



Bulletin of the Brothers of the Christian Schools N. 233

# Interdependence in our Institute

**BULLETIN OF THE BROTHERS  
OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**  
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Br. Umberto Marcato

During the Synod held in October 1990 which the Superior Br. John Johnston attended as an observer, the Pope invited various groups to supper. The photo shows the Pope greeting our Superior. In the centre of the photo we see Sister Helen McLaughlin, President of the Union of Superiors General.

**MORAGA (California): Closing ceremony of the USA/Toronto Regional Convocation.**



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# SOME REFLECTIONS ON INTERDEPENDENCE BY BROTHER SUPERIOR GENERAL

The Superior General, Brother John Johnston has been emphasizing the idea of interdependence from various points of view since the very beginning of his term of office. We present here a series of quotations which contain his views.

## 1. THE ADDRESS AT THE CLOSING OF THE 41st GENERAL CHAPTER (1986)

### Association and interdependence

Brothers, we are one. We are an International Religious Institute at the service of the Church. While it is perfectly normal and necessary that we function as Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations, this Chapter has consistently reminded us that we are one, calling us to association and interdependence, calling us to fight against "provincialism". Brothers, we have to help our Brothers appreciate the power for God that we possess if we really live and work together and by association as an International Religious Family. This commitment will require us to know one another better and to be disposed to share our personnel, our finances, and even to make ourselves available personally for service in areas with special needs.

*(Circular N° 422, p. 40)*

## 2. THE ANNUAL PASTORAL LETTERS

On January 1st of each year, Brother Superior sends a Pastoral Letter to the Brothers. Through them, we can follow the development of his ideas from Jan. 1, 1987.

### A) From "Together and by Association" and "Interdependence"

#### *Our Fourth Vow*

To attempt to capture, at least partially, the spirit of the original vow of association, the capitulants to

the 41st General Chapter renamed our fourth vow (called since 1967 "the vow of service of the poor through education"). It is now called the vow of "association for the service of the poor through education". (See Chapter 3 of the new Rule). In rendering this fundamental notion of association more explicit, the Chapter wanted to contribute to a strengthening and deepening of our self-understanding and of our commitment as consecrated men associated for mission.

#### *Interdependence*

Furthermore, the Chapter introduced into our Institute vocabulary the word "interdependence". The meaning is immediately clear, which perhaps explains why the term was so quickly accepted by the capitulants. We are not a "federation" of either independent or dependent units. We are Brothers in association, living in relation to one another. I use that word "living" deliberately. Interdependence is the lived expression of association. It involves far more than "carrying a membership card". It is a mutual commitment, requiring us to know one another and to be disposed to live as **brothers**, sharing our personnel, our finances, and even to make ourselves available for service in areas with special needs.

*(Letter Jan 1, 1987, p. 23)*

### B) Moving from "subsidiarity" to "interdependence"

It is a joy for me to be able to say that that paragraph describes not only the ideal towards which we strive, but, to a large extent, the reality that exists. I am happy to have this opportunity to express my personal appreciation of the genuine spirit of brotherhood that I perceive in the Institute today.

With respect to the sharing of personnel, we members of the Central Government of the Institute have contacted many regions or districts during the past year with requests for personnel, either in response to immediate needs or in response to long-



range needs. A number of regions and districts have responded immediately with Brothers, particularly for specific needs. Other regions or districts have made long-term commitments and have already sent their first Brothers. Other regions and districts are still studying our requests. I am confident that the responses of these sectors will be positive. I am keenly aware that agreeing to share personnel with other sectors represents a significant "sacrifice" for these regions and districts. To all those who have manifested such outstanding fraternal collaboration, I say, "Thank you sincerely".

The same spirit of generosity has been manifested in a readiness to share financial resources. The districts, sub-districts, and delegations have nearly all been very faithful to contributing for operation of the Generalate and for services emanating from the Generalate. Furthermore, many sectors have contributed regularly and significantly to the Sharing Fund; to SECOLI, either by direct contributions or by the funding of mini-projects; or to needy areas directly through a variety of twinning arrangements. The response to our letter on the restructuring of the Sharing Fund, a restructuring demanded by the General Chapter, has been very encouraging.

Another manifestation of a growing sense of international brotherhood is the participation of representatives from neighboring regions as observers in regional assemblies. There is fidelity too to our international programs of continuing formation. Although the present CIL session is not at capacity, the first session after the Chapter had a waiting list and the 1988 International Session of Lasallian Studies has already closed registration.

It is clear, therefore, Brothers, that we are thinking more and more as INSTITUTE and of the potential for service in the Church that we possess. I join you in praising and thanking God for this special grace.

*(Letter, Jan 1, 1988, p. 17-18)*

### C) To achieve "solidarity"

#### *Interdependence*

It is interesting to note that John Paul II gives "interdependence" a slightly different meaning from that given by our capitulants. He seems to accept interdependence among peoples and nations as a fact, and insists that we must become *aware* of this reality as preliminary to a response. Interdependence determines "relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements... When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a virtue, is *solidarity*" (SRS, 38).

I think that a study of our own texts reveals that the capitulants intended that the word "interdependence" itself carry the weight which the Holy Father attributes to "solidarity".

Enough. I am not concerned at this moment with precise definitions. My intention is rather to share some thoughts on these expressions, particularly that of "solidarity", in the hope that they foster reflection that will lead to a more profound awareness of our universal brotherhood and sisterhood, as well as of our responsibility as Christians and as Brothers to participate in the building of a world where all can live in justice, peace, and dignity, a world where all can live as brothers and sisters.

*(Letter, Jan 1, 1989, p. 8-9)*

### INTERDEPENDENCE AND SOLIDARITY

Brothers, I am well aware that I have addressed the topic of association and interdependence in the three other personal messages I have sent to the Institute: that is to say, in my closing address to the General Chapter and in my pastoral letters of 1987 and 1988.

I offer no apology, however, for returning to the topic a fourth time. In his last testament, St. De La Salle earnestly recommended the Brothers "to maintain an intimate union among themselves". This same Founder "who continues to inspire and to sustain the Institute" (*Rule*, art. 149), has not ceased urging us, through the last three General Chapters, to live our brotherhood profoundly and wholeheartedly.

Earlier I made reference to the succession of words that the last three General Chapters have employed to focus attention on the nature and quality of our relationships as Brothers. The 39th General Chapter introduced the concept and language of "subsidiarity":

"All the Brothers... are truly responsible for the life of the Institute and its work. The superiors shall take note of the inspiration of the Brothers and respect the principle of subsidiarity in the exercise of their authority: each Brother and each level of government has, in its own proper domain, a certain initiative and responsibility" (*Book of Government*, 39th Gen. Ch., p. 2).

That the Chapter was serious in its insistence that the Brothers, communities, districts, and assistancies take more initiative and assume more responsibility for the life and mission of the Institute is clear from the unambiguous language of the final paragraphs of the *Declaration*:

"The destiny of the Institute is in the hands of the Brothers. They must not expect those in authority to



give ready-made solutions to the new problems that come from a world in evolution. It is up to each Brother in the presence of God to start out along the path of spiritual conversion and determine to have a personal share in the great community work of renewal and adaptation" (*Declaration*, 53.2).

But the chapter did more than proclaim and guarantee the principle: it established the structures of dialogue, consultation, elections, and chapters, which made its practice possible.

(*Letter 1-1-1989*, p. 19-20)

### **3. ADDRESS TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE "MEETING OF THE MISSIONARY SECRETARIES OF EUROPE" (Dublin, July, 1986)**

The 41st General Chapter has introduced a new word to our Institute vocabulary to express the fundamental meaning of *together and by association* and the implications of our vow of *association for the service of the poor through education*. That word is INTERDEPENDENCE. We are an international religious family at the service of the Church. As I mentioned in my concluding address to the Chapter, it is perfectly normal that we function as regions, districts, sub-districts, and delegations. But it is not normal to forget that we are one, called to association and interdependence. This Chapter challenges us to struggle against that tendency *to live in our own little world*. It challenges us to appreciate the power for good that we possess if we really live and work together and by association as an international religious family.

In its message to the Brothers, the Chapter urges us to share our personnel and our financial resources with areas in need and challenges us to make ourselves available for service in the young Churches. In this spirit the Chapter requires the Superior and General Council to make the sharing fund more efficacious, to continue the very successful structure of *mini-projects*, and to develop a more effective approach to the sharing of personnel, perhaps through further development of the twinning program.

#### **Responsibility of Superior and Council**

What the Chapter did not do — partly because of lack of time, partly because of a reluctance to commit the districts to specific quotas of personnel and financial contributions without consultation with district councils and bursars — was to provide specific directives and guidelines. Instead, the Chapter charged the Superior and General Council with the re-

sponsibility of finding an equitable and efficacious approach.

In response to this charge, we hope to have a plan in operation by the end of the calendar year. While these important concerns are never far from our awareness and have a pervasive influence on many of our decisions, we intend to dedicate a full week of study to our missionary commitments and will invite the heads of the general services, including those responsible for SECOLI, education, and formation, to join us.

Although assessment of the needs confronting us in our missionary commitment will be central to this week of study, there are certain needs which seem immediately evident. Let me share with you those which occur to me at this time.

#### *Personnel*

1. The need for formation personnel.
2. The need for Brothers with specific expertise; for example, financial or management expertise; or technical or agricultural training.
3. The need to maintain numerical stability of missionary Brothers as a temporary measure because of the youth and inexperience of the local Brothers.
4. The need to maintain strong communities in non-Christian areas — even when there is little hope humanly speaking of a significant number of local Brothers — to accompany the minority Christians, to make the presence of the Lord and of his Church a visible reality, and to promote dialogue and collaboration among Christians and non-Christians.
5. The need to establish new foundations in areas where the necessity for evangelization and for education is particularly pressing.

#### *Finance*

1. The need to help sectors meet their financial obligations for initial formation, for the formation and education of their young Brothers, for the continuing formation and education of their young Brothers, for the continuing formation and continuing education of perpetually professed Brothers.
2. The need to help sectors fund specific and worthwhile projects for which agency money is not ordinarily available.



# INTERDEPENDENCE IN INITIAL FORMATION

Throughout the history of our Institute and of every Religious Congregation there have always been changes and adaptations in initial formation in order to respond to the needs of the times.

As an Institute, up to 1966, we held to a process which can be qualified as one of *dependence*. The Central Government established a plan for formation which was implemented in each District. Brothers Visitors General were charged with the supervision of the system and they maintained uniformity of policies. This plan was suited to a centralized form of government which was consistent with the times.

The Chapter of 1966 was the beginning of a new epoch. Necessarily, it reflected the new reality and tried to respond to the desires of the Church that Religious Institutes up-date their Rules and Constitutions according to the directives of the Council which had just concluded. As far as initial formation is concerned, the repercussions of the resulting change in the system were considerable.

Now it was the Brother Visitor who had the ultimate responsibility for initial formation in the District, and plans for formation came from the District. Faced with the new obligations it had to assume, it began to search for leadership and help. Thus the District Committees came into being. Based on its own autonomy, each District established its own system of initial formation within the general guidelines of the Rule.

We could call this the period of independence. Various formation plans appeared. Each District felt itself to be independent of all others, even sometimes resenting any kind of interference or suggestions whether from Rome or elsewhere.

This brings us to 1986. The 41st General Chapter made official a new stance, a new policy of interdependence. I say that the Chapter *made* it official because in fact we came to the General Chapter of '86 with a considerable experience of interdependence already, at least as far as initial formation in certain Districts is concerned.

Developments since 1966 have created new situations and often some very difficult ones. They called for serious thought and courageous decisions. In the Institute at this time there were three kinds of situations:

- Those Districts with abundant personnel who had a great potential for reaction and adaptation to the new circumstances could therefore furnish an adequate response to the demands of initial formation according to the times. These were in the minority.
- Those Districts with fewer human resources, who had a more limited capability to react, went through this period with scaled down versions of the previous system, but experienced a steady decline. There were many in this category.
- Those Districts who felt constrained to adopt the new forms and who tried to offer youth, not so much the formation which the District with its limited resources could give, but rather the formation which young men needed in order take up to their Religious life fully in the world in which they lived. And so contacts between Districts began as they searched for a sharing of thought, plans, and implementation. This developed into what we now call interdependence.



The limits of the autonomous District do not necessarily coincide with its geographical limits. Its broader horizons generated a complex process which gradually resulted in a configuration which we know as the Region. It is very interesting and significant to note that it was initial formation which gave the original impetus to relationships between the Districts and little by little the concept of Region was created.

When Regional structures began to appear with the creation of regional committees (for example, the Committee on Formation), at first it was not infrequent to encounter a certain hesitancy and fear that this would interfere with the autonomy of the Districts. Today, after almost 20 years of experience, in some instances, this kind of committee has become a real forum for consensus and assistance. In a broader context, together we search for the best for our prospective candidates.

This is where we find ourselves at the present moment. In 1969 and 1971 RELAL (Lasallian Region of Latin America) and ARLEP (Lasallian Regional Grouping of Spain and Portugal) experimented with central novitiates for cooperating countries, or Districts within a given country. Thus there was one novitiate in Córdoba (Argentina) for the Districts of Argentina, Chile, Perú and Paraguay; and a novitiate in Bujedo (Spain) for the Districts of Andalucía, Madrid, Valencia and Valladolid. Today, twenty years later, these two central novitiates which have been greatly improved over the years, continue to serve these same Districts who have adopted a common plan for formation.

Recently, along these same lines of interdependence we have seen the appearance of a central novitiate in the Region of Africa (CLAF - Lasallian Center for Africa). It was no longer possible to maintain non-viable District structures which were holding on to the past. Already prior to the Chapter of 1986, a novitiate had been set up in Kinshasa for all of French-speaking Africa. It was based on a formation plan accepted by everyone and implemented by a staff made up of African Brothers assisted by Brothers coming from other continents.

In 1989, a novitiate was opened in Nairobi (Kenya) for all the English-speaking Districts. Presently, the entire Institute is cooperating in every way to open a French-speaking scholasticate in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) in September, 1991. It is our common answer to the need we all feel that our young African Brothers receive the best possible preparation in theology and Lasallian pedagogy before going to take their places in our communities.

The common effort of the Central Government of the Institute with the African Region as well as the collaboration of all the other Regions of the Institute who have been asked for help is a real symphony of Brotherhood which the Lord will bless abundantly.

There is a similar plan for a future scholasticate for English-speaking Districts of Africa. Thus, the aspirations of this Region, supported by the entire Institute, is establishing foundations so that future African generations can form African Brothers who are adequately prepared for their times, cultures and circumstances.

The same can be said for PARC (Pacific-Asian Regional Conference) where the Philippine novitiate has opened its doors to novices from Thailand and Singapore. A good percentage of scholastics from Asian countries have made their studies in Manila. Australia has received novices from New Zealand, Papua and New Guinea.

Regular meetings of formation directors within the Regions have been occurring everywhere over the past few years. To mention a few which are to take place soon: Formation directors of the Latin American Region meet in Lima, Perú; those of Spain and Portugal at Christmas time, 1990; and the Pacific-Asian Region in January of 1991.

It is impossible to mention all the many facets of interdependence which exist in the Institute. However, of special significance is the formation plan which has been developed by the Region of France where the young Brothers have been led, for many years now, to think more in terms of belonging to a Region than to a District. And in fact, at the present time the Region of France is changing into a single District and the young Brothers are already prepared for this reality.

After the General Chapter of 1986, the concern and urgency to provide our young Brothers with the best possible formation have given rise to new instances of solidarity and interdependence in the area of formation. Many Districts have collaborated in recent years to draw up joint plans to suit their needs. I would even say that the Districts which are going it alone are in the minority. In a few years, the panorama has changed completely.

Dialogue between the Districts and the Center of the Institute is a reality which certainly corresponds to an acutely felt need. The Secretariat for Formation is the intermediary in this dialogue and interdependence according to Article 86 of the Rule which outlines the actual policy for formation in the Institute. The plans for formation are made in the District or Region in dialogue with the Center of the Institute.



## Toward New Horizons

There are three significant facts which determine our projections for the future.

- The call of the Pope to the Church of Latin America on the occasion of the 5th Centenary of its evangelization to go beyond its own frontiers and become a missionary Church. Latin American Catholics make up 50% of the Catholics in the Church.

- The call of the Pope to the Churches of Europe to support the Churches of the Orient and to set up definite plans for collaboration and assistance in the historic times through which they are passing.

- Within our own Institute, the Secretariat for our Educational Mission organized a meeting in Ostia, Italy, of all the Directors of Lasallian educational institutions of Europe in which norms and programs were agreed upon in the light of the new Europe of 1993.

- The meetings of the Brothers Delegates in the field of Youth and Vocation work in the Districts of Europe were designed to prepare the Congress of young Lasallians who are most committed to apostolic endeavors.

Just these few items speak very eloquently of the new horizons open to the new generation of Brothers who are now in our houses of formation. They must be ready when their time comes.

The steps we have taken thus far are important. I dare say that a high percentage of our young Brothers already have the attitude that they can overcome the difficulties which worry their Districts today and even feel themselves already involved in their solution. The style and structure of their formation has helped them in large measure. The wealth of information which circulates among us has been another factor which has enhanced their awareness and willingness to help. I would even say that this abundance of information is both the product and the origin of the richness of our life and our solidarity.

I was very impressed by the meeting of young, European Religious held in Rome two years ago. At formal and informal meetings, they spoke of their experiences of apostolic work in other countries

which we generally refer to as the Third World, and their immediate plans to do more. For some time now, Europe has seemed too small for them. Their information was well rounded and precise and their focus of interest went far beyond their Religious and national Provinces. A good sign.

On the one hand, emphasis is placed on the need for an inculturation of the Gospel and Religious life. In answer, suffice it to read the instructions of CRIS of Feb. 2, 1990 on formation in Religious Institutes. If under the pretext of interdependence we take our youth now in formation out of their cultural context, they will be hard put later to inculturate evangelical and Lasallian values. Interdependence should rather make it possible for each District and Region to provide its own youth with the formation they need to live their religious life within their own or similar cultures.

Our formation programs, adapted to the local culture, must offer our young Brothers sufficient broadness of vision to attune them to the needs of humanity, the Church and the universality of the Institute. An inculturated ecclesiology must never lose its universality.

In its "Message to the Brothers" by the General Chapter of 1986, this reference is made: "A missionary attitude is an essential part of our vocation as Brothers". Apart from matters of language, basically it is saying that each Brother, regardless of his own culture or the part of the world he comes from, must be concerned and willing to collaborate in missionary service according to needs and circumstances.

The wide possibilities which initial formation ought to offer to youth are exciting. The "Guide for Lasallian Formation" which will appear soon is intended as a guide for all of us, but especially those Brothers who are more directly involved in the initiation of youth to the Religious life.

Certainly the Institute which must be true to its time will have an adequate response. Solidarity and interdependence, lived with intelligence and courage will make possible an adequate formation for the young generations of Brothers, especially in countries and regions where a lack of personnel is already being felt.

**Brother Bernardo Villar**



# FACING CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES “TOGETHER AND BY ASSOCIATION”

(Brother Genaro, *Vicar*)

*“The spiritual journey of John Baptist de La Salle, their Father, as well as their solidarity with people today and the needs of the Church, motivate the Brothers to cultivate within themselves the disposition of a poor person. By such a conversion, they witness to the fact that God is their only wealth” (Rule N° 32).*

My intention is to present a summary sketch of what interdependence means for the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at the present time. Even though my presentation will refer to the members and structures of the Institute of De La Salle, it would be well to bear in mind and apply it also to the other Lasallian groups which are recognized as part of the educational and spiritual family of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

## 1. “Together and by Association”

The Vow of Association for the educational service of the poor takes on a very special value and meaning in an Institute which is aware of the clamor of ever increasing needs arising from the thousands of situations created within rapidly changing societies.

It is “together and by association” that we find mutual solidarity, interior freedom to commit our availability and the assurance that we are firm in the Lord who brings us together, consecrates us and sends us.

## 2. “As a Spiritual Family”

“Together and by association” began in the communities of the Christian Brothers. It is expressly stated in the Formula of Vows. Throughout our history, “association” has been a principle which has sustained us, encouraged us and animated us.

Today, we are called upon to intensify the meaning and practice of that “association” because we are a “spiritual family”.

St. John Baptist de La Salle has a charism which even today inspires the Brothers and a great number

of other educators (R. 20) to recognize “that the spiritual gifts which the Church has received in St. John Baptist de La Salle go far beyond the confines of the Institute which he founded” (R. 146).

Brothers, the spirituality of De La Salle is ours — to share with many people and groups involved in Christian Education who would like to make their profession a Gospel ministry (R. 17).

The mission confided to us by the Church is in our hands, Brothers. It is our responsibility. “The Brothers’ community is ever mindful that its apostolic activity takes place within an educational community in which all the functions, including positions of responsibility, are shared” (R. 17a).

## 3. Challenges which are ever ancient and ever new

To live as Brothers and as a spiritual Lasallian family, in this our day, is to accept the challenges which are thrown at us by the times in which we live.

More and more, we are living in the world...

- Open, with social and cultural frontiers which are wider, more unclear and sometimes very confused.

- Exposed to the various pressures from the opposition: ideologies, coalitions, exclusion, permissiveness, neglect and evasion...techniques of totalitarianism...

- Threatened by forms of oppression both old and new. Even though the actual forms of oppression today are more subtle, they are therefore more deadly.

There is a correlation between our problems as identified in the Rule and those found in current sociological documents.



**EQUATORIAL GUINEA:** A group of children the Brothers work with. In Africa, there are many obvious signs of collaboration and interdependence.

According to the Rule of 1986-87, “those who are in need of salvation” are:

- the spiritually and humanly abandoned (1);
- Those involved in injustice, war, violence, confrontation (7);
- Those abandoned in some way or other (11);
- Those who want to be treated with human dignity and as children of God (11);
- Those discarded by society, their reasons and groupings (13);
- Those suffering from injustice (14);
- Those locked into overwhelming poverty (15);
- Those who are spiritually abandoned, individually or as groups (15);
- Those crushed by the burdens of life; with no normal life, sense of responsibility, learning or love (15c);
- Those caught up in rapid change, without roots in their own culture (18);
- Those with no chance to hear the Gospel (19);
- Those who must follow the party line, sectarianism, in which dialogue is impossible (19b);
- The humble and poor (20);
- Caste groups with no hope for growth (39);
- Those economically poor, victims of social injustice, delinquents and the discarded (40);
- Those with serious learning disabilities, with personal problems or social and family mis-fits (40);
- Those deprived of human dignity and closed to the Gospel (41).

The general problems which affect or inflict suffering on people of all countries, some more and some less:

- “islands” of poverty amidst affluence.
- Neighborhood decay.
- Loss of confidence in institutions.
- Uncontrolled urban expansion.
- Occupational insecurity.
- Alienation of youth.
- Rejection of traditional values.
- Inflation and economic and monetary fluctuations.
- Rapid increase in the population of undeveloped countries.
- Rapid consumption of mineral resources and energy in the industrialized North.

(Aurelio Peccei, Club di Roma).

In contemporary writings, we also find clear references to present challenges to us as “Institute” and as a “spiritual family”.

We must broaden our field of vision, beyond our communities or Districts, to take in the dimension of the whole Institute. This is the precise purpose of what we refer to as *interdependence*. This interdependence should be seen as a new dimension in our living as Brothers, in addition to its administrative and juridical aspects. Members of one single Body, we are invited to place in common our resources, skills, our apostolic and spiritual wealth.

This invitation would be of primary benefit to the *Young Churches* in the Third World. Beyond the deficiencies we all feel, some sectors are seriously handicapped because of isolation, lack of financial means, the need for formation personnel or because of challenges posed by growth. Commitment to the missions is an essential element of our vocation as Brothers.

We must also show solidarity with our ageing Districts, and give Central Government the means to provide inspiring leadership for the Institute. This will demand of us an emphasis on generosity, a spirit of sharing, receptivity and availability. *We will find joy in these qualities and an expression of our present-day reality of the Exodus: Go and leave your land...*

(Circular N° 422, p. 26)

### **Facing up to new challenges**

We are all very much aware nowadays of the upheavals which affect us as citizens of a world in the process of rapid and radical change.

We are witnesses to the struggles of mankind to discover a new basis for a more genuine and lasting



understanding between nations and between individuals; for a more stable and guaranteed form of justice; for more peaceful development, marked by growth which is more organic and just.

We feel — it is perhaps more a conviction — that we cannot simply sit still and be silent witnesses to what is at stake here, even if we feel inadequate and ill-equipped. As disciples of De La Salle, we have a source of wealth that enables us at the same time to stand for and actively promote unity, peace, dialogue and hope among groups of people and individuals, especially among those who are young. And this is a task we seek to accomplish in a great many different countries, cultures and educational systems where we Brothers work.

*(Letter to Lasallian Family, p. 9)*

#### 4. As a “missionary Institute”

Although it is true that our Institute was founded within the context of Christianity, little by little it took on a missionary character looking toward “missionary lands”. This is why the present Rule defines its missionary role with such realism, optimism and decision.

*John Baptist de La Salle was deeply moved by the way in which “the children of the artisans and the poor” were abandoned and left to themselves. As a practical response to his prayerful consideration of this fact in relation to God’s plan of salvation, he came to discern, in faith, what God wanted the mission of the Institute to be.*

*In order to respond to this divine plan and also to situations of distress similar to those that the Founder knew, the Institute desires to be present to the world today as part of the Church’s work in spreading the Gospel.*

*The Institute is concerned above all for the educational needs of the poor as they strive to become aware of their dignity and to live and to be recognized as human beings and children of God. The Institute establishes, renews and diversifies its works according to what the kingdom of God requires.*

(Rule N° 11)

*The Institute is particularly conscious of the great design of God who wills that all people should come to the knowledge of the truth. Thus the Institute participates in the missionary activity of the Church whose essential task is to announce the Gospel to everyone and to all cultures.*

*The concern to bring the Church into being among peoples, either unaware of the Good News of Jesus Christ or as yet little informed about it, as well as the evident shortage of people working for*

*the spread of the gospel in certain areas, constitutes a continual challenge to the Institute to make its contribution through its specific ministry.*

(Rule N° 19)

*As a response to this missionary call, the Brothers offer themselves to be sent by the Institute to places where there is a greater need for their services. In such cases it could even happen that a District would need to hand over to others some of its works in order to meet more urgent demands.*

*In this missionary activity, the Brothers are deeply conscious of the need to cultivate local vocations in order to provide for the growth of the Church and of the Institute.*

(Rule N° 19a)

And each Brother is called to adopt and implement this missionary awareness.

*If some Brothers are called upon to work outside the establishments conducted by the Institute, they do so in such a way as to be identified as Brothers wherever they carry out their work.*

(Rule N° 16)

*Advancing age or infirmity can oblige the Brothers to lessen the pace of their active work. Motivated by faith and zeal, they search for new ways to exercise their ministry as a response to a new call from God.*

*Accordingly, they are supported by the Brothers of the community and by the superiors as they seek to accomplish some apostolic task within their capacities and in keeping with the purpose of the Institute.*

(Rule N° 16d)

*The Brothers generously and with joy devote their time, their physical well-being, their security, their intellectual and spiritual gifts, to all those who may have need of them.*

(Rule N° 35c)

#### 5. Interdependence in operation

The Rule clearly defines the areas and the activities in which interdependence becomes operative. As we mention them, we can sense that our vocation as Brothers is a continuous effort to maintain “fraternal and apostolic teamwork” (Rule 42), and the essential basis for sharing (“The Brothers shall have all things in common”, Rule 32).

It is likewise clear that our vocation is one of education in and for Brotherhood and solidarity.



## 5.1 Interdependence within communities

The community as such is aware that it has a designated mission.

*From the beginning of the Institute, the Brothers have fulfilled their mission "together and by association". Each Brother exercises his apostolate as a member of a community by whom he knows he is accepted, supported and entrusted with his mission.*

*The Brothers are in solidarity with their community, with their District and with the Institute as a whole. In fulfilling their ministry, whatever their individual assignment may be, they are contributing, as a community, to the unique mission of the Institute within the Church.*

(Rule 16)

*The Brothers submit their plans for new forms of apostolate to the discernment of the community in communion with the superiors and the Brothers of the District, in order to be sure that these initiatives are in conformity with the purpose of the Institute.*

(Rule 16a)

*Dedicated as it is to the apostolic ministry of education, the community realizes that its mission needs constantly to be discovered. Accordingly, the community reappraises its goals and methods with a view to coming closer to the spirit of the gospel. It does this by reexamining the pastoral effectiveness of its activity.*

(Rule 51d)

*The Brother's community shares in the animation of the institutions in which it is involved. It develops therein an atmosphere of brotherhood rooted in mutual respect and freedom. Its action to promote the gospel aims to bring into being a community of faith in the midst of the educational community.*

(Rule 51a)

The community accepts the challenge of the missions and joins in the effort.

*The community forms an integral part of the pastoral activity of the local church. Within the limits of its resources it cooperates with civic organizations of a social or cultural nature. The community manifests the same concern and open spirit with regard to the institutions for which it is responsible.*

*The community participates in the missionary effort of the local church and of the Institute.*

(Rule 52)

*Each local community is conscious of its solidarity with the other communities of the District and those of the Institute as a whole. It maintains a cordial relationship with the Brothers of other communities and expresses this by fraternal help whenever this is called for. The community also extends a welcome to members of the Lasallian Family.*

(Rule 64)

## 5.2 Interdependence on the District level

Districts as such cannot work together without interdependence and cooperation.

*The District, as the ordinary communion existing among its communities and Brothers, is more than a structure of government. It manifests and fosters the fraternal union which enables all, communities and Brothers alike, to assist each other in sharing their common responsibility for their life and their apostolic work.*

*For this reason, the first mission of those in charge of the District is to promote unity among the Brothers and the communities as well as their active participation in District concerns, thereby ensuring the value and the effectiveness of their witness within the local church.*

*The District is also called to establish and to maintain relationships with other Districts or Delegations and to strengthen those which unite it with the Center of the Institute.*

(Rule 124)

In order to be united, missionary and interdependent the District must organize itself with a long range outlook, aware of all its potential with regard to Brothers, works, committed laypersons, Lasallian groups, etc...

This demands a real change in the way of understanding and organizing the life of the District. Following are some of the factors which require realistic decisions in each of the Regions of the Institute.

- Annual District program.
- The educational program for each school.
- The Community Annual Program.
- The Personal Annual Program.
- District, administrative and school boards.
- Formation staff.
- Standing committees of Brothers and laypersons.

All of the above must conform to the priorities established by the District in its District Chapters which decide the policies, priorities and the means which will be adopted.





ANALABE (Madagascar): Brother Ignace, a novice, during a liturgical celebration. Interdependence in formation is becoming more and more widespread and enriching.

This is the necessary context in which the Rules already quoted and to be quoted are to be interpreted.

*In addition to participating in the activities of a given Region, the Districts, sub-Districts and Delegations are encouraged to cooperate with other parts of the Institute.*

*Sending Brothers to the Young Churches or to sectors that are lacking in vocations, together with the sharing of material or spiritual resources, constitutes a most significant form that Regional cooperation can take. Formal agreements between Districts that send Brothers and those that receive them specify the details of this type of collaboration.*

*The Regions also make it possible for Brothers with particular aptitudes to be made available temporarily to give assistance where needed.*

(Rule 127g, h)

### 5.3 Interdependence within the Region

The sense of "Region" is growing nicely throughout the Institute. It makes the understanding and implementation of interdependence easier.

With a clear definition and organization of the Regions, we also find an increase in missionary efforts, union and interdependence.

In some instances, the Region commits itself to

the implementation of interdependence. In others, the Districts within the Region sense the strength and solidarity which comes from collaboration in the solution of certain problems and the implementation of certain specific projects.

*The Region is conceived, not as a structure of government but as a means of coordination and collaboration between certain sectors of the Institute which choose to join together.*

*Unity of heart and mind among the Brothers of the Region is established and maintained by communicating and actively sharing with one another. A Region is established as an expression of the willingness of the units that compose it to cooperate with one another and so benefit by the added vitality that comes from acting together.*

*Every District, every sub-District and every Delegation forms part of a Region. The Brother Superior and his Council ensure that no sector of the Institute remains isolated and without the benefit that comes from collaboration.*

(Rule 127)

### 5.4 Interdependence among the Regions

It is the result of our awareness of the "Institute as a Community" in meaning and practice.

With the directive of the recent General Chapters and the Rule, the meaning and practice of our belonging to the Institute go beyond the local boundaries and broaden the understanding of those who live within the various Regions. Significant experiences are being shared which implement the general directives of the central government of the Institute, especially in the area of initial and permanent formation of our Brothers and laypersons.

### 5.5 Interdependence in our Shared Mission

As we said earlier under "together and by association" the spiritual Lasallian family now takes on a new and broader meaning.

The "Message of the 41st General Chapter to the Lasallian Family" has already indicated this.

- We have especially thought about the Lasallian Family. This is a new phenomenon that over these past decades has been developing in the Institute with ever increasing strength and creativity.

- We have placed value, in a special way, on the efforts of so many men and women who work in our centers through the contribution of their educational commitment, their faithful support in the mission of the Institute, their creativity, their constancy.

- The Brothers' communities constitute the



“heart”, as it were, of this Lasallian experience, like a “faithful memory” of the Lasallian Spirit.

(Circular 422, N° 422, p. 29)

That is why the Rule could be explicit in affirming:

*Ever since the time of their foundation, the Brothers have contributed to the promotion of the Christian laity, especially among those educators who want their professional work to be a form of gospel ministry.*

*The Brothers gladly associate lay persons with them in their educational mission. They provide, for those who so desire, the means to learn about the Founder and to live according to his spirit.*

*The Brothers co-operate in forming Christian teachers. They help them to develop their professional competence and also to become increasingly involved in the work of the Church and in the field of education.*

(Rule 17)

This requires an understanding and implementation of “association” in its three aspects:

- The Brothers “associated” according to the Rule and Vows.
- The Brothers and committed laypersons collaborating in our Mission, animated by our Spirituality, “associated” in order to enhance enthusiasm and dedication for both that Mission and that Spirituality.
- Lasallian laypersons “associated” in a project confided to them and in the Spirituality which takes on special characteristics depending on the “Lasallian group” to which they belong.

As the Letter to the Lasallian Family indicates, there are other forms of “association” which may eventually appear, and those already in existence will become more stable.

The following paragraphs of the Letter to the Lasallian Family encourage this process:

*We think that it is on a local level — that of the Region, District or Delegation — that it is essential to establish and extend training programmes and Lasallian research, and to pool experience. Brothers and lay people must join together and collaborate to make the work of the groups more effective, and to ensure that Lasallian studies and research find a practical application both in schools and elsewhere. In this context, it seems to us, a priority is the training of assessors and the setting up of commissions and secretariats which will take in hand the support and guidance of various groups and communities.*



MADAGASCAR: A young Brother tries his hand at teaching

*This, then, is what we suggest to Districts and Regions:*

*Since the most effective arrangements for the setting up, guidance and development of the various Lasallian Family groups take place at District and Regional level:*

*We would like:*

- a) Regional Coordinators, Visitors and their Councils to set up the most effective organisation they can to promote the development, training, guidance and structural organisation of these Lasallian groups;*
- b) Headmasters and administrative teams of Lasallian schools and other establishments to give a certain priority to implementing the District policy on Lasallian groups on a local level;*
- c) Brothers' communities to fulfil their role as the driving force behind the development and vitality of the Lasallian Family. What is needed is that each group should have a Brother delegated by his community to look after it, and provide a link with it.*

(Letter to the Lasallian Family, p. 38-39)

## 5.6 Interdependence and Districts of aged Brothers

The Rule, logically, makes no distinction between Brother and Brother. All were blessed by God with the same vocation and all are equally responsible for the vitality of the Institute. As Brother Superior General points out in his Pastoral Letter of 1-1-'88, “The destiny of the Congregation is in the hands of all”.

*Each Brother, regardless of his age, has a role to play in the vitality of the Institute. The fidelity of the Brothers is achieved by their daily response to different situations, by getting to know more fully persons and the milieu in which they live and work,*



and by their determination to find new strength in frequent prayer.

(Rule 145)

Therefore the Rule has a special word for those Brothers who are advanced in age:

*Advancing age or infirmity can oblige the Brothers to lessen the pace of their active work. Motivated by faith and zeal, they search for new ways to exercise their ministry as a response to a new call from God.*

*Accordingly, they are supported by the Brothers of the community and by the superiors as they seek to accomplish some apostolic task within their capacities and in keeping with the purpose of the Institute.*

(Rule 16d)

This statement is echoed in the Message to the Brothers from the 41st General Chapter:

— *To consider helping in any Region of the Institute especially in the Young Churches.*

— *Prepare for possible work in forming laypersons, by sharing with them the Lasallian heritage lived during many years of experience. Many laypersons connected with our schools appreciate the presence and witness of older Brothers.*

Another aspect of interdependence with and in favor of Districts with a majority of aged Brothers can be found in Rule 125e. When read from their point of view, there seems to be little hope of a proximate resurgence of vocations. The following question then arises: Could something be done by the Central Government of the Institute or some other part of the administrative hierarchy to preclude the loss of their valuable experience and traditions, which will certainly be the case if these aged Districts merely fade away?

— Is this not a matter which we should look at “together and by association” leaving aside for the moment certain susceptibilities which might create obstacles and which might tempt us to waive our sense of Institute?.

— Are we not faced with such situations which should be addressed by the next General Chapter?

## 6. Some Practical Consequences

Much can be said because there are many varied conditions being lived within the Institute, especially in certain Regions.

I will consider three key aspects. If these premises are accepted, then a whole series of actions flow automatically from them and enrich our interdependence.

### 6.1 Administrative organization of the District

So that each year it can adopt a mini-project of Secoli and Secoli can count on some definite source for funds.

### 6.2 New initiatives

Especially along the line of Lasallian Volunteers, twinning of schools and ministries within a District or Region...schools and ministries of other Districts or Regions...

### 6.3 Understand the new attitude in the Rule

What the Rule says concerning the Center of the Institute, live and apply it in the District and Region; or from the District and Region for the enrichment of others.

- Style of Government:

*The Brother Superior and his Councillors have as their mission to foster a spirit of communion and interdependence within the Institute. In their efforts to establish and maintain the structures that are needed for the unity of the Institute and the effectiveness of its activities, they are careful always to give priority to persons.*

(Rule 116a)

- Studies on the Founder and making them known:

*The Center of the Institute organizes and promotes research projects on the person of the Founder and his thought, the development over the years of the work which he started, and the educational practice and spirituality of the contemporary Institute.*

*It furnishes financial aid for this research and for the translation and diffusion of the Lasallian message.*

(Rule 101h)

- Formation:

*The Brother Superior General and his Council are careful to promote programs of continuing formation in the Institute, especially those designed to prepare Brothers for work in formation.*

*They ensure that the Brothers from the poorest Districts are enabled to participate regularly in the programs of renewal established in the Institute.*

(Rule 101g)



- Finances:

*The Institute, the Districts and similar groupings legitimately constituted, and the communities are non-profit making entities. They have the right to acquire, possess, administer and dispose of material goods in view of their specific mission. In such cases they act within the authorized limits and under their own responsibility, conforming to canon law and the legislation of the Institute, and taking into account the requirements of civil law.*

*The Brothers appointed to administer the goods of the Institute do so as depositaries of the goods of the Church.*

*Those in charge at all levels see that the resources are shared equitably, in such a way that the sectors which are better off, come to the aid of their Brothers less favourably placed, so as to minimize as far as possible the differences which might exist in the living conditions of communities within the same sector.*

(Rule 139)

*The various Districts, sub-Districts and Delegations jointly contribute towards the costs of the central administration of the Institute. They ensure that it can balance its budget so as to be able to meet its other expenses.*

*The amount to be contributed by each District is calculated by a system established by the General Chapter and applied each year by the General Council according to what is proposed by the International Economic Council.*

(Rule 140c)

## 7. Conversion to Interdependence

The 41st General Chapter made a special appeal for conversion as a necessity; a conversion which begins with a change of attitude.

What attitudes should we develop in ourselves as Brothers, communities, Lasallian groups?

- An attitude of openness: Openness to the demands of Mission: youth, the poor, schools, the Church...

Openness to the call of the Gospel, the Church, the Institute...

Openness which will facilitate more frequent and better communication with needy Regions.

- An attitude of acceptance: of the calls of God, of the Institute, of the poor, of the needy Regions... with humility, understanding, joy, generosity, availability to help.

This attitude of acceptance in Faith will generate an attitude of thanksgiving because God, who continues to knock at our door, keeps us from getting

smug or closed in on ourselves and our fears.

- An attitude of interest: A great interest to know how life is being lived elsewhere, what the sufferings are, the needs, the beliefs... In this way we come to know the needs of our Brothers and our own possibilities, as well as those of the various Lasallian groups of the District or the Region.

- An attitude of discernment: Discern to serve better, with a discernment which is realistic and to the point, inspired by the Spirit of Faith... A community discernment in the light of the Rule.

- An attitude of availability: A humble, joyful, generous, realistic, united and gratuitous availability... An availability which is also creative to maintain contact with our needy Brothers in cases where we cannot actually be in the place where they are.

- An attitude of service: We must increase the capacity and quality of service because the demands of going into and becoming a part of another culture are very great. And service must always be evangelical — “Whatever you do for one of these little ones, you do it to Me”.

## 8. Formation in solidarity and interdependence

My final word has not been mentioned, even though it has been present throughout this presentation.

The Rule says “By faith the Brother recognizes that his life consists in a succession of calls from God to which he continues to respond” (R. 100).

We can now see how this “succession of calls and responses” gathers urgency and multiplicity. There is no period of life when we are more open or more closed to these calls. As far as our Mission is concerned, we do not have the initiative. It is God who calls. Events challenge us in the name of God.

As the needs and challenges multiply so also should our capability for continuous formation increase. With the conviction that God, who “calls, consecrates, sends and saves” (R. 21) us, is also a God who is ever active and who knows how to wait for the right moment when He will find the greatest availability in us, regardless of our human means. But we also know that the rapid changes in our society are also a sign of God urging to live always in a state of formation.

“The dialogue between God and the Brother” (R. 100), the dialogue between the Brother and the culture of his time “permits the Brother to grow continually in fidelity” (R. 100).

*Rome, October 1990*



# THE REGION OF FRANCE

## MAKING INTERDEPENDENCE A LIVING REALITY

For many years, French Districts had maintained special links with certain parts of the Institute in North Africa, the Near East, the Indian Ocean and black Africa.

With the creation of the Assistancy of France in 1966 and the Region of France in 1978, there was also created a new and stronger framework for cooperation between the various parts of the Region and other countries. The decision to join up the 8 Districts of France and form a single District is intended to make it possible to exercise interdependence on the basis of a more coherent policy and a greater choice of means.

### 1. Internal cooperation in the Region of France

The present Region of France consists of metropolitan France, some communities in neighbouring countries (Switzerland, Luxembourg), Djibouti, and the Delegations of Turkey and Reunion.

The initial formation of young Brothers is under the direct authority of the Regional Coordinator. The novitiate has been a national one for almost 20 years: it has recently been moved to the highly symbolic location of Parmenie.

The Regional Coordinator has been given responsibility also for organising sessions for Brother Directors of communities, as well as sessions and retreats for retired Brothers. The mixture of Brothers originating from different places and the high quality of the organisers have built up a very high reputation for these sessions; and Brothers from other Regions have asked to take part.

#### *Shared responsibility for new undertakings*

A greater degree of cooperation was achieved by the creation of a Regional commission. It was given the responsibility of deciding on new undertakings in France and in the Third World, meeting urgent needs by drawing on the funds and personnel of the various Districts.

Among the undertakings successfully supported by the Region we may mention the following: **Garges**, near Paris (cf. Bulletin N° 230), **Pruille le Chetif** (technical school founded at the request of the diocese of Le Mans), **La Grand Combe** (a very poor area near Ales), the **SIGÉVO** team running courses in literacy for gypsies, **Djibouti...**

Brother Michel Sauvage, who was Regional Coordinator from 1978 to 1982, made an appeal to

all the Brothers to write to him to say if they were prepared to undertake some new form of apostolate. The new possibility of moving Brothers around made it possible to strengthen various undertakings in metropolitan France, Reunion, Djibouti and Turkey.

It was at the level of agricultural schools, however, that it first became clear that an overall policy was essential. Each District had an agricultural school, but it was impossible to find Brothers to replace those already there. For some years, the Brothers working in these schools had been meeting once a year to discuss common farming problems. The Visitors' Conference asked this group of Brothers to examine the future of the agricultural schools of the Region. As a consequence, the Regional Coordinator moved Brothers into those agricultural schools that had been declared a priority. And so "new undertakings" came also to include relaunching old undertakings.

#### *In search of a policy on establishments*

The period between 1981 and 1984 was a time when the freedom of choice of education in France was seriously threatened. A high proportion of the population mobilised its resources to defend its freedom to exercise this right. This inspired the staff of the various Brothers' schools to state what use they made of this freedom. A "white book" published by Brother Michel Sauvage pointed out to isolated establishments the advantage of belonging to a Lasallian "network" of 140 establishments, 8,000 teachers, and 100,000 pupils.

On the Regional level, the Education Secretariat acts as a forum for new ideas, provides follow-up for innovations and organises meetings. At a time when the number of Brothers is on the decrease, there is a noticeable hunger for more information, and more Lasallian information. Brothers have to stop teaching at 65, which means that every year 75 or 80 retire, amounting to almost 300 in four years, the equivalent of a large District.

No District can fill its own gaps. Without a national policy with regard to Brothers' communities in Lasallian schools, the Institute in France would be an irrelevant collection of scattered elements. Successive Assemblies have given the Regional Coordinator more authority to implement this policy regarding establishments.

There are two new factors that are going to give this policy a new look: the rise of a new generation



of lay headmasters, and a more active involvement by Visitors in fulfilling the role of a board of governors with regard to Lasallian schools.

### *A new Lasallian factor*

The first lay people to take over from the Brothers as headmasters of Lasallian schools asked the Institute to continue to guarantee their Christian and Lasallian character. In French this is known as "la tutelle". Just as he would in a school where the headmaster was a Brother, the Visitor is called upon to appoint the headmaster, supervise his work, visit the school, and reserve the right to endorse all major decisions regarding the school.

These lay people ask also for a spiritual follow-up. "You have shown us that your approach to education is rooted in an experience of God. Share this experience with us so that we can continue where you left off but not in servile imitation: enable us to write a Lasallian page in the annals of education".

And so the La Salle Association (ALS) was born. At first, its membership was made up of Visitors and lay headmasters. It was not long before the ALS was made responsible for providing the Institute "tutelle" in the establishments concerned. The 1986 Regional Assembly (AR 86) gave itself 4 years to extend membership of the ALS to all Lasallian schools, whether the headmaster was a lay person or a Brother. This is now the way in which the Institute "tutelle" is exercised in France.

What made it possible for this new type of association to come about between Brothers and Lasallian lay people working together in this network of schools? The impetus given by Vatican II and its influence on the Rule (the shared mission) doubtlessly prepared people's minds. However, the decisive factor, to my mind, was the widespread response of teachers to the invitation to take part in the French Lasallian Centre (CLF).

The lay headmasters of the ALS asked for some systematic form of training in the Lasallian spirit to be organised. The experience gained from experiments along these lines in certain Districts showed that courses needed to be spread over a period of two years, that they should be centred on Paris, and should teach a specific spirituality for the Christian teacher as taught by St. John Baptist de La Salle. How many people would come forward under these conditions? With 30 a start could be made. When applications had risen to 127, no more could be accepted: three groups of 40 would already mean a great deal of work for the organisers. And now in its fifth year, the course is still heavily oversubscribed with a waiting list of 40 or 50 each year.

Only a Region had the resources to make these hopes become reality. From now onwards, moreover, the policy with regard to establishments is not the responsibility of the Brothers alone: Brothers and lay people together must take responsibility for the Lasallian network.

### *Temporary gatherings and lasting structures*

Beauvais 80, one of the events marking the tercentenary of the Institute, enabled more than 500 Brothers from the whole of France to meet one another for the first time. All that greying hair belied the extraordinary dynamism and youth of the assembled Brothers. The 1986 Regional Assembly attempted to provide a Fountain of Youth for the Brothers and the lay people who worked with them. Rheims 89 brought together more than 1,300 for a period of 3 days.

The Education Secretariat and the more recently formed Catechesis Secretariat have organised vast youth gatherings at Parmenie, Quebec... Periodicals publicise guidelines and suggest educational methodology. Among these, we find Action Educative Lasallienne, Outil Pedagogique, Outil Catechetique, Clefs de Lecture, and so on. And there are collections of readings for Christian schools and colleges, a new and revised version of the Lasallian Educational Project, cards with suggestions for the morning reflection, the Kiko method of teaching reading, specially adapted for use by gypsies, and the list is not exhaustive.

To enable the Regional Coordinator to make a quick financial response in urgent cases, a fund amounting to 50 million Francs has been put at his disposal. This fund was set up by withdrawing a large proportion of District reserves and is regularly topped up.

Inter-District financial solidarity comes into play also when some undertaking is going through very serious financial difficulties which a single District on its own cannot cope with. This solidarity grew in answer to isolated instances of need. It will be given a more permanent basis when, with the creation of the single District of France, a "tutelle" fund will be set up to promote the development of Lasallian establishments.

## **2. Cooperation with other sectors of the Institute**

When the Region of France came into existence, the Regional Coordinator was given responsibility for helping the missions. The Lasallian Missionary Secretariat (SEMIL) made an important contribution too. The Regional Coordinators, Brothers Michel Sauvage and Jean Marie Thouard, made long journeys in particular to Chad and Cameroon, to visit the French Brothers who were working in those parts of Africa.

Brother Superior's choice of French Visitors to be his delegates in Egypt and Greece helped a great deal, especially in Egypt, to establish closer relations: help was given to the novitiate, and Brothers were sent to strengthen communities. This help can be considered to have been mutual, since the Lasallian Research Group (GRL), which serves to prepare candidates for the Brothers' life, was first worked out in Egypt before being adopted in France.



Older young people and teachers have been helped in their understanding of apostolic work by coming into contact with the Third World by spending time in Burkina Faso, Egypt or Cameroon. Several novices have remarked that what drew them to the Institute was sharing the life of the Brothers on these missionary help programmes. And so clearly it is question of mutual benefit and not simply help in one direction.

In spite of the fact that Brothers in France are becoming old, and Brothers below 60 fewer and fewer — these number at present 330 out of a total of 1,400 — the percentage of Brothers working abroad has been maintained at 8%. For a time, Brothers were encouraged to go abroad, and certain retired Brothers volunteered and provided some very valuable help.

When the call went out again, asking Brothers to be prepared to move, in particular to work in the Third World, the Visitors' Conference decided that the formation programme of young Brothers would include 2 years of "Donum Dei" service in a Brothers' community in the Third World, and so young French Brothers have joined communities in Burkina Faso, Reunion and Egypt.

#### *Consistent financial commitment*

Districts contribute to the Regional missionary fund. Campaigns in Lasallian schools and among Brothers to create a greater awareness of Third World needs have increased financial contributions tenfold. It was only a survey run a few years ago that revealed the extent of these contributions.

At the request of a number of Visitors, several African and Polish Brothers have joined communities in the Region of France to pursue their studies for one or more years. The Region provided some study scholarships on that occasion and still continues to do so. An inculturation session was held for the Brothers involved.

The Visitors' Conference accepted likewise to contribute to special schemes, such as providing help for Lebanon, or setting up the pan-African scholasticate at Abidjan.

Doubtlessly, some of these undertakings would have been possible without Regional structures: District missionary secretariats are active. The Region does provide, however, coordination, continuity in work programmes, and follow-up of people.

#### *Brothers and lay people in Europe*

The meeting at Ostia for the headmasters of Lasallian schools in Europe, organised by the education secretariats of Europe, was attended by many members of ALS: the greatest number of lay headmasters attending came from France. It is perhaps still too early to assess the impact of this meeting, but some new developments as a result of it are already noticeable, like the twinning of Lasallian schools.

This meeting which brought European headmasters together was an occasion for exchanging information, and discovering that, as the Lasallian training offered by the Institute to Brothers and lay people evolved, there were certain characteristics that never changed, despite the diversity of countries involved.

Work is going on at present to draw up a common policy with regard to translation and Lasallian publications. It should be noted that the collection of reading texts mentioned earlier is based on work done by the Brothers of Catalonia.

Very valuable work is being done jointly with Spanish Brothers on the Feverstein method of teaching (PEI), and the efficient teaching of reading: by training a large number of teachers in these methods, a great many youngsters with learning difficulties are benefiting from these combined efforts.

### **3. The new single District of France**

Having listed all these good things, one has to remember also the present limitations of interdependence. Whether it is a question of policy regarding the kind of work undertaken or of supporting the missions, the Regional Coordinator does not have any canonical jurisdiction at present to set up communities. The Rule gives this right to the Visitor.

The 1986 Regional Assembly realised that soon Districts would no longer be able to fulfil their obligations (cf. Rule 128), and so it asked that a plan should be drawn up for the 1990 Assembly outlining a more tightly structured Region of France. With the Visitor of the District of France becoming also the Regional Coordinator, all the necessary powers to make interdependence more complete will be invested in one person.

This new unit has to be workable. The following arrangements should be sufficient to ensure the good running of the 200 communities and of the entire network of Lasallian establishments in France: the District of France will be divided up into 3 sectors, each the responsibility of several auxiliary Visitors. There will also be a vice-Visitor and a Visitor-Bursar who will be auxiliary Visitors to the Visitor of France.

The District of France is due to come into existence on August 1st 1991. The Region of France will then include, in addition to the 1,400 Brothers of this District, the Delegations of Turkey (about a dozen Brothers) and Reunion (25 Brothers), and the sector of Djibouti (6 Brothers). The disproportion in numbers should not create any new problems. On the contrary, by making the Visitor of France also the Regional Coordinator, the statutes stress that: "The Regional Coordinator makes available to the Region all the human, material, spiritual and apostolic resources of the District of France" (art. 11).

This is only the beginning of interdependence.

**Brother Alain Houry**  
*October 27th 1990*



# INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE REGION OF ITALY

1. The Region of Italy practises interdependence with regard to other Regions of the Institute in a variety of ways:

## a) Sharing personnel

- At the present time, there are Italian Brothers in two missionary areas:

- *Orient District*: In Israel, there is one Brother in Nazareth, one at Jaffa and one in Jerusalem. In Lebanon, there is one Brother in Beit Mery.

- *Delegation of Ethiopia*: There is one Brother here. He is the President of the Delegation and works mostly in formation.

- In addition to these, there four Brothers working in the Generalate: two work in the Postulator General's Office, one is the House Bursar, and the other runs the Institute Information Office.

## b) Sharing financial resources

Apart from contributing to the central administration of the Institute (category 5, the highest), and giving generously to the Sharing Fund, the Region shares its financial resources in particular with certain sectors of the Institute. Details of this will be given in the second part of this account, which deals with interdependence between Districts, Delegations and sectors.

## c) Forms of cultural and apostolic collaboration

- The first instance of this kind of collaboration was with ARLEP. In fact, because of a similarity of language, culture and socio-political background, most of the Regional exchanges and links are with the **Region of Spain and Portugal**. This cooperation has existed for some years now.

As far as Regional bodies are concerned, the **February 1986** meeting of ARLEP was important. The Visitors of Italy took part and joined the other Brothers in recounting their experiences of running a District. The areas touched on were as follows:

- running a community (Community Annual Programme);

- running schools (educational legislation, lay teachers, involvement of parents, the educational community and Christian training, the educational project);

- youth pastoral care and vocations promotion;

- initial and ongoing formation;

- retirement;

the missions.

The exchange of printed information with ARLEP about District life and new undertakings continues as a matter of course. It includes such items as District projects, reports of District Chapters, Visitors' circulars, and various pieces of news.

With regard to formation, the Rome Director of Novices, Br. Mario Chiarapini, has attended meetings with Spanish Brothers involved in formation work and exchanged information with them about their work, experiences and programmes.

- Also, contacts and relations with **other Regions in Europe** have proved both useful and worthwhile.

Here are some examples of what was done between 1985 and 1988:

- The Education Commission of the District of Rome was represented by Brothers Giuseppe Gioia and Manlio Bernardini at a number of meetings:

- in December 1985, at the Paris Conference organised by the Education Secretariat on the topics of "Special Education" and "Lay teachers in our schools";

- in February 1988, in Rome, at a meeting for European Brothers responsible for educational organisation. This meeting produced a document entitled: "Thoughts and 220 Suggestions for a Lasallian School";

- in February 1989, in Palma de Mallorca, at a meeting attended by the same Brothers.

- Brothers Secondino Scaglione and Giampiero Fornaresio, representing the Education Commission of the District of Turin, took part in both the February 1988 meeting which drew up the document on the Lasallian School, and the previous meeting for



European Brothers which produced an important document entitled "The Identity of the Lasallian School Today".

— In the last two years, a detailed programme to promote interdependence among the Regions of Europe has been set in motion.

— From September 24th - 26th 1989, the Visitors of France, Belgium, Italy and Spain met in Bujedo, Spain, to work out a programme of collaboration in a number of areas. At this meeting a number of commissions were set up, each Region being represented on each commission:

- Translation Commission for the exchange of publications. Italian representatives are Brothers Serafino Barbaglia and Secondino Scaglione.

- Pastoral Commission to promote work with young people and adults. Italian representatives are Brothers Bernardino Lorenzini and Giorgio Dicasilati.

- Lasallian Centres Commission for the training of teachers. Italian representatives are Brothers Mario Presciuttini and Secondino Scaglione.

- Education and Pedagogy Commission. Italian representatives are Brothers Manlio Bernardini, Giampiero Fornaresio, Secondino Scaglione and Mario Presciuttini.

- Educational NGO Commission to set up educational NGO's. Italian representative is Brother Mario Presciuttini.

These commissions are all active, meeting regularly in various parts of Europe, and working on the tasks allotted them.

— At the next meeting of the European Visitors which will be held from March 4th - 6th 1991 in Ciney, Belgium, it is planned to improve the coordination of the many valuable instances of collaboration already taking place, and to strengthen considerably the links with those European Districts that as yet have not involved themselves significantly in this interdependence movement.

Another area in which European interdependence has been steadily increasing is that of coordination of help for the missions. For several years now, Missionary Secretaries have been organising international meetings to exchange information and coordinate their missionary aid programmes. Italy is represented at these meetings by Brothers Luigi Guarneri and Raffaele Lievore.

— Finally in August 1990, the Region of Italy was represented at the USA/Toronto Regional Convocation at St. Mary's College, Moraga, California, by the Regional Coordinator of Italy, Brother Vittorino Ratti, the Regional Secretary, Brother Mario Presciuttini, and Brother Lorenzo Orlandini. It was a particularly enriching experience, and important as a

sign of increasing links within our international Institute.

## 2. COLLABORATION AGREEMENTS WITH DISTRICTS OF OTHER REGIONS

This question can be considered under several headings:

### a) Agreements with regard to formation

- The District of Rome has made such an agreement with the Delegation of Ethiopia, and has sent Br. Amilcare Boccuccia there to train the postulants and young Brothers of the Delegation.

- The Colle La Salle community in Rome has provided accommodation for several years now to various Brothers from the Delegation of Ethiopia studying in pontifical universities. The community of Angelo Mai in Rome is now offering this service.

### b) Provision of funds and help

- **The District of Rome** has funded the Delegation of Ethiopia and the school in Nazareth in the sub-District of the Holy Land in two ways.

1) With the following sums of money:

- 1983: 99,004,000 lire
- 1984: 61,600,000 lire
- 1985: 20,000,000 lire
- 1986: 35,000,000 lire
- 1987: 54,986,000 lire
- 1988: 41,500,000 lire
- 1989: 53,700,000 lire

This comes to a total of 365,790,000 lire to which must be added a further 9,258,000 lire in the form of food for the famine relief in Ethiopia.

2) By covering the expenses of Ethiopian Brothers studying in Rome in pontifical universities. These expenses include board and lodging at the Colle La Salle community in Rome, university fees, pocket money, etc. The sums involved are as follows:

- 1983: 20,000,000 lire
- 1984: 20,000,000 lire
- 1985: 22,000,000 lire
- 1986: 22,000,000 lire
- 1987: 25,000,000 lire

This comes to a total of 109,000,000 lire. Altogether, in the last seven years, the District of Rome has contributed the sum of 474,790,000 lire.

- **The District of Turin** has provided funds for the Delegation of Ethiopia and the Orient District (Nazareth and Beit Mery) to support the schemes already mentioned. The sums involved are as follows:

- 1984: 871,000 lire



- 1985: 71,700,000 lire
- 1986: 55,250,000 lire
- 1987: 15,724,300 lire
- 1988: 48,500,000 lire
- 1989: 91,000,000 lire

This comes to a total of 283,045,800 lire over six years.

- An example of collaboration with a sector of the Institute other than that of Ethiopia and the Middle East, which remain the traditional and principal recipients of the financial aid of the Region of Italy, is Sri Lanka. This is principally the work of Brother Delio Mazzucco and other Brothers from the **Istituto Filippin di Paderno del Grappa**, from the District of Turin.

Through SECOLI, they have sent financial aid to support the formation of postulants and young Brothers at Mannar, Sri Lanka.

Recently three separate sums of 750,000, 800,000 and 1,000,000 lire have been sent to help with the "preparation and formation of the young Brothers of Sri Lanka". The **Istituto S. Giuseppe of Milan** in the District of Turin has sent 690,000 lire to Sri Lanka for the same purpose.

- Another example we would like to draw attention to is that of the "Friends of the Missions" group from **Villa Fietta di Paderno del Grappa**, in the District of Turin.

Among the various Lasallian causes the group has supported financially in various parts of the Institute we can mention the following:

- 1982: A well in Togo: 1,800,000 lire
- 1984: "Operation Nazareth": 800,000 lire
- 1985: "Operation Ethiopia": 1,200,000 lire
- 1986: Help for Cameroon, Togo and Chad: 1,900,000 lire
- 1987: "Operation Togo": 2,300,000 lire
- 1988: Study scholarships for Lebanon: 1,300,000 lire

Other schools, groups and communities in the District of Rome have funded **mini-projects**, like for example:

- the AGESC (The Parents Association of the Catholic School of Villa Flaminia, Rome);
- the AGESC of the Collegio S. Giuseppe, Rome;
- the Istituto S. Luigi in Acireali;
- the Collegio S. Giuseppe, Rome, with its help for the school at Beit Mery in Lebanon;
- the Associazione Lasalliana Angelo Braschi of Grottaferrata.

- As a result of closer cooperation between the Missionary Secretary of the District of Rome and

SECOLI in the last few years, a whole series of mini-projects all over the Third World has been made possible with the involvement of all the schools in the District of Rome. An excellent and much appreciated publication has been produced by Brother Luigi Guarneri. It is entitled "Young People in support of the Missions", and it describes a whole variety of mini-projects that were completed in 1989 in Pakistan, India, Kenya, New Guinea-Papua, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, etc.

Of course, we do not think we have given a complete picture of the implementation of interdependence by this account: we have not mentioned such areas of spirituality as praying for one another, mutual witness, and so on, which are difficult to quantify.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Before **interdependence** can become action or a practical reaction to a perceived need, for there are less well-off areas that need the help of better-off areas, it has to become **an interior attitude, a desire to build, a culture, a spirituality.**

**Hence the following seems to me to be important:**

- **to improve and increase the dissemination of information**, either by publishing news and accounts of completed schemes, or by personal contacts and taking part in meetings or other means of promoting communication.

- This has to be first and foremost something that the Institute should concern itself about, but District Centres and Regional Secretaries have a special role to play in disseminating information and acting as go-betweens, by either passing on information from the Centre to communities, or by maintaining links with other Regions and Districts of the Institute.

As our Region reorganises its various structures, it must consider the above as a priority.

Probably, if more specific campaigns were promoted periodically at an Institute level in the way of days of recollection, topics for reflection, awareness campaigns, a greater need would be felt for interdependence and solidarity.

While it is true that the Rule states in article 116a that "The Brother Superior and his Council have as their mission to foster a spirit of communion and interdependence", one has to remember that none of this is possible without the active and committed participation of all the Brothers.

**Br. Mario Presciuttini**  
Regional Secretary



# MEDITERRANEAN REGION

The Mediterranean Region comprises the District of the Orient (Lebanon), the sub-District of the Holy Land and Jordan, and the Delegations of Egypt, Greece and Turkey. It numbers about 120 Brothers spread over 24 communities. It runs 27 establishments including a university, 25 secondary schools — in many cases with a primary school attached — and a centre for young people in trouble (Nazareth).

What is remarkable is that in each of these 5 sectors the situation is different — politically and educationally, each having its own language and culture, and especially its own religious beliefs. In Greece, Christianity is preponderant with the Orthodox Church in a dominant position. On the other hand, in Turkey, Jordan and Egypt, it is Islam that occupies this position. In these latter countries, Christians are in the minority, even if, as in Egypt, they constitute more or less a fifth of the total population. For a long time, Christians formed the strongest religious community in Lebanon, but now the Moslems are dominant. In the Holy Land, Christians form 13% of the population, Moslems 12%, while the rest are either Jews or claim no religious affiliation.

What should be noted also is the variety of groups that each of these religions includes. Islam, for example, has the Sunnites, Chiites, Druses and the Alids. It is among the Christians, however, that this diversity is most striking. There are at least a dozen different denominations. To try to list them all would present a real challenge. We can mention, perhaps, the best known ones without going into too much detail: there are Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Maronites, Greek Orthodox. There are also Copts, Syriacs, Armenians, Chaldeans, some of whom are in union with Rome, while others are not, like the Nestorians and Monophysites... Each of these denominations has its own hierarchy, clergy, places of worship, liturgy, even sometimes its own liturgical calendar, and sometimes its own monasteries and schools.

All these churches, except those in Greece, face the same problem: the departure of their faithful for countries that are more welcoming. In the long term, there is a great risk that in countries where

Christianity once flourished the Christian presence will disappear completely or at least will be greatly reduced. A case in point is Turkey. Around 1920, Christians made up 30% of the population: now they number only 0,4% of a Turkish population which has more than doubled in the last 70 years and whose birth rate continues to increase. What is true of Turkey with regard to the departure of Christians is true also of Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt.

One of the main causes of this exodus is the insidious but nonetheless real ostracism by Islam of other religious beliefs, and in particular Christian beliefs. Sometimes, as in the case of occupied Palestine and Lebanon, the reason for this exodus is war and the destabilisation that follows. Bethlehem University was closed for three years — it was re-opened on October 4th — and students who wished to pursue their studies were forced to leave the country as best they could. Since the beginning of the Intifada, the pupils in our schools in Jerusalem and Bethlehem have had their studies constantly interrupted by strikes called by the Palestine resistance leaders. The agony of Lebanon has lasted so long (over 15 years) that one tends to forget it. As a result of fratricidal warfare and internal divisions in times of foreign occupation and at international conferences, this unfortunate country continues to disintegrate and lose its Christian population.

All this is not irrelevant, when speaking of interdependence, if it helps us to understand the context better in which the Institute pursues its apostolate in this Region, and to assess its significance. In some countries like Turkey, the Christian school is one of the few visible signs of the Church's presence in society. Elsewhere, Lasallian educational establishments are places where young people and adults can gather, meet one another, live and work together unhampered by their religious differences and sometimes prejudices. The Rule defines our apostolate in such circumstances very clearly: "True to its founding spirit, the Institute also makes its presence felt in those areas where, humanly speaking, there is little or no possibility for it to develop".

"The work of the Brothers in such places beco-



mes, especially for non-Christians, a presence of the Church, a witness to the charity of Christ and a centre of dialogue and collaboration” (Rule 19b).

When one considers also the political, religious and economic situation in which our Brothers live, one becomes aware of certain operational difficulties that are special to this Region of the Institute. Regular communication and exchange of views, which interdependence between the various sectors of a Region presupposes, are sometimes difficult to establish or maintain. There are many frontiers involved and at times they are closed between countries. For example, the Beirut area, where there are five communities and the administrative centre of the Orient District is located, is to all intents and purposes totally cut off. It is almost impossible to make contact by either telephone or fax. Mail has to be entrusted to people entering or leaving the country. The difference in dates on which the various denominations celebrate religious feasts, like Easter, for example; and the way in which the school year is organised in different countries, make it difficult to choose dates that will enable Brothers to follow sessions or go to meetings organised by the Region.

One needs to be flexible enough to adapt to such circumstances.

What has already been said makes it clear also that interdependence in the Mediterranean Region has a character all of its own. It takes the form especially of help and support offered by other Regions to help it run. In the case of three of the Delegations of the Region — Egypt, Greece and Turkey — Brother Superior has appointed a special delegate to help them. In each of the other four sectors, with the exception of Greece, there are a great many Brothers who have left their own Districts either permanently or for a specific period of time in order to devote themselves to the human and, where possible, the Christian education of the young Jews, Moslems and Christians of the Middle East and Egypt. At least twelve different nationalities are represented in our communities there. These include both indigenous Brothers and Brothers from Europe (Great Britain, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland), North America (USA), and Latin America (Colombia). But for the availability of these Brothers and the generosity of their Districts, a considerable number of our establishments in the Mediterranean Region would not be able to run.

The fact that the Brothers come from so many different countries, cultures and educational backgrounds is one of the characteristics of most of the communities in this Region and is worth a special mention. In many of these countries, differences or open confrontation between religious denominations, ethnic origins, economic interests and political

allegiances spark off and fuel conflict which often ends in bloodshed. The witness, however, given by religious from different parts of the world but united in faith and by their mission is proof that it is possible to bring about true brotherhood among people and nations.

It has to be said, however, that interdependence in the Region does not work only in one direction. A Brother from Greece is working in Cameroon helping to set up a farming project that is sponsored by the Region of France and the District of Douala.

The financial side of interdependence is obviously important in sectors in which practically no establishment (Nazareth is an exception) receives government help. The running costs of our schools are financed by often very low fees and by contributions from external sources: Church organisations, charitable organisations, other Districts or Regions of the Institute. For many years now, the Region of France has been funding a school in a poor district of Cairo. Lasallian establishments in Lebanon have been partly funded for a long time by the central administration of the Institute, by the Region of Italy, French Districts, the sub-District of Jordan and the Holy Land, and by Egypt and Greece.

There are other schemes in the Region which seek to promote “unity of mind and heart among the Brothers” (R. 127). For several years now, there has been a regional novitiate in Cairo. It runs courses for Brothers on Lasallian spirituality and our shared mission. A session on the latter topic, which took place in August 1990, was attended by a dozen laymen from Egypt and the Holy Land. A meeting for the Directors of communities is planned for next year. Other schemes are still at the drawing-board stage, as for example, courses on our mission in relation to ecumenism and to Islam. We should add finally that the various Brothers with responsibility for the Region — Visitors, Delegates and Presidents — meet together at least once a year. The opportunity that such occasions offer for meeting socially, for exchanging views and for prayer and study, is very much appreciated.

Now that some time has passed since the Region was formed, it is clear that there is a need to take a fresh look at its constitution and structures and at the way in runs. The next few months will be set aside for this task. Each sector and each community has been invited by Brother Superior to say how it sees the future of the Mediterranean Region. This consultation will no doubt give rise to proposals and suggestions that will enable this part of the Institute to find ways of helping the Brothers and those associated with them to fulfil their Lasallian mission better.



# INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE ASSOCIATED LASALLIAN REGION OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL: ARLEP

According to the wishes of the 41st General Chapter, this Region of the Institute is implementing interdependence on several fronts.

This is a description of the efforts which are being made toward inter-Regional cooperation as well as the sharing between Districts of this Region.

## 1. Interdependence with other Regions

Our Region is either in communication with or actually collaborating with the following Regions of the Institute:

### a) *The Lasallian Afro-Madagascar Region*

We contribute to both the personnel and activities in Equatorial Guinea, and the Sub-District of the Gulf of Benin which are sharing partners with ARLEP.

There are presently 8 communities and 37 Brothers in the Sub-District of the Gulf of Benin. Most of the latter come from Spanish Districts. There are 4 novices.

Each year some Brothers are rotated back to Spain from the Sub-District. Considerable economic assistance is also contributed for formation and to maintain the works already in existence.

There are 2 communities and 10 Brothers, also from the Region of Spain, in Equatorial Guinea. There are 2 novices and 1 scholastic.

ARLEP also shares with other countries by sending personnel to the International Novitiate in Kinhasa, Rwanda, Madagascar and Burkina Faso.

It provides economic assistance for the international scholasticate in Abidjan and will also send Brothers when it goes into operation.

One of our more inspired initiatives in this interdependence movement was the "Summer Projects" begun about 10 years ago by the Region in order to

help the Institute effort in Africa. It consists in sending men and money to work at a specific project during several weeks in summer. In return, we gain valuable insights into the reality and values of life in the Third World.

With the adoption of PROYDE (Non-Governmental Organization for Growth and Development) by our Region, we have been able to make our schools more aware of the problems of the Third World and to provide substantial economic assistance to many projects. Specifically, during 1989-1990 we have raised \$ 600,000 (US) for programs in countries which need our help. Half of this amount was contributed by students and parent groups during campaigns in our schools. The matching funds came from national and international organizations.

### b) *With the Regions of Europe*

We have had frequent and profitable contacts with the Regions of Europe. We have attended the Congress of the Brothers Visitors of Europe, and been members of the Commissions which were created to promote various projects for Europe as a whole: Education, Catechetics, Ministries, Lasallian Publications and Formation.

### c) *With the Region of Latin America*

Historically, there has been a long tradition of relationships and cooperation. In fact, there are many Spanish Brothers who belong to the Districts or Sub-Districts of RELAL.

In general, the present style of interdependence is one of direct relationships between the Districts of RELAL and the Districts of ARLEP. For example:

- The District of Bilbao has sent Brothers to help the District of Venezuela. At present, the District of Bilbao has agreements with the Districts of Bolivia, Ecuador and West Indies.



- Cooperation has been in place between the District of Catalonia and the Districts of Perú and Bolivia.

- The District of Madrid maintains 8 Brothers permanently in the Sub-District of Paraguay and provides economic assistance as it becomes available.

- The District of Valladolid provides 9 Brothers for the District of Central America.

Recently our program of interdependence has provided the "Summer Projects" for Bolivia, Perú, Ecuador and Paraguay.

## 2. Interdependence within the Region (ARLEP)

Cooperation and sharing among the Districts of ARLEP has been growing steadily.

Some of the specific ways in which this is realized are given here.

- The so-called Central District was created with a total of 80 Brothers from the 6 Districts of the Region in order to provide the Services which are common to all the Districts. Among such Services are:

- The Regional Center "La Salle" which provides hospitality to the Brothers working there or passing through.

- C.E.L. (Centro Español Lasaliano) which is a program for continued renewal in which each year some 20 Brothers of the Region take time to study the various aspects of their identity and mission: Lasallian and Religious spirituality, theology, ministry and catechesis.

- C.E.L.T.E. (Centro Español Lasaliano de la Tercera Edad) is designed to help elderly Brothers to adjust. Usually there are 30 Brothers in the 2 month program.

- C.E.L.A.S. is another Lasallian Center program created to enhance Lasallian spirituality among the Brothers and the lay teachers of our schools.

- The Pontifical Institute St. Pius X, an Institute of Higher Learning specializing in Catechetics.

- Editorial Bruño, a publications press which develops and publishes educational materials.

- Inter-District novitiates and scholasticates take care of initial formation.

- Ediciones St. Pius X publishes books on spirituality, theology, pedagogy and catechesis.

- P.R.O.Y.D.E. (Non-Governmental Organization for Growth and Development) proposes to make

schools aware of the needs of the Third World and channels the financial assistance they provide in conjunction with national and international organizations.

The Districts of ARLEP also play an active role on Regional Committees (Education, Ministry and Catechetics, Missions, Retired Persons, Initial Formation, Finances and Lasallian Publications) which meet annually to plan specific objectives for the coming year.

There are also regular meetings of the Conference of Visitors of the Region. They are held 3 times per year in order to propose, follow up and evaluate the various projects of the Region. The Visitors make their annual retreat together.

## 3. Plans for the future

It is our conviction that to promote solidarity and interdependence within the Region and the Institute is a positive contribution towards the vitality of the Institute.

For this purpose, we will continue to foster our Common Services, especially the program for formation in Lasallian Spirituality aimed at our lay colleagues because we see in this a clear sign of the times which will greatly benefit the educational and evangelizing effort of our schools.

At the same time we want to continue the missionary thrust of the Region, supporting the areas which are its special concern with men and money; i.e., the Sub-Districts of the Gulf of Benin and Equatorial Guinea. Our primary interest is in promoting native vocations in view of the future.

We also wish to continue the encouraging relationships we have established with the other Regions of Europe, develop them further and establish new forms of cooperation.

We have found a cordial reception of the delegates of our Region in the grand Assembly of the Brothers of the United States and we consider these contacts between Regions to be very encouraging.

Another form of interdependence is our solidarity with the Center of the Institute. We will continue to send personnel and economic assistance according to its requests and our means.

We would like particularly to thank the countries of the Third World for the fraternal welcome they have given our Brothers who have gone to help them with their projects and assure them that we also appreciate the opportunity to learn and be enriched by the experience.



# INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE LASALLIAN REGION OF LATIN AMERICA

*“The Region exists as an expression of cooperation between the Districts which compose it and the benefit which derives from the vitality of combined effort». (R. 127).*

## I. Interdependence cannot be improvised

1. **Interdependence** is the mature result of a consensus of minds and a union of wills. Interdependence does not just happen. Rather, it is prepared by the progressive awareness of the need for its members to plan and work together when those things which must be done are too complex to be achieved separately.

2. The first steps of **RELAL** to deliberately accept the challenge of interdependence were taken formally in **Lima, Perú, in May of 1967**, during the period between the sessions of the 39th General Chapter (1966-67), with the establishment of the Conference of Brothers Visitors of Latin America. Although they formed part of 2 Assistancies, they decided to have only one joint Conference of Brothers Visitors. This decision indicated their will to **union** in pursuit of their goal. There was already a certain awareness of a Region of Latin America, even though juridical status would appear in the Institute only by a decision of the 40th General Chapter (1976): “The Region does not come into being by decree. Rather it gets its life from the need to facilitate and maintain the unity of the entire body” (Bk. Gov. 1976, Art. 70, 1).

3. Possibly the Brothers Visitors were inspired by the experience of the General Assemblies of the Bishops of Latin America and its Executive Offices (CE-LAM) in order to share their own expectations, questions, problems achievements and the vast potential of their own Districts.

Actually, between 1967 and 1974, the Conferences of Brothers Visitors held 7 meetings in various ci-

ties of Latin America. In 1975, just before the 40th General Chapter, the two Assistancies of Latin America North and Latin America South held their respective regional Chapters in Bogotá and Cochabamba respectively.

4. During the final days of the 40th General Chapter, in the Generalate in Rome, the Brothers Visitors who were delegates to the Chapter met and laid down the foundations for a Latin American Region, leaving the official confirmation in abeyance until they could consult with their respective Districts, and meet again in Bogotá in February of 1977.

This Conference took another step toward uniting the Brothers of Latin America by including in their Statutes the **Regional Assembly** of Latin America which was to take place every 3 years. This body met: 1. Lima (1979), 2. Mexico (1982), 3. Santo Domingo (1985), 4. Córdoba (1988). The 5th one is scheduled for 1991 in Guatemala.

5. Latin America defines its Region as “A group which expresses the union and desire to serve of the Districts of Latin America, in the light of the Lasallian charism for the evangelization and education of this continent” (Statutes).

The Lasallian Latin American Region is not a monolith of languages, cultures, history, etc. On the contrary, it is a beautiful mosaic of many elements, with different problems and varied experiences which require adequate response to the particular circumstances of each place, the distinct personality of each people within its present historical reality. Thanks to the will to work together since 1967 (which is about 25 years), the Region can point to certain achievements along the lines of interdependence.



## II. Interdependence becomes real through action

### 1. Discussion an essential element

From its very inception, the Region decided that it was very important to get together to talk about what needs to be done. It is the indispensable element which makes it possible to face the great challenges which Latin America presents to the Brothers: To educate as a community and with interdependence.

The main formulas used for this kind of discussion have been: courses, seminars, workshops... in which Brothers alone or in conjunction with lay people have dealt with the following topics:

— Those dealing with the organization of Districts and the internal workings of our communities. With the assistance of an inter-District staff there were sessions on:

- Brothers Visitors,
- District finance directors,
- Brothers directing initial formation,
- Brothers Directors of communities, etc.

— Those dealing with the Lasallian charism: current educational problems, Lasallian spirituality for Brothers and lay people. The results of these discussions appeared in a paper entitled: "The charism of De La Salle as seen from Latin America" which has been a great inspiration for educational work in the Region.

### 2. Planning for action

During the past 15 years the Region has been well served by the numerous specialized courses and seminars which were offered, their consistently high quality, the large number of Brothers and lay people who participated and because of the valuable initiatives and programs which have come from them.

The specific areas of discussions and plans for definite action were:

- Education for everyone.
- Education for justice and peace.
- Evangelization and catechesis.
- Youth ministry and Christian leadership.
- Lasallian spirituality for lay people.
- Programs for the initial formation of the Brothers.
- Special problems in education.

The energy and vitality of the Region is due in part to the creativity shown at the conception of the plans which were drawn up together and implemented by everyone.



INGAPIRCA (Ecuador): A group of catechists.

### 3. The training of personnel

To undertake solutions which will help to solve the serious problems of the continent, we need people who are very well prepared. Therefore, we need courses in continued formation for Brothers and the lay people who work in our schools, as well as provisions for non-formal education.

In 1969, the Region organized sessions to study Lasallian spirituality, first for the Brothers and later on for lay people who work in our schools. They continued until our General Chapter of 1976. They were called **CEL (Centro de Espiritualidad Lasallista)** and were held in three different areas of the Region, north, central and south. 80% of the Brothers participated.

After the General Chapter of 1986, **CREL (Centro de Renovación Lasallista)** was created. Within a period of 3 years, there were 4 sessions in different parts of the Region. Each District could send up to 10% of its Brothers.

The Regional Congresses of the Lasallian Family have begun the process of familiarization, cooperation and sharing of the mission we accomplish in conjunction with lay people. Seminars and workshops have been held in Quito (Ecuador) in 1979, Araruama (Brazil) in 1981, Quito, (Ecuador) in 1983 and finally Conocoto (Ecuador) in 1989 which took up the first Regional study of the **Letter to the Lasallian Family**.

All of these activities and efforts at formation have been well received by both Brothers and lay people. Through them they have come:

— To know each other better in spite of geographical distances.

— To discover and appreciate the value of the persons and institutions, the value of community, and the educational and District programs which have been set in motion.



— To evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of our Districts.

All this has brought about a natural surge of desire and the will to cooperate, to maximize resources, and to plan and implement common projects with a wider scope for action. There is now a heightened awareness of the need for people who can radiate their influence and inspire others in every aspect of our educational endeavors.

All this has entailed the development of an abundant bibliography of materials in Spanish. This is indispensable for bringing the knowledge of the Founder to all those who now have a desire to know him better, and to make his works better known also. The publications which have appeared:

— Life of M. de La Salle. Maillefer, 1977 (from French).

— St. John Baptist de La Salle: a spirituality for teachers and educators. Jean Pungier, 1978 (from French). To preach the Gospel to the poor. Sauvage-Campos, 1980 (from French).

— The Charism of de La Salle, seen from Latin America. By a team of Latin American Brothers.

— Meditations for a Christian Educator. (Adaptation of MTR) Origins of the Management of Schools. Jean Pungier, 1987 (from French).

— Spirit and Life: The Lasallian Educational Ministry. Alfredo Morales, 1990.

— Life of M. de La Salle. Brother Bernard, 1990 (from French).

#### 4. *Implementation of Common Projects*

RELAL has always had a firm resolve to unite forces and join the best of human, material and financial resources to achieve specific projects which are considered priorities. Such a serious commitment, however, has always involved sacrifices.

Some projects were in the area of formation, others involved renovations, and still others looked towards new foundations which would be specifically missionary.

**PARAGUAY:** The Institute began in Paraguay in 1968 through the initiative of the General Council and especially of the then Assistant Brother Francisco Alberto. It is a child of interdependence because although it was in the District of Argentina, it was originally staffed by Brothers from Argentina, Brazil, Spain, and for a time one from Mexico.

RELAL committed itself to cooperate financially to sustain the Lasallian presence in Paraguay. Until 1985, all the Districts contributed an annual quota determined by the Conference of Brothers Visitors.

Since 1985, the Sub-District of Paraguay receives regular financial help from Madrid and Argentina. The other Districts of RELAL contribute from time to time. Eventually the Sub-District was able to finance itself almost entirely. As far as RELAL is concerned there will always be a high esteem for the Lasallian work being accomplished in Paraguay.

**BOLIVIA:** In 1979, the Archbishop of La Paz asked the Brothers to take charge of radio station "San Gabriel" begun by the Maryknoll Fathers. A group of Brothers from the Districts of Spain in conjunction with the District of Bolivia assumed the administration of the station which is now known for its dynamic, creative and practical programs.

As "the Voice of the Aymara People", Radio San Gabriel realizes that its contribution to literacy must include the entire culture of the Aymara people, which is profoundly religious. Therefore, evangelization is part and parcel of all its cultural and educational programs. At the present time, the community there comprises Bolivian and Spanish Brothers as well as a large group of lay people.

**ECUADOR:** Since 1978, some Brothers from the District of Bilbao have been cooperating with the District of Ecuador in its literacy and evangelical programs among the native people of Aguarongo. The presence of the Brothers in the area and the acceptance of "lay missionaries" have made it possible for Lasallian volunteers from the District of Bilbao to work there effectively, thus assuring stability and continuity.

**BRAZIL:** The two Districts of Brazil, São Paulo and Porto Alegre have joined forces in order to open missions in the remote areas which lie in the center of each District, particularly in the region of the Amazon. Four communities serve the educational needs of Altamira (Pará), Cândido Mendes (Maranhão), Presidente Medici (Maranhão) and Uruará. By living with the people, these communities of Brothers dedicate themselves to train leaders for education and evangelization. Both Districts support this common project with Brothers who are there either full or part time. Soon, Lasallian volunteers will be incorporated into the project.

**CUBA:** Based on the "Missionary Proposal" which Brother Superior General and his Council made to the Latin American Region in April of 1987, the Brothers Visitors began to plan for the opening of 2 communities of Brothers to serve the Church in



Cuba. "Project Cuba" as it is called, started the first one with 3 Brothers in Santiago de Cuba. The other will be in Havana as soon as government authorization has been granted. The Brothers will come from various Districts of the Region and will belong to the District of the West Indies, into which these schools will be incorporated. Up till now, the Brothers have not been able to work in schools. However, they are doing excellent ministerial work in the diocese, especially with youth, in the formation of lay people and teaching in the seminary of the archdiocese.

**EL SALVADOR:** Since 1985, the Brothers have worked in this war-torn country in which justice is trying to prevail. Unfortunately, this first attempt has not succeeded. In the 1988 assembly of the Latin American Region, the decision was made to open a "new missionary territory" in a poor sector of Latin America. After making new contacts and bearing in mind the serious need for education and evangelization in El Salvador, we are preparing to open a community made up of Brothers from various Districts of the Region which will be part of the District of Central America. The completed project will be presented to the Regional Assembly in March, 1991 for its final approval.

### III. Beyond Regional frontiers

#### 1. *The arrival of valuable help*

For a long time many areas of Latin America were considered as missionary territories (according to the meaning of "Ad Gentes"). This brought many missionaries to these lands. Some came with the explicit desire to dedicate their entire lives to spreading the Gospel of Jesus among peoples who had never heard of Him. Others were moved Providentially by historical circumstances of persecution. We Brothers of the Region have profited from this influx of generosity into our part of the world.

Our Region has always been able to count on the varied and generous cooperation of Brothers from all over the Institute: France, Spain, the United States, Holland, Luxemburg, Germany, Czechoslovakia...

At present, our Districts still welcome the cooperation of non-Latin American Brothers who join our communities and apostolic works. Some commit themselves permanently in order to identify completely with the District where they intend to work. Others offer their help on a part-time basis but with the same generosity and commitment.

Another form of collaboration offered by the Brothers of Europe, Africa and the United States is also much appreciated. It consists in animating retreats, special courses, sessions for growth in spirituality, etc.

#### 2. *We want to give out of our poverty*

After having received generous help from the Institute to found and consolidate our Districts, to provide for the formation of our Brothers and to assure the vitality of our educational endeavors, it is now time to look, not so much at our own needs, but at the needs of other Regions of the Institute and the Church. The boundaries of RELAL must embrace the world.

For the present, our desire to help has gone in the following directions:

a) We have Latin American Brothers in Madagascar, Israel, Lebanon and Jordan. The missionary novitiate of Bordighera has played an important role in the formation of many of these Brothers.

b) The 2 Districts of Mexico (North and South) have committed themselves to furnish Brothers for Japan over a period of time. In a few years, they will be able to take over complete responsibility for the works of the Institute in that country.

c) For several years now, Latin American Brothers have been of service in the Generalate in Rome and on the staff of CIL.

d) The Districts have made important contributions to Secoli: "The Sharing Program" and the financing of mini-projects.

e) There is a special effort in the Latin American Region to translate the works of the Founder into Spanish.

### IV. Conclusion

We wish to declare that the Latin American Brothers subscribe completely to paragraph 368 of the Document of Puebla. "The time has come for Latin America to intensify its mutual efforts between local Churches and to project itself "ad gentes" beyond its own borders. It is true, we still need missionaries. But we have to give out of our poverty. Our Churches have much to offer which is important and original: the meaning of salvation and liberation, the wealth of popular devotion and faith, the experience of "base communities", the development of ministries, our hope and joy in our faith".



# THE USA/TORONTO REGION AND THE INSTITUTE

(Brother Paul Grass, FSC, *Regional Coordinator*)

## **Interdependence: the People**

Brothers of the Christian Schools have been working in English-speaking Canada and in the United States of America since the 1840s. The regional structure, however, dates back only to October 26, 1960, when the Visitors of the U.S. Districts filed their incorporation in the State of New Mexico as Christian Brothers Major Superiors, also known as Christian Brothers Conference.

This legal incorporation coincided with the decision of the Visitors to establish the Sangre de Cristo retreat and renewal center near Santa Fe, New Me-

xico. The immediate intent was to create an effective program for the renewal and continuing formation of the Brothers in the Region's Districts. Beyond the outstanding achievements of this goal, however, is the additional satisfaction today of having a worldwide clientele of men and women enrolled in the Sangre program, an example of interdependence with the universal Church. The Sangre de Cristo program has established a solid reputation throughout the Region and the English-speaking world. Dozens of Brothers from Australia, New Zealand, Asia, England, Ireland, and the European continent have taken advantage of the Sangre program.

MORAGA (California): Brothers of the USA/Toronto Region in the main auditorium.





The interdependence and interrelationship of the Region with the rest of the Lasallian Institute, of course, can be traced back to the early days of the Brothers' work in the United States and Canada. The present nine Districts of the Region enjoy the benefits of the interdependence practised so generously by the other sectors of the Institute in the 19th and early 20th centuries. England, France, Ireland, and Spain, among other countries, provided a considerable number of Brothers to begin and strengthen the Lasallian foundations in what became the USA/Toronto Region.

When the honored roster (a *Memorial Wall*, if you will) of the names of all of the deceased Brothers from the Region was displayed at *Convocation II* in Moraga, California, in August 1990, special note was taken of the 103 Brothers who died outside the Region, representing 4.5% of the total of 2,312 deceased since the 1840s. Remembrance of the lives of these and other Brothers calls to mind the fact that hundreds of Brothers from Canada and the USA have served the Institute in all parts of the globe during the past 155 years.

The USA/Toronto Region presently includes the eight districts of the United States of America (Baltimore, Chicago, Long Island-New England, New Orleans-Santa Fe, New York, Saint Louis, Saint Paul-Minneapolis, and San Francisco) and the Toronto District of Canada, which joined with the USA Districts in the Conference in 1978. Nigeria is a Sub-District of Toronto. The Delegation of East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) and the Delegation of Ethiopia became responsibilities of the Region in 1988 and 1990, respectively. Bethlehem University is also a responsibility of the Region, which appreciates the strong support and assistance there from the Brothers of the Districts of Great Britain and the Orient.

Two other examples of the important *crossover* participation of other Districts with the Region are the Delegation of Ethiopia, which the District of Rome supports financially and in the person of Brother Amilcare Boccuccio, the President of the Delegation, and the Sub-District of Nigeria, a responsibility of the Toronto District, but with personnel from the Districts of Ireland (including Brother Thomas Lavin, Auxiliary Visitor), Great Britain, and New Orleans-Santa Fe.

Most of the Region's 1,300 members live and work in the United States of America and in Ontario, Canada. Seventy-three Brothers and five lay missionaries from the Region serve in international ministries outside their home Districts.

The distribution in 1990-91 is as follows:

AFRICA		24
	Ethiopia	5
	Kenya	15
	Nigeria	4
ASIA		18
	Japan	1
	Malaysia	1
	Pakistan	1
	Philippines	12
	Sri Lanka	2
	Thailand	1
LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN		26
	Chile	1
	Costa Rica	2
	Guatemala	7
	Honduras	1
	Mexico	4
	Nicaragua	2
	Saint Vincent	9
MIDDLE EAST		4
	Bethlehem University	4
ROME GENERALATE		6

The following table shows how the Region is increasing the number and percentage of its Brothers and lay missionaries in international service:

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Africa	17	20	24
Asia	15	16	18
Latin America and Caribbean	25	27	26
Middle East	6	4	4
Rome Generalate	4	4	6
<i>Total</i>	67	71	78
USA/Toronto Region (December Census)	1,371	1,329	1,300 (estimate)
Percentage	4.9%	5.3%	6.0%

### Interdependence: Finance

Alongside the personnel support of the Institute's international activities and missionary apostolate, the nine Districts of the Region distribute annually an estimated total of US \$ 500,000 to missions of the Christian Brothers. These funds come from Brothers, communities, schools, Districts, and benefactors



who designate their donations for Christian Brothers missions.

In addition, the Districts allocate approximately US \$ 350,000 in their annual operating budgets for the medical insurance, District and Institute taxes, retirement, travel, formation, and education of their own Brothers who are on mission, as well as funds for Lasallian lay missionaries and for the education of foreign Brothers temporarily in the Region's Districts.

The combined total of these two categories is US \$ 850,000. In addition to supporting the FSC missions, the Districts raise US \$ 150,000 for missions and church appeals other than those connected with the Christian Brothers.

Another aspect of financial interdependence is the array of financial services offered to Catholic organizations in the United States (many of them involved in missionary work). Christian Brothers Conference was licensed in the State of Illinois on June 7, 1965, in order to develop on a national scale a series of retirement, insurance, and risk-pooling plans. As of 1985, these plans and services are now managed by Christian Brothers Services, a for-profit corporation wholly owned by the Conference. The annual dividends from Christian Brothers Services finance the major share of the Conference's regional and international activities. Thus, in addition to providing low-cost group plans to Catholic organizations and institutions, CBS, Inc., makes it possible for the Region to participate more extensively in the international life of the Institute.

Another profit-making corporation, Christian Brothers Investment Services, Inc., was established with the encouragement of the Conference in the early 1980s, and has developed into a separate corporation whose stockholders are the individual Districts of the United States. The investment funds managed by CBIS, including Religious Communities Trust, Catholic United Investment Trust, and individually managed portfolios, enable US-based Catholic institutions and entities to invest their funds in socially responsible companies, achieve growth and security, and apply funds to needy causes. The FSC Foundation, created and funded by CBIS, awards grants annually to Catholic organizations for projects that directly serve the poor. Many of these projects, sponsored by US organizations, serve people in developing countries.

### Interdependence: Publications

Brothers and their Lasallian associates throughout the English-speaking world are sharing the out-

put of publications that the USA/Toronto Region has organized and financed as its international contribution to the extension and formation of the modern Lasallian Family. The Region sponsors two series of publications: **Lasallian Publications** — including English translations of the basic texts of De La Salle, the early biographers, and the *Cahiers lasalliens* — and **Christian Brothers Publications** — a new biography by Brother Luke Salm, *The Works Is Yours; The Life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*, biographies of the beatified and canonized Brothers, the annual Spirituality Seminar, Lasallian Liturgies, Lasallian Calendar, and works of general interest to the Brothers and their Lasallian colleagues.

**Lasallian Publications** will, over the coming years, produce two series of scholarly books in English on the life, writings, and work of John Baptist de La Salle, Founder of our Institute, and on the early history of the Brothers. The project will result in some 30 volumes. Brother Joseph Schmidt is the executive editor of Lasallian Publication.

The first series, **Lasallian Sources**, consists of 13 volumes of new English translations and editions of all the authenticated writings of John Baptist de La Salle. The second series, **Lasallian Resources**, includes *a)* the three earliest biographies of John Baptist de La Salle, *b)* original studies of material that is contemporaneous with the foundation of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, *c)* translations and editions of modern Lasallian studies, and *d)* several volumes of collected articles on current research, especially commissioned by Lasallian Publications.

### Lasallian Sources

— *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*, translated and edited by Colman Molloy, FSC and Augustine Loes, FSC (1988).

— *Rules of Christian Decorum & Civility*, scheduled to appear in November 1990.

— *The Conduct of Schools*, in preparation.

— *Meditations for Sundays and Feasts*, in preparation.

— *The Method of Mental Prayer*, based on the new study by Brothers Miguel Campos and Michel Sauvage, in preparation.

— *The Collection*, in preparation.

### Lasallian Resources

— *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle*, by Canon John Baptist Blain, translated by Richard Arnan-dez, FSC (1985).





Tom Vuletich, who will work in Kenya as a lay missionary from 1991 to 1993.

c) General guidelines for screening and orientation were presented. The REB agreed that the testing program as described should be optional and that the interview process needs more development.

d) The Volunteer Program will be a continuing agenda item.

At the REB meeting of October 18-21, 1979, Districts reported only sporadic efforts following their consideration of the Volunteer Program. What interest there was seemed to be among formation people, especially recruiters, on college campuses. The opinion was expressed that the help that comes through the Volunteer Association might not be appropriate for the existing schools, but rather for the non-school apostolates.

The Saint Louis District reported to the REB at the meeting of January 10-13, 1980, that a volunteer nurse was working in Guatemala, another volunteer was serving in the U.S., and three or four applications were pending. Other Districts reported no progress. One obstacle may have been the rather cumbersome screening process that was proposed.

The Districts reported at REB's meeting of March 27-30, 1980, that the volunteer program was in abeyance in most Districts, although Saint Louis was having some success. The REB recommended that the Volunteer Association be continued on a District level, using the original model.

The next reference to the Volunteer Program in the REB minutes is five years later, at the meeting of October 13-15, 1985: The program for FSC volunteers was growing, and several districts reported considerable success. A brochure from Saint Louis was distributed, and New York and Chicago reported progress in specialized services — in one case in the schools, in the other, in the retreat center.

## The Lasallian Volunteer Movement

Throughout the 1970s, Brothers and communities — in Fargo, North Dakota; New York City; Plano, Illinois, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, West Indies — had invited male and female volunteers to join their communities and ministries. For years individual Brothers — such as William Clarey in Saint Paul, Ed Cleary in New York, Thomas Geraghty in Saint Louis, and Isidore Wasylenchuk in Toronto — had been inviting volunteers to work in this or that Lasallian ministry, and had developed the elements of an organized volunteer program. In many other instances, Brothers had been inviting volunteers to share their ministries through summer camps, reading programs, and other youth activities. Formal district sponsorship and staffing of a volunteer program were elusive, however, because of the shortage of personnel and the fact that all of these Brothers were fully occupied in their own apostolates.

Two factors came to be seen as essential in developing the volunteer concept. One is to have someone in the District specifically charged with responsibility for it, and the other is a good range of opportunities, with news spread by word of mouth. Neither of these conditions was fully realized until the creation of the Lasallian Volunteer Movement as a District-sponsored activity.

The Lasallian Volunteer Movement emerged from a tradition of volunteerism, but differs in one major aspect. Its precursors were most often local programs initiated by one Brother or a small group of Brothers. The Lasallian Volunteer Movement, on the other hand, originally sponsored by the three Midwest Districts, now has direction, connections, and placements across seven of the nine Districts of the USA/Toronto Region. The program employs

FRIDLEY (Minnesota): Training session for Lasallian Volunteers held in August 1990.





standardized systems of recruiting, screening, placement, training, and support services.

It is encouraging and hopeful to compare the development of the Lasallian Volunteer Movement with the gradual, organic growth of the early Society of the Christian Schools — from individual efforts to several small groups to a national network of associated communities.

Several events in 1988 created the right moment for the initiation of the Lasallian Volunteer Movement:

1) Four volunteers served at Saint Martin's Secondary School on the island of Saint Vincent in the Caribbean through the initiative of several Brothers in the Toronto and Saint Paul-Minneapolis Districts.

2) Volunteers in the Chicago District's retreat center at Plano, Illinois, worked successfully with the permanent staff.

3) The Saint Louis District concluded its plans for a new ministry in Greenville, Mississippi, where volunteers and Brothers would live together in community.

In the summer of 1988, the Visitors of the three Midwest Districts (Chicago, Saint Louis, and Saint Paul-Minneapolis) met and hired as director of volunteers Michael Culligan, a lay person and alumnus of Cretin-Derham Hall High School, Saint Paul, Minnesota, who had lived with the Brothers as a volunteer on Saint Vincent Island in 1987-88 and who is himself a strong advocate of volunteerism.

As Michael himself observed, "Volunteers are given a great opportunity. Through their experiences, they grow as a person and as a Christian. Teaching in the West Indies changed me forever".

The office of the Lasallian Volunteer Movement is located at the provincialate in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The director, Michael Culligan, reports to an Executive Board, which consisted originally of representatives of the three founding Districts, Brothers Maurice Anglim (C), William Clarey (SP-M), and Thomas Geraghty (SL). Whether by design or chance, the Executive Board provided a rich balance of ideas, administrative experience, and enthusiasm for volunteerism. Brother Paul Grass, Regional Coordinator, who had been working simultaneously with volunteers for Africa, also kept in close contact with the Executive Board.

## Philosophy

"Who are we?" was the Executive Board's first question, one that continues to challenge the Lasallian Volunteer Movement at every step. The challenge is not necessarily in finding the one answer,

but in limiting the number of options that come to the fore. The Board decided to limit itself, to start small, and to establish the firm foundation critical to success — future achievements are contingent upon the reputation of today's positive experiences.

The Statement of Purpose of the Lasallian Volunteer Movement is one answer to the question, "Who are we?"

The purpose of the Lasallian Volunteer Movement is to enable the young adult (male and female) to respond to a call from Christ to share in the service of the Brothers. This response will come in the form of a one- to three-year volunteer experience in the field of Catholic education or social work. In responding to this call, the volunteer will address the needs of youth in contemporary society. From the spiritual poverty that often exists in an affluent area to the material poverty that besets those in the inner cities, youth today need the Lasallian message of personal care and concern as did the children of the streets of Paris.

In addition to meeting the needs of today's youth, this program will allow the volunteers to encounter Christ through exposure to spiritual formation, Lasallian spirituality, and community living. This exposure will mean living and praying with other volunteers, in some cases with communities of Christian Brothers. In this respect, the volunteers stand to gain as much from the program as the youth they will serve. One of the greatest benefits gained by the volunteer will be insight into his or her life's call to ministry and Christian formation.

## Placements

The Executive Board limited itself in deciding upon placement locations. In order to be accountable to the volunteers and to the placement sites, the Director and Executive Board established these criteria for selection of ministries:

- 1) The ministry provides service to the poor.
- 2) The ministry involves education or human services.
- 3) The on-site director of the ministry demonstrates enthusiasm and vision.
- 4) The placement has the potential to accommodate two or more volunteers.
- 5) The placement site has the finances to support the volunteer.

Placing volunteers requires extensive preparations: organizing host communities and ministries, recruiting and screening applicants, and preparing the training and support services for the volunteer.





Brother Paul Grass, Coordinator of the USA/Toronto Region, and responsible for the Lasallian Volunteers, with Michael Culligan, appointed Director of the Volunteers in the Districts of St. Paul, St. Louis and Chicago.

*The volunteer sites selected for 1990-91 include:*

**New York City** – Five volunteers (3 men, 2 women) teach secondary school courses at La Salle Academy and serve at the Highbridge Community Center. Located in Manhattan and the South Bronx, these placements offer a unique opportunity to be of service to the poor and to the victims of injustice and inequity in urban areas. Besides teaching at inner-city schools, and coordinating and administering community development projects, volunteers are also invited to be on the staff of a shelter for homeless women and children who are victims of AIDS.

**Plano, Illinois** – Three volunteers (2 women, 1 man) organize, coordinate, and lead retreats for students from Catholic high schools of the Chicago area at La Salle Manor, a retreat center located 60 miles west of Chicago. In addition to organizing liturgies, prayer services, and recreational activities, volunteers spend time leading small groups and discussing topics which concern today's teenagers.

**Greenville, Mississippi** – Three volunteers (3 men) teach at primary and secondary levels and serve as community development staff. This is a new ministry, requiring volunteers with initiative, enthusiasm, and vision. The community conducts a literacy program, high-school equivalency classes for adults, retreats, and athletic and social programs for adolescents.

**Stevens Point, Wisconsin** – One volunteer (male) teaches at the secondary level and helps with youth activities in this rural town in central Wisconsin.

### **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, West Indies**

– Three volunteers (3 men) teach a variety of subjects at Saint Martin's Secondary School and assist with diocesan youth programs on this Caribbean island, 20 miles long and 10 miles wide, located north-east of Venezuela.

**Delegation of East Africa** – Two volunteers (2 men) teach at the secondary level and work with boarding school youth activities in the schools conducted by the Brothers in Kenya (Marsabit, Nyeri, and Rongai).

Of these 17 volunteers in 1990-91, 8 have returned for a second year of service.

### **Recruiting**

With a selected few placement locations decided, recruiting became the number one priority. Advertisements were placed in the two major national resource publications, *Connections* and *Response*. Administrative and publicity documents were prepared and the Director scheduled visits to the three Christian Brothers universities in the Midwest (Christian Brothers University, Memphis; Lewis University, Romeoville, and Saint Mary's College of Minnesota, Winona).

All of these recruiting methods were effective, but experience has shown that *word of mouth* is the strongest recruiting tool. Similar to the experience of the Jesuit and the Holy Cross volunteer programs, 70% of the Lasallian volunteers have had prior experience with the De La Salle Brothers through school, family, or social situations. These volunteers are especially desirable, because they already have a practical understanding of the Lasallian mission, a reliable and immediately accessible character reference, and an easy access for screening and selection.

The applicants tend to be bright, responsible leaders who are high achievers. They have decided to volunteer after evaluating other current options in their life. The Lasallian ideal of an integrated life of community, prayer, and service to the poor necessarily requires that the applicants be mature, good natured, emotionally stable, energetic, enjoyable to work with, disciplined, highly motivated, intelligent, spiritually developed, and good humored. These kinds of people are out there, looking for opportunities to serve. They are often recent university graduates, but sometimes have been working in a career for a number of years. Most are single, but one married couple has volunteered in the program.



## **The Lasallian Volunteer Movement Orientation Retreat**

For most of the volunteers, the Orientation Retreat is their first and best opportunity to meet the other volunteers and to have an intensive experience of absorbing the Lasallian tradition. The topics over the five-day retreat include the following:

- History of the Lasallian Volunteer Movement and of Volunteerism.
- Motivation and Discernment.
- John Baptist de La Salle and the Christian Brothers.
- Our Relationship with God.
- Love and Servanthood.
- Emotions and Journalling.
- Prayer.
- Community Living.
- Communication.
- Living a Cross-Cultural Experience.
- Dealing with Discouragement.
- Apostolic Workshops (teaching, counseling, youth ministry).
- Social Justice and Voluntary Simplicity.
- Commissioning Ceremony.

The volunteers, or lay missionaries as they are called, who commit themselves to two years of service in the Delegation of East Africa undergo a different, lengthier preparation. They are enrolled in the Maryknoll missionary discernment program, a four-week experience with other men and women who are examining their call and their fitness for cross-cultural service. They live and work in one of the Brothers' communities in their home District for a period of six weeks or more, in order to experience the life directly, in advance of going to Africa. Once commissioned by the home District and received by the community in Kenya, the volunteer, aided by a Brother mentor, is expected to contribute fully as a member of the community in whatever needs to be done.

## **Future Priorities**

The Lasallian Volunteer Movement has great potential; however, there are two priorities that the Director and Executive Board keep uppermost in mind: the community experience and the enthusiasm of the receiving placement site.

The Lasallian Volunteer Movement differs from most other volunteer programs, because it invites volunteers not only to serve in the ministries of the Brothers, but also to join their communities. This approach offers great potential for the growth of both the volunteer and the community. Volunteers bring to communities a fresh enthusiasm, commitment, and affirmation to the Brothers' ministry, but they also present challenging questions to traditional thinking and patterns of behavior.

In return, the Brothers assist volunteers in their ministry, share their community, and contribute years of wisdom and tradition which aren't often available in the volunteer's own milieu, the relationship between volunteers and Brothers can be rich and symbiotic; however, in order for the experience to be successful, the volunteer and the members of the community must discuss and agree on their expectations of one another. Communication must flow freely, and both parties must give in to the other at times.

The Lasallian Volunteer Movement must assure that carefully screened and trained volunteers who understand their responsibilities in ministry and community are placed in communities enthusiastic to receive them. That is the challenge: to have as many communities requesting volunteers as there are qualified volunteers.

This closing statement, by one of the volunteers, could well be an observation by a typical Brother:

“What amazes me is that, even during the hard times — and the work is tough — there is a pervading feeling of correctness, a realization that this is a good use of the gifts God has given me. I know that my being here has a design. It has given me a better understanding of myself and of life. This year is changing my life forever.”



# INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE PACIFIC-ASIA REGION (PARC)

The missionary work of the Brothers in Asia began in 1852 with the arrival of a community of Brothers in Penang (Malaysia), and the founding not long afterwards of St. Joseph's Institution, Singapore. At a time when the Institute was over 90% French, it is interesting to reflect that these foundations were made in British colonies, a good half-century before the reconciling agreement **L'Entente Cordiale** between the United Kingdom and France. The missionary policy of the Institute under F. Philippe was wider than national interests!

What is striking about these first foundations, and indeed the subsequent development, is the fact that the communities were so international in their membership. The first **interdependence** was that Brothers who knew English (some Frenchmen had served in Canada and the United States), were sent to strengthen the work, while younger members had a long sea-voyage to prepare themselves in English! This is true also of the later development. The foundations in Asia subsequently brought Brothers from France, Germany, Ireland, England, United States, Canada and Czechoslovakia up to the time of the Second World War. These Brothers were usually incorporated into a particular district, and their later movements tended to depend on the role of the Brother Assistant.

The development of the Institute in Asia radiated from **five** principal centres. The original foundation in Penang eventually became the **Penang District** (Malaysia, Singapore, Burma and Hong Kong). The **Colombo District** developed in Sri Lanka, but some 30 years ago became itself missionary, with its foundations in India and Pakistan. **Vietnam** developed under French Brothers, but also became missionary with foundations in Cambodia and Thailand. The **Australian Districts**, founded initially with a community of French and Irish Brothers, was developed by the Irish Brothers, spreading after 1946 to Papua-New Guinea and to New Zealand. The **Philippines** was begun by the District of Baltimore, but subsequently attracted Brothers from many other U.S. Districts.

This is not to say that the growth of each sector was completely independent. The fact that there were usually **two** different Brothers Assistant with

responsibilities in Asia meant, in practice, that there was still a great deal of transferring of Brothers from one country to another, according to needs. In this sense, it is not too fanciful to recognise a certain kind of **interdependence**, at least for the supply of personnel, even if decisions ultimately depended on the role of the Assistant. Brothers were easily transferred between districts, as happened, for example, with the German Brothers in Singapore who were transferred to the Philippines when the second world war broke out between Germany and the United Kingdom.

## The end of the colonial period

The end of the colonial period in the years following the Second World War brought particular problems to many districts in Asia. The "new" nationalism was not always hostile to foreigners, but it was apparent that institutions needed to be in the hands of local Brothers as soon as was feasible. This demand sometimes exposed the lack of preparation of local Brothers for posts of responsibility. Many were hastily prepared through overseas experiences — Second Novitiate, studies etc. — but this sometimes

SINGAPORE: A meeting of the Regional Conference (PARC).





resulted in such Brothers having to take responsible posts for many years, without much possibility of having a successor. The centre of the Institute and individual districts practised a real **interdependence** in the way they sponsored Brothers, helped them financially, and generally supported them in their efforts to work **within** a new system. At the same time, many districts were weakened when “foreign” Brothers felt they had to withdraw, or were actually compelled to do so. With the wisdom of hindsight, it is possible to see that some local Brothers had become accustomed to a certain “neo-colonialism” and did not easily take to new and strident forms of nationalism. **Colombo** district lived a crisis during the decade of the 60’s as schools were nationalised, but it was interesting to see that the Brothers held firm to their new mission foundations in India and Pakistan. **Burma’s** “New way to Socialism” for the past 25 years or so has never returned certain sequestered schools to the Brothers who have, in consequence, been forced to live very much on their own without much contact with their former district of **Penang**. Here again, the principle of **interdependence** has involved the Institute, and various districts as well, in helping to educate Burmese Brothers outside the country, and help them, to return in order to discern their new mission. This support has taken various forms: supporting studies abroad, paying for travel, supporting the financial costs of attendance at seminars, renewal programmes (Sangre or CIL) and so on. At another level, it has meant that Brothers who could no longer work in their own country, have been accepted and integrated into districts which accepted them. This pattern has been repeated, and is still being repeated, on an Institute basis, in the welcoming of the Vietnamese Brothers who have gone into exile since 1975.

It is important, if the principle of **interdependence** is to be well understood, to note what the contribution of the **exiles** has been to the receiving districts. One of the most striking would be the school begun by the Vietnamese Brothers in Thio in New Caledonia. Here, in an island where the Brothers themselves are foreigners, in a small mining town split by ethnic divisions, the Vietnamese Brothers have re-opened a Catholic school and quickly made it welcomed by local people as **their** school. Even when there have been periods of tension and armed conflict, the Brothers have been allowed to move freely and to continue with their school. The education given by the Brothers has a splendid **gratuity** about it which bears all the hallmarks of a Gospel work.

There is something similar in the works launched by the **Colombo** district in Pakistan and India. India, with 43 local Brothers, is already well on the way to

district status. Pakistan still needs the presence of the missionary Brothers from Sri Lanka and elsewhere, but **interdependence** on an Institute and regional basis continues the hope that Pakistan will one day have its own local Brothers for all of its works.

### **Some facets of interdependence today**

The growth of the Pacific-Asia Region (PARC) in recent years has been due largely to a number of initiatives which illustrate different aspects of **interdependence** in action.

1) The PARC region for the past two years has had the advantage of a full-time secretary who not only helps to coordinate the flow of information, but is responsible for organising and coordinating programmes which help continuing formation. The expenses of this service are assured by the Canadian district of Ottawa, as well as by the home district of Baltimore, which has released one of its members for this service.

2) The newly-opened novitiate at Halgasena in Sri Lanka has its Director from the United States, one staff member from Burma, and another from Sri Lanka. The experienced novice master, who has already served as novice master for the Thai district two years ago, is responsible as well for the on-the-spot formation of his own staff members. The purchase and furnishing of the property has depended on a number of benefactors, in and outside of the Institute. Without such **interdependence**, the project could not even begin.

3) Recent meetings of **formators** within the region were arranged, coordinated and financed by teamwork within the districts which make up the region, helped by central funding from SECOLI through the Secretary for Formation.

4) The District of Japan, launched by the Canadian Brothers some 50 years ago, has a certain number of Japanese Brothers, but to assure the future of such an important mission, the Districts of **Mexico-South** and **Mexico-North** have accepted to send young Brothers to replace the ageing Canadian Brothers. The preparation for this work is assured financially by Japan, and by the generosity of the two Mexican Districts with their long-term commitment.

5) Formation sessions, 30 day retreats, pre-profession programmes and retreats, as well as sessions for Brothers coming to retirement, are usually opened to other districts of the region, and in some cases, some subsidising of expenses is offered to districts which have difficulty in finding their own resources.



## A MINI-PROJECT

6) For many years, De La Salle University at Manila has offered scholarships to some Brothers from other Asian countries. The Scholasticate at Manila has also been open to Brothers from other districts, who wish to pursue religious studies in other centres in the Philippines. This has been true for other kinds of studies, especially in agriculture and catechetics through the East Asian Pastoral Institute. Inter-district sharing of novitiate programmes has been a well-established procedure for many years.

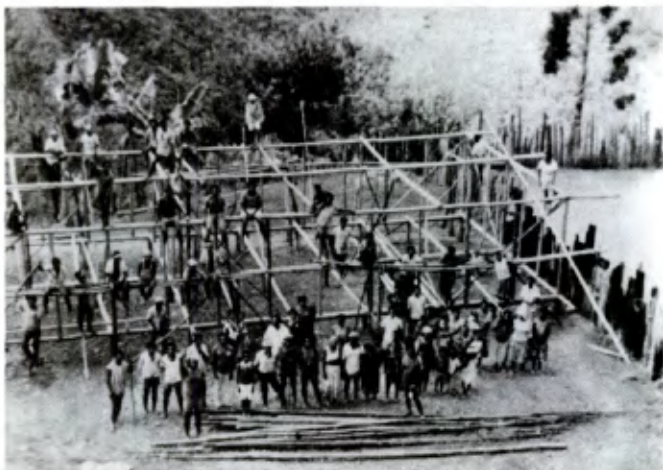
There are many other examples which could be offered but the six above help to show how PARC is profiting from the application of this important principle of **interdependence**.

### Conclusion

**Interdependence** has already brought substantial benefits to all the districts of PARC. If the help with money, men or materials has been more obvious, it is important to recognise the growth of a deeper awareness of the richness and diversity of the region. The first **La Salle Asia**, held in February 1989 in the Philippines, showed that all the participants, no matter which countries they came from, evaluated the meeting most positively as a **learning experience**.

We all know the importance of learning again and again that "it is in **giving that we receive**". These words point to the essentially reciprocal aspect of **interdependence**, a concept which has helped PARC to grow, not only on the basis of a broader missiology, but also from the enrichment received by the willingness to enter more deeply into other cultures in order to discover the richness and diversity of God's creation.

PAPUA: A new school is being built: the whole village rejoices.



## PAPUA – NEW GUINEA

### Building village schools

There are 35 schools located in isolated villages spread out over a large area of the central plains of Papua New Guinea. They were put up by the first missionaries and are built of straw. These schools are supervised by Brother Brendan Crowe whose job is mainly finding teachers willing to work in these isolated areas, and improving the standard of education given in them.

People in this area are very poor. Their food consists of the vegetables they grow, and they live in small villages of 10 to 20 houses. The population of each village, therefore, numbers about 50 persons. The task of the school is to provide the children with an elementary education.

It is a mountainous region, and it often takes the Brother 10 hours on foot to reach a school. Brendan insists the people build their own schools, but he provides the materials. In certain places, the people themselves bring the materials in over the mountains.

The aim of these new schools is to provide a decent building for the children's education. The existing huts are miserable and are to be replaced by something more suitable.

Each school has two classrooms with room for between 45 and 50 children in each. In the evening, these classrooms serve as meeting places for the adults.

It is possible to build a school in about 3 or 4 months. This depends on the availability of materials locally and, where this is not the case, on the distances to be travelled to more important centres where these materials can be obtained.

Also, one has to find a time when the villagers are free in order to be able to gather them together to do this building.

A school costs 3,500 US dollars.

So far, 3 schools have been paid for by:

- Rummel High School, New Orleans
- The schools of the District of Rome
- The schools of the District of Ireland

A project for a fourth one has been sent to one of our Brothers in North Belgium.



# INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE INSTITUTE (AFRICA REGION)

## 1. AFRICA — a collection of countries, cultures and Brothers

Up to a certain time ago, the Africa Region was called a missionary country. Various countries or regions would send missionaries to it, and these would live and work in isolated units, grouped together according to the Assistancy they came from. Those were the days of autonomy and independence...

How, in fact, could one establish any kind of unity in a continent, or even in a country, where a variety of languages was spoken and where there existed different ethnic groups each with its own culture?

The present situation is as follows: the Africa Region includes 15 countries, 4 Districts, 3 Delegations and 4 sectors or sub-Districts. There are just over 200 indigenous Brothers, and the number of young Brothers and young people in formation is increasing. Working with them are just over 200 non-African Brothers, a living witness to the workings of interdependence. These Brothers represent a link between the Africa Region and the Regions of France, Italy, Central Europe, North America, Canada, Spain and even Central America. The Institute is present there with its variety of Brothers and under its many aspects. One can truly say that Africa is an Institute territory.

## 2. INTERDEPENDENCE is a movement with a starting point

In Africa the movement began in 1973. People began to think in terms of the continent, although not of interdependence. The French-speaking Districts organised a meeting which took place in 1974 in Yaounde. The topic for the meeting was prophetic: "What should Lasallian religious life be like in present-day Africa?" A movement was launched which will never stop. It was the Conference or first Regional Assembly at Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina Faso) in

1977 that made a start of drawing up Regional statutes. Meetings of the Visitors' Conference took place annually and, as the need occurred, collaboration took place: in 1976, the novitiate in Toussiana (West Africa) became the joint novitiate for West Africa and the sector of Rwanda, and Brothers from Burkina Faso, Madagascar and France staffed it. During the 1979-81 period, there was a joint novitiate in Madagascar for novices from Cameroun, Rwanda and Madagascar. Later the Cameroun novitiate catered also for novices from Rwanda. These various moves led the Visitors to think about creating the common facilities centre, CLAF (African Lasallian Centre) which began functioning at about the same time as the experiments in joint novitiates were going on.

At the present time, there is an impressive amount of collaboration. It is a sign that African Districts are prepared to work together, and to pool their efforts especially in the area of initial and ongoing formation. There are three novitiates in Africa, and two of these (in Nairobi and Kinshasa) are pan-African; CLAF has been going now for 15 years and has considered such topics as: The religious life of the Brothers in Africa at the present time, Community life in Africa, Fostering vocations and initial formation in Africa, The mission of the Brothers in the African continent, The Community Director...

At present, the Visitors' Conference is concentrating its efforts in two areas in particular: a common postulancy programme and the setting-up of a pan-African scholasticate in Abidjan. The postulancy programme has been drawn up. There remains simply the task of bringing the scholastics to Abidjan and the choice of staff for this centre. All this also is the result of a plan, published in 1982, which set out the various stages of initial formation for the African continent. This plan has been implemented efficiently by the Visitors of Africa with the help of Brother Vincent Rabemahafaly. There is strength in unity. But there must be willingness to work together.



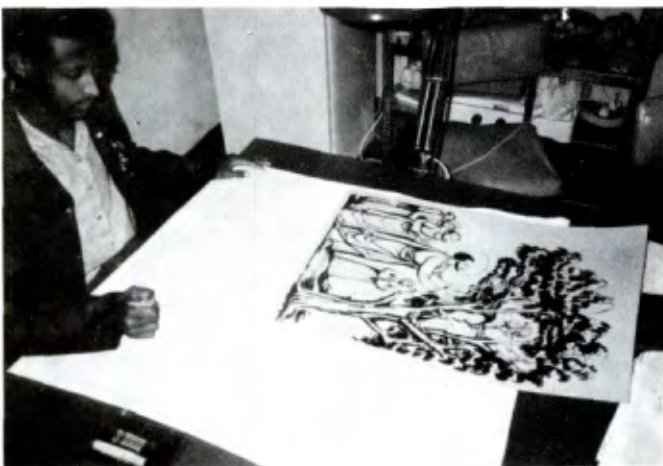
### 3. RECEIVING IMPLIES A DUTY TO GIVE

As we have already said, many African Districts are prepared to help others by sending Brothers. There has been a somewhat timid start in this area, involving moves only between Districts, and providing formation personnel for joint facilities like CLAF, novitiates, and for running retreats and sessions. Be that as it may, what has been achieved goes some way towards fulfilling the wishes of the Region with regard to a more extensive practice of interdependence. The fact that there has been a joint effort to bring together a certain number of young people in formation as well as formation personnel is a sign of willingness to work together for the common good and for which one is prepared to make sacrifices. In this context we must mention the help given us by other Regions of the Institute: Spain, Switzerland, the United States send us Brothers on a temporary basis to help us with the formation of our young people and Brothers. This is a sign that, more and more, Brothers are thinking and working in terms of the whole Institute.

### 4. SHARING RESOURCES

Many Districts in the various Regions of the Institute contribute to the life of the Institute in Africa by their material help and financial support for our work. The remarkable contribution of France, Belgium, Canada, Ireland and so on is both well-known and very highly considered. There are certain Districts which offer study opportunities for our student Brothers and meet their cost. It is enough for us in our Region to hear these student Brothers recount their experiences to be convinced of the concern, follow-up and affection shown by the Brothers who look after them.

**ETHIOPIA:** In East Africa, Brothers from different countries and continents work closely together.



**BOMUDI (Equatorial Guinea):** Postulants with two members of staff, Brothers Theodore and Augustine.

Other Districts and Regions help us by means of mini-projects administered very efficiently by SEC-OLI. The Sharing Fund — a clear sign that the Institute functions like a single body in which all the members help and support one another as the need arises — has made possible the formation of the young members of the Institute in Africa and the setting up of a certain number of Regional joint facilities. By such help the future of the wider community of the whole Institute is ensured by the cooperation of the whole body.

### 5. A COMMON MISSION AND PROMOTING CULTURE

Apostolic interdependence exists in Africa by the very fact that the mission of the Institute has a cultural and Christian dimension.

Since 1974, the Brothers in Africa have been reflecting on the role of the Institute and the Brothers in Africa. Representatives from all Districts, including indigenous Brothers and expatriates, have thought a lot about the identity of the Institute in Africa. The various sessions of CLAF, available to all Brothers in Africa, whatever their origins, provide a permanent opportunity for cultural exchange and sharing of experiences, and in this way help to create a single view of our Lasallian mission. At every juncture, there come together western techniques and methods and African wisdom and art. This shared facility constantly promotes collaboration between African Districts and those of other Regions at



an administrative and logistic level. Africa always sends Brothers to CIL — to their mutual benefit.

## **6. A WELCOME FORM OF COLLABORATION: SUMMER CAMPS**

Every year, Spain, England and France send groups of Brothers and young lay people to certain Districts in Africa to spend a month doing apostolic work. The result of their hard work is a number of new schools, clinics, chapels and workshops. This scheme continues to grow every year.

But Africa, in its turn, has something to offer to these groups in terms of cultural values. This is something we hear constantly. Those who have been involved in this work return home very happy with their experience and with much to report to their District or Region — their experience of community life, African style; the warm welcome they received; how even what little there is is shared; the meaning of gratuity, and so on. They go home thinking of the possibility of doing more, but also with a heightened sense of commitment, help and Lasallian cooperation. They say that, when they get home, they tell everyone about their experiences and fire the enthusiasm of others. For some this experience has resulted in a new vocation in life, or a call to be a missionary. Many say they received more than they gave. The way these groups worked together with the indigenous population illustrated the union that comes about among different people when they work for a common cause. It was a visible illustration of mutual giving and receiving.

## **7. ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSALS**

7.1 - Our collaboration and interdependence at an Institute level is based on the fact we all have the same Father, St. John Baptist de La Salle. He called upon the Brothers to be united in heart and mind. The idea of interdependence will be understood to the extent we take his teachings and inspiration to heart. Several Regions have provided the Institute with Lasallian researchers and research. The influence of their works extends to all Regions. It would seem, however, that in this area, the Region of Africa needs to concentrate more on the needs of its own Districts than on those at an Institute level. The great interest shown by young Brothers in everything to do with the Institute and the Founder is very promising. There remains the need to train them to be able to profit from a deeper understanding of Lasallian writings; and added to this is a need to study the Institute languages — essential for any kind of communication, collaboration or exchange of personnel.

7.2 - Interdependence has always been from the north to the south. It has taken the form of material help, offers of personnel, places where help was available. The Africa Region has received a great deal of help and is very grateful for the contribution of other Regions. This form of help and collaboration needs to continue and represents the source of new growth.

However, it would now seem to be important to establish a more concrete form of collaboration, in the strict sense of the word, that is, working together. We need to work together at the task we share as members of the Institute. What can we do to make interdependence just that? All the Districts of the Institute and all the Regions are called to practise interdependence and to be interdependent.

### *7.3 - Promoting freer movement of personnel*

The Institute is increasing its numbers considerably in Africa and in the south and east of the globe. To quantity must be added quality, hence the need for collaboration. The support given to the formation of our young people must be continued and intensified; qualified and competent personnel must continue to be made available on a temporary basis: by our work, we are providing for the future of the Institute.

However, at the same time, African Districts must be prepared to allow freer movement of Brothers across District boundaries. As early as the novitiate, young Brothers express the wish to go to work in another District for a period of time. African Districts could give a thought to the situation of our Brothers in South Africa. Even within the Region there are calls for help. The Africa Region and all its Districts are called upon to put into practice the parable of the widow's mite.

Could the Africa Region help other Regions of the Institute which ask to be more fully informed, to share values more fully and enter into dialogue? What contribution could the Region make in terms of religious life, community life, apostolic undertakings? How can African Brothers make a contribution in these areas in the Institute as a whole and in other Regions? Could not African Brothers accept invitations from other Regions to run sessions, retreats, discussions or provide information? Do African Brothers living outside the Region have a chance to share their convictions, research and culture? How can all this be organised?

### *7.4 - Bear witness together and by association*

Would it be possible to set up a community in each Region that would bear witness to the interna-



tional nature of the Institute, and in which Brothers from all Regions of the world would pursue a common mission? Would not such a community be an example of communion, interdependence, cooperation between Districts and of the international nature of the Institute?

#### 7.5 - *Work together*

Could not, for example, some African Brothers and young people visit some other Region and speak about their country to the Brothers of the Region? Such contact would seek to promote the idea of summer camps, provide information to the Lasallian Family, with a view to setting up a worldwide project. What contribution could Districts and Regions make to the Districts or Regions that send them Lasallian volunteer workers, helpers and missionaries? Could not the Visitors of the Districts concerned meet some time?

#### 7.6 - *First of all, inculturation*

The very idea of interdependence and collaboration implies the need for inculturation. Throughout the Institute, inculturation is a fundamental precondition for interdependence.

In Africa, for example, there should be inculturation everywhere, especially where the formation of young people is concerned: the future of the Institute depends on this. Such inculturation would enable a District or Region to grow with the worldwide Institute in view, on a level where independent Regions worked closely together, all distinctly different but united as one, and whose differences are complementary.

#### 7.7 - *Free exchange of ideas*

To think in terms of an inter-Regional assembly on interdependence and collaboration is not to dream. For many years now, some Regions have had missionary commissions. Secoli has representatives all over the world. There remain, however, possibilities to consider of doing something concrete in Regions where there are no permanent structures. What would the result be of a round-table discussion between the Africa and the Asia Region? between the southern Regions: Asia, Latin America and Africa?

Something like this could happen, for example: delegates could be sent to other Regional Assemblies; a similar arrangement could be made with regard to meetings of Visitors' Conferences. This would be a process in which boundaries became blurred; a

process of interdependence, osmosis at both the level of reflection leading to action, and action leading to reflection.

#### 7.8 - *Understand the idea of Region more clearly*

Different parts of the Institute have had different and varied experiences as Regions. The idea of a Region was developed in terms of interdependence within the Region. This is true, and it is the first stage. But is it not time now to think again together about Regions and Regional Coordinators? The very idea of a Region, based on interdependence and on the wish of Districts to come together and collaborate, leads naturally to a desire for interdependence and unity between Regions, with the aim of flooding the Institute with extra life generated by each Region.

Interdependence would go beyond being a response to a need for material help or personnel. It would be the expression of a profound conviction of the importance of union, the common life as well as the common good which is none other than the Institute in the world and Church of today. What the world and what the Church thirsts for is union and unity. This is what Christ says in St. John's Gospel, chapter 17. The Region is the challenge of the coming of the Kingdom now being built.

May our efforts to build up the Region lead us to want to build up the unity of the Institute throughout the world. The idea of the Region must never make us lose the conviction that the Institute is one and all work together to build it. "By this you shall be known as my disciples".

**BOHICA (Benin): Brother Pablo Garruchaga with a group of parish catechumens.**





# THE REGION OF CANADA

Already before 1966, the Assistency of Canada grouped together the Districts of Montreal, Longueuil, Ottawa, Quebec, Trois Rivieres, Toronto and the missionary District of Douala in Cameroon. Whenever circumstances permitted, the auxiliary Visitor of Japan (a mission supported by Montreal) would attend meetings of the Assistency.

In the intervening years, Longueuil has become part of Montreal, and Toronto, because of language differences as well as those of educational organisation, has joined the US Region. As for Douala, it now belongs to the Region of Africa.

In those days, there existed already a lot of collaboration in the following areas:

a) *Meetings of Visitors and those in charge of formation.* These furnished an opportunity for thought, exchange of ideas about future plans and current undertakings, and occasions to have retreats together.

b) *Initial Formation.* The District of Quebec catered also for the postulants, novices and scholastics of Trois Rivieres; and the District of Montreal offered a similar service to the Districts of Longueuil and Ottawa. Round about 1963, there remained one novitiate at Compton in the District of Montreal.

c) *Ongoing Formation.* The Canadian 100-Day Retreat was begun in 1948 for all the then existing Districts. For many years, it was directed by Br. Olympius Georges Tremblay.

d) *The Missions.* Several Brothers from Quebec went to help the Montreal mission in Japan, while Brothers from Montreal went to help out in Cameroon, which was under the jurisdiction of Quebec in those days.

e) *Finances.* In the 60's, there existed already a regional Bursars' Committee. Later, an inter-District agreement permitted the construction and funding of a Canadian Second Novitiate at Ste. Angele. The residence fees of postulants and scholastics at the College Marie Victorin (Montreal) and the Notre Dame de Foy Campus (Quebec) were shared out between Canadian Districts.

From 1966 onwards, following the General Chapter, all Canadian Districts were represented at a Regional Chapter which sought to work out how to implement the decisions made in Rome, and to consider more local problems. There followed other Regional Chapters.

## The Regional Coordinator

Chosen by and from among the members of the Visitors' Conference, his first responsibility is the smooth running of his District. He is responsible also for communicating relevant information to Districts of the Region and to missionary Districts that have links of one sort or another with the Region. He keeps a close eye on all that concerns the religious life, the life of the Institute and the needs of society, so as to be able to stimulate thought among his fellow Visitors and the Brothers of their respective Districts, and encourage appropriate action to promote a more effective apostolate in the whole Region. He is responsible for ensuring good communication between Canadian Districts and the administrative centre in Rome and for the mutual exchange of information.

## Regional Bodies

The Visitors' Conference holds between 6 and 8 meetings every year. Some of these last 2 or 3 days.

The Bursars' Committee, for its part, meets 5 or 6 times a year and whenever an urgent need arises.

With a view to achieving greater subsidiarity and real efficiency, the Conference has set up the Conference of the French-speaking Districts of Canada. Its members comprise the Visitors concerned, their auxiliaries if they have them, and councillors from each of the Districts. This Conference has set itself some very clear and practical aims. It meets at least twice a year, and helps to form ad hoc committees to deal with specific problems as they arise. This approach using ad hoc committees enables a larger number of Brothers to become involved for limited periods of time. It has proved very successful.

Over the course of years, the Visitors' Conference has changed and improved the way it functions. With the help of the C.F.D.C., it has set up committees for the promotion of vocations, youth pastoral care and initial and ongoing formation. As the need arises, new committees are formed. These committees study the matter in question very thoroughly and submit their conclusions to the Visitors.

The Visitors' Conference has an executive secre-