

## TESTIMONIALS...



"I have always wanted to work with young people, because this is a way of helping them grow up, and because their desire to make all kinds of changes makes me think about my own attitudes. I try to prepare them for the world around them, a world which I view with a critical eye. I try to teach them respect for others and tolerance".

*Olivier Gaté is French and teaches French. He was sent to Turkey by the Catholic Delegation for Cooperation in lieu of military service. Having completed the statutory two years, he has decided to remain an extra year as a civilian.*

"There is a very friendly atmosphere in the administration office of the school in which we work. There is a real family atmosphere in the school. I first came to work here because I lived close by and because here I could work in a Christian setting. When I first came here in 1979, I was young, and St Joseph's was a place where I could learn and practise speaking French.

The quality of the teaching given at St Joseph's is appreciated by everybody. Our former pupils occupy important positions in public administration as well in the private sector. This school is different from other Turkish schools especially because of its discipline and the quality of its teaching. The teaching staff is competent and well-versed in methodology, producing satisfactory results at the competitive university entrance examinations.

For me, a Brother is above all someone who has a vocation to be of service. His is a life of sacrifice and dedication. The aim of the Brother is to educate young people in virtue and the Lasallian spirit. Brothers are understanding, good teachers, impartial and well-organised. Their behaviour reflects the Christian ideal. A sense of responsibility, frankness and honesty are Lasallian characteristics. Our school is not isolated from the rest of the network. Brothers from other schools visit us, and we organise exchanges and twinnings with other places, such as Liège and Dijon".

*Djenya Filibelian, Turkish, Gregorian Armenian, Headmaster's secretary.*



"Teaching is a pleasure. We try to form our adolescents and open up new horizons for them. There are various obstacles (obligations imposed by the State educational system), but, instead of complaining, we should look for ways of overcoming them. At St Joseph's, we are constantly looking for ways of improving the teaching we give, suggestions are welcome, and it is pleasant to work in an atmosphere where there is dialogue. I try to teach my pupils to be good persons (friendly, getting on well with the other boys, helping others, trying to improve, knowing their own abilities, qualities, defects, being confident and honest). After that, I teach them to think properly and fill their heads with knowledge. At St Joseph's, we want education to be based on trust and frankness. In this family (St Joseph's is my family) the pupils are a step ahead of other young people in the country, because they have the possibility of discussing things with the Headmaster and certain teachers. When our pupils apply for jobs after finishing university, they never fail to mention that they received their secondary education at St Joseph's, because they know that employers will consider this fact as a guarantee of their quality as persons.

St Joseph's is not a private school where people come to earn money. It is rather a school where they try to educate young people who are the future of the country.

The lay character of the school is a precious treasure. Religious differences should not intrude on work. St Joseph's is a school without intellectual barriers".

*Yasemin Keskiner, Turkish, Moslem.  
Head of the French Department, Deputy Head of the Preparatory School.*





"I am very proud to be at St Joseph's. It is thanks to St Joseph's that I love my work. I am happy to work with my colleagues. St Joseph's is a building, set in a large property, with a long history, a united staff and a peaceful atmosphere.

For me, a Brother is a believer who devotes himself to teaching and educating children, and looking after old people, the poor and orphans. He is always ready to help them. I don't know anything about their congregation. The Brothers I have known have always been persons of high integrity and dedication. Their schools are part of a larger group, but since different countries have different requirements, it is difficult to see what makes them all homogeneous.

The fact that the school has a lay character does not prevent the transmission of moral values common to the various religions represented at St Joseph's. Our main aim is to educate young lay people. At St Joseph's, they do not simply learn a foreign language: they are made aware of the world around them and are brought into contact with a different culture".

*Berna Ilgen, Turkish, Moslem, teaches French.*

"St Joseph's has the reputation in the outside world for the quality of its teaching. I see it only from the inside and I have nothing with which to compare it. As teachers, we are never satisfied with the results we obtain. This search for perfection affects our pupils also, and it has both positive and negative consequences.

I try to teach my pupils to know one another better, to like and to respect one another more, despite all kinds of differences. I try to foster in them a taste for work, effort, assiduity. I try to broaden their horizons, and to form individuals capable of communicating, facing difficulties, as this century comes to an end, and building a better future. All this could be an illusion. Hope alternates with disappointment, enthusiasm with discouragement.

St Joseph's changes very quickly, like the world itself, and alternates between excessively strict and excessively permissive education. I have met former students of St Joseph's who are very well educated, instructed and endowed with great qualities, but who are too hard on themselves and on those around them, or too pretentious to be capable of acting, creating or changing. The arrival of girls in the school has made the atmosphere less harsh, and this is very much a change for the better.

For me, a Brother is a religious who is not a priest, who dedicates his whole life to teaching and education. However, I know very little about their congregation. As the Brothers disappear, lay people and former students of the Christian Schools are increasingly taking over responsibility for the school".

*Mara Yakovlevski, Turkish, teaches French, Orthodox Christian.*



"At St Joseph's, we are careful to observe the guiding principles set by the Turkish Ministry of Education. It is a serious school with fine facilities. Because of the small size of the school, teachers and pupils know one another, and no pupil goes unnoticed. The teachers are competent and aware of their responsibilities.

For me, a Brother is a person who has dedicated himself to teaching and education. He is a person with ideals for which he has sacrificed the possibility of founding a family.

I know nothing about the congregation of the Brothers. I think that their main aim is to spread the French language and French culture throughout the world".

*Ali Ihsan Aymak, Turkish, Moslem, non French-speaking, teaches music, Administrative Deputy Head.*

"For a long time, the administrative and teaching staff of St Joseph's was composed of persons whose greatest quality was their honesty and uprightness. Pupils brought up in this atmosphere became adults with high moral principles, worthy people, upright and disciplined. Now, however, our staff is no longer homogeneous, and many differences exist regarding moral values, ideals and principles.



I try to teach young people to use their reason and to be just. I try to make them understand the value of logic, not to accept anything uncritically, to think clearly, to be demanding and systematic. In science, this is easy. In addition I try, in particular, to be an example of justice for my pupils.

St Joseph's is a school where different beliefs and cultures are shared. St Joseph's is a place that has a soul. I have a lot of contact with my French colleagues. I hope they draw some benefit from their contact with me.

I have been working here for the last 31 years. I have been able to exercise my profession in the way in which I understand it. What I mean is that the administration has never imposed any constraints on me. The administration has always been successful in maintaining a balance in relations between parents and teachers, parents and the administration, the administration and teachers. I have always had complete and absolute confidence in the honest, just and loyal character of the administration. This has always been a source of great consolation in my work. I have always been certain that, in any conflict I had with parents, pupils or the Ministry, I would be given total support, if what I was doing was just and honest".

*Serçin Divanuogui, Turkish, Moslem, French-speaking chemistry teacher.*

"I became a teacher as a result of certain personal and family circumstances. I now think that, if I had to live my life again, I would choose to be a teacher. I came to St Joseph's by chance. I would like to be 25 years old once more, come to St Joseph's and remain there for a long time. St Joseph's broadens horizons and opens up vast opportunities.

I want my pupils to master their mother tongue perfectly and develop the habit of reading.

For me, a Brother is a person who is honest, virtuous, hard-working, dedicated, thrifty, frank, not a slave of materialism and who renders a service to my country".

*Sitki Badem, Turkish, Moslem, non French-speaking teacher of Turkish.*



"I teach in the preparatory school. In addition, I look after a dramatic society and an audio-library. I like to be in contact with adolescents. It offers an opportunity to pass on, more or less consciously, basic values such as tolerance, non-violence, listening to others, etc. I help these adolescents also to learn skills that can help them in later life, such as a foreign language, and confidence in front of an audience, which can develop a confident attitude to life, etc.

St Joseph's offers the necessary structures and support for my work from the headmaster and my colleagues. The teachers here form the kind of united group, a real team, where you can discuss everything.

I insist on my pupils listening to others, discussing with them, doing their work regularly and organising it properly, avoiding verbal and physical violence, having an open mind regarding the world at large and particularly French culture. All this work helps pupils to know themselves better.

For me, a Brother is a person who has chosen a religious and human vocation (if it is possible to make this distinction) by which he devotes his whole life to others in a specific context. Since I have been in Turkey, I have learnt a little about this congregation, and have discovered that it exists on an island I love very much, Haiti, where, as in other developing countries, it works with the very poor".

*Gilles Davy, French, teaches French. He was sent to Turkey by the Catholic Delegation for Cooperation in lieu of military service. Having completed the statutory two years, he has decided to remain an extra year as a civilian.*



"I teach French literature by personal choice. At St Joseph's, I have all the freedom I need to use my own teaching methods. In this school, teachers try to respect the free intellectual and moral growth of pupils, by trying to help them develop a critical sense and self-affirmation. Former students often tell us of the positive effects such teaching had on them.

St Joseph's offers plenty of opportunity for debate and discussion. I joined the staff here more or less by chance, but I liked the family atmosphere here so much that I stayed. I am lucky to have established close relations with some of my Moslem colleagues, with whom I can speak about everything, in a critical spirit of open-mindedness and tolerance.

St Joseph's is different from other schools in this country by its liberal outlook, by the importance it gives to sound judgment and common sense. Our former students distinguish themselves in their professional life by their intellectual and moral qualities".

*Michel Tagar, Turkish, Armenian Catholic, teaches French.*



"I came to Turkey by chance. Now, I cannot see myself living elsewhere. I love my work, and it is a great opportunity for me. At St Joseph's, I found a "cocoon" which played an essential role in helping me to settle down in this country.

Pupils come to this school in search of a European style of education, synonymous with progress and the future, and yet still respecting tradition in many ways. In Turkey, as soon as a family has enough money it starts looking around for a private school for its children.

I am a Christian and I teach Moslems. My professional life involves me, therefore, in this mixture of different cultures and religions. My private life is similar, as I am married to a Turk.

St Joseph's is a place where people share, and receive as much from others as they give. Nowhere else have I felt so intensely French and Christian as I have here in Turkey. And yet with this awareness of my difference, I feel very much enriched by my contact with a new culture and a new religion".

*Laurence, French, Christian,  
teaches mathematics.*

"I am at St Joseph's because I am a former pupil of this school, and I follow the example I received from the Brother Director who was then in charge.

At St Joseph's we try to have personal relations with our pupils. It is a "true" school, and our former students, the young ones, tell us that it was only after leaving that they realised what it meant to be a pupil of St Joseph's. In Turkey, the school leaving certificate obtained from St Joseph's will always carry more weight than a diploma awarded by such or such a university.

I do my work without reference to my religion but in accordance with my conscience. At St Joseph's, there is a true exchange of cultures and beliefs: it is like a primordial broth. One example will be enough: our physics teacher is a Jew, born in Egypt, living in Turkey and teaching physics in French. What can I add?

*Ender, Turkish, Moslem,  
French-speaking, teaches computer studies,  
deputy head of the senior school.*

"I have retired. I take care of the laboratory and the natural history museum. I look after the Christian pupils also, but since the lay character of the school has to be respected, I do so out of school hours. The teaching of Islamic culture, an area where lay principles do not apply, is included in the curriculum. Marks are given and exams are set. Non-Moslem pupils are dispensed from following this course.

How can I describe St Joseph's briefly? It is a school where the pupils stay for 8 years. Former students are distinguished by the quality of their mastery of French. Their own eastern family, social and religious traditions form adults and their children to be reserved, respectful and cordial.

Without being aware of it, St Joseph's is firmly part of a Lasallian network. This is so because of the presence of the Brothers, some of whom still play an active part in this network.

St Joseph's is a school where different cultures come into contact with one another, and offers a typical example of how eastern people can live harmoniously together. It is not, however, a place where beliefs are shared. In my opinion, we are the only ones who make an attempt to understand the beliefs of others".

*Brother Charles*



**IN WESTERN  
CITIES...**





**ROUBAIX  
COLLÈGE SAINTE MARIE**
**Historical background.**

Collège Sainte Marie was founded 63 years ago at No. 32 rue du Fort, to prepare the local children for the textile industry.

– *After 1963*, the local population changed considerably as the result of a massive influx of immigrant workers and the departure of French families.

The current headmaster, Brother Jean Hasbrouck, decided the school should remain where it was, and cater for this newly arrived population, despite the objections of some staff who left the school.

– *In 1983*, thanks to help from the Region of France and the District of Lille, the school moved to rue St Antoine, and new buildings were put up.

– *At the present time*, Collège Sainte Marie has 346 pupils, 17 classes, a lay headmaster, 40 teachers and administrative and maintenance personnel. There are 4 first forms (1st year secondary school), 3 second forms, 2 third forms and 2 fourth forms. Classes 1 to 4 follow the SES programme of studies. One of the 3rd year and one of the 4th year classes follow a special programme of studies for pupils with learning difficulties.


**Two significant facts**

Two significant facts characterise our school population:

1. 64% of the families are of foreign origin (44% are Algerian). This means only 36% are of French origin.
2. These families are affected by unemployment. 53% of the fathers are unemployed, and 5% are retired or receive a pension. As a consequence, the majority of our pupils do not have working parents.

A poor part of Roubaix.

64% of the school population consists of immigrants.

2/3 of our pupils are girls.





**Roubaix:  
workshops teaching handicrafts.**



**You have to think of a skill for later on.  
Why not cooking?**

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15

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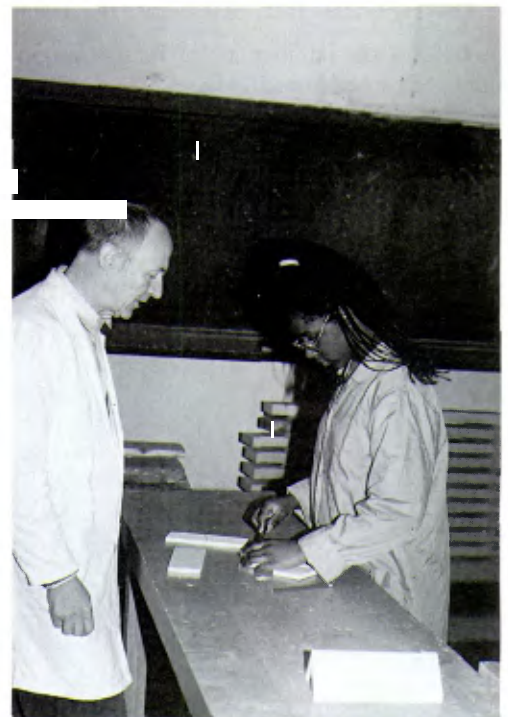
variety

5



**Abandoned houses on the street  
where the school is.**

**Why not learn carpentry?**





## Serving the underprivileged Working with itinerant gypsies



Stes Maries de la Mer:  
Gypsy baptism.

### Gradual involvement

#### 1° Timid beginnings

In the 60's, there were 2 Brothers who spent much of their time working with itinerant gypsies.

Brother Coquereau would regularly visit the camp at Angers to "catechise", but also to help the gypsies, 90% of whom were illiterate, to fill in official forms and to regularise their position vis-a-vis the authorities. He would also try to teach them reading and writing.

Brother Étienne Pierre was released from school duties to help itinerant gypsy families in the Nantes area. Brother Pierre, with his background of expertise in teaching methodology and his truly prophetic enthusiasm, led the so-called SIGEVO group of Brothers (Service for the instruction of itinerants), who drew up a method for teaching reading to itinerants, called the KIKO method. They also trained teachers to work with gypsies, and organised mobile classrooms, etc.

#### 2° A decisive appeal

Faced with the 90% rate of illiteracy among gypsies, chaplains responsible for the pastoral care of gypsies in the Paris region set up the ASET Association (Help to provide schooling for gypsies). The aim of this association was to find schools for children of non-itinerant gypsy families. Its members acted as intermediaries and school auxiliaries. There was nothing organised, however, for gypsies who moved from place to place.

In 1979, the Regional Coordinator for France, Brother Michel Sauvage, repeated the appeal the chaplain for gypsies had made to the Brothers to form a team to teach reading and writing to the gypsies as they moved from place to place in the Paris region. Brother Michel's appeal was answered by Brothers Léon Cote and Camille Véger. For them, it was the beginning of a great adventure.

#### 3° Official creation of mobile classrooms

In September 1982, after a long series of negotiations, the first mobile classroom made its appearance at the Seine St Denis gypsy camp, having received the official approval of the Education Inspector from Bobigny. The teacher responsible for this classroom was a member of staff from St Joseph's School at Pantin. The expansion of this scheme was rapid. In 1996, ASET had 36 teachers teaching in 31 mobile classrooms, in 14 departments in France.

#### 4° Concrete response to the appeal launched by the chaplains Mobile classrooms – Role and work of teachers

– The mobile classroom is a means of reaching those who cannot attend school, while at the same time respecting their way of life, their values and their traditions.

– By going to gypsy camps, the mobile classroom enables us to share our knowledge with them and to learn from theirs. Reports of the activities of the various ASET centres reveal extraordinary vitality. The work and inventiveness of the teachers are both astonishing and extremely varied.

– Teachers adapt their methods to circumstances and demonstrate great flexibility and understanding. Their attitude is welcoming and they keep in close contact with families.

– They listen to their problems and try to solve their administrative and other problems, by giving them advice and by putting them into contact with the appropriate authorities. Some of them even organise medical care for them with the help of doctors who do not charge for their services.

– They find places for children in schools when possible.

– They serve as mediators between families, schools and authorities.

– Fortunately, some ASET groups include some Young Lasallian volunteers, who help them in all this work and take part in activities connected with teaching, such as the following:

\* helping children in schools with their work and ensuring follow-up;

\* running circus training sessions with the help of non-itinerant gypsies, as a means of integrating them into society;

\* organising a circus performance;

\* organising educational visits to museums, libraries, cinemas; introducing them to the use of public transport;

\* organising "Weeks of friendship and meeting others", during which young students come to help the group to run workshops, outings, etc.

– In other centres, there is a gypsy educational auxiliary, a sort of mediator, who helps the teacher in his work.

– Certain groups organise an exchange of letters with children of other mobile classrooms or schools, or produce a newsletter which is distributed. Some even write a little book!

– At the "All in support of the school" Centre, gypsy mothers bring along their young children, and are helped by a group of 6 persons, including 4 gypsies.

– A community of Brothers living near a camp, opens its doors daily to 15 or 20 gypsies. The Brothers listen to their problems, help them out, or write letters for them. Every month, there is a Mass and a meeting attended by itinerant gypsies and "Gadgé" (Gadgé is a term used by itinerants for non-itinerants.)

## • We bear witness by our actions

*"By his life, his conduct, his professional competence, his human qualities and the way he relates to people, the Brother is called to give witness to the reality of the transformation proclaimed in the Gospel he teaches" (Declaration 38,4).*

Many gypsy families have joined Pentecostal Churches, and this explains some of the remarks that follow.

### 1° The behaviour of ASET teachers is a challenge for the gypsies.

Seeing what we do for them and their children, they often ask us such questions as:

- "Why do you do this for us?"
- "Why don't you ever ask us for money?"
- "Who are you?"
- "You love us a lot to do that".

### 2° The sight of a cross, the approach of a big religious feast, a death in the clan, etc. sometimes serve as a pretext for questions from:

#### (a) Children.

They often begin by asking:

- "You baptised?" (that is, have you received adult baptism);
- "You believe in God?"
- "You believe in the Holy One?" (Our Lady)

Such questions give us an opening to say that we believe in the same God, that we have things in common, but also to correct some of their views about Catholics. They sing hymns during writing lessons. We try to understand and make them understand the meaning of what they sing.

#### (b) Adults and young preachers

Questions arise in connection with the Bible. They say they have the real Bible and that we have the wrong one. They ask us if we read it, if we have read the whole Bible. Young preachers, who can hardly read, come to the mobile classroom to improve their reading. This is an opportunity to read a passage from the Gospel and to discuss the text. One preacher lent us his "training manual" so that we could discuss them with him later.

### 3° During the making of a video entitled "When the school comes to them".

We asked the gypsies if we could film them singing and playing the guitar. They agreed on condition they could preach the Good News to us. They did so, and we sang a hymn for them.

### 4° Organising activities to enable gypsies and Gadg  to get to know one another, help one another and work together. These activities help to bring people closer together and help to avoid exclusion and rejection.

One group organises a cabaret evening once a year which brings together itinerant and non-itinerant gypsy parents.

In the gypsy district of one town, an ASET group has opened "an information centre on gypsy culture" run by a gypsy supervisor. Gadg  and itinerants use the centre to consult documents.

In most ASET centres, school support and leisure activities give young students an opportunity to take part, and enable them to learn about a section of the population that has been unjustly excluded from society. Bonds are often forged between these young people and gypsy families.

### 5° Special occasions which bring us into contact with Catholic groups.

There are occasions when the Gipsy Chaplaincy asks ASET to bring its mobile classrooms to provide literacy classes during a pilgrimage, such as the one to Les Saintes Maries de la Mer, or during Holy Week. These are often opportunities for giving some religious instruction after lessons and for answering the numerous questions put by the children.

### 6° For a better understanding of the Pentecostalist Churches and the work of their preachers.

On November 26th 1996, as part of its ongoing training programme for its teachers, ASET organised a day-long information session on these Churches. It was run by a university lecturer who specialised in this field.

Pantin: "Pentecostalist Convention",  
Whitsun 1981 (TV programme).



Stes Maries de la Mer:  
Gypsy procession.



## **ADOS** **Association for School Dialogue and Counselling**

62, rue Servient, 69003 LYON. Tel: 78.62.81.07.

### • **Origin**

It all began with a decision of the District Chapter (1981-82) of the former Centre East District of France to "create a new and original work for the service of the very poor".

In December 1983, 3 Brothers were chosen to form the new community (Georges Bruhas, Gérard Coudour and René Bonnetain). They met at Caluire on January 29th 1984.

There were numerous contacts with the Archdeacon, Fr. Henri Le Masne, the diocesan priest in charge of relations with the North Africans.

The search for premises ended on July 13th 1984. A temporary lease was taken out for a building due to be demolished. All the necessary repairs were carried out by the Brothers.

From the outset, Brother Gérard was able to become a supervisor in the local workshop where young North African schoolchildren came to work after school. The other Brothers had to wait till January 1985 before they could undertake some kind of school support work. The early stages were modest and difficult. The work undertaken was in response to a specific request from the Immigrant Families Association. Knowing our competence, they asked us to help some adolescents at the College with their studies.

We began by teaching in premises lent to us by ALPIL. We asked the town social services to provide us with permanent premises, but they refused. We appealed to the Town Council which acceded to our request.

On June 5th 1985, we registered as an Association at the local préfecture. In September, we opened our centre in its new premises. From day one, we had the active cooperation of a dozen or so students who offered their services free.

*Brother René Bonnetain*  
*Founder of the ADOS Centre*



**ADOS: Meeting for organisers.**

### • **Changes and new developments**

In the course of the years, the number of young people enrolled at the ADOS Centre has constantly risen. In 1986 we had 60 students. By 1996, these had increased to 260. Because of this influx of new students, adjoining premises were acquired in 1993.

The President of the Association, M. Pierre Marie Baetz, took an active part in the running of the Centre.

Some young immigrants, who had arrived in France less than 3 years before, and who were following a special 1st year course known as CLAD in the Chaponnay State College, asked us to help them learn French. The College arranged their timetable so that they would have Friday afternoon free to come to the ADOS Centre and receive instruction adapted to their personal needs.

Every summer, at the end of the holidays, the Centre ran a two-week course for the local children who were due to enter the 1st form, but who often lacked the basic knowledge necessary to follow its programme. We continued to help these children during the course of the school year.

The ADOS Centre strengthened its links with the College and other local associations by joining the PTAC (Local Project for Concerted Action).

Every year, there is an improvement in our teaching equipment and materials (books, documents, course books, etc.). In 1995, we set up a computer room. Computers are now helping us in our teaching work.

We are constantly being asked to arrange for people to visit us, to contribute articles to magazines, to let students study our work in preparation for a thesis for their educational science degree. All this is an opportunity for us to exchange and compare ideas.

A set of "Rules for Living Together" was drawn up by the staff and the young people at a common meeting. A copy of this "charter" is given to each youngster when he joins the Centre and is signed by him.

Young people who, for many years, were helped by ADOS, meet at the Centre on Saturday mornings and, with the help of a member of staff, help local primary school children with their school work. They feel that, having received, it is now their turn to give.

One of our major problems is the recruitment of staff who are competent, trained as teachers and educators, and who are prepared to offer their services free.

Two of our staff have followed CLF formation sessions, and three take part in Lasallian Team meetings in Lyons.

In 1995, the ADOS Centre became part of the Lasallian "tutelle" scheme.

- **Education in shared values**

The ADOS Centre, although a part of the Lasallian tutelle scheme and run by Brothers and lay people, does not advertise itself as having a religious affiliation.

Our educational work with young people consists basically in being welcoming, listening to them, helping them with their personal problems, and educating them in such values as tolerance, mutual respect and help, social promotion, and in helping them to find a meaning in their lives.

Basically what we try to do is to make our work with these young people a form of "witness".

On the religious level, values common to Christianity and Islam are brought up occasionally in conversation and give rise to a valuable exchange of ideas.

Many young people, knowing that we are religious, are challenged by our lives and the free gift we make of ourselves for their service.

- **Revitalisation of our vocation and sense of mission**

In 1996, the community at rue Moncey in Lyons consisted of the following 4 Brothers: Maurice Gonnet, Marc Peyrard, Joseph Perilhon and André Raphoz.

Our community has a specific apostolic programme: to offer a welcome to young people from local immigrant families, help them with their school work and contribute to their education.

Our thoughts, discussions and prayers are constantly centred on these young people with all their difficulties and attitudes, with their behaviour, their successes and their failures, their moments of discouragement, their appeals to us and their developing lives.

### **Brother André**

"I have no regrets about my life in school as a teacher and educator, or as an educational adviser for teachers. I have always been very happy in my work as a Brother of the Christian Schools.

When I was appointed Director of the ADOS Centre 2 years ago, I came into contact with a world I did not know, the world of immigrant children. I discovered their poverty and their riches. Their poverty is not only material: it is also and especially intellectual poverty and the poverty of home life and social relations. Their riches lie in their spontaneity, their warm hearts, their gratitude.

At the age of 70, I respond to this new call with great joy, and I feel as if my vocation as a "Brother in the service of the poor" has recovered its wind. My spiritual and apostolic life have been revitalised".

### **Brother Maurice**

"By helping children with their homework free of charge, by welcoming them individually or in small groups, I find it easier to influence them as an educator, as well as to discuss my faith and convictions at a much deeper level. My work here enables me to use my professional expertise. This helps to give meaning to my life as a retired religious educator, on both a human and religious level. Our whole community life, our interests and our discussions are all centred on our work for ADOS, in a way they never were when I taught in a school in which the community was not involved".

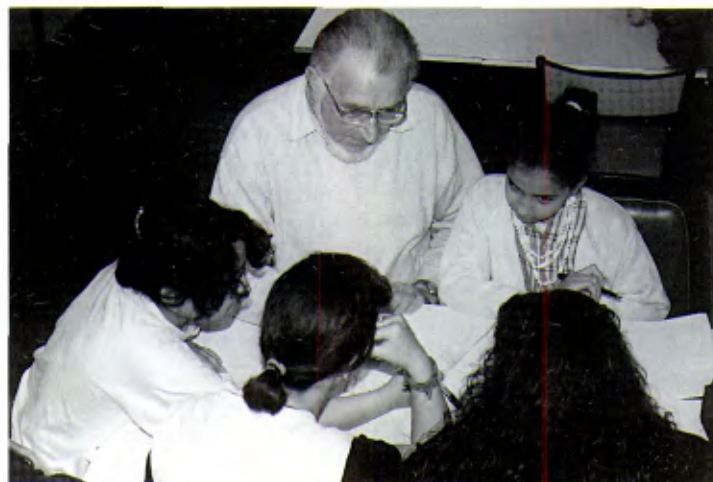
### **Brother Marc**

"Contact with another religion and culture, which makes me want to know more, share more and witness more.

Contact with problems of social integration and racism, which makes me question my behaviour.

Discovery of a world of underprivileged persons, who often feel inferior, humiliated, ashamed, and whose only form of release seems to be violence.

This world strengthens my identity as a "brother", as a "bridge" linking different age groups, races and religions. It makes me more capable of listening, of seeing with the eyes of a "creator" in order to help these young people to exist, to believe in themselves and to love. All this is not without influence on my life of prayer and my community life".



ADOS: Brother André Raphoz at work.

## DE LA SALLE ACADEMY New York

### • Characteristics of De La Salle Academy

De La Salle Academy was founded in 1984 by Brother Brian Carty as a private, independent, coeducational school for academically talented, economically disadvantaged students in grades six, seven and eight.

Providing a full educational program and chartered by the Regents of the State of New York, De La Salle is the only independent school in New York City established explicitly to serve academically talented students from low income families.

De La Salle Academy is a Catholic School where only 50% of the students are Catholic and 10% to 14% are non-Christian.

75% of the students are African-American or Latino-American, and 48% are being raised in single parent families.

The mission of De La Salle Academy is to reach into disadvantaged communities and to offer academically talented students an educational challenge that will change their lives. Because the population of the school mirrors the essence of New York City – a multicultural, multiethnic environment – students learn to see beyond differences to the underlying similarities. The ability to develop relationships with people of all religions and cultures is an important quality of the leadership which De La Salle fosters.

As far as value education is concerned, De La Salle Academy is a place where all are expected to be their best and where the whole child is cared for and nurtured, mind, body and spirit.

This is understood here as value-centered education which is concerned with life, love, trust, fidelity, freedom, justice, and brotherhood/sisterhood as rooted in religious commitment.

The goal is to provide each student with a learning environment where the issues of the spirit are respected equally with those of the intellect, and where God's presence is recalled and revered; to instill in all youngsters the pride in being who they are, an acceptance of diversity, and a humble gratitude for the gifts God has given them.

A sense of community is fostered by having students and teachers experience how the needs of others are often placed before our own; how everyone helps everyone else without being asked; how we all participate fully in the things we do together; how we struggle to accept everyone for who they are, including their weaknesses and flaws; how we demand the best of each other, let no harm come to each other, and encourage each other to be our best; how we develop friendships with each other that are inclusive, avoiding any exclusive relationships; how we behave towards each other with respect as brothers and sisters, and how we demand respect from and give respect to everyone.



Brother Brian Carty  
and pupils of  
De La Salle Academy.

## • The current student body

neighborhoods such as East and West Harlem, Hunts Point, South Bronx, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Flatbush, and the Lower East Side. The following statistics about the 133 students enrolled during the 1995-1996 school year are helpful in describing the children and communities we serve:

31% of our students are supported solely by welfare or social security payments.

39% of our students are from families that have incomes of less than \$20,000.

39% of our students are from families with an average of 5 or more members.

48% of our students are being raised in single parent homes.

75% of our students are African-American or Latino-American.

The size of our student body has grown consistently over the past 11 years, and is now above the maximum population of 130 students.

Year	84/85	85/86	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96
Students	53	90	102	108	119	117	125	128	130	125	130	133
Male	29	45	51	55	56	48	60	60	61	62	67	66
Female	24	45	51	53	63	69	65	68	69	63	63	67
Asian	2	4	7	11	8	12	12	9	13	17	18	21
Black	21	43	43	44	52	56	65	77	66	55	54	46
Hispanic	26	38	38	46	53	45	43	37	43	46	52	54
White	4	5	5	7	6	4	5	5	8	7	7	12
Catholic	39	66	64	62	72	68	59	60	55	54	58	66
Protestant	14	24	35	43	42	41	54	56	61	54	57	54
Other Faiths			3	4	5	8	12	12	14	17	15	13

The Academy's enrollment clearly supports its Vision-Mission as an independent, coeducational, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural institution committed to the education of economically disadvantaged urban minorities.

## • The Mission of De La Salle Academy is...

- \* To provide academically talented, economically disadvantaged children of diverse backgrounds equal access to a quality education through a needs-blind admissions process.
- \* To provide each student with a learning environment where the issues of the spirit are respected equally with those of the intellect, and where God's presence is recalled and revered.
- \* To train a cadre of youngsters who will become the leaders of tomorrow.
- \* To instill in each youngster the pride in being who they are, an acceptance of diversity, and a humble gratitude for the gifts God has given them.
- \* To train the youngsters to recognize and make a personal commitment to become involved in the issues of Social Justice and Community.
- \* To expose the students to teachers who relish the intellectual life and delight in sharing with the students the joys of the world of ideas.
- \* To be a place where the students can be loved and learn to love appropriately.
- \* To be a force in the movement to refund and revitalize education for the poor.
- \* To be a counter sign to parents who are despairing for the education of their children.
- \* To emphasize innovation in education for children with special talents.

*"Where there is no vision the people perish."  
Proverbs*

## • Some Elements of Community

### *Care:*

1. The needs of others are often placed before our own.
2. Everyone helps everyone else. One need not be asked to help. One notices that someone needs help and lends a hand.
3. We all participate fully in the things we do together.
4. In Community, we struggle to accept everyone for who they are: gifts and talents as well as weaknesses and flaws.
5. We will do no harm to anyone, physically, emotionally or spiritually.

### *Support:*

6. We demand the best of each other, academically and socially.
7. We let no harm, physically, emotionally or spiritually, come to each other.
8. We encourage each other to do and be our best in all areas of our lives.

### *Respect:*

9. Our behavior is based on strong values of truth, justice, love and respect.
10. We develop friendships with each other that are inclusive. This refers to all relationships, regardless of gender.
11. We avoid any and all exclusive relationships. Dating is exclusive behavior and does great harm to the community.
12. We behave toward each other with respect as brothers and sisters.
13. We demand respect from and give respect to everyone.

## **District of North Belgium**

### **Introduction**

The District of North Belgium has a long tradition of caring for the children of immigrant workers. As far back as the 20's, our garden-city schools in the Limbourg coal-fields had to cope with a multicultural local population. This situation was repeated in the second half of the 60's with the massive influx of Turkish and Moroccan workers, which brought our schools inevitably into contact with the Moslem religion.

Gradually other places too, especially the larger cities with their run-down districts, became areas where these two groups of immigrants settled down. Many of our Brothers' schools in these older parts of town were mainly attended by children of Moslem immigrants.

Between the 1981 and the 1985 Chapter, a booklet was published by the Visitor, Brother J. Machiels. In it he wrote: "Moslem children are welcome in our schools". The booklet was intended to help teachers in schools attended by Moslem children. One of the questions treated in it, in particular, was the presence of these children at our catechism lessons and community liturgical celebrations.

The first part of this valuable booklet deals with attitudes to adopt regarding Islam. The second part is based on information gained from contacts between schools attended by Moslem children, and describes some of the problems, in particular, religious ones, associated with integration. The third part provides some pedagogical and pastoral guidelines for the Lasallian schools concerned.

Among the recommendations of the 1985 Chapter, we find: "In Brothers' schools, Brothers and lay teachers proclaim with conviction values based on the person of Jesus Christ and on the Gospel. Charity is an essential element in this: they love as Jesus loved: «Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes»" (1 Cor 13, 4-8).

As educators in a Lasallian school, we must proclaim these values. Even if there exist great differences between religions, lifestyles, races and nations, in our Brothers' schools, these values must be held in high honour by Jews, Moslems, pagans, non-believers, those who no longer believe, those who have other beliefs, and by Christians. Our Lasallian schools are open to all, but they do not in any way deny their specific character, nor do they water it down because of the presence of others with different convictions.

Schools are supposed to include religious freedom in their regulations. Brothers' schools, however, maintain their own specifically Christian educational policy statement, and are not obliged to accept young people who actively oppose our aims. It is our duty to state the aims of the school clearly and explicitly to parents who wish to send their children to our Lasallian schools.

It is appropriate also to recall here the decree on non-discrimination put out by the Flemish community. This decree urges all schools to accept the children of foreign workers and so combat the creation of ghetto-schools, which militate against the integration of these children. This decree is, moreover, an appeal to all schools to collaborate positively to provide an education which will promote the integration of foreigners and native inhabitants within the existing multicultural community. I hope that the articles that follow will give an exact picture of the life and work of the Brothers and lay people in our Lasallian schools which are attended by children from different cultures and with different religions. Their work constitutes a valuable contribution towards the creation of a harmonious community in the year 2000 and after.

*Brother Antoon van Ooteghem*

## **The Lasallian school and Islam in Brussels**

Let us say straightaway, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, that our schools with a large majority of Moslem pupils are no longer Catholic schools. Catholic schools are characterised by the recognition and celebration of Jesus the Saviour, Son of God, of the Holy Spirit, of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, of the Gospel, the Good News of Salvation, and by the liturgy as an expression of faith. All this is categorically rejected by Islam.

The Institut St Thomas offers the following courses: tertiary education, primary and secondary school teacher training, primary education and secondary education in the humanities. It is located in an old part of Brussels. It used to be attended by children of adequately well-off Belgian and Spanish families. Teachers were very committed, all excellent collaborators, and some of them ran activities such as the Legion of Mary, help for the missions, spiritual retreats, special activities in Advent and Lent, devotions in honour of Our Lady in the month of May, the Conference of St Vincent de Paul, the scout troop, regular Masses and confessions, altar servers and the choir, etc. The sociological transformation of the neighbourhood happened very quickly. The massive influx of Moroccan families resulted immediately in the departure of Belgian children, followed closely by that of Spanish children. Apostolic activities disappeared just as quickly through lack of Christian pupils. The generosity, the welcoming attitude and the sense of service of the Brothers and of their lay colleagues remained unchanged, but had to be redirected towards different educational aims, and this caused much pain. What made it worse was the fact that these North African families did not share our views regarding many of the values we promoted, such as respect for women and authority, honesty, application to work, loyalty and trust as an a priori attitude.

Prayer, liturgy, religion lessons became impossible in this Arab ghetto. Fortunately, there remained the concern "for the

underprivileged". This was demonstrated by sympathetic attention to the intellectual and social needs of these children, and the adoption of new teaching methods suited to their learning problems. Brothers and lay teachers sought information about the culture and lifestyle of Moslems, and helped out the weakest pupils. They gave them free private lessons, helped them to learn the language, to prepare for examinations, and corrected their work. They were appreciated for their disinterested dedication and their competence, but this was the only way they could exercise some influence over these children. Religious lessons are now necessarily reduced to giving information about religion in general, and to a search for shared values, such as belief in a single God, the family, solidarity, justice, etc. On this level, it is possible to establish relations built on mutual sympathy and esteem, but it has to be said that the expectations of the Moslem clientele are above all utilitarian: our schools are appreciated because they are good schools, with good teachers who ensure a good education which is still of quite a good standard, and this has to be good for their children. In addition, the Brothers' schools charge lower fees than other private schools.

Teacher training has been less affected by these changes: our older students come from a variety of places, and you have to be Belgian to be able to teach. However, second generation immigrants, born in Belgium, and those who have taken up Belgian nationality, can now obtain teacher training certificates in Catholic training colleges, enabling them to teach either in primary schools, or in secondary schools. With these qualifications they have every right to teach in the private sector and even to give instruction in the Catholic religion. Private educational establishments do not provide instruction in the Koran. These young Moslem teachers are ideal for dealing with children from their own countries in schools attended almost exclusively by them in the central areas of the city. Some educational authorities go so far as to recruit them, and so their appointment is intentional. However, laws in Belgium ensuring permanent employment are such that, if a teacher loses his job, he must be re-appointed whenever and wherever an opening occurs. It can happen, therefore, that a Moslem woman primary schoolteacher, having lost her job in a ghetto-school, is appointed within her own educational district to a primary school with an overwhelming majority of Catholic children. The Moslem teacher in question would have to



**Sports, scenery building, theater...are all activities  
that form the individual, transmit culture, foster social skills and understanding of the other...**



respect and accept the specifically Catholic nature of the school, and this could give rise to serious problems. So far, there have been no pronouncements by religious authorities regarding this question.

It is easy to understand how much Brothers, and especially their lay colleagues, who still firmly believe in their vocation to be Christian educators, have suffered because of these changes: the values, convictions, ideals and practices which motivate them and give meaning to their lives no longer apply. Some have taken early retirement, but most have continued to work conscientiously. A small minority of teachers, however, have taken up the challenge and, with admirable dedication, try to witness, by their generosity and availability, to the transcendent message of the Gospel.

I think that the situation of our Lasallian schools in Moslem or Buddhist countries is very different from that of our schools for immigrants in Europe. The former are schools which enjoy great prestige, and whose staff, united by common educational aims and comforted by the wealth, if not always material, certainly cultural, of the western world, offer an example of respectable partnership. The European immigrant schools are a different matter. They are second-choice schools, attended by immigrants who have failed to secure a place in a big college. More often than not, these pupils cannot afford the tuition fees of such schools, nor even the daily fare between their homes and the college. When these children come to immigrant schools they are already full of disappointment, bitterness and frustration.

These schools are less well-equipped, the locality in which they are is not at all prosperous and, in particular, parents object to any extra expenses (swimming, outings, publications) imposed by the school. Fortunately, civic authorities in the French-speaking part of the country practise positive discrimination in the case of these schools, and provide better teachers. This enables the schools to improve their results and cut down on the amount of violence.

This critical but objective analysis of the situation gives us little reason to feel satisfied. Our experience teaches us that it is self-delusion to think one can make these young people "better Moslems". In their eyes, a European, by his very nature, even if highly esteemed, is disqualified from having any kind of say where their religious faith or practice are concerned. We would be deluding ourselves and it would be dangerous, both for us and for them, if we thought we could convert them. One wonders really what advice St John Baptist de La Salle would have given in such a situation.

Our large technical and vocational De La Salle School in Molenbeek, with its 620 pupils, had to cope with similar changes.

To conclude this brief survey of how Lasallian schools in the Brussels area have evolved, we can say that the maintenance of the specific nature of a Catholic school in a Moslem immigrant district depends on three factors:

- The age of the children. In primary schools, children are still docile, they are taught all day long by the same teacher, they accept without much difficulty the lifestyle and activities of the school. This is no longer true in the case of adolescents, who no longer accept the authority of their parents and who cause problems especially for women teachers.
- The social environment. In very poor parts of the city, such as Molenbeek, the combination of the North African ghetto and general social degradation gives rise to intractable problems of truancy, vandalism, rackets, violence and drug abuse.
- The percentage of Moslem children. When these constitute no more than about 25% of the school population, they conform with what is the general practice of the school. Once the percentage is higher, Belgian pupils start leaving, and within a short time, the ghetto school comes into existence. And once this happens, the Catholic school as such ceases to exist. All that is left for it is to care as far as possible for "underprivileged young people".

*Brother Maurice De Coen*



**Within education a climate of friendship, socializing and solidarity is important.**



*What can a Lasallian primary school do when it is located in the district of Laeken, whose population is 75% Moslem, and which is culturally, socially and economically deprived?*

**Note**

- The better off people of the district are leaving for more prosperous parts of town. Normally, they first send their children to a school in the area to which they are moving. The people who remain, or those who take the place of those who have left, are always those with the most problems.
- Families are often uneducated. In these cases, schools serve a dual purpose: educating children without the help of the parents or in their place, and educating the parents themselves.
- Many of our pupils have important responsibilities at home. This is an advantage for those who can cope, but those who cannot are doubly in need of our help: we give them our support and try to make their parents aware of the burden they are imposing.

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An analysis of these new needs and of our new role has led us to organise various activities and to encourage others.

**• Bringing children and parents into contact with our culture**

- Encouraging them to get to know their district and especially its historical and socio-cultural riches;
- Taking our colleagues to the theatre, to concerts, to the circus and to tourist attractions, and helping them to discover, learn and be astonished;
- Developing a team spirit and the notion of working together, especially through sport and team parlour games;
- Making them aware of their abilities and being proud of themselves without being arrogant;
- Encouraging gatherings and organising less formal meetings and meals for small numbers to encourage discussion;
- Teaching democracy and citizenship, by sharing views and asking for the views of others, or at least, by keeping everyone informed and avoiding secret agendas;
- Encouraging people to read more, to develop a taste for reading, by means of libraries and associated activities, such as story-telling, theatre, videos, etc.

**Remark**

Our aim in all this is to take care of everybody. We try to discover who has most need of our care and who is reluctant to become involved. We spend our time trying to motivate children and parents by highlighting everything that has a positive value.



Some exercises of bodily expression...

**• Implications for day-to-day teaching**

- No elitism, no competition, no rivalry, no exclusion;
- Formation of groups according to level of attainment;
- Encouraging pupils to learn according to their ability;
- To have aims that are as high as possible, by learning to surpass oneself, but bearing in mind one's limitations (which need defining);
- Learning adapted to individual needs;
- No individualism. Learning takes place in an atmosphere of mutual help which promotes the development of everybody.



Recalling the dances of the land of their parents...

### • Another important aspect

One of our daily tasks is to defuse all kinds of violence by working on its internal and external causes, and by transforming these into something positive and a source of progress. This is yet another way of giving a positive value to life and of teaching values.

### An additional thought

We do not want our district or our school to be a ghetto for us. Consequently, we have as much contact with the outside world as we can, taking part in its activities, and inviting all kinds of teachers to join us.

We are not here to concern ourselves exclusively with our pupils as if we belonged to a private club!

### How does religion come into all this?

#### An observation

We take care to preserve our identity. In fact, many parents and many former students appreciate our Catholic and Lasallian label. They have great affection for this school which has a God who looks after all his little ones.

They understand that the way we act is our way of following the example of Jesus Christ, and they respect it.

They recognise that what their children learn about religion, the source of faith and truth, does not contradict their faith and can only benefit them.

#### Analysis

Immersed as we are in this Moslem population, we have been obliged to take interest in, and even learn about its customs, traditions and the basic tenets of its faith. This has led to many valuable discussions, marked by mutual respect, between members of different faiths. These meetings enable us to know better other children of God and at the same time to strengthen our own faith.

#### A few thoughts

We wish to avoid at all costs falling into a kind of pluralism, devoid of points of reference, where all choices are left to personal preference. We pursue our quest for our roots and our rich heritage in company with, and for the benefit of potential Christians.

A practical example: how can we start having Eucharistic and other celebrations again for Christians, when hardly any have been held in recent times? Will it ever be possible to hold ecumenical services?

We have open minds regarding everyone, while at the same time we try to hold firm. We do not wish to run the risk of becoming watered down. Many of us, in fact, have a real need to go back to our sources.

#### Conclusion

What we have done in concrete and real terms is the result of intense activity within our walls. Our work needs to be regularly evaluated, looked at critically and remotivated. We are always very active, and often in search of perfection.

*Roger Charles*

## The Quatre Vents Primary School Molenbeek Saint-Jean

### The school

Up to 1980, this boys' primary school was located at the Institut St Jean Baptiste de La Salle, rue des Quatre Vents.

In 1980, because of a drop in the school population, it merged with a girls' school run by the Ursalines. The girls joined the boys' school.

In 1986, the primary school moved to its present position, on the Merchtem road. At this time, Belgian children were still in a majority, but this did not last long.

Ten years later, it is a school with a multicultural population. The school numbers 125 pupils divided up between the kindergarden and the primary section. 15 nationalities are represented, and there are 45 Belgian children. Of these 45, however, many have parents who are not of Belgian origin.

75% of the pupils are Moroccan, and the remaining 25% is made up of Turks, Italians, Spaniards, Chilians, Indians, Chinese, etc.

As for religion, 90% of the pupils are Moslems. Of the remaining 10%, Catholics are a clear minority. If we compare the religious practice of our young Moslems with that of our young Belgians, the former can hold their head high. Many Moroccans attend the Koranic school.

### The local community

Most of our pupils are second or third generation children of immigrants. Some of their parents are more or less coherent in Flemish. The predominant nationality is Moroccan.

From the moment you enter our school it is clear that we are Catholics. This is clearly stated on enrolment forms, in our information bulletins and in our letter-heads. Parents, however,



Races and countries are blended in the same classroom...



**Discovering together the value of nature and the environment serves to foster companionship and fraternity over and above one's personal boundaries.**

pay little attention to this. Sometimes there is a reaction when a teacher, from their point of view, speaks too much about Jesus or the saints. Sometimes, you are asked: "Is there pork in the soup?"

Parents give positive support to the aims of the school mainly because we advocate politeness, refinement, mutual respect and tolerance. They appreciate that a Catholic school is first of all a good school which, in addition to providing instruction, is concerned with lifestyle, mutual respect and tolerance.

#### **In the school itself**

When we decided that our school would provide an educational service for the local community of which we were a part, we were quite alone in taking this important step. No one outside gave us any advice.

By a process marked by both success and failure, but, in particular, by our team effort, we have succeeded in responding positively to the reasonable expectations of both parents and of the local community.

What has helped us especially has been our frequent contacts with the parents. We realise more and more, that the value of our Lasallian school lies in its being an open school, and in the fact that it makes collaboration with it by outsiders as easy as possible. The parents are our partners also.

Religious instruction is given twice a week. This calls for careful preparation and adaptation: there are still no books suited to our needs. At least, that is what we think. We base ourselves partly on the "Promised Land" series, as well as on our study of elements common to both our religion and the Bible, and the Koran and several of their religious practices.

We realise that Moslems have difficulties in accepting the idea of saints, but that is no reason why we should never speak about them. When we compare them with their own marabouts, the children begin to understand what we mean by our saints. They know what pilgrimages are, because their parents and their grandparents tell them about their own pilgrimage to Mecca. When we speak of God and Jesus, we speak also of Allah and his prophet Mohammed. In this way, we try to show them how, in general terms, our religion and theirs are related, we pick out the points they have in common and, with great respect, draw some conclusions regarding what transcends man and what is holy. The children and their parents know we are

Catholics, and we have no problem about appearing as such. We celebrate our own feasts and acknowledge theirs. They appreciate Christmas when it is presented to them in terms of light and peace. They know the nativity narratives and like Christmas carols. Easter is more of a problem. We celebrate their feasts also, such as Ramadan and the Feast of the Lamb.

We have just had a multicultural week: children brought all kinds of objects to do with their culture to school, and explained their significance and use. Extracts were read from the Koran and the Sourate commentaries. We talked about henna and the importance Moslems attach to it.

#### **The school and the local community: parents, locality, others.**

Our school programme takes into account local and community events.

We receive a great deal of help from local bodies and from the Young Moroccans Association, and we support their activities. In a few weeks' time, we shall be helping to paint the walls of the "local centre".

Last year, five of our teachers organised the pastoral activities of our school, and showed what this means in a multicultural school.

The teachers in our school help pupils with their homework. At present, there are 20 pupils who receive this help regularly. On Wednesday afternoon, trainee teachers from the Institut St Thomas in Brussels come to work with us for two hours.

A room has been set aside in the school for parents who wish to study Flemish. Parents join the group after hearing about it from others. At present, there are 11 mothers in the group. Those who know some Flemish already help the others.

In this way, the locality benefits from the presence of the school, and the school benefits from the locality.

#### **New cultures**

Immigrants can learn from us and we from them. The recent multicultural week was very enriching for everybody. One of the topics we studied was living (in the sense of inhabiting), and its possible consequences. We looked at living at home, living among others, building, making plans, moving house,

etc. Another topic was immigration. We spoke of going to another country, why you had to do so many things to obtain a residence permit for the new country. We spoke about the structures of our country. We studied the question of prejudice - we are not the only ones to be prejudiced. We did this by means of a game. We gave the children coloured cards with symbols on them. The different symbols and even some colours caused reactions: red, for example, can signify exclusion. Why is this not right?

The children appreciated this week. It helped them to learn about one another, about their respective cultures, and to respect one another. Tolerance gave way to esteem. This was the case also of parents who were involved.

### Future prospects

Last Easter, as a way of helping us to adapt more to the world where our pupils, their parents and grandparents used to live, and where they return to during the holidays, 7 teachers from our school went to Morocco.

The whole question is a very difficult one. We come up against problems, prejudice and obstacles. Families change houses frequently, and this obliges us to be constantly prepared to start much of our work all over again, if we want to help them to fit into society, which we do.

On the other hand, all this has bound us together very tightly and continues to do so. We have all become very close friends. We work **together** to bring about integration and to make the adaptations which regularly become necessary. We work **together** on multicultural projects, and we are very often **together** after school hours.

This is a factor which is enriching and which breeds great enthusiasm. Our educational aims are not merely written down: we live them.



The theater helps to recall the culture of origin.

## Sint-Henricusinstituut Antwerp

### 1. Short description of the process by which the school became what it is now.

Our school population is very multi-ethnic. As many as 14 different nationalities are represented. The largest group is made up of Turks. We have reached our present situation in the space of 10 years. The main reason for this new situation is due to changes in the composition of the population of the district in which the school is located.

Nationality	%	Nationality	%	Nationality	%
Turkish	42,1	Flemish	8,3	Dominican	1
Turkish-Syrian	7,8	Bosnian	3,1	Potuguese	0,5
Turkish-Kurd	1	Algerian	2,6	Chilian	0,5
Moroccan	13	Zairean	2	Chinese	0,5
Barbary-Moroccan	15,1	Cape Verdian	2		

There are various reasons for the presence of these immigrants:

- Immigrants do not discriminate on ideological grounds when they choose educational districts or schools.
- Immigrants send their children to schools (especially to primary schools) which are nearby. This often reflects their considerable geographic and social immobility. This factor, I think, affects their choice not only of schools, but also of other things such as housing.
- Large concentrations of immigrants in one place result also from the departure of Belgian pupils from specific schools.
- Parents enrol their children at schools where there is a large concentration of immigrants in the belief that conditions there will be better.

There are schools with a good reputation which refuse entry to these pupils. They fear that their presence could have the effect, among others, of making Flemish parents remove their children from the school. And so these schools, either explicitly or more subtly, refuse entry to immigrant pupils. The fact that some schools close their doors to them, often means that immigrants have to send their children to schools where there is already a large concentration of immigrants. This produces a vicious circle: schools with immigrants take in more and more immigrants; those with few immigrants preserve their good image.

- I wonder also about "the declaration of non-discrimination" and the implementation of the "threshold of tolerance" (which enables a school, after a certain percentage of immigrant pupils has been reached, to send pupils away or refuse them entry). The constitutional freedom of choice of school is to a large extent ignored. Such measures are based on the belief that large concentrations of immigrants lead automatically to a fall in standards.

## 2. The attitude of the school towards

### the values of the different faiths. Positive

#### community values and negative fundamentalist values.

Like Christianity and the Hebrew religion, Islam is monotheistic. This is an important characteristic that we share, which unites us more than it divides us. There are also other similarities between the three religions. They are all totalitarian, in the sense that all three seek to define the life of a person in all its totality and in all its dimensions. All three place a value on the free will of man, but its practical consequences vary from religion to religion.

Islam is more of a group religion and does not have the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. One must not justify oneself before anyone but God. Moreover, intention is very important in Islam. This profound common basis is more important and stronger than the various litigious points that surface in practice. We must also bear clearly in mind certain traditions, which have nothing to do with religion but which are interpreted as if they had, and which lead to generalisations or divergence.

Fundamentalism, whatever the religion, is a return to the roots. In itself, fundamentalism does not have a negative sense. However, the word is most often used to describe extreme forms of religious practice. Negative fundamentalism has no place in a conscious deepening of one's faith and its practice.

Everyone has the right to have a specific set of religious convictions. Instead of proclaiming that one's own convictions are the only true ones, it is better to respect the religion of others. In my opinion, this is a fundamental (but not fundamentalist) right.

Respect for other religions implies that we respect the values and norms of these religions. We have no right therefore to prevent others, who have different convictions, from practising their own religion.

## 3. Attitudes of teachers towards one another.

### Attitudes of teachers towards pupils.

### Attitudes of pupils towards one another.

The attitude of teachers towards one another is probably different in our school than in others, because of the need we

have to share specific information about our pupils. Follow-up of a pupil throughout his primary school years presupposes automatic cooperation. Our specific situation, however, (two and more languages and cultures), demands a special effort from teachers.

The knowledge that we are working with a team that has a common policy, that we are looking for solutions together, and that we are working for a common project, makes the work we do more bearable for every member of staff.

Having empathy for the pupils is a matter of course. We have to be careful not to treat these children as infants by eliminating learning difficulties, or by excusing them from work too easily because of family circumstances. However great the impact this education may have, the motive behind it has always to be to remove these children from situations of powerlessness and to break the vicious spiral of degradation. The attitude of pupils towards one another is much the same as in other schools. From contacts with other teachers, I have come to the conclusion that large concentrations of immigrants do not result in any specific kind of behaviour. Replacement teachers and those who have taught elsewhere are often surprised to see how so many different nationalities (and especially the Moroccans and the Turks) live so peacefully together in our school.

## 4. Interaction with neighbourhood activities.

In 1994, 6 parents working in the locality decided to pool their efforts.

The group they formed meets 7 times a year, and plans various activities.

Their common efforts have produced the following results so far:

– More parents come to the school and they come more often. The number of parents who come to meetings, to the distribution of school reports and to open days, is satisfactory. If we do not organise home visits with the help of intermediaries their participation drops off rapidly. This means that we still have to do our share of the work.

– Teachers go more often and more regularly to visit immigrant families, with the help of intermediaries. By means



In the classroom or at play...all help to form the person.

of these visits, teachers understand better the home circumstances of the pupils.

- The problem of communication is solved to a certain extent by the use of interpreters and bilingual circulars.
- Communication between the school and other bodies working with our pupils has improved noticeably since the creation of a SOW network.
- Weekly meetings between the administration of the school and the teachers ensure that information is circulated.
- Thanks to the help of the SOW organisers and our intermediaries, we have been able to organise open air classes for a large number of the pupils.

### **5. Some concrete indications.**

Our Lasallian educational aims (not predominantly Christian in tenor) are working well in a mixed religious environment.

All aspects of our school indicate that our Lasallian educational aims can work in a school where the majority of pupils are not Christians. These aims, whose overriding principle is that of openness, are precisely what enables us to have a great freedom of action in a multicultural school and society, which are in the process of rapid development. I should like to quote a significant passage from the document setting out our aims, which refers to the great open-mindedness and realism which inspires it: "Through respect for freedom, for conscience, for growth in the faith and the difficulties associated with it, each one of us must be sensitive to the differences in age and the aspirations and needs of non-believers and of believers in other faiths".

The conclusions of the 1985 District Chapter sum up well for me the kind of outlook we should have. The new challenge posed by the secularisation of our culture and the arrival of Islam in our country must lead us to give authentic witness to our own faith. It must lead us to re-examine our faith thoroughly and rid it of various kinds of practices which belong to the past.

In our school, we celebrate the feast of Christmas and the Moslems take part. They are happy to act out the story of the Nativity and eagerly watch and listen to its message of peace. Sharing and solidarity are often preached in the school, and this results often in a generous response on the part of the whole school community.

The fact that the children are not aware of the "Christian" aspects of this is not very important, in my opinion.

The experience we have of community and of going forward together is more profound and enriching than any declaration ever could be.

### **6. What is done for the underprivileged and the unfortunate?**

The attention and understanding that teachers have for each individual child is often obscured in the midst of everyday activities and practical concerns.

While they are not always readily discernible, they are nonetheless very important for the development of a healthy personality.

We should be very grateful whenever we are entrusted with the mission of looking after children, whatever their social background may be. I do not mean a mission from on high, but in the true spirit of the Founder. In concrete terms, we have noticed in the last few years an increase in the number of families with serious financial difficulties. In some extreme cases, the school provides a daily bowl of soup to needy children. We can no longer take it for granted that children can afford to pay for outings, school materials and a reasonable school bag. Apart from helping children, we help families also in conjunction with the local social services. Social misery is often very great, and pride leads many people to make great sacrifices.

### **7. Do former students continue their studies?**

A fair number of pupils complete their studies successfully, but more often than not, the qualifications they are constrained to pursue are of a lower order. Most of our pupils choose vocational courses, often because of a family decision. It is very important to inform students and parents fully regarding the structure of secondary education, and this has been a priority in our school for a year now.

After one or two years, we discover that certain pupils have problems in their secondary schools because of language difficulties. The kind of teaching these pupils had in their primary school does not exist at a secondary level. The gap between primary and secondary schools is becoming unbridgeable.

### **8. What happens to religion lessons in these mixed-faith groups?**

Religion lessons concentrate a great deal on the Bible, in particular, on the Old Testament. We speak of Jesus also, but not in terms of a truth to be believed. We stress the norms and values that can be deduced from these accounts.

There is one more thing I should like to say. Many teachers find it difficult to teach religion because of all our cultural changes. The personal commitment that religion lessons presuppose no longer exists. This is evident, but how can we bear witness to our faith if we ourselves have problems regarding it?

*Brother Roger Luyckx*

## **Inculturation**

18. Every culture needs to be evangelised. The Brothers make every effort to get to know, to respect and to assimilate the positive values of the cultural heritage of the people where they are located and whom they are called to serve. With joy and hope the Brothers discover there the signs of the presence of the Spirit. They ensure that the ferment of the gospel renews and enriches this cultural heritage.

This effort at inculturation is equally necessary and applies as well to youth culture as to the rapidly evolving culture of contemporary society.

18a. Every Lasallian foundation is embodied, together with the local church, in the culture, the language and the life-style of the place where it is located. Such embodiment ought to be accomplished in keeping with the charism proper to the Institute.

18b. The Brothers who belong to the country by birth are the ones principally in charge of inculturation into their own social milieu. The Brothers who come from other countries collaborate in this effort in a spirit of fraternal solidarity. In those areas where the latter are still numerous, they encourage their confreres gradually to assume complete charge.

18c. With an open mind and yet in a spirit of healthy criticism the Brothers study the various religions, ideologies, and cultural traditions of the areas in which they establish themselves. They will be able in this way to absorb the positive values therein and so to make a valuable contribution to the education of the people around them.

*(Rule, 18)*



## FRONT AND BACK COVERS

The front and back covers of this issue number 243 of the Bulletin of the Brothers of the Christian Schools are the work of Brother Fermín Antonio Gaínza.

Brother Fermín was born in Santiago, Chile, and he made his initial formation in his native country and then he began his educational apostolate. Then for many years he carried out his apostolate in Argentina, having been transferred there in 1947 to the Novitiate in Cordoba where the young Chilean Brothers used to go for their training.

After a brief stay in Chile he returned again to Argentina to work in the area of formation. He was twice appointed Director of the inter-district and inter-congregational novitiate in Argüello. He was Auxiliary Visitor for four years.

Brother Fermín has developed his interest in painting and poetry in a special way.

In many communities and schools throughout Latin America but especially in Argentina and Chile, you can find examples of art in the form of murals or paintings, typically consisting of vivid colors and swift, schematic strokes, a harmonious whole and above all symbolism... Then immediately the identity of the artist is revealed even though his signature is rarely found.

This may occur not only in the Americas but throughout the Institute, because many of the drawings that treat of a religious theme in general, and a Lasallian one in particular, sometimes are published in many of our own magazines, and they are his works even though they are not identified as such.

Some months ago when we asked for his help in designing the front and back covers for this Bulletin, we gave him only the general theme of this issue. He knew how to compose drawings full of symbolism, rich in content that really summarize the entire content of the publication.

He himself has explained the meaning of both drawings in the form of a poem, reflecting his own penchant for poetry. This is not to be "recited simply" as one may read the title of a book of his, but it is to be read as a type of "total prayer". He writes:

*We often spread your Word  
without being able to pronounce your Name.  
We stammer words of a human dialect  
concerning your paternal program for all of creation.  
We open up the possibilities of life and science  
to the enthusiastic minds of the young.  
We open to new hearts the meaning of love  
and a responsible type of self-giving.  
And so, Lord, almost without realizing it  
we sketch your face in many different ways.*

(Cf. Rule, 15c).

Brother Fermín, we thank you very much in the name of all the Brothers and members of the Lasallian Family.

*Br. J.M.V.*

