaged. So we try to be prophetic. But West is said to be political - as if there's such a thing as a politically neutral paper! As for money - West obviously runs at a loss. But its debts are justified in view of its training programme.

West, while being true to its readers and its mission of defending the oppressed, may soon have to enter a partnership with one of the bigger newspapers - even as the mighty Sowetan has done.

The alternative is death. Tyrone August may say what he wishes about the 'principled death' of a magazine such as Speak. But what good is a dead newspaper? By retaining editorial control, West can be both prophetic and self-sustaining. And whatever about profit, it can also continue to train.

Civic education

The civic education project launched by Radio Mafisa and the Freedom of Expression Institute last Saturday raises a lot of issues.

Firstly, there is enormous interest in this kind of education as is evident from those who attended, and more so, by the many applicants who had to be refused entry.

Secondly, when are curriculum developers going to include an introduction to the new constitution in high school syllabi? After all, what use is the new dispensation if grandiose democratic principles remain locked away in obscure documents and are written in opaque legalese that only attorneys can explain?

These are questions that Saadtu and other teaching bodies might consider. Because without a culture of respect, our Bill of Rights will remain a dead letter, warns Mr Mandla Seleokane of the Freedom of Expression Institute.

But schools are not the only, or even the best institutions for this kind of subject. Civic education might best be handled by the media - especially community media.

Lastly, given the FXI's depth of talent, we suggest that that body engage other community media, nationwide to spread the word. But only after the Rustenburg civic education dream has been realised - please!



Students at Tsholofelo Community College parade their own handiwork.

VICTORY PARK NIGHT SCHOOL 1992

De La Salle College, Victory Park, Johannesburg, was founded in 1958 with Br Alpheus Farrell as principal. After the riots of 1976, the Bishops declared the small network of Catholic schools open to all races. In due course De La Salle opened its doors, thereby incurring the wrath of the pro-apartheid government. In 1986 Holy Cross Convent School and De La Salle amalgamated, making a total of 800 pupils, black and white. A government grant in the late 80s has made a contribution towards running expenses.

The college authorities, in the early 90s, saw the need to do something positive for the education of domestic workers and labourers in the area, most if not all of whom never attended school or squandered the opportunity when it was available.

After some research they decided to make the college premises available for night school classes, and so the Victory Park Learning Centre, a satellite of City Deep state-run Education Centre, made a beginning.

Students enter at different levels, and courses include literacy, African languages, English, maths, science, social studies, accounting, Bible studies, biology, business economics, mercantile law, history. The centre is registered with the Gauteng Department of Education and with the Independent Examination Board for examinations. The Department pays the teachers an hourly rate. The Brothers do not teach in the Night School. However, it is the Brothers' premises that are used, and the bill for electricity in consequence is very big indeed, and the burden is borne by the Brothers but the outlay is in a very good cause.

The students buy their own books and stationery and pay a minimal fee, but paying it enhances their self-respect and personal sense of dignity and independence. As the year progresses attendances drift from good to not good, and for that principal reason examination results do suffer. Currently there are 420 students, Christians and non-Christians, on the rolls. Past students no less than present students are grateful for the opportunity to follow classes in an atmosphere of acceptance and calm. They admit they are prone to discouragement, and that their little framework of security is easily shattered. They do appreciate the courtesy and helpfulness shown them and that encourages them to persevere when at times it is so difficult.

Display Board at Tsholofelo Community College listing the generous donors of the project.

ST BRENDAN

St Brendan's, a well-equipped, diocesan co-educational boarding (only) high school for 500 African pupils, is situated on the Tropic of Capricorn in the Northern Province, South Africa's poorest and the one in which the failure rate in public examinations is highest. Such are its fees, it's said it's cheaper to board at St Brendan's than at home. Even so, 15% of the pupils are on bursaries. For the Brothers, many of their services have to be paid for by the Sub-District. 78% of its pupils are Catholics and preference is given to diocesans.

Brothers from St Brendan's have taken on a supportive role of assisting neighbouring schools in the teaching of biology, general science and English (as a second language), for the reason that the teachers are poorly trained, and the standard of English - the medium of instruction - is low.

Demonstrations and experiments are performed in the laboratories in St Brendan's for pupils and their teachers. In so insisting on the presence of the teachers, the Brothers see the experience as an opportunity for the in-service formation of these teachers. It emerges now that the Department of Education in the province is looking to the religious-run schools such as St Brendan's to help in what way they can to improve the lot of education in these difficult times. The principals and teachers and pupils from those neighbouring government schools are neither Catholic nor Christian, in many cases, but that is not an issue when it is question of assisting them in their time of need. Besides, they are most appreciative of the assistance of the Brothers.

It's been said that at present St Brendan's is an island because they do not have day pupils. The supportive role referred to here will surely help to erase that image and enable them to better identify with the locality.

NEW TSHOLOFELO COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR THE BOITEKONG COMMUNITY

HATS OFF!! FOR ALL PARTNERS

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It is a matter of note at St Brendan's that pupils are trained in the care of the environment where several small parks, suitably marked and carefully fenced in, e.g. La Salle Park, Mandela Park, Marian Park, Dwars Park, the Fountain, etc. have been planned by Br Anthony Furniss and put in place by him and groups of interested pupils. Also the walks are lined with trees of different varieties, and although it will take years for these developments to mature, even now the grounds look really lovely. In addition all pupils are instructed, by theory and practice, in the preparation of the soil for planting vegetables, planting and care and harvesting of same.

LA SALLE COLLEGE, Discovery, Johannesburg

LA SALLE COLLEGE, Discovery, Johannesburg, was founded in 1966, with Br Alpheus Farrell first principal and director. This boys only school is situated in the highly industrialised area of Roodepoort. In 1977 Muslim and Hindu pupils enrolled for the first time. The present % of Muslim and Hindu pupils stands at 7. Their reasons for joining the school are: its quality education and favourable environment; the small classes, religious tolerance, a caring environment and a caring staff. Muslim and Hindu pupils are well accepted by their Christian colleagues. The behaviour of the Muslim and Hindu pupils is excellent. The teachers find the Muslim and Hindu pupils, for the most part, co-operative; as with all students some are well motivated and work hard, others have to be "pushed".

Muslim and Hindu parents attend school functions, and are very supportive of fund-raising activities. Muslim and Hindu pupils are often represented in prize lists, and quite frequently they are elected school prefects and captains. They attend Religious Education for non-Catholic students in which moral values are included: respect for human life, property, justice, etc. Muslim and Hindu students have no objections to attending Religious Education classes with non-Catholics where common values are taught. They make no demands, for example, re Halal food in the tuckshop.

As Muslims and Hindus are a small minority in the school, it is difficult to serve their specific religious beliefs. Most Muslims attend Islamic classes outside of school. Once a week on Fridays Muslim students take time off from classes for prayer. Muslim students get time off from school to celebrate their special festivals, at the end of Ramadan and the Eid.

There are three occasions in the year when all students including non-Catholics attend Mass: 1. opening of the academic year, 2. Founder's Day, and 3. Matric farewell Mass.

Teachers see only pupils, not Catholics, Muslims, Hindus. Br Michael, our school counsellor, sees all pupils individually on a number of occasions throughout the year.

Relationships and interrelationships among students are good; there is very good integration, no racial tension. Teams, for example, are selected on merit. Relationships and interrelationships between the families of Muslim and Hindu students and those of the Christians seem to be cordial. There is good co-operation on committees, e.g. Matric Dance, Fetes, etc. I am not sure of social activities outside of school.

Living in a mixed racial environment has helped all denominations to respect each other's culture, traditions and beliefs. This promotes tolerance and understanding.

Twice a year we have collections of food and clothing for the poor. We have no regularly established "Action Group". In cases of necessity Muslim parents are considered for reduced fees, especially when more than one child from the same family attends school.

St. Brendan's School Dwars River; Bro Malachy Yates, Principal, with some pupils.



Br Finbarr Murphy (centre back) with staff (just a few) at West newspaper and Radio Mafisa offices in Rustenburg, North West Province.

TESTIMONIALS

FROM A PARENT OF MUSLIM PUPILS:

Whilst understandably Christianity is given much more prominence, a few periods of time are allowed for other religions, even though it is not presented in a structured way by trained educators.

AS A MUSLIM PUPIL OF THE SCHOOL:

I feel that the standard is above average and that the high school caters for the religious needs. For a Christian school the standard is very good.

FROM A SENIOR HINDU STUDENT:

The school allows for freedom of religion and shows no discrimination to other religions. It does not put pressure on students to convert or intimidate them. In education the school allows discussions about Hinduism in the religion period. The discussions are linked to certain aspects of life. These discussions allow my classmates to understand me and my religion and have a greater acceptance of me. The majority of the religion periods are devoted to Christian studies and this allows me to understand my friends and gives me a greater knowledge of the Christian religion. During the religion period neither Hinduism nor any other religion is condemned.

AS A HINDU PARENT:

I have observed in De La Salle College that my son Shvan Samuel is not at all deterred from his faith.

I thank Almighty God for making it possible for my son to benefit by the high standard of education and principles that is still in existence in this time and era.

I thank the La Salle principal and teachers.

Mrs T. Samuel

A TEACHER OF LA SALLE COLLEGE, DISCOVERY, Johannesburg.

As a teacher at La Salle College, how do you see the school and its educational efforts, in behalf of Muslim pupils, in the light of the Christian Lasallian School and other religions?

Let me commence by placing the following discussion within the context of my teaching experience. I teach religion to a group of approximately 30 scholars in a De La Salle School in the Republic of South Africa in what might be considered a middle class school, with boys ageing from 14 to 16 years. The vast majority of the group are Christian Protestant, with a minority following the teaching of Islamic and Hindu faiths.

To my mind, teaching religion is much more than merely throwing a particular religious code of ethics at the young and expecting them to follow blindly what they have been taught. Rather it must be seen in the light of education as a whole where the teacher is trying to get the adult of tomorrow to follow a moral code – in a Lasallian school, the Christian code – with a conscious acknowledgement of the moral principles behind it.

On reaching the age of 14 and onwards, the scholar should have begun to question the world around him. Not to accept unquestioningly that which is told to him by any teacher in any subject. Because of this, I feel that a scholar has reached a point where he or she should be carefully introduced to the other great religions of our time, in a manner which results in the scholar questioning certain fundamental tenets of his own religion in order to strengthen his own beliefs. It is, however, of the utmost importance that the teacher must NOT leave the young adult without a firm base to fall back upon in his own religion and that any discussion be so handled so as to ensure that by the end of such a discussion period, the scholar will be left with a feeling that his own religion, whether that be Christian or Muslim, has a solid and fundamentally sound basis in which he can believe.

This becomes a difficult task when teaching both Christian and Muslim students in the same class. For in looking at the one religion, one is inclined to be influenced by one's own beliefs (in my case Roman



De La Salle Holy Cross College. Adult Night School.
Students: a singing group.



De La Salle Holy Cross College. Adult Night School.
Ms Amanda Batha (principal, left), student, and
Brother Cornelius, College headmaster.

Catholic) and to criticise those other religions in terms of these beliefs. From experience I have found that the only way of not destroying those foundations which all young people regardless of their faith must of necessity have, is to resort to teaching fundamental truths which lie behind the various religions as a whole, emphasising that I am a Catholic and that I will have a certain outlook on certain points.

Admittedly, the emphasis of my classes is towards the Christian religion, with most other religions being compared to the Christian religion which serves as a frame of reference to the majority of scholars within the Christian Lasallian school within which I teach. This however should be expected of such a school and when deciding to send one's non Christian child to such an institution, parents must understand that their child will be exposed to other influences.

While no specific effort is made to teach the Muslim pupil his religion formally (the task being left up to the parents), the pupil still be stimulated, and required to think about his own religion, especially in light of the continual comparison being made between the various religions. Indeed I have found that upon numerous occasions when I have asked, upon finding a lack of knowledge upon a certain aspect, that the Muslim (and in my case the Hindu) scholars find out certain information for myself and the rest of that class. This can only be of benefit to themselves and their knowledge of their own faith.

The school makes allowances for the scholars to observe the various prayers required by their faith, and accommodates the scholars when it comes to religious holidays and days of fasting, especially the period of Ramadan. This policy has led to a toleration and indeed a total acceptance of the non Christian religious customs with which the Christian majority within the school are confronted. The result of this is that the minority groups fit in with the rest of the Christian scholars without any of the ethnic / religious undercurrents which so often lead to violence in different societies. Indeed, I feel that it is this very tolerance which is shown by this La Salle School towards other religions (noting that Saint De La Salle founded a Catholic institution) that has led to the acceptance of the different religious groupings of scholars in our school. In our environment, the issue of Islam versus Christianity or Islam vs. the West which is becoming a major issue in many parts of the world as the human population continues to expand, is to both the Muslim and Christian pupils a non issue. When one's values are accommodated, tensions arising out of the need to protect them fall away.

In summary, to quote from the Christian Bible, a quote which forms one of the cornerstones upon which I teach both in and out of the classroom environment, for one must note that the task of teaching is not confined to the classroom, is: "But those who shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Mt. 18,6)

As was once told to me by one of my teachers, Brother Adrian O'Farrell, one cannot force a religion upon anyone, one can merely give the scholar a solid background and allow the scholar to develop his or her own reasons for following a particular religion.



**IN THE
MIDDLE EAST...**



Relationships with the Great Religions

The expansion of the Institute into the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean brought the Brothers for the first time into contact with Islam and Judaism, and the schools in Penang and Singapore included Moslem, Hindu and Buddhist pupils. The pupils of religions other than Catholic Christian could attend the Brothers' school but usually had to attend the catechism lesson which was seen as indispensable to the overall curriculum. But the experience of the Brothers in such mission countries usually modified the "conversion" model of mission which was the common theology of the time. Thus, for example, the prospectus, written by Père Beurel (Missions Etrangères) in 1848 announcing the opening of the Brothers' school in Singapore, included the following wording:

"The principles upon which [the Brothers' school] is based will be as liberal as possibly can be: thus it will be open to everyone, whatever his creed may be; and should, for instance, a boy of a persuasion different from that of Roman Catholics wish to attend it, no interference whatever will take place with his religion, unless his parents or guardians express their wishes to have him instructed in the Catholic religion. Public religious instruction will be given to Roman Catholic boys either before or after school hours; but at all times, the Masters will most carefully watch over the morals of the whole, whatever their religious persuasion may be."

*(The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian education:
a Shared Mission, 1-2.3).*

**THE LASALLIAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
IN JERUSALEM
AND OTHER RELIGIONS**

1. Some historical background

The school in Jerusalem was founded in 1876, at a point in the 19th century when the missionary activity of the Church and of the Institute was in full swing. What began as a "French" school is now a Christian Arab school, multilingual, the majority (61%) of whose pupils are Moslems. There are no Jewish pupils because of the strained relations that exist between Jews and Arabs.

2. The College and its work

Most of the College is situated in the Old City of Jerusalem near the New Gate. It has 800 pupils ranging from the age of 4 to 18, taught by 50 teachers, most of whom are Christians, and 6 Brothers. The latter have responsibility also for the College annexe in Beit Hanina, the school in Bethlehem and the house in Nazareth.

There is separate religious instruction for Christians and Moslems. While the Christians study catechism, the Moslems are instructed in the Koran. Liturgical celebrations are organised for the Christian pupils.

The College has a "Young Lasallians" group, and recently a "Signum Fidei" group has been started.

As a way of combating drugs and pornography, which are easily available in this district, even though it is Christian, we have started up a "De La Salle Sports Club" for our pupils, which is open in the afternoon and attracts large numbers of young people.



Sde Boker, South Israel: The Jerusalem community.

3. Education in values common to both religions

While it is true that all teachers, Brothers and lay people alike, wish to promote peace, solidarity, mutual understanding, good relations and Moslem-Christian dialogue, we could still be more creative and take a more active part in schemes organised by local Christian communities.

The Young Lasallians group and members of Signum Fidei run a number of interesting apostolic projects.

4. Quality of relationships

On the whole, it seems that, despite certain situations which are sometimes difficult to accept, the College is highly considered by teachers, pupils and their families, by the society in which we try to fit in as best as we can, and by local Moslem and Christian dignitaries.

Recently, in liaison with other Christian schools and with the help of St Andrew's University, Glasgow, we have launched an ambitious scheme to help to run our schools and to coordinate them on the pedagogical level. Locally, the link is provided by Bethlehem University.

5. What has been achieved

It is clear from the day-to-day life of the College, as well as from feastday celebrations, that a good understanding exists between staff and parents. A further proof of this was given recently when the Director, Brother Raphael, left us.

The Brothers take part willingly in inter-faith celebrations.

Regarding the service of the poor, we have done a great deal to help Christians in difficulty. We make sure that tuition fees



Jerusalem, 1996: Upper centre, the Brothers' school.



Abu Gosh (Emmaus?), 1996: Brothers' retreat.

are reduced for pupils from families unable to pay the full amount.

6. Our school and the world of Islam

It is very important for us Brothers to become as far as possible part of this Arab Moslem world; our vocation and our mission demand this of us. We must try to share its language, its culture, its way of life, its difficulties and its aspirations.

We have moved on from a situation in our school when Christians were a majority to one where they are a minority. Our relations with Islam, or rather, with Moslems, is a powerful source of encouragement for us to deepen our faith and to understand more fully our identity as Christians. Rubbing shoulders daily with people with a religion different from our own must be seen as an expression of the will of the God of love, who wishes everyone to be saved.

Ours is not a ghetto-school surrounded by an Islamic world. We prefer to think of it as a school which provokes the Moslems - in a positive sense. The days of mediaeval proselytism are long gone: our apostolate must consist in being present in the Moslem world as the humble and poor Carpenter of Nazareth was present.

At the present time, we have to face three different missionary situations:

- first evangelisation
- new evangelisation
- pastoral support



Abu Gosh, 1996.

The question we inevitably have to ask ourselves is: "What part does Islam play in the economy of salvation?"

The steps in our process of evangelization are: testimony, the first proselytism (for the sake of life, education, education, charitable activities).

Our true proselytism must be prudent. Moslems tend to consider "missions" as a planned attack on Islam by the West. We need witnesses, not apologists. This does not exclude the proclamation of the faith, even if only by example. There is absolutely no question of denying our faith on the pretext of coming closer to these people who are so different from us. We must always be prepared to speak about our faith when we are questioned about it. By our faith, we are linked to the Christian world; by culture, we share in a predominantly Moslem East. We must learn to look upon our presence in a Moslem world in a realistic way, and make it the means by which we fulfil our vocation and exercise our mission.

Unfortunately, the faith of our Christians in the present context seems often to be a form of social distinction rather than a personal commitment.

The Moslem world is torn at present between tradition and modernity, as it has to face immense political, social, economic and cultural problems. The current slogan "Islam is the answer!" is more a sign of despair than a well-defined programme of action. It is a kind of refuge from socio-political frustrations, and by this very fact, gives rise to varying degrees of violent extremism which worries the Moslems as much as the Christians.

In conclusion - and it is worth repeating - we must see the call of God in the situation in which we are involved.

7. What should we do, then?

- Pray for our Church so that it becomes more missionary;
- live in sympathy (sympathy which can at times become friendship) with all Moslems and Jews with whom we come into contact every day, despite the inevitable problems that can arise;
- bear witness to Christian values, especially to "boundless charity";
- develop a local Christian culture free of any apologetic considerations;
- create a climate conducive to the acceptance of Christ and the peace of Christ;
- become more involved in the life of the local Church and contribute to its vitality;
- strengthen our links with other religious who, like us, are involved in education;
- support the "Young Lasallians" and "Signum Fidei".

Brother Umberto Marcato

The Collège des Frères in Jaffa

Like many other establishments in the Middle East, the Brothers' school in Jaffa was founded in 1882, at the express request of the local population. The Christians in Jaffa had heard of what the Brothers were doing in Egypt and Lebanon, and now wanted their children to benefit from the apostolic zeal of these religious. Another reason for their request was the fact that Christians had always been a minority in Jaffa. However, if we consult the history of the house, we discover that, from its very beginning, the College admitted pupils from the three religions. We read also that the first Director of the house, Brother Néon Marie, was drowned at Jaffa while trying to save a young Jewish pupil from a similar fate.

And so, from the outset, the intake of our school consisted of Christian, Moslem and Jewish children. Up to 1948, there was a large majority of Christian pupils in the College, and this made it possible to have a number of youth movements, such as the "Coeurs Vaillants" (Valiant Hearts), the "Croisés" (Crusaders), the Sodality of Our Lady, etc. In 1948, the situation changed. Most of the 90,000 Arab inhabitants of Jaffa had to leave for neighbouring Arab countries. The College had to adapt, come what may, to the new Jewish majority in the school, which continued to exist up to 1975. With the closure of the boarding section in the 70's, and the shift of the Jewish population of Jaffa to Tel Aviv, the number of Jewish pupils fell considerably, while that of the Moslems increased.

However, despite all the difficulties arising out of the inextricable political situation of the Middle East, the College has never ceased to pursue its mission both on the human as well as on the moral level.

On the human level, first of all, the fact that Arab and Jewish pupils have to mix leads to friendships which cross religious boundaries and which could subsequently take on a much greater importance. By the fact of living cheek by jowl for several years, pupils break down the barriers of mistrust and misunderstanding which separated them. It will be possible for Arab pupils to say: "I lived with Jews and got to know them well", and for Jewish pupils to say the same thing with regard to the Moslem pupils. This coming together of two groups from different ethnic backgrounds is surely an integral part of the Church's teaching on understanding between peoples. The College tries to maintain this understanding not only among the pupils but also among the teachers, for there are 20 Jews on our staff of 52 teachers.

As we have already said, the College has a considerable number of Moslem pupils. Out of a school population of 1,000 pupils, 700, that is 70%, are Moslems. The daily contact between these pupils and pupils and teachers of a different religion and culture, develops in the Moslem pupils a certain broadmindedness and greater tolerance towards others. These pupils cannot escape from the Christian atmosphere of the College. It is an atmosphere which is transmitted by the daily moral reflections of the Brothers on charity, forgiveness and understanding.

The Jewish and Moslem pupils who come to us are characterised subsequently by an attitude of goodwill towards others, an attitude which has its origin in the teachings of the Gospel, and which is opposed to fanaticism in all its forms.



Jaffa: The Brothers' School

This friendly understanding between pupils is apparent already during their time at the College. As the feast of Christmas comes closer, it is above all the Jewish and Moslem pupils who begin to decorate the classrooms with Christmas trees and pictures of the Nativity. In the days before Moslem feasts, the walls of classrooms are covered with drawings of mosques, and often the most beautiful pictures of minarets are the work of Christian pupils. For the Jewish feast of Hanouka, all the pupils contribute money to buy doughnuts, which Jews eat on this feast.

From about December 15th onwards, the school begins to be filled with the sounds of Christmas carols such as "Il est né le divin Enfant", "Mon beau sapin", etc. All the pupils sing these, led as often as not by Jewish or Moslem teachers.

This coming together of pupils from different cultures has become more than ever before our most important task. Our College includes more or less 1,000 pupils, most of whom are Arab Christians or Moslems, as well as a Jewish minority. There are also 120 pupils representing 30 different nationalities. Our mission regarding these pupils, who are mainly Christian, is first of all to give them religious instruction by whatever means are available, given that many of them do not know any of the languages taught in the College. The second task we set ourselves is to help them fit into society by teaching them languages.

Brother Henri Hérou



Jerusalem: Holy Sepulchre, 1996.

De La Salle College, Amman

Beyond all frontiers

In 1948, the Jewish immigration to Palestine led to the well-documented conflict between the State of Israel and the Arab States of the Middle East. Through fear of reprisals, many Palestinians took flight and sought refuge in Amman, the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom. These refugees included the parents of many children who had been pupils in our schools in Haifa, Jerusalem and Jaffa. These parents now asked the Brothers to open a school for them in Amman.

And so it was that the first steps were taken in 1950 to open this new school. The Greek Catholic bishop, Mgr Assaf, was consulted, and the approval of the French Minister of the day, a certain M. Dumarçay, was sought and obtained.

On being approached regarding this matter, His Majesty, King Hussein, gave his consent without delay, thanking the Brothers for all the good they had already accomplished in the Transjordanian part of his Kingdom.

Once the school opened, it grew very rapidly. At the present time, it tries to respond to the profound aspirations of a society open to all kinds of innovation. Over half of its 1,350 pupils (54%) are Christians of one rite or other. Of all our pupils, it is these that need the most help intellectually, spiritually, and even materially. Christians represent only 3% of the population of Jordan and are not the richest section of society.

On entering the College for the first time, a visitor would certainly wonder how to tell Christians from Moslems, and vice

versa. At first sight, it is in fact impossible to do so, whether it is a question of teachers or pupils. There exists real friendship between the members of different religions or rites. This implies, of course, that religion is not mentioned with the intention of bringing about a confrontation. Religion is spoken about evidently, but in contexts which bring people together and unite them. The strength of this friendship is seen particularly on the occasion of official feasts or of family events such as weddings, deaths, successes or failures in examinations, etc.

For some years now, "Lasallian" teachers, whose lives are inspired by the spirituality of St La Salle, provide pupils with a greater level of accompaniment: to pupils in general, without distinction of religious affiliations, they teach human values; to Christian pupils, they teach values which are more specifically Christian.

We try to help our Moslem pupils discover the wealth of their Arab-Moslem heritage, and make them aware of their responsibilities towards their society and succeeding generations.

The teaching staff are always very respectful towards everyone they meet - other members of the teaching staff, pupils, domestic staff. Daily example is often more powerful and effective than simply words.

Our school is always happy to make its premises available for pastoral and educational purposes. It hosts joint parish meetings to organise leavers' retreats for schools in Amman and the neighbourhood, and the Focolari hold their weekly meetings in the College, for either religious purposes, or at least for the promotion of human values.



Amman: general view of La Salle College.



A Koran Sentence.

COLLÈGE DES FRÈRES TRIPOLI - DEDDAH EL KHOURA

The beginnings

Tripoli is the second largest city in Lebanon. It is situated in the north part of the country. In October 1886, at the request of the French Consul General in Beirut, Brother Hugonis, Visitor of the District of the Levant, sent 3 Brothers from Alexandria to Tripoli to open our first school in Lebanon. For 100 years, it was the most famous school in North Lebanon.

Known as the "Collège des Frères" (Brothers' school), this school grew rapidly. It was attended by Catholic and Orthodox Christians and by Moslems who were mostly Sunnites, but who included some Alaouites. From the outset, it was the policy of the school to accept non-Christian pupils. At the present time, Moslem pupils represent 56% of the school population, and Christians 44%. In the future, it is likely that the percentage of Christian pupils will fall, as most of our pupils come from Tripoli which is 95% Moslem.

Up to 1975, relations between Christians and Moslems were good, and then war came with all its political and religious complications and destroyed these relations, causing a large part of the Christian population to move elsewhere.

In 1986, on the occasion of its centenary, the Collège des Frères moved to Deddeh, some 10 kilometres from Tripoli. The transfer was made because of the noise and the impossible traffic conditions in the College neighbourhood, and especially on account of the atmosphere of fanaticism inspired by an endless war.

The College at the present time

The College numbers about 2,100 pupils at present, and provides a complete education from the kindergarten to school-leaving age and part 2 of the baccalaureate.

We offer our pupils an academic education. We teach Arabic, French and English, and prepare our students in the sciences for various universities in Lebanon and abroad.

Almost all the teachers are Christian. There are a few Moslem teachers in the secondary and non-academic secondary departments.

Relations and respect for beliefs

There are both Christian and Moslem pupils in our school. We insist on good relations and respect for all

beliefs. We hope that the dialogue begun at school will continue in adult life.

We provide religious instruction to both Christians and Moslems. The latter study the Koran. The catechist and the teacher of the Islamic faith divide up the class between them once a week for an hour.

In 1986, a Moslem religious group was the dominant political party in Tripoli. This party tried to impose the teaching of the Islamic faith to Moslem children attending Catholic schools. Negotiations took place between the hierarchy, headmasters and the Moslem authorities. The decision reached was that Catholic schools would provide this teaching on condition they could choose the teachers. The teachers in question would need to have the approval also of the local Moslem religious authorities.

Each morning, teachers give a "reflection" to all pupils without distinction for the purpose of helping them to develop certain human, civic and moral attitudes.

The College has various youth movements. Scout groups include both Moslems and Christians, and promote values such as belief in God, good relations with others, solidarity, loyalty and service among their members.

Relations

Relations among teachers, pupils, families, and in society tend to be harmonious, all people and all tendencies existing side-by-side. This reflects the political life of the country, in which all religious "communities" are represented. Through respect for all beliefs, all committees organised by teachers, parents of pupils and former students, are composed of Christians and Moslems, often in equal proportions.



Brothers' school at Deddeh.

**Personal account of school life by a former pupil
of the Collège des Frères in Tripoli (1967-1980).**

_____ was _____

_____ is _____ is _____, _____ we _____ emblem

the _____

_____ were _____ village _____ was because _____

awareness, _____ classes, _____ the _____

Young _____ very _____ line _____ work _____

Brothers, _____ society _____



**Lebanon: members of Signum Fidei with
Mgr Noujeim and the Brothers.**

_____ a _____ then _____

_____ was _____ education, but religious _____ was _____

_____ to _____

saw _____ a _____ was _____ very _____

_____ especially _____ to _____ was _____

_____ was _____

_____ be. _____

so, _____ each _____ know _____

was _____ received _____ excellent _____ to _____ me in _____

_____ a _____ of _____ m, _____

Khaldoun El Sharif (pharmacist)

TESTIMONIALS

The desire to pay a tribute to the moral and intellectual fidelity of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, has rekindled the enthusiastic attachment we feel for a teaching Institute which is original in its form, and which has successfully married the traditions of a profoundly eastern society with European modernism.

The Collège de la Sainte Famille in Tripoli, North Lebanon, tirelessly promoted the knowledge of French language and culture, so as to bring Lebanese society into contact with the scientific and technical rationalism of the West, and this it did without cutting off Lebanese culture from its eastern roots. Its mission to serve as an intermediary between opposite shores of the Mediterranean explains the fundamental role of this establishment, a role which has nothing to do with ideology. Its role was based on the conviction that there existed a common Mediterranean civilisation, and that any measures should be supported which promoted cultural, scientific and social cooperation between Lebanon and France.

Soubhi Hussein Abdul Wahab Al Hindi
Head of the Department of Studies and Relations in the
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tripoli and
North Lebanon



Meeting for catechists from Lasallian schools in Lebanon.

I am a former pupil of the Brothers' school in Tripoli and a Moslem. I did all my primary and secondary schooling with them, and left in 1946. I received a good civic education, I learnt respect for spiritual values and a love for my country. At no time did I encounter discrimination on religious grounds.

Successive Directors of the school never failed to mention the considerable help given by the leading Moslems of Tripoli towards the construction of the Tripoli school and its development.

The people of Tripoli have always been very attached to the Brothers' school, and so they felt a little bitter when the school was transferred to Deddeh to enable it to expand and offer more extensive sports and cultural facilities.

The creation of an association and friendly society for the former students of the Brothers' school in Tripoli-Deddeh, is a tangible proof of the way all the various religious denominations in Lebanon merge harmoniously together in Lasallian schools in Lebanon.

Saudallah Chaaban
Ex-President of the Order of Lawyers

Some incidents during the Christian Islamic war in Tripoli, when people were killed because they carried the wrong identity card...

A Brother came to Tripoli by car, wearing his robe. When he reached the market, he looked for a place to park. As the car moved forward it hit two crates of vegetables by the side of the road. The owner, now furious, approached the car to remonstrate, but a crowd of people immediately gathered, saying that he must not say anything to the Brother because the Brothers were there to help us and educate our children. The Brother got out of the car and offered to pay for the two crates. The people refused to let him, telling him to leave the car where it was, and that they would look after it. The Brother left the car and went off to do his shopping. On his return, he found the car carefully guarded. He thanked the people and returned home.

You have asked me to say a few words about the 12 years I spent as a pupil of your school, and I am happy to do so.

The longer I stayed at your school, the more clearly I realised that it offered a perfect example of the respect we should have for others. I learnt not only to respect the religious beliefs of my companions, but also to understand them.

As a Moslem student, I never felt that students were discriminated against because of their religion, even though the school was a Christian establishment belonging to a congregation founded by John Baptist de La Salle, a saint.

I have always respected religions different from my own, and continue to do so. I try to understand them as I did when I was at school. I thank you with all my heart for forming my character, and for teaching me, not only my school subjects, but also respect and understanding for others, even when our points of view differ.

Mahmoud Tabbal
School leaver 1996
(Experimental sciences)

When the Tawhid (Moslem fanatics) governed Tripoli, Sheik Chaaban, the leader, used to visit all the schools to give a talk on the Koran. When it was the Brothers' turn, the Sheik's followers came the day before to tell them to make preparations for his visit. The Brothers objected, saying it was against the rules to change the timetable, especially as the Christmas exams were being held. They would arrange a day after Christmas.

The Sheik accepted the reasoning of the Brothers and after Christmas renewed his request. The Brother Director indicated a day, but insisted the Sheik send him a written copy of his sermon in advance. The Sheik accepted and sent a photocopy of his text.

The Sheik arrived as planned, and was met by the Brother Director. Together, they made their way to the auditorium where they found the older pupils standing in silence awaiting his arrival. Once the Sheik was seated, one of the teachers of the College gave an explanation of the Sheik's sermon. This lasted for an hour. Next, the Sheik was invited to speak and he did so for an hour, during which time none of the students made any noise.

When all was finished, the Sheik went to the reception office and asked to speak to the Director. He told him that he was so impressed by the discipline of the Brothers' school that he wished to enroll his son in the 4th year of the secondary section.

Saint Joseph's School, Kadiköy Istanbul, Turkey

The imposing buildings of St Joseph's School, Kadiköy, Istanbul, were begun in 1870 on a fine piece of land overlooking the Sea of Marmara. Permission to build was given in 1864, as is attested by the precious firman of the Sublime Porte, which carries the seal of Sultan Abdülexiz and the decree: "Given that it is our will that all forms of worship and religion should enjoy the most complete freedom in our States, we grant authorisation for the said school".

One particular feature about St Joseph's is that it is located in the Asiatic part of the city (Kadiköy is the former Chalcedon), and this is a great advantage where recruitment and the quality of life is concerned. The latter advantage is still there even though Kadiköy is no longer the remote spot it was in 1870, when St Joseph's was like a little town, with its wells, vineyards, jetty, bread oven, etc.

At the present time, pupils come to St Joseph's at around the age of 11, when they have finished primary school. There is a common entrance exam for all the private bilingual schools of the country. Pupils stay 8 years at the school, 2 of these in the so-called preparatory school, where they study almost exclusively French. There follow 3 years in the middle school, followed by a further 3 years in the senior school, leading to their school-leaving certificate. This certificate enables them to sit an extremely competitive entrance examination on which admission to university depends. At St Joseph's, science and mathematics are taught in French, so the school can rightly be called bilingual. It is not a school where French is taught, but where teaching is given in French (56% of the lessons are given in French). St Joseph's is also a Turkish school, fully integrated into the State educational system, and intended for Turkish children. This means I have to send my own children to a French school, offering a French programme of studies.

It is very rare for children to change schools or to repeat classes. One result of this is that there develops a very strong sense of group loyalty among children who joined the school at the same time. This group loyalty explains in part the vitality of the Former Students' Association. Of course, after 8 years together, pupils know one another very well, and anonymity is impossible in our school.

This year, we have 729 pupils. Of these 45% are girls, 17 are Christians, 14 Jews, and the rest, the vast majority, are Moslems. Our school reflects perfectly the situation in the country. The entrance examination gives us no latitude regarding the choice of pupils who come to us. Christians are either Catholic or Orthodox, and may be Armenian, Greek, Syrian, Bulgarian, etc.

Our teaching staff is 45% female and includes 25% French nationals, 33% French-speaking Turks and 42% non French-speaking Turks.



St Joseph's College, Kadiköy, Istanbul.

The cohesion of our school is provided by our 18 French-speaking Turkish teachers. They provide continuity also, as most of them are former students of similar schools, such as St Michael's, St Benedict's, etc.

St Joseph's is not an isolated case. It is one of the 6 members of the Federation of French Catholic Schools in Turkey. Of these, 3 schools are run by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, one by the Lazarist Fathers, one by the Daughters of Charity, and one by the Sisters of Sion. This Federation, with its statutes registered in Paris and its tight organisation, enables us to speak with one voice with the French authorities. It also creates a great sense of solidarity among the staff and the headmasters, most of whom are now lay persons.

In a country gradually being taken over by globalisation and therefore a prey to the contradictory forces of flight towards the future and nostalgia for the Golden Age, the school has to rethink its mission statement, in the light of its history, its current situation, its membership of the Lasallian network, and, in particular, in the light of the human resources currently available. We asked some of them to give their impressions of the school. Together, they will give a picture of St Joseph's that is not far short of the reality.

There are 3 Brothers in the school. Their presence is very evident, and their attitude towards the situation in the country is very positive. Years ago, when Turkish Moslems from the interior of the country came to take the place of the Christians who had fled, it was not rare for them to find treasure buried underneath the house. People began to believe that, wherever there were Christians, a treasure lay hidden, waiting to be discovered. And they were right: there is a hidden treasure in St Joseph's. Three Brothers stand guard over this treasure. When you read the simple and heart-warming accounts that follow you will see what I mean.

Michel Bertet, Headmaster