

Integral education

Introduction

The term “integral education” is an expression that not everyone understands in the same way. Over the course of time this expression has acquired at least three meanings that are recalled here to put into context the Tijuana and Chile experiences that follow:

- Revolutionaries of the 19th century all approached the question of education as part of the goal to transform society. This was a radically different way of viewing the school, removing the child from the control of the Church and the State so as to allow the forming of free adults likely to change the world. The guiding principle of integral education in this sense is to develop a person’s full potential, preparing him or her both for the world of thought and for that of work. This kind of education, of course, means equal for everyone, co-educational, and secular. Guided by the light of reason and science and by the observation of facts in an environment free of coercion, the child will go from discovery to knowledge. The first person to put these ideals into practice was Paul Robin (1837-1912), in France.
- As for the final document of the World Conference on Human Rights, organized by the United Nations in 1993, it asks nations to “orient education toward the full development of the person and the strengthening of the rights of men and of fundamental liberties.” This view of integral education “is an education that can prepare people to be morally autonomous and respectful of the liberty and dignity of others. This is its essential objective. Education for the rights of man makes reference to this goal of education.”
- More recently, in a specific context, we find integral education defined differently.

Here it refers to the **EVA** Program developed in the Cameroon in struggling with the challenges of AIDS. EVA (*Education for Life and Love*) is a program of integral education for humans introduced in the primary and second-

ary levels of technical and general education in the Cameroon. In operation since 1986, **EVA** organizes young people by sexual education for the prevention of AIDS and STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease) with the goal of having them change their behavior in conformity with worldwide and regional action, taking into account the psycho-affective, social, cultural, religious, and family context. This program consists of three facets: integral human education, access to health services, and gathering up the sick. Let us note that this program was conceived and put into practice by Canadian **Brother Rock Delud**, who dedicated to it the entire end of his missionary life in the Cameroon.

In the booklet called **MEL** that you have in hand, I use the term “integral education” with an added meaning. I believe that it is more radical because it clarifies the definitive place in which the educational act occurs. The reader can evaluate my explanation.

While visiting the Centre in Tijuana and remaining several days with the team of assessors and promoters I discovered what is meant by “integral education”. People come here driven by the necessities of life, looking for formation and practical skills for confronting their existence: to learn a trade, to put together some knowledge, to prepare for an exam... This is their first motivation; but having come into contact with the proposals for human and spiritual improvement at the Centre, other needs appear, linked notably to a whole process of rebuilding the person and recovering one’s own self-esteem.

This seemed to me a distinctive feature of the Tijuana Centre. In fact the people who come there have very often experienced trials which have shaken them to their depths to the extent of making them strangers to themselves, to the extent of making them doubt their own value and dignity. But the fraternal pedagogy of the Centre applies itself to making them discover that the most urgent matter is the rebuilding of their self-image and their true identity. This is achieved imperceptibly but consciously thanks to three things: first of all from the professional responses given, then from the proposals for spiritual, pastoral and religious formation (they are not imposed but each person has to choose at least one which suits him and is adapted to his present personal development), and finally thanks to the former promoters who have in

their turn become assessors and thus bear witness to their own personal reconstruction.

This is what is meant by a Centre of 'integral formation': it is the heart (in the biblical sense of the word) which is at stake in the pedagogy of Tijuana. This is why spirituality has its full place here. Because it is in the spirituality of each one that self-esteem, a capacity for welcoming, for the gift of self, for pardon, for commitment, is developed; it is there that new paths of dialogue, a new look at life and the strength to make new beginnings, open up. It is in this inviolable and free centre of the person that our adherence to life and the response we decide to make in spite of the ups and downs we have previously experienced, are mysteriously played out.

The Tijuana Centre is not a technical place of formation, but a place of human and spiritual improvement. Its educational approach is Lasallian.

Several thousand kilometres further south one finds this same pre-occupation. In Chile it is catechetical practice with children which spilled over from its own context to thinking in a more integral way about the steps being taken.

In fact the child and the young person are not little flowers thrown in the desert. They are growing in a soil which has already been cultivated a lot, full of presentations, customs, practices, foundation myths, sensitivities and sentiments carried along by the river of their family history.

In the catechetical situation the child or the young person carries - without knowing it - a whole personality already quite developed which could in due course stifle in him the call of his interior liberty and be an obstruction on the road which is his and that no other person will take.

Family catechesis has this concern for the natural and cultural environment of the child and the young person. It is a respectful concern because it counts on the parents who are also educators and witnesses of spirituality and in doing this they too are invited to follow their own road of faith, watched by their children.

Here as in Tijuana people are welcomed with all that they are, with all their history. The pedagogy being implemented wants to "touch hearts". It proposes means for setting this in motion, a set-

ting in motion which could produce an opening, a decision, a commitment in this intimate place where the person (child, young person or adult) is awakening to himself, to others, to a God of relationships.

Our Lasallian educational intervention is this integrated education.

Our colleagues in Tijuana and Chile keep telling us this. Let us thank them.

Br. Nicolas Capelle

Districts involved: North Mexico and
San Francisco, USA
By Brother Lorenzo González Kipper

La Salle comprehensive for-
mation center. Tijuana,
Mexico

This report, by Brother Lorenzo González Kipper, was written with help from Brother Nicolas Capelle, who spent time at the Center in 2004, and from Brother Carlos Manuel Castañeda C., who made a report on this ministry during the CIL session in Rome in October 2004.

The Reality

Beginning in the 1970s, due to a structural financial crisis which continues to the present day, a great number of Mexicans had to migrate to the United States. The resident Mexican population in the United States drastically increased by 53% between 1990 and 2000, to a total of 20.6 million persons, according to the latest numbers from the US Census Bureau. The Mexican portion of the Hispanic population in the United States had the greatest increase, bringing the total of Hispanics in the United States to 35.3 million. (<http://www.contactomagazine.com/mexicanos0515.htm>)

The results of the Twelfth Population and Housing Census reveal that the Municipality of Tijuana has a population of 1,210,820 inhabitants, which represents 49% of the population of the entire state. During the last 20 years Tijuana's population growth had an average rate of 4.9%, somewhat higher than the growth rate during the same period in the state (3.9%) and in the nation (2.3%). According to data from the 2000 Census, only 40% of Tijuana residents were born in the state Baja California, some 48% were born in other Mexican states, some 3% were born in another country and the remaining 9% did not indicate their place of birth.

In line with the projections from the State Council on Population (CONEPO), the city will have 1,380,742 inhabitants in 2002 and by the end of 2004 the number will be 1,574,510. These projections are the result of a conservative estimate of a 4% growth rate, even though the growth rate between 1990 and 2000 produced a population increase of 4.9%.

(http://www.tijuana.gob.mx/Copladem/pmd_2.htm)

No city in Mexico has grown as fast in terms of population in less than a century. The changing population, which goes to and comes from the United States searching for the opportunity to live "the American dream", or which accepts the opportunities that

Tijuana offers, is about 200,000 souls, according to unofficial estimates. (<http://www.neticoop.org.uy/documentos/dc0203.html>).

Juan

Juan is seventeen years old and lives in the middle of the country. Like his parents, he farms land but the economic situation leads him to “look North”, like his father did, for alternative employment that will help his family.

After a long and grueling journey he reaches Tijuana, the urban center of northwest Mexico, known for its expansion and for its organized drug-trafficking as well as its human-trafficking of those without proper documents, two practices which have taken over the city. Tijuana is in a privileged position to afford entry into the United States: there are thirteen legal entrances and there is one barrier, electrically and electronically protected which should be done away with because there are thousands of persons without proper documents who, not without much suffering, succeed in crossing it to work as laborers in companies in North America.

Juan has not yet succeeded in realizing his dream of entering the United States. Defenseless, with no home or office, he finds himself without any opportunities for advancement in this great urban center of two million inhabitants which is characterized by:

- an exponential growth in population in recent years.
- the number of inhabitants who are considered to be “floaters”.
- being the center of operations of a well-established network of drug-traffickers.
- being a center for sexual exploitation.
- being the world’s most crossed border.

YEAR	2000	2001	2002	2003
Total number of border crossings	52,253,560	54,559,883	68,828,263	72,702,577

While it is true that not everything in Tijuana is negative, nevertheless the environment that Juan encountered does not facilitate his desire to move forward. Furthermore, he has not finished secondary school and he knows no other trade than that of farming.

Juan and many others have found a place that will help them in their personal growth and which offers them the tools, at no cost,

to work in an office. Thanks to these tools, they can get some money together so that they can live decently and - why not? - return to their homes more sure of themselves, having done some studies and having a greater capacity for finding a job.

The La Salle Comprehensive Formation Center responds to the desire for personal improvement and Christian formation shown by Juan and by many other persons. The Center accepts all persons without regard to philosophy, religion, culture or sex.

Educational activities are carried out in an atmosphere of fraternity and openness to others. Work is done in a way that integrates the social and cultural milieu of the population. People are supported by the close cooperation between advisors ("teachers") and promoters ("students") to respond to human and spiritual needs of those come to the Center.

A Historical Sketch of the Center

The beginnings of the Formation Center in Tijuana date from 1979 when, through the initiative of Brother Armando García of the District of San Francisco in California, young North Americans went on simple mission trips to the marginalized areas of the city. These activities were known and appreciated by the Bishop, Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo, who sought to have this service consolidated by creating a Lasallian Center in favor of the people from the Diocese of Tijuana. From its foundation, the idea was to create something appropriate and suitable for this city with its specific set of problems, concretely its influx of adult immigrants. The challenge was how to be a sign of faith and human development in this populous and diverse city, where a murder is reported every 48 hours and where each day seven persons are injured in acts of violence?

The challenge was accepted and the first group of four Brothers arrived on August 16, 1981. The pioneer community was made up of Brothers Antonio González, Armando García, Juan Gómez, and Enrique Vargas, Director. From those first days the community discerned its objectives, but it was not easy to find a way to achieve them. Based on analyzing the needs of the Diocese, it was thought that primary importance had to be the formation of leaders in human and spiritual areas, so that, in turn, these people

could serve as ferment for the population. Registration was opened on January 23, 1982, and two days later the first adult student signed up. This Center admitted adults only. A Board was formed to support the Center's finances. As years went by, the Center grew stronger. At the beginning, La Salle Center cared for people who were in some way connected to the parishes in Tijuana, but it was soon discovered that many other persons required the Center's help and educational services were offered to any person in need of those services. In the beginning, the following courses were offered: English for Beginners, Organizing and Planning Youth Groups, Communication Strategies for Youth Leaders, Catechetical Formation for Teachers of Adolescents, Organizing Sports Programs, Introduction to the Bible, Family Relationships. The advisors ("teachers") offered their services free of charge. Over the years the number of advisors has increased and they have been joined by many "promoters" who wish to share their knowledge and ability. The current number (2005) of advisors is 130. The Center's outreach has grown and now extends to nearby towns such as Rosario (12 kilometers away) and to other far-away communities.

Vision of the La Salle Community

The La Salle Community was "struck" by the situation of abandonment in terms of the poor of Tijuana - the poor who:

- Could not stay with their families nor where they were born because of their need to actively support their families.
- Could not complete their basic educational studies because they had to work to support their families.
- Know no other trade that might help them earn an honest living.
- Have no knowledge of fundamental rights.
- Have not received any type of formation or training that would enable them to understand and to fight to preserve and increase human values which they should enjoy because of their "Dignity as Persons".
- Have no knowledge or have a very basic knowledge of God present in their lives and, therefore, they have not heard the call to full freedom as children of God.

For these people the La Salle Comprehensive Formation Center offers educational experience that facilitates:

- The development of the promoters' skills with a view to a more decent personal and family life and a suitable response to the demands of society.
- The promotion of responsibility, social awareness, and commitment to serve within the Church and society.
- The emergence and enabling of leaders who will serve in parishes and within the Diocese of Tijuana.
- The creation of a climate of responsibility, of doing a job well and of continual updating.
- Continual renewal of a participative didactic methodology that is open, flexible, active, and which fosters ongoing interest and motivation.
- Education for productive work and education for leisure time and the good use of free time.
- Personal and family formation and training in different trades and artistic fields.
- Learning English.
- The opportunity for religious instruction, catechesis, practicing the sacraments, experiences in prayer, moral education, Christian social commitment, family formation, psychological formation.

Based on lived experience, the mission of this ministry has become more focused:

The La Salle Comprehensive Formation Center of Tijuana is an educational institution, inspired in the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, which offers free, non-formal education programs, preferentially aimed at persons with few resources and who are 15 years of age or older. The purpose of these programs is to promote human and Christian development of persons, by means of acquiring skills that will enable them to live more fully their dignity as persons as well as to improve their family environment and that of society in general.

The Vision for 2008

The La Salle Comprehensive Formation Center, energized by Lasallian processes of association:

- Will offer quality education based on a curriculum defined in response to the needs of the city of Tijuana.
- Will generate and implement strategies that will increase its outreach and presence in the most needy areas of Tijuana and in parishes within the Diocese.
- Will be a volunteer Center in which laity deepen their Lasallian spirituality and grow in their commitment over a determined period of time.

Courses

Course content and the integration-reflection days that the Center offers are in the following five areas: religious training (including the Lasallian dimension), humanities, technical training, training in manual and artistic skills, and an open school for primary and secondary students.

The 13 courses that have to do with the humanities include: values formation, personal improvement, human relations, personal motivation, leadership, school for parents, adolescent psychology, help for drug addiction and alcoholism, winners males, successful women and training young people to be responsible.

Technical training courses include healthcare, learning English, computer science, training for secretaries, and journalism.

Several of the courses (currently there are 46) have to do with training in manual and artistic skills: culinary arts, baking, dress-making, plastic arts, hairdressing, hair design, cosmetology, painting, ceramics, decoration, musical instruments, voice training, yoga, aerobics, techniques in sports training, orthopedics, natural medicine, formal dance, modern dance, choreography, theatre, organizing free time.

Among the 25 courses dealing with religious training, current offerings include: catechetics, Bible studies, liturgy, pastoral ministry, family ministry, youth ministry, the social doctrine of the Church, Church history, ecumenical dialogue, Christian spirituality, Lasallian spirituality.

Adults are given the opportunity to take open-ended primary, secondary, and university preparatory courses. The program is based

on intensive courses and assignments and there is a weekly personal evaluation.

From the very beginning, it was thought that the best way to reach out to the population would be by the idea of “ferment for the masses” and for this there was created the training center for leaders. These leaders would spread what they had learned in various places, especially reaching out to many people in the diocese of Tijuana. To ensure this wide-ranging service, it is free. All the courses are free of charge, including the registration.

Schedule

The Center begins operations at 7:30 AM. The usual morning courses are: personal improvement, yoga, and aerobics. Sessions last one and one-half hours and they meet three times per week.

At 9:00 AM the principal morning session begins. The schedule is variable and there are 14 large rooms available and they are used according to the published schedule.

At 1:00 PM the Center’s activity is at a low ebb. At this time of day there are generally only active courses dealing with secretarial and computer skills.

At 3:00 PM general activity resumes in the 14 large rooms.

The courtyard is the privileged place for informal meetings. It is a welcoming space where birds sing, fountains flow, and where flowers and the shade of trees help to create an atmosphere of peace and tranquility.

The secretariat closes at 7:00 PM but the work in the large rooms continues on until 8:00 or 9:00 PM. Usually it is the youth group advisors or the teachers of journalism who are the last to leave.

Saturdays are devoted to catechetical work - for young children, teenagers, and adults. There is sacramental preparation and liturgical training. In the afternoon there are open courses and intensive English courses and these attract a large student population. There are also activities available for youth groups.

The leadership team

The international community of Brothers is at the heart of the

Center's leadership. From the beginning, the community was made up of Brothers from Mexico and from North America. Two Brothers from Spain have also helped out. The community of Brothers is closely linked with the 130 advisors ("teachers") who freely offer their services as guides and as mentors of the 1,250 promoters ("students").

Participation in the Lasallian formation courses allows partners and promoters to integrate the Lasallian thinking and spirituality, and together to envision new service projects for the needy. Rather than theory, daily living together in fraternity and prayer as a concrete response to the needs of the marginalized has brought about the association of Brothers, other religious and the laity along the lines of the 43rd General Chapter.

Church authorities, since the very beginning, have favored frequent communication with the educational community and have offered valuable support. The parishes of the diocese are seen as the fortunate recipients of Christian leaders, lay and religious, who have been trained at the La Salle Center and who want to respond to the concrete needs of the local Church.

Municipal authorities not only recognize the altruistic work of the promotion of adults that the La Salle Center does, but they also support it.

Financing

A Board, comprised of twelve families, ensures support for the Center. The group meets regularly to evaluate activities and to plan events (celebrations, raffles, candy sales...) that will raise the funds necessary for the Center's support. The Districts of North Mexico and San Francisco financially support the Brothers' community as well as improvements in the Center itself.

Results and Impact

The La Salle Center's contribution to the diocese and the society of Tijuana is very much appreciated. Various evaluations have confirmed that:

- The open primary, secondary, and university preparatory courses have allowed a great number of young people and

adults to attain basic academic training, evidenced by corresponding official certification.

- Parishes have benefitted from the support of trained and motivated young people and adults.
- A good number of adults have been interested in and enriched by courses in the humanities and in religious training.
- Thanks to the development of personal skills many persons have become self-employed and financially self-sufficient.
- Persons in their later years have grown in their self-esteem.
- Personal improvement and courses in human relations have had positive repercussions in families and in parishes.
- The financial situation for a good number of promoters and former promoters has improved.

In these ways the La Salle Comprehensive Formation Center has continually responded to the practical needs of the people and of the Church. The Center's strategic plan for the coming years envisions a continuous improvement of the services provided and, in particular,

- To establish academic plans and programs for each one of the courses and certificates offered by the Center.
- To generate strategies for recruitment and training that will guarantee teacher availability and ensure quality educational service put forward by the Center.
- To design and implement activities that will inform poverty-stricken parishes and neighborhoods about the services offered by the Center.
- To organize community services so that students can be involved in activities of human and religious development as a way to give something back for what they have received.
- To adapt the Center's organizational structure in such a way that there are appropriate programs and structures which enable volunteers to carry out their duties in accordance with the institutional program.
- To establish plans to train and to mentor volunteers that will ensure their growth as well as assist them as they carry out the Educational Mission.

- To execute a development plan that will ensure the presence of volunteers who possess the necessary characteristics required by the District and by the Center.

Lasallian vitality is a daily driving force for the Center's advisers and promoters as they live together the charism of Christian education and the building of a world that is more just and fraternal.

Testimonials

What has the La Salle Comprehensive Formation Center of Tijuana meant for me?

Brother Lauro Medina Terrón (former Director)

Now that I no longer work at the La Salle Center I can see more clearly that it was a very special part of my life story, both on the level of faith and on the human level. The atmosphere of the La Salle Center each day put me face-to-face with God and it helped me to discover “miracles” that happened each day in the life of the people whom I encountered in the classes I taught, on retreats with young people and in the other activities that occurred outside the La Salle Center. Even in the life of the community there was a rich relationship and ongoing reflection on our work as religious in Tijuana. What always impressed me *was the availability of many of the people who helped out at the Center, the lessons drawn from the people in their daily life and their experience but above all the hunger for God that many people had.*

Brother Maurilio Barriga Gaona

1. A place of ideal Evangelization, where faith is lived and charity is practiced.
2. A place of encounter and friendship.
3. A place where what is human is promoted so that one can live by his work.
4. A place where consecration has witness value as concern for the poor is evident.

Brother Alejandro Bûnsow Wilson (former Director)

God allowed me to live the experience of the Community Center in Tijuana from 1996 until 2001 and this for me was a true gift. As I took over the administration of the school my eyes filled with tears as I saw the good that we were trying to do for persons with scant financial resources but also with a tremendous ignorance about their religion. These people did not have adequate means

to learn about their religion and little by little I was made aware of what was missing and I was falling in love with the people who were leading me try to motivate the Brother Visitors from the Districts of North Mexico and San Francisco to make the Center a place of encounter with Jesus in the Lasallian style. In that way, we could not only give them the tools necessary for more dignified work, but also help them to get to know their religion and, at the same time, they would be in an environment where people are respected which would help in their own self-esteem. All of this leads to living Gospel values and for that reason when I left Tijuana I was even sadder since I felt that I was totally committed to each and every one. This led me to found not one but two community centers based on the Tijuana model.

Elvira and Armando Vázquez (Board members)

For us this has been a great experience in our lives and we are proud to know that as Catholics we had this great opportunity to prepare thousands of people spiritually and materially, just as De La Salle did, besides providing a space to exercise an apostolate.

Walter and Ma. Eugenia Peralta (Board members)

We feel fulfilled as persons as we have contributed a little of our time and yet we have been greatly rewarded as we see the daily results achieved by students at the Center.

To study and to analyze the charism of our Founder has led us to commit ourselves more and more firmly each day to always help the disadvantaged.

Patricia Acevedo Castillo (Student and former teacher)

The Center has been the pillar that has supported me on the way. It has been the staircase that has made me climb and grow in my spirituality. The La Salle Center is a treasure that has enriched me.

The La Salle Center is where I learned what it means to be and to act like a child of God.

Blanca Elizabeth Serrano Limón (Student)

The Center is an important part of my life. Here I had spiritual formation that I needed and so, for me, the La Salle Center is my second home and family.

José Rafael Falcón (Student)

The La Salle Center is my home where I have the opportunity to study and to improve in a fraternal setting. I have had good times at the La Salle Center. The La Salle Center has an indescribable “chemistry”. The Center is more than a school and that is about all I can say about it; it is something which is sensed and perceived.

The Center has also given me the opportunity to increase my faith in God and to get to know friends, to chat, to dance, to laugh, and to meditate. It is there that I learned what it means to give. Coming to the La Salle Center has been for me a kind of daily Christian festival and it has everything.

Martha Preciado G. (Student)

I consider our time at the La Salle Center as a great opportunity given to us in order to improve ourselves, both in knowledge and spiritually. The Center has helped me grow as a person and I would like to express my thanks for everything that has been done for me. May God bless all involved at the Center.

Ramon Hernández Carpio (Former Director and teacher)

The Center is a place where I can give to others in a disinterested way and receive much from others as well.

Nicolas Capelle (Secretary for Lasallian Education)

While visiting the Centre in Tijuana and remaining several days with the team of assessors and promoters I discovered what is meant by “integral education”. People come here driven by the necessities of life, looking for formation and practical skills for confronting their existence: to learn a trade, to put together some knowledge, to prepare for an exam... This is their first motivation; but having come into contact with the proposals for human and spiritual improvement at the Centre, other needs appear, linked notably to a whole process of rebuilding the person and recovering one’s own self-esteem.

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ing them strangers to themselves, to the extent of making them doubt their own value and dignity. But the fraternal pedagogy of the Centre applies itself to making them discover that the most urgent matter is the rebuilding of their self-image and their true identity. This is achieved imperceptibly but consciously thanks to three things: first of all from the professional responses given, then from the proposals for spiritual, pastoral and religious formation (they are not imposed but each person has to choose at least one which suits him and is adapted to his present personal development), and finally thanks to the former promoters who have in their turn become assessors and thus bear witness to their own personal reconstruction.

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For Reflection

- What place is given to spirituality in your culture?
- Do you think that it is at the heart of the spirituality of the educated that education is really developed?
- Do you develop education practices which favour a fair self-esteem?
- Has this had practical consequences for your Lasallian education approach?

About the author:

Brother Enrique Garcia Ahumada. Director of the Higher Institute of Pastoral Catechetics of Chile, "Catecheticum", Expert in the Catechetical Section of CELAM, Co-founder, in 1995, of SCALA, Society of Latin-American catechists, and pastoral assistant and member of the Administrative Council of the de La Salle Institute in the Florida district in Santiago, Chile, since 2000.

Enrique Garcia Ahumada, fsc

Catechesis of the family for initiation into the Eucharist

Family catechesis for eucharistic initiation is the most important stage in the evangelisation of the parents in the schools in Latin America which use this system. The historical beginnings of this method in our Institute reach back to Saint Brother Miguel (1854-1910) who placed great importance on the spiritual retreats for the parents of the children he prepared for their first communion in Ecuador over a period of 26 years and who rejoiced in the adult conversions brought about by God on these occasions.

The beginnings of our experiment

About 1960, several parishes in different parts of Chile gradually changed the catechesis preparing children for first communion, using various formulas aimed always at greater involvement of the parents. Indifference or the religious passivity of the families annulled, over a short time, the sacramental initiation attained by means of catechesis addressed solely to the children. A change was called for.

Starting from Holy Week, 1968, some of us Brothers in La Salle College tentatively began an original experiment. Each week, we gathered together the couples whose children hoped to make their communion at the end of the year to teach them how to prepare them at home. To provide motivation for the change, we began by explaining to them several points from the Council and the Bible in a rather intellectual way. By dividing them into small groups to facilitate participation, several much more vital preoccupations concerning faith and morality came to light. Some responsible persons in the small groups spontaneously assumed the leadership, while, at each session, we Brothers each moved among two or three groups to observe and then complete the doctrinal formation when the groups all came together. The plenary gathering lasted a little less than half of the two hour session. For the purpose of unifying and giving a logical progression to the themes to be treated, we began to supply a pair of duplicated pages each week. These presented certain experiences from daily life, a few gospel texts with brief explanations, some questions to help the children to understand the relationship between the Gospel and life, and an invitation to pray together as a family and to concentrate during the week on some aspect of Christianity.

Once a month, we gathered the parents and the children in a tripartite session which we used to evaluate and to boost the process. During the first part, the parents were listeners and spectators, proud and sometimes ashamed at what they saw and heard. By means of multiple questions the Brothers elicited from the children what they had learned in their family during the month in the area of doctrine as well as in that of practical living. The sincerity of the children showed clearly that the majority of them had made real progress as well as what aspects still remained insufficiently assimilated. The second part consisted in a celebration of the Word to reinforce, by a reading and a homily, the understanding of the theme for the month, to give thanks for what had been learned from the parents and to express themselves through spontaneous prayers, which made the session very moving. The third part was a feast for the whole group, with drinks and delicacies; sometimes certain parents took the initiative in entertainments, which everyone enjoyed.

This monthly gathering enabled us to give a better focus to the written content for the parents' sessions for the following month. An important moment in the year was the communal celebration of the Sacrament of Penance for the adults, with several confessors. One of them, carefully chosen, gave the homily after the biblical proclamation at the beginning. Up to the present time, on this occasion, there have always been some people who went to confession after long years away. When the children made their first communion, nearly all the parents also received communion. Likewise up to the present time, some people who canonically were excluded from communion, have received from the Brothers the necessary accompaniment to face up to this situation maturely.

In October of that year, Father Carlos Decker Guerra was appointed Director of the Archdiocesan Institute in Santiago and charged with developing and gathering together existing experiments in family catechesis. He is still carrying out this task thanks mainly to the great success obtained throughout the country by this new system of eucharistic initiation. In the course of the summer, in the following January, he was invited to introduce our experiment, which was the only one in a college and not in a parish. At the end of 1969 he published a manual entitled "Meeting the living God" accompanied by a Children's Booklet, which was used to prepare children for communion thanks to the parents or at least

the mother, in one year. From the beginning of the following year we began to use this Archdiocesan material in our college.

In Plenary Assembly, the Episcopal Conference of Chile examined, in 1970, the experiments and publications of different dioceses on the new method of initiating children into the Eucharist. Relying on the General Conference of the Latin-american Episcopacy which took place in Medellín in 1968 and stressed evangelisation, it decided:

1. Not to promote mother catechists but Christian families.
2. To consecrate at least a year to the evangelisation of the parents and a second year more directly to eucharistic initiation.
3. Not to impose the system in an obligatory manner but to support it as and when the parish priests or others with pastoral responsibilities could take it up. This decision caused a qualitative leap in ecclesial life in Chile.

In 1971, the Dioceses of Santiago and Valparaiso began to publish new catechetical material for families dedicated mainly to the evangelisation of adults with the object of offering children the support of their parents so that they can help them in their Christian development. But there was a difference: in Valparaiso Father Enrique Barilari Galleguillos, Diocesan Director of Catechesis, considered that it was more realistic to enlist only the mothers, whilst in Santiago there has always been a desire to implicate both parents, devising all possible means of attracting the dads. Brother Enrique Aguilo Bonin, F.S.C., published at the Archdiocesan Institute of Santiago the first manual of Methodology of Family Catechesis, but after the Pinochet coup d'état in 1973 he had to return to Spain, saved by Archbishop Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez from death amongst the prisoners in the National Stadium. At present he is directing the Archdiocesan Catechetical Institute in Seville and this allows him to promote principally family catechesis for eucharistic initiation.

Upon my return, in 1974, after two years of specialisation in theology and catechesis at the Lumen Vitae Institute in Brussels I began to work with the Carlos Decker team, for the development of material and the renewal of catechist formation. I was appointed National Director of Catechesis, a responsibility to which I devoted myself half-time for thirteen years. My principal success was in spreading family catechesis for eucharistic initiation (CFIE)

into every diocese in the country. Beginning in 1978, invitations came to do the same work in some rural and urban parishes in other countries in Latin America, then into some dioceses and finally on the national level. CELAM, the Latin America Episcopal Council, created in 1954, promoted contacts between Bishop Presidents and the National Directors of Catechesis in regional and sub-regional meetings.

With Father Ramon Echeverria Neira, we published, from 1975 onwards, some manuals for *Celebrations for Children*. These completed the series of the new pastoral courses “*Meeting the living God*”. A youth, aged 18 or more, or an adult, called the Animator of Children’s Celebrations (ACN), on the Saturday or Sunday, celebrated with two objectives in view what it was presumed the parents taught during the week with the help of their accompanying adult:

1. to enlarge beyond the home the children’s ecclesial experience,
2. to initiate them into the Sunday liturgy.

That is how the Chilean system of family catechesis for eucharistic initiation is completed.

A group of persons united around certain objectives of education in the faith, with formation, stages, content, processes, equipment and means of evaluation, constitutes a ‘catechetical system’.

Over and above the description, the presentation aims at emphasising the most decisive aspects for success in maintaining quality in the functioning of the system. There is variety in the manuals, the programmes, the languages and the processes of formation in use in the various countries, but it is necessary to pay attention to some essential aspects. Some criteria are set for the authors of material, others concern the basic apostolic personnel, and others match the ones for those who give them initial formation or accompany it.

Objectives

In addition to the purpose defined by the system - the evangelisation of the parents of children who are being initiated into the eucharistic life in order to offer them lasting support in the devel-

opment of their Christian life - there are two other objectives linked together in CFIE:

- to lead families to become actively integrated into the communities of faith - participation in the Sunday eucharist being the minimum desirable
- and to awaken the commitment to social solidarity between the parents and their children, as a result of their being members of Jesus Christ.

Persons and their formation

CFIE consists in bringing together each week, for two years, small groups of fathers and mothers of families, usually animated by a person accompanying the couple, to form them in communicating the faith to their sons and daughters. Likewise the children gather each week, preferably on Sunday, or, failing that, on Saturday, to accustom them to celebrate the Lord's day. These meet with an animator who, experience showed, should be 18 years of age or more. The role of this person is complementary and is not to be substituted for the role of the parents, who remain primarily responsible for the faith of their children and who are going to enable the incorporation of the child into an ecclesial community bigger than the family.

Those who accompany the couples as well as the animators of the children are prepared in each diocese by courses given in each parish or in neighbouring parishes grouped together. Catholic schools send to these courses apostolic personnel who wish to prepare to take part in CFIE outside the school time table. This is an integral part of the educational plan. It must be recognised that some parishes, without following the diocesan criteria, give a very short initial formation and without much accompaniment for their representatives, and this impacts negatively on the quality.

The normal formation of the two classes of apostolic personnel is divided into three stages:

- The first is a human, Christian and evangelical formation in order to:
 - a) improve the self-esteem and human relationships, using some appropriate group dynamics;

b) go from popular religiosity which they usually possess, to a more committed faith in Jesus Christ;

c) understand evangelisation and the criteria of the episcopal conference and of the diocese.

- The other two stages each of which likewise lasts for about forty or fifty hours enables them to use the materials for the first and second years of the CFIE with ease and flexibility. Thus, they can alternate the format of the course of meetings with learning the contents of doctrines, everything being impregnated with biblical, eucharistic and social spirituality. In all the courses for persons accompanying the couples or the children, a community celebration of pardon with individual confession, is included, which supports the habit of living in the grace of God.

The classical error in methodology of those beginning to accompany families is to read the parents' manual at the meeting even when they sometimes divide it up and comment on it. As time goes on and they gain experience, while keeping in mind the said text, they swap other instructive passages to the subject of the meeting but without reading anything other than the biblical passages which are suitable in the circumstances.

In some dioceses the doctrinal formation requires as a pre-condition a complete course of two hundred hours or more of introduction to the Bible, dogmas, morality and the sacraments. In most dioceses the doctrinal preparation of personnel is more functional, being limited to the themes they must treat. Local coordinators must pay attention, by means of special or day-long meetings, to keep very much in mind what they notice about the catechists and the liturgical animators of the children. The Bible must always be brought into relationship with daily life in which God is acting. At the same time they place emphasis on certain pieces of basic knowledge which consolidates Catholic identity and brings about a capacity for a tolerant ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

The Brothers, other male and female religious and deacons usually become accustomed to the system by accompanying a group of parents until such time as one or more households arise from the group who may be disposed to prepare to exercise this role at the end of their formation. It is more normal for parents to be guided

by other parents to develop and give direction to their matrimonial, parental and apostolic experience. Thus is developed a Church of Lay communities instead of nourishing a dependence of lay people on clerics. The role of the clergy and religious is to coordinate, animate and form the lay people within the subsidiarity of a Church community.

The initial formation of the animators of the children has quite a few things in common with that of those who accompany the parents, but their methodological formation has to be different because their role is not to be catechists, but liturgical animators, helpers of the parents and promoters of the formative dialogue of the parents with their children. If these animators take centre stage they cause the parents to lose their role as primary educators of their children and can quickly undermine the system. This is a complex question and deserves a flexible case by case accompaniment, because certain parents are really incapable of giving example and Christian formation to their children, or else, the requirements of present-day urban living prevent them from being able to communicate seriously with them.

As well as the planned courses and the yearly apostolic task, ongoing formation exists for those who accompany households on the one hand and for the animators of the children on the other. They come together each week or each fortnight in a climate of prayer so that they may themselves assimilate the Word which they have to pass on to their respective groups, to do preparation and to evaluate their catechetical encounters. The parish, or the pastoral assistant in the Catholic school, ordinarily suggests to the teams of those accompanying the households and to the teams of the animators of the children, coordinators experienced in this type of work to encourage them and help them to resolve the difficulties that are sure to crop up.

Content

There are three kinds of content in CFIE: testimonial, doctrinal and experiential.

- 1) It is indispensable that those accompanying households be simple examples of real families, with their normal difficulties which are not passed over in silence, but rather reflected on with their interlocutors during the meetings.

- 2) The doctrinal content is essentially a shared reflection on a biblical text which is a focus at each meeting, although sometimes the accompanying person should give the answer straightaway or after a prudent delay to certain demands articulated by the participants.
- 3) The experiential content consists in facts of life as they are related to the particular objectives of each weekly meeting, either suggested by the person accompanying the family or which arise from the discussion of a significant biblical text. This is very important for the interaction between the Word of God and daily life.

As with the parents' meeting, the meeting of the children with their animators has elements of content linked to their age. In this way, what the parents have dealt with in their weekly meeting is useful in conversation with their sons and daughters. These each have a notebook in which they record their own reflections and their obligations, the principal one of which is precisely to deal with the subject with their parents. The subject is reinforced in the week-end meeting with their animator to summarise the topic.

Stages in the process

There are two basic stages, lasting about thirty weeks each, because the present conditions of urban life do not allow of having systematic meetings every week of the year.

The first year is taken up mainly with a presentation of Jesus Christ Saviour and this culminates in the sacrament of reconciliation. The second year is a presentation of the Church, the sacrament of salvation, the summit of which is the Eucharist. To call it the summit does not mean that the communion of the children is the last gathering nor that the Eucharist, under its various aspects is the end of the programme.

It is important to show adults and children the different vocations at the heart of the Church and the various activities in which they can take part according to the capacities and inclinations of each one in order to accomplish the second and third of the stated objectives. What is at stake is that the parents live a kind of catechumenal journey. It is indispensable in this case for the majority of Catholics have never had a truly complete Christian initiation;

in this way they move towards taking on commitments in the Church and in the world. Otherwise, why go to mass and communion?

The length of the process is indispensable to realise the three objectives. Those who limit it to less than two years lose the opportunity of leaving the action of God a favourable ground for the transformation of individuals and communities.

Each of the two years of the cycle is further divided into smaller stages. Each of these leads to a lovely celebration of the Word. For these, different CFIE groups come together to give greater breadth to this Church ceremony.

The first year is devoted to organising several meetings to explain the objectives of the system, to improving the communication of the parents between each other and with their children and to give some directions on family education. The parents are grateful because no one has ever prepared them for it. When the programme is organised around the liturgical year, at least in the first year, this human and family basis of the formation must be kept, by introducing anthropological subjects at opportune moments, obviously from an explicitly Christian perspective. In the course of the following weeks, special attention is given to christocentric biblical initiation, something which is lacking in many families. The following is a theoretical example of the first year programme, inevitably subject to evaluation and re-formulation every four or five years by the team of authors in each college, diocese or country:

1. *Celebration*: Welcome to sharing in the Word of God.
2. Communication strengthens union.
3. It is much better for mum and dad to educate together and by being in agreement.
4. How do we treat our children?
5. *Celebration*: Being parents and children, what a lovely gift!
6. *God chose a people to announce salvation.*
7. In the Bible we meet the Word of God.
8. The New Testament speaks to us about Jesus.
9. Mary listens and reflects on the Word of God.
10. *Celebration*: Distributing the Bible.
11. Jesus true man.

12. Jesus Son of God.
13. Jesus makes God the Father known.
14. Jesus man of prayer.
15. *Celebration*: gift of Our Father.
16. Jesus-Master teaches us to love.
17. Jesus promotes conjugal love.
18. Jesus liberates from the idolatry of sex.
19. *Celebration*: Renewal of marriage vows.
20. Jesus liberates from the idolatry of power.
21. Jesus liberates from the idolatry of money.
22. Jesus liberates from vices.
23. Jesus criticised, persecuted and betrayed.
24. *Celebration*: Jesus dies on the cross because of our sins.
25. The Resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith.
26. The Risen Jesus institutes ministers of forgiveness.
27. *Celebration*: Celebration of sacramental forgiveness.
 - A. *Celebration*: Jesus born poor in Bethlehem (at a suitable time).
 - B. *Celebration*: On the cross Jesus gives us Mary for our mother (at the right moment).
 - C. The Assumption of Mary (at the right moment).

In the second year, before presenting the Church and the Eucharist, it is fitting to give a plain presentation of the people of Israel, their deliverance and their Covenant, in order to understand the fundamental liberating aspects of community and communion and to achieve a first introduction to the Bible as a whole, and not just the New Testament. A programme for the second year could be the following:

1. *Celebration*: God entrusts creation to us to preside over it wisely.
2. Christians inherit the promises made to Abraham.
3. God frees his people thanks to Moses.
4. God, the Liberator, proclaims the commandments of his Covenant.
5. *Celebration*: The Jewish people celebrate their deliverance at Passover.
6. God the Father proclaims his beloved Son at the baptism by John.

7. Jesus announces the Kingdom of God.
8. Jesus chooses the Apostle of the new People of God.
9. Jesus sends the 72 disciples to preach.
10. *Celebration:* Through baptism we are chosen and sent.
11. Jesus promises resurrection and eternal life.
12. Jesus brings a new personal and social life.
13. The Holy Spirit animates the Church.
14. Within the Body of Christ we have different vocations.
15. *Celebration:* Gift of the Creed.
16. Jesus washes the feet of his disciples (Penitential rite).
17. Jesus speaks to his friends at the Last Supper (Liturgy of the Word).
18. Jesus gives thanks to the Father with his community. (Eucharistic Prayer).
19. Jesus gives himself under the appearances of bread and wine (Eucharistic communion).
20. Jesus sends forth to bring peace to the world (Rite of commissioning).
21. *Celebration:* Through the Eucharist we give thanks to God as a community.
22. As Church, we serve those in need.
23. As Church, we work together to spread the Word of God.
24. As Church, we celebrate the sacraments instituted by Jesus.
25. Financial contribution to the Church is merely justice.
26. Mission of lay people in the world.
27. *Celebration:* The Holy Spirit helps us to bear witness.
 - A. *Celebration:* In every pregnancy there is an Annunciation (at a suitable time).
 - B. *Celebration:* The Immaculate Conception of Mary (at a suitable time).
 - C. *Celebration:* National Feast and social Mission (at a favourable time).

This programme plan is a suggestion that can be freely discussed and modified in terms of the needs that come to light in ecclesial life and local culture.

Methods

The way of operating should be collective, active and liberating. If the group of parents reaches twelve or fifteen people representing six to ten families (for various reasons the complete couple cannot always take part), the group of children per animator can include groups of two or three siblings. When there are more than about twenty children, two animators are needed, one being in charge and the other a beginner who helps or possibly replaces that person in case of absence.

Shared prayer and celebrations of the Word are indispensable factors in Christian growth which, although personal, is not individualistic. At each meeting care is taken to give a good balance to reflection and a prayerful attitude, and attention to the Word of God. The whole development begins with liturgical life. The participants, during successive celebrations, take on different roles, and creativity is stimulated by symbols, ornamentation and providing a suitable atmosphere for each celebration according to its subject.

The approach in parents' gatherings is active, with the usual steps of *see, judge, act and pray*. The children's meetings include games - to the extent that they contribute to the success of the objective of the gathering - acting out biblical stories or real life situations, dialogue with the animator and celebration of the Word in as much as it is the central part and sometimes the sole content. Outside of the meetings, the activity encouraged most - and the one which, in our experience, is the most difficult to bring about - is dialogue between the parents and the children on the subject for the week. Those who accompany parents and those who accompany children have to check each week if this dialogue has taken place and, in a friendly way, find creative means to develop it.

Everything is done in CFIE to make sure that it is liberating. Persons accompanying couples and the children's animators, by their respectful attitude facilitate the participation, free expression and initiative of the members of each group. None are excluded because of their matrimonial situation; but to the extent that it is requested each case is followed up discreetly to regularise the situation if possible. Nothing is imposed, but the Good News is announced freely and enthusiastically. In the celebrations and

other gatherings, it is suggested that each one take on responsibilities in turn. Everything that can favour self-esteem is promoted, and whatever can wound or marginalise anyone is avoided. In the children's games cooperation is preferred to competition, and when there is competition, it is between groups and not individuals. Joy, a healthy physical or mental atmosphere and a friendly way of living are encouraged. Expenses which could be too onerous for the poorest are avoided.

When the person with pastoral responsibility wants to establish the CFIE anywhere - in a parish or a Catholic school - he prepares for setting it up by giving reasons rather than imposing it brusquely. For example: there is an expectation that there will be an improvement in communication between families and their children in order to forestall the tendencies of adolescents to rebellion, violence, drugs and other vices; the desire is to create small friendly groups of neighbouring families to help them educate their children in Christian values with the help of households which have greater experience; it is a way of offering parents a simple but systematic introduction to the Bible so that they can better fit in with the post-conciliar Church through a gospel attitude to today's society.

Materials

For each year, there is specific material, so that each member of a basic group may know what to stick to. To secure good communication with the beneficiaries, it is important to bring together a multidisciplinary team - in communication, pedagogy, pastoral theology, catechetics - with updated biblical-theological content, awareness of popular practices, of the secularising milieu, of the local culture and of the pastoral situation with its strong points, its opportunities, its weaknesses and its dangers.

The *Parents' Book* helps them to take part in the gatherings, the celebrations and the singing. There is a very clear objective for each meeting and help towards dialogue at home between parents and their children. One country diocese with a very widely scattered population has designed the book solely for use at home, without meetings of the parents. The internet can make new means of communication between scattered families possible and accessible. Each subject needs to be short, with questions

that lead to and provoke reflection, with very precise steps in order to:

- 1) *see* a daily reality which raises questions,
- 2) *judge* that situation in the light of the Word of God contained in the Bible and Tradition described in a few short thought-provoking texts,
- 3) *act* after freely imagining some commitment to the boy or the girl and also to the others,
- 4) *pray*, leaving complete liberty for spontaneous vocal prayer or for silent prayer.

This manual leads from set prayers to spontaneous prayer, from the prayer of petition to the prayer of repentance, of thanksgiving and of praise; from vocal prayer to prayer of the heart and mind. This book uses a good translation of the Bible, which can be easily understood by the least educated. The book is planned as the first course in adult evangelisation of a catechumenal kind. It requires a series of discussions within a group of interdisciplinary authors to specify, on the occasion of each new edition, what subjects are essential and sufficient and the best order in which they should come.

The *Children's Notebook* encourages personal work, dialogue with parents and the weekly meeting. The subjects correspond to each one in the *Parents' Book*, with an appropriate objective and language. The hymns should include a religious repertoire for children as well as the most usual ones in the local Church; they call for stimulating faith and rhythm. This *Book* prompts the personal reflection of the child and its apostolic creativity in solidarity with others. It calls for the memorisation of only one or two important assertions such as bible maxims, short doctrinal formulas, acclamations or ordinary liturgical responses, commandments, beatitudes... When this *Notebook* is revised each year, before sending it to the printers, there has to be a check on whether these formulas to be learned by heart are sufficient to attain the objective for the year and if they are all pertinent.

The *Teaching Guide* focuses the work of the person accompanying the family for each topic, It provides material for a practical introductory course in the first or second year, for the persons accompanying the families in catechesis. It contains rules for evaluating the quality of the catechetical meetings and the liturgical

celebrations. Its doctrinal content for each gathering answers, in simple words, the usual questions asked about the Catholic faith today by the local adults. It provides indications for bringing the Word of God into touch with life. It supplies leads for making profitable the meetings of teams of those accompanying parents and for preparing and evaluating their interventions with the parents. It puts forward means for attracting fathers to these catechetical instructions. It suggests activities which, especially in the second year, put those who take part in touch with activities in their parish and with lay people who, through a variety of activities, give their Christian witness in society. It also includes advice about books and sites useful for developing and upgrading human, Christian and apostolic formation.

The *Book for Animators* not only gives direction to the weekly gathering with the children, but likewise to carrying out the authentic role of this apostolic agent. It points to ways of making fruitful the weekly or fortnightly meetings of the animators of the children. It indicates ways of establishing good relationships between the animators and the children, and amongst the children themselves, so that all cooperate in creating an interesting, educational and spiritual climate. It suggests a number of different ways of opening dialogue between parents and children. It formulates examples of numerous questions for helping children to understand and live the chief biblical text for each meeting. It suggests to the animator diverse ways of encouraging rhymed phrases for repeating in unison, games, children's dances, poetic supports and dramatic presentations connected to the subject and objective of each gathering. It encourages the formulation of good, optional resolutions for the children at the end of each meeting and their revision at the start of the next one. They avoid transforming the gathering into a class and take means to make it a festival with the Lord.

As those accompanying couples and the animators of the children learn their roles starting with the particular activities for each meeting a methodology text helps them situate that in a wider framework: the objectives of the system, the history of that form of catechesis to make them grasp its meaning, each year's objectives, the relationship between the particular tasks and the stated objectives, the relationships it is desirable to establish with those accompanying the families, the animators of the children, the

coordinators, the parish priest or the person responsible for pastoral care in the school, the Bishop, papal and episcopal guidelines on the family and on family catechesis and how to evaluate the achievement as connected with the aims of the Church. This book is useful in giving minimum uniform content for the courses in the initial formation of the apostolic personnel who take part in this catechesis.

Evaluation

Evaluating how each gathering went is accomplished on the one hand at the meeting of those accompanying couples, and on the other hand, within the teams of the animators of children. After the celebration which marks the culmination of each sub-stage, and at the end of each year, each of these teams is able to evaluate, on a special day, the achievement of the objectives and seek other ways of acting to correct the shortcomings.

Diocesan formators get another somewhat more complete evaluation while giving second level courses. There they can become acquainted with the most frequent difficulties or the newest ones encountered by the basic apostolic personnel in the course of their first year of experience.

Chapels, parishes and catholic schools periodically organise days for those accompanying couples and for animators of children. The aim is to evaluate success and difficulties by offering doctrinal motivation, spiritual stimulus and formation in method. Dioceses and especially diocesan or national teams which develop the material, conduct their own surveys every four or five years to revamp the programmes, the methodology resources and the formation courses for the apostolic personnel of CFIE.

The transformation in the life of the Church that results from this system is such, that in the countries and dioceses that adopt it, the majority of catechists work with adults. A demographic calculation based on the sale of specific catechetical material gives ground for estimating that in Chile in 2004 there are some 25,000 adult family groups. This represents between 25,000 and 50,000 who accompany them depending on whether each group is helped by only one person, as is most frequently the case, or by a couple accompanying the family, which is desirable as a norm.

Teaching of religion in schools, the other catechetical system most common in the country, in which the personnel work likewise for the Church and evangelisation, including in schools without religious affiliation, accounts for about 15,000 teachers of the Catholic religion. The predominance of adult catechesis to support the action devoted to the young people and adolescents is evident.

One fact of direct personal observation makes it possible to describe the situation as regards quantity and quality. Since 2002, CFIE, in La Salle Institute in La Florida district in Santiago, Chile, included about 1,200 pupils and four teachers of religion. A total of some 160 children in two successive age groups were prepared for the Eucharist with six animators of children and thirteen groups of parents attended to by 10 couples plus two accompanying lay persons and one Brother; a total of 23 catechists worked with the adults and ten with the children and adolescents. While in 2001, there were six adult groups accompanied by their respective family catechists in their first and second years, in 2004, as fruit of the evangelisation of families, there are more persons accompanying families and this permitted a reduction in the size of the groups and the provision of a more personalised Christian formation of the participants. Our colleges have provided persons who accompany families and animators of children who collaborate with CFIE in other colleges or parishes. The effect of this is to keep on multiplying lay apostolic personnel. In this way the affirmation of Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* finds fulfillment: real evangelisation produces new evangelisers. (EN 24).

In Santiago, Chile, two sociological analyses external to CFIE were carried out and these enabled successes and deficiencies in functioning to be detected. Not everything is perfect in this catechetical system, and it is always possible to bring about improvements. In 1999, the Chilean Higher Institute of Pastoral Catechetics, "Catecheticum", completed its first critical inter-disciplinary seminar and then published a number of its year book "Catecheticum" 3 (2000). Together with exposés delivered by different specialists, were syntheses of two theological doctoral theses, defended in the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, on parish experiences of CFIE, one in Buenos Aires and the other in Tenerife. The bibliography lists in "Catecheticum" 3 above likewise evaluate various recently published CFIE documents.

Reasons for the spread of CFIE

In the beginning, parents take some time to accept a new system which requires time and more meetings for their children to be admitted to the Eucharist. They appreciate the support brought to them for preventing, by means of the weekly conversations, the crises they dreaded in adolescence. They are also impressed by the recognition of their primary responsibility for the Christian education of their children and the assistance brought in this way by the Church. From the very first meetings, they appreciate the new friendships made with families which have the same desires and the same kinds of needs, the mutual solidarity shown in times of sickness, loss of employment or other problems. and the friendly rapport with those accompanying their group. Later on they discover why the Bible is the most read book in the world and how it helps them in their spiritual growth to draw closer to God. As young adults they are in what is perhaps a unique period in their lives, during which they can make time to receive a calm and serious introduction into Christianity. For the Church, it is difficult to find a better opportunity.

The children do not have the opportunity to compare this procedure with other alternatives, but they are delighted that their parents devote time each week to talk to them about their concerns and, for this reason, they hurry to the meetings and, when they come home, they are questioned keenly. They are pained if their parents do not show interest or do not speak about their work on the *Notebook*. This is how families are encouraged to persevere with the process.

If, in the beginning, it was necessary to enlist those accompanying from among the better instructed in the ecclesial communities by calling on them to take part in a supplementary service for the Church, nowadays those accompanying families arise each year from groups of parents who, while preparing their children for the Eucharist, discover Jesus as Saviour and want to pass on this good news to others within a process which has the support of the Church. Other parents, without giving accompaniment to families, continue to meet in new small faith communities or join up with existing family groups, or simply exercise in a new and active manner their role as lay persons in the world. Only a small fraction do not change much in the course of the journey, for a variety of reasons. This happens in every missionary system.

Male and female religious who chose to work with this system of eucharistic initiation really notice the difference from the catechetics of days gone by which was addressed directly to the children. They were often quite reluctant seeing the indifference and religious shallowness of the families. Now they feel that they are building up the Church in a manner very different from the ordinary, short and superficial practice because it was directed solely to the children.

Parish priests highly appreciate seeing the lasting conversion of the adults; noticing how much the sacrament of reconciliation is put to advantage; observing a revitalisation in the eucharistic participation of the young couples whom the system leads to eucharistic celebrations well prepared by lay people; noting how marriages formerly outside the Church are being regularised; noticing how much lay apostolic personnel is increasing through the particular dynamism of the system, and seeing the young becoming committed as animators of children within a process which is not only active but also has formative value. They are witnesses to the birth of vocations to the consecrated life.

Pastoral Assistants in the schools appreciate the CFIE because, from the time the parents have had this experience they are the ones most interested in seeing that the evangelising status of the educational establishment is effective. Couples who accompany families become animators of other forms of family pastoral care and of liturgy for adults. Adults who have been evangelised likewise become committed to the pastoral care of parents, in solidarity action and other community activities.

Bishops discover in the CFIE an effective means for giving priority to the family, for preventing it from crumbling, and for setting up a catechumenal system by means of baptised person who have become enthusiastic since the Council.

The contemporary spread

In Chile, Catechesis of Families for Initiation into the Eucharist (CFIE) has come to be the pivot of parish life. The constant increase of adult apostolic personnel who commit to two years of catechesis convinces parish priests of its advantages. It fuels not only catechesis but also liturgical life and lay social action.

In all Lasallian schools and colleges the CFIE represents an important part of the apostolic life in which Brothers of all ages can work. In colleges, not only Lasallian ones, the CFIE changes the majority of parents within two years. When they have experienced it, they become persons interested in supporting an evangelising educational plan. In different countries, as and when the Brothers get to know the system through pastoral and catechetical reviews, or through contact with parishes and education in pastoral care in the dioceses, they adopt it enthusiastically.

National catechetical teams in Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Honduras and Ecuador have adopted the CFIE with pertinent adaptations. Many dioceses in North and Central America, in the Caribbean and South America are adopting it as soon as they perceive the changes the system produces through the grace of God.

Father Antonio Pérez Morales, in the diocese of San Cristobal de la Laguna, in Spain, after evaluating it by means of a critical theory, began to introduce it using the Chilean material. Emilio Alberich S.D.B., who runs the Catechetical Institute in the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, became acquainted with the system on a visit to Chile, and continues to study it and promote it. The Professor of Theology and Evangelisation in the University of Tubingen, Dr Albert Biesinger, studied it on Chilean soil and in Peru, adapted it for Germany and his material has recently been translated into Italian, where, however, it is known as the "Biesinger method". Sister Sabina Han who studied at the "Catecheticum" in Santiago transmitted it to Korea, where her Sisters of the Congregation of the Most Blessed Sacrament have adopted it for their country.

In February 2003, the first International Congress of Family Catechesis took place in Lima, in the presence of Cardinal Dario Castrillón, Prefect of the Congregation of the Clergy, fifteen bishops and nearly 4,000 delegates from the dioceses of the country, together with a few invited from Germany, Columbia, Chile, Ecuador and Panama.

The Higher Institute of Pastoral Catechetics in Chile, "Catecheticum", in collaboration with the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, with the Faculty of Theology of the University of Tubingen, is preparing for an International Congress on Family catechesis for Eucharistic initia-

tion, from 4th to 7th April 2005, in Santiago, Chile, to look at the past, the present and the future of this catechetical system. It will be open to hundreds of people.

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For Reflection

- What do you learn from this catechetical practice?
- Are there some elements which can be transferred into your situation?
- How do you involve families in the catechesis of the young?

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
La Salle comprehensive formation center. Tijuana, Mexico	9
• Juan	13
• Testimonials	23
• For Reflection	27
Catechesis of the family for initiation into Eucharist	29
• Bibliography	52
• For Reflection	54