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**THE LASALLIAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
and Its Presence among Other Religions**

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OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

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Director: Brother José María Valladolid

Editorial Committee:

Br Paul Grass
Br Joseph Le Bars
Br Emmanuel Sciberras

With the assistance of members of the General Council:

Br Gerard Rummery
Br Pierre Josse
Br Raymundo Suplido

Artwork

Front-cover and back-cover:

Br Fermín Gainza

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INTRODUCTION

THE LASALLIAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL and Its Presence among Other Religions

In the beginning...

The Lasallian school, born in France in the seventeenth century and called the Christian school, had as its goal to educate children in line with the teachings of the Gospel.

This was played out in a Christian society where the vast majority of persons were Christians even though their personal religious training might not have been very extensive.

John Baptist de La Salle wanted the school to teach children how to live well while at the same time instructing them in secular subjects and Gospel values. And he recognized that the Christian school in many cases took the place of the parents who were not themselves prepared to nor did they have the time to instruct or educate their children.

When the Christian school spread throughout the western world and when the number of teaching congregations increased, their work was almost always carried out in Christian environments.

But throughout the eighteenth century and especially in the nineteenth, the Christian school spread to countries where other religions were in the majority or to nations where other religions existed alongside Christianity.

In quite a few cases, schools looked to see how they could be of service to the children of Christian families in such countries and sometimes exclusively so.

Presence in non-Christian areas

The presence of Lasallian schools outside of France in the 19th and 20th centuries was often linked to the opening of schools in French overseas territories or spheres of political influence. This movement often accompanied the strong missionary movement by the main Christian churches to preach the Gospel in Asia, Africa and Oceania.

Although such schools were originally established for the children of Christian families in these countries, they soon opened their doors to students of other beliefs because the

country's school system was not sufficiently developed. With the passage of time, schools in many areas, became frequented by a majority of students who were not Christian. They sought admission because of the individual school's reputation for offering a quality education.

The Christian school thus became important because of the value of its presence, a place where students of different religious traditions studied, played and worked together and learned mutual respect and tolerance.

Currently in many countries the majority of students in the Lasallian schools are Moslem, Buddhist, Hindu or followers of other traditional religions.

Catholic schools always...

In countries where all or the vast majority of students are Christian, the Lasallian school is a Catholic school, not only because its sponsors belong to a religious congregation and carry out their work and their objectives as an active apostolate at the service of the Catholic faith, but also because those who frequent it are Catholic.

In countries where other religions form the majority, this school is also Catholic; not because of the faith of those who frequent it but because it is sponsored by the same religious congregations who are in service to that Catholic institution within a particular society, and this service is offered with no discrimination whatsoever.

But in both cases the school is still Catholic because of its origin, inspired by the Catholic faith by means of a specific organization.

It is also Catholic because of the objectives that it pursues: helping students in living well, in their training and in seeing them grow as persons. Those who are Catholic are schooled in Gospel values. Those who belong to another religion are schooled in the practice of the human and religious values that come from their own faith, which in many cases are consonant with the Gospel itself.

A school present in and part of the culture

Besides the important historical significance that the Christian school has in countries where Christians are in the minority, it is important for other reasons.

Its continued presence in schools normally maintained by persons from religious institutions is a visible sign of the change of attitude of the Church itself. It is the first step in an interreligious dialogue that is not based on the old "conversion model" but on a model which fosters mutual acceptance and respect.

The interchange of human and cultural wealth is ongoing during the entire school year, beginning with learning to respect all the existing religious traditions. In many places there are celebrations held for religious festivals which are part of the various traditions and there is also participation by different religious groups. This is a dialogue of everyday events which mark life everywhere and that reflects in a special way the events that affect persons and families, such as births and deaths. These events strengthen the ties of solidarity of all those in the school. This is the dialogue of life.

The Christian school witnesses to Gospel values

The Christian school by its very nature proclaims Gospel values. The way that this is done will vary from country to country and from culture to culture.

In areas where Christians are in the majority, a faith community may be established, to varying degrees, integrated within the local and diocesan Church.

In areas where Christians are in the minority, the effects of the school's presence may be greater or lesser depending on local circumstances. In many cases, the very presence of the Christian school is an aid in helping to proclaim and support common human values which are supported by all religions.

* * *

The reality of the Christian school today

The Lasallian school as characterized here today is found on all continents and offers its services in countries where the Christian religion predominates as well as where other religions are in the majority.

In the case of the latter, the Lasallian school is a ministry which is at the service of society and its commitment consists in helping young people grow as persons and as citizens by means of science and culture and also be means of promoting behavior which is worthy, honest and committed to the society in which they live.

The very presence of a Lasallian school in many cases is - and should always be - a sign of conviviality, tolerance, respect for persons, respect for the dignity of work, a place of self-denial, decency, honesty, solidarity... Brothers and lay colleagues, whether Christians or members of other faiths, work together and share the educational ministry for the welfare of young people, in a spirit of understanding and harmony on both faculty as well as student levels. The constant concern is always that of helping all young people improve themselves; in a special way service to the poor and to those most in need, and who find themselves in great difficulty in achieving that goal, is fostered.

And so this is how the Lasallian school collaborates in bringing the Kingdom of God to places where Christians are in the majority as well as where other cultures and faiths predominate. Thus it fosters a world where there is more justice, more love and greater peace. The school itself is enriched and evangelized, thanks to the positive elements that it is able to draw from other religions, integrating these in the message and practical application of its educational mission.

* * *

How this reality is expressed in the current Bulletin

The current Bulletin attempts to reflect on the present and the activity of the Lasallian school in areas where other religions predominate.

What is presented are simply some samples from specific countries.

When information was solicited for this issue, what was sought after was that there be a presentation of the "relationship" of the school with the religious atmosphere existent.

There was an excellent response that presented the information that was requested, since in nearly all cases the material received dealt simply with "the school".

It is as if one could say: "The Lasallian school is present and fulfills its ministry of educating young people. That is its work and the reason it is where it is. What else can it be but an educational center?"

That is to say, the reader is going to be able to discover the relationship between the Lasallian school and other religions as eyes are opened to the educational reality in each school. "Go and report what you have seen...Young people are learning to become persons who are upright and committed to society". Is this not a miracle that can attract everyone's attention?

* * *

**This is, simply, the practical application
of what the Rule says:**

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

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

The pages of this Bulletin, while offering some evidence of Lasallian ministries in countries where Christians are in the minority, immediately bring up a very important and current topic: interreligious dialogue.

And so before presenting the experiences of several regions, we are reproducing in its entirety a section of the recent document drawn up by the General Council on the topic of "The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission".

The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE Prelude

The presence of the Institute since 1817 in the countries of Africa and Asia where Christianity is a minority religion has always been marked by a profound respect for the different religions encountered. (Cf. 1.23) But this classic sense of interreligious dialogue has been greatly extended as a consequence of the expansion of the Institute and the large-scale immigration of the post Second World War. Nowadays there are Lasallian educational works in Europe, North America and Oceania where Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists and many other religious groups can be encountered. Interreligious dialogue, therefore, is not something exotic reserved to scholars and theologians but something which takes place daily in many schools at one level or another.

Why interreligious dialogue now?

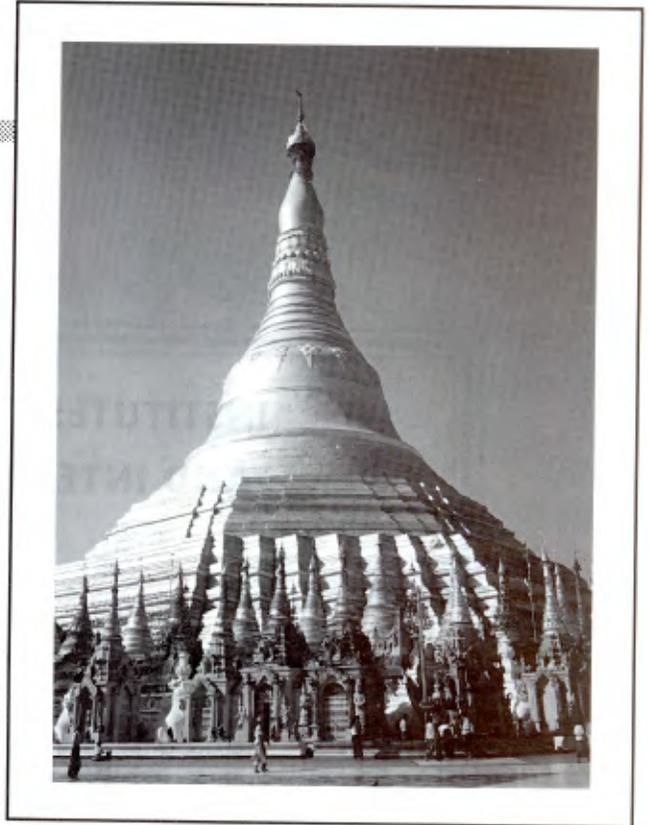
The history of religions shows that religious people have too often in the past seen their mission too narrowly as persuading or enforcing their particular religion, sometimes even to the extent of imposing it on others. When religion acts in this way and becomes more of an ideology, it effectively loses its spiritual sense, because the first gift of the Spirit according to Saint Paul is "freedom." The *Declaration on Religious Liberty (Dignitatis Humanae)* from the Second Vatican Council is uncompromising in insisting "that the human person has a right to religious freedom" so that "nobody is forced to act against his convictions in religious matters in private or in public." (No. 2)

What is understood by interreligious dialogue?

Ever since this important change of attitude towards other religions, apparent in *Dignitatis Humanae* and in other documents from the same Council, notably documents such as *Nostra Aetate* and *Ad Gentes*, the Church has pursued interreligious dialogue through many symbolic meetings, such as the meeting of the Pope with other religious leaders at Assisi in 1986, as well as by the publication of a number of important documents from what is now known as the **Pontifical Council on Interreligious Dialogue**, such as *Dialogue and Mission* of 1984 and *Dialogue and Proclamation* of 1991. Both these documents state their understanding of interreligious dialogue:

[In the context of religious plurality] dialogue means "all positive and constructive **interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment,**" in obedience to truth and respect for freedom." (*Dialogue and Mission*, No. 3)

This form of dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation* assures us, is "one of the integral elements of the Church's evangelizing mission" (9), but it goes on to say that "The foundation of the Church's commitment to dialogue is not merely anthropological but primarily theological. God, in an age-long dialogue, has offered and continues to offer salvation to humankind. In faithfulness to the divine initiative, the Church too must enter into a dialogue of salvation with all men and women" (38). What is being sought is not to win an argument but rather to be open to the same broad questions which the traditional religions seek to answer:



IN ASIA...



INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Because "interreligious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission" (Redemptoris Missio 55), Institutes of Consecrated Life cannot exempt themselves from involvement also in this field, each in accordance with its own charism and following the directives of ecclesiastical authority. The first form of evangelization in relation to our brothers and sisters of other religions should be the testimony of a life of poverty, humility and chastity, imbued with fraternal love for all. At the same time, the freedom of spirit proper to the consecrated life will favour that "dialogue of life" which embodies a basic model of mission and of the proclamation of Christ's Gospel. In order to foster reciprocal knowledge, respect and charity, Religious Institutes can also promote *appropriate forms of dialogue*, marked by cordial friendship and mutual sincerity, with the monastic communities of other religions.

Another area for cooperation with men and women of different religious traditions is that of a shared *concern for human life*, extending from compassion for those who are suffering physically and spiritually to commitment to justice, peace and the protection of God's creation. In these areas, Institutes of active life especially will seek an understanding with members of other religions, through that "dialogue of action" which prepares the way for more profound exchanges.

A particular field for successful common action with people of other religious traditions is that of *efforts to promote the dignity of women*. In view of the equality and authentic complementarity of men and women, a valuable service can be rendered above all by consecrated women.

These and other ways in which consecrated persons are engaged in the service of interreligious dialogue require an appropriate training, both in initial formation and in continuing formation. They require study and research, since in this very delicate area a profound knowledge of Christianity and of other religions is needed, accompanied by solid faith and by spiritual and personal maturity.

(Vita Consecrata, number 102).

THE CHRISTIAN LASALLIAN SCHOOL AND OTHER RELIGIONS IN MALAYSIA

Historical Background

The Brothers have a very special place at the heart of Malaysia's multi-faith society. This has much to do with the Brothers' record for quality education which goes back to the middle of the last century, when they were among the great pioneers of popular education in this country. In modern Malaysia, leaders in public life, in the various professions and in the Church are happy to identify with the Brothers, either as past students themselves or as parents who feel the Brothers' school still provides the best education for their children.

Following their arrival in 1852, the Brothers were at first closely identified with parish life and with educating Catholic pupils. It was only some decades later, with the growing demand for modern education, that the Brothers opened their doors to a great influx of pupils of other faiths, chiefly Buddhists and Hindus. Soon these would form the majority. Lay teachers had to be employed and in the course of time some of these too would belong to other faiths. The Brothers' schools grew in prestige for academic performance, moral training, and not least for splendid architecture. Much of this was already happening before the end of the last century. And it was happening against a backdrop of rigid Catholic counter reformation theology on the one hand and a forward thrust of colonialism on the other. Relations with the colonial authorities were often uneasy, even a little volatile. The Brothers sought to safeguard their own mission agenda while the authorities, by providing for greater funding, began to exercise increasing supervision and control.

The colonial curriculum was concerned with preparing students for the professions, the commercial sector and government service. The Brothers, on the other hand, gave priority to a strong evangelising dimension. Every student of whatever faith was exposed to the Christian message. Muslim pupils alone were exempt, and these were usually a small minority. The Brothers could not easily escape the Church's position at that time of absolute rejection of "pagan" religions. Consequently the Brothers yearned for all "pagans" to be securely baptised, sooner rather than later. For most Brothers their special consolation and reward was in the number of pupils baptised each year.

The reward was often meagre as, by contrast with other parts of the world, conversions were slow and rather few. This was due in part to the fact that in Asia the Church encountered strong ancient cultures which were usually linked to highly developed religious traditions.

[Even today despite centuries of sustained missionary effort, the teeming millions of this vast continent seemingly remain untouched by Christianity. India with its population approaching 900 million is just 3% Christian, China with a massive 1300 million is less than 1%. And so for most other leading countries in the region such as Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Pakistan. One notable exception is the Republic of the Philippines which is 93% Christian, another is South Korea with 30%.]

Young Malaysians
belong to
many races and
faiths.



In practice, however, the Brothers often admired the exemplary behaviour and high moral standards found among teachers and pupils of these Asian religions, and the Church's negative attitudes did not prevent the cross of spiritual union. The faithful and generous benefactors of the Brothers' Schools were frequently those from Buddhist and Taoist traditions.

This situation continued up to and after the Japanese occupation of South-East Asia during World War II.

In the second half of the present century, two major events - the one political and external, the other religious and internal to the Church - have conditioned relations between our Lasallian Schools and other religions, namely [1] the coming of political independence and the rise of national governments, and [2] Vatican Council II.

The Advent of Political Independence & Islamisation

In 1957 Malaysia achieved national independence under a government that was predominantly Malay and Islamic. The Malays, who are mostly Muslim and rural, constitute more than half the population of West Malaysia. The Lasallian schools traditionally attracted few Malay pupils, and rarely did any Lasallian school have Malay or Muslim teachers on the staff. There was a long tradition of mutual suspicion and distrust, in part due to a language barrier - the Brothers for the most part, even those born in Malaysia, did not speak Malay, and the Malays in general did not speak English. There followed a gradual change in the medium of instruction in all schools from English to Malay. Christian instruction was forbidden within the official curriculum in all mission schools. Most schools continued for some time to provide it informally outside the official curriculum, but strictly for Catholic pupils only. All schools were obliged as well to make provision for Islamic instruction for all Muslim pupils.

The new changes were painful for the Brothers and some began to fear for the future. In those pre-Vatican Council days, having to provide for Islamic instruction within the Catholic school was for many Brothers a particularly severe shock, suggesting the ultimate violation mentioned in the Book of Daniel.

Now there was a large influx of Muslim pupils, in line with government policy, and an increasing number of Muslim teachers joined the staff. This was in large measure due to the prestigious profile enjoyed by the Lasallian schools, and to government's policy to give Muslim pupils better opportunities. One important consequence of the momentous changes was that Muslim teachers, pupils and parents came to know the Brothers better, and the Brothers themselves, both foreign and Malaysian, took pains to study the Malay language and culture, and old suspicions and prejudices gradually gave way to understanding and trust. Soon Muslim teachers were found among the most devoted and loyal members of the staff.



Brother Edmund Chia conducting an interfaith youth seminar.

The Vatican Council & Its Aftermath

With the Vatican Council came a welcome sense of liberation for the Brothers from increasingly burdensome attitudes towards all of Asia's great religions. What they had for so long felt in their hearts they could now openly affirm, namely that these religions were deserving of respect. They had so much that was beautiful and sustaining, especially for family life, in their ethical codes, in the way life's passages and the seasons were marked and colourfully celebrated.

It became much easier now to speak of the transcendent with pupils and teachers of all faiths, and to promote personal faith life according to one's particular tradition. In the school, it became possible to provide informal spiritual supports for students of all faiths. Some schools had occasional days of recollection when staff and students of various faiths were given the opportunity to group separately for reflection and prayer. This was well received by parents and public as well.

But by far the most significant impact of Vatican II was on the Brothers themselves, their life-style, their sense of identity and of mission. Together with other congregations, the Brothers held a great variety of seminars and conferences to reflect on their changing world and how best to respond to emerging trends and needs.

Some quit to find other ways of pursuing their personal goals. Others saw a need to address youth needs more directly outside the school. As time passed the number of Brothers serving in schools diminished as a consequence of Brothers retiring, leaving the Institute or opting to serve in non-formal projects.

The School Situation Today

Today in Malaysia, the Brothers, though few in number, are involved in a great variety of projects within their overall mission in education. Their control over the schools has greatly diminished. This results largely from the total control exercised by the government over intake of students, staffing and appointment of heads.



Interreligious group preparing a presentation on the life of De La Salle.

However the falling number of Brothers serving in the schools has also been a factor. Today in some 50 primary and secondary Lasallian schools, the heads are all lay people, with the exception of three schools which still have a Brother in charge. Many of these heads belong to other faiths; in some instances they are Muslim.

While the situation appears beyond changing, there are significant signs of new Lasallian life. The most important development for the past ten years has been the annual week-long national Lasallian Youth Convention. This convention is planned with much care by a team of Brothers and lay associates. The participants are also chosen with much care from among the leading students in each of our Lasallian schools. The lay heads are happy to give full support in this process, because they have

come to realise from past experience that the whole school will benefit from strong peer leadership among the students.

It is obvious that the enormous success of this annual convention is due above all to the Lasallian spirituality underlying the months of preparation, the actual convention, and the follow-up programme at regional and school level. It is a spirituality of brotherhood and inclusiveness, where students and accompanying teachers of all faiths feel accepted and affirmed. La Salle is the focus, the icon with which all can readily identify.

This is indeed a new thing that the Lord is doing in our midst. While formal control and influence may be diminishing, our Lasallian schools are experiencing renewal as numbers of young boys and girls each year are joining a rapidly expanding network of young dynamic Lasallian leaders of all faiths.

This network includes those still in school, those at university, and others already working in their chosen professions; all are anxious to remain in contact, and ready to give their services in running youth camps and in various other practical ways.

This Lasallian network depends very much on the effective contacts we are able to maintain with our schools, particularly with those responsible for administration. In the final analysis it rests on

the enduring credibility of the Brothers among school heads, even among those with little previous contact with the Brothers.

Some Malaysian Brothers Involved in Inter-Faith Dialogue & Collaboration

Brother Edmund Chia

Brother Edmund Chia is executive secretary to the Commission for Interfaith Dialogue under the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences [FABC]. This high-powered commission promotes dialogue with the great religions of this continent and collaborates with them to bring about a more just and caring society.

He was recently invited to a select encounter between top Muslim and Buddhist scholars to consider alternative politics to challenge the negative effects of globalisation. Together with Brother Gerry, he helped document the sessions and shared Christian perspectives.

Brother John D'Cruz

Brother John specialises in alternative education. In collaboration with people of different faiths, he has initiated a highly successful programme for children with learning difficulties.

In addition he is much in demand at major conventions as an expert in process work, and this provides him with opportunities to promote understanding and goodwill in the varied groups he works with.

Brother Gerry Louis

Brother Gerry, recently resigned as school principal, is now programme co-ordinator at La Salle Centre, Ipoh. He is mainly responsible for the annual Lasallian Youth Convention, which promotes La Salle as an inspiration for young people of all faith traditions.

In his counselling programmes he helps participants relate modern theory to their different religious traditions.

He is fully committed to inter-faith dialogue, and has taken a leading part in FEISA III in Indonesia, as well as in the recent dialogue promoting a Muslim-Buddhist search for alternative politics for the Asia of tomorrow.

Brother Anthony Rogers

Brother Anthony Rogers heads the National Office for Human Development in Malaysia and helps to initiate and sustain many grassroots projects for the less privileged of all faiths and for migrant workers.

He is also executive secretary to the Commission for Human Development under the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences [FABC]. Recently, for example, he organised the FAITH ENCOUNTER IN SOCIAL ACTION III [FEISA III] in Indonesia as part of an ongoing opening up to Asian realities for Asian Bishops. The theme for FEISA III was Christian-Muslim Dialogue for Justice and Solidarity. Some Malaysian Brothers also participated.

Brother Vincent Corkery

Brother John D'Cruz
doing some
group work.



2

THE LASALLIAN SCHOOL IN THAILAND

AN INTRODUCTION

The Christian Lasallian School is alive and well in the country of Thailand, where Christianity is the minor religion. It is necessary to approach this whole issue with a cursory look at the origin of Thailand, its predominant religion -Buddhism- the arrival of Christianity with the Catholic missionaries, followed by the Protestant missionaries. With the knowledge of this evolution, it is likewise worthwhile to note when the Lasallian community began in Thailand and how the three Lasallian Brothers' schools came about. A further look at the impact the Lasallian Brothers and teachers are having on Thai youth will help to understand what is happening in a country where Christianity and Catholicism are less than two percent of the population of sixty million.

THE ETHNIC CHARACTER OF THAILAND

The population of Thailand is ethnically homogeneous. The Thai constitute a clear majority of about eighty percent. Karen in the North, Malay in the South and Lao in the East make up the other twenty per cent.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THAILAND

Thai history is divided into four important periods that correspond to the location of the capital of the nation:

First period (220 BC-1253 AD):

During this time the Thai settled not in the present Thailand but in Yunnan, the present day province of South China.

Second period (1253-1438):

This was the first Thai kingdom to bring large parts of present day Thailand under Thai rule. It is called the Kingdom of Sukhothai.

Third period (1438-1767):

During this time a new Thai state of Ayuttaya, named after its capital, was established at the heart of the Chao Phraya River plain and was captured and burned by the Burmese in 1767.

Fourth period (1767-the present):

This is known as the Bangkok period, established in Thon Buri, across from the Chao Phraya River, facing Bangkok. The Rama dynasty line began with Chakkri, the name of Rama I.

THE COMING OF BUDDHISM, ISLAM, CATHOLICISM AND PROTESTANTIS

- It was in the fourth century that Siam (a name formerly given to Thailand) received the first **Buddhists** from Magadha, India. Buddhism spread quickly to rural provinces of the country. Thailand is now considered the cradle of Buddhism, with over ninety-five percent of the population being Buddhists. There are over 3,600 Buddhist temples in Thailand, four hundred alone in the city of Bangkok.

- **Islam** also tried to make converts in 1668 when Mohammedan missionaries arrived from Acheen, an Arabian state. The Muslim population in the country is about four percent.

- The first **Catholic** missionaries who ever penetrated into Thailand were the Portuguese Dominican Fathers in the seventeenth century. After much strife and persecution, other groups also came -the Franciscans and the Jesuits. It was at this time that Francis Xavier was quite active in the church in Malacca, Malaysia. The Jesuits left for some time, only to return in 1954.

French missionaries arrived toward the end of the seventeenth century, during the reign of King Phra Narai. With great diplomacy they had a meeting with the King, who gave them property to build a Catholic church, along with a school. Other institutions were gradually built in the country.

Good relations between the Thai government and the Catholic church have continued, though there have been difficulties along the way. In the main, Catholics have been

Becoming a child with children...





Before the meal God's blessing is prayed for.

allowed to build churches and teach in schools established by the Catholic church in Thailand.

Education and the Catholic church progressed in the eighteenth century in Thailand, but it was not until the nineteenth century that a Frenchman, Father Colombet, founded Assumption College in 1885. With humble beginnings and an enrollment of 33 students, it is today one of the finest universities in Thailand, with an enrollment of over 15,000. Father Colombet asked a French order, the Brothers of Saint Gabriel, to manage Assumption College in 1902. Many schools were later opened in Thailand, all with the same name, in primary, secondary and commercial schools.

The Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartes is another religious order that began work in Thailand; these Sisters are primarily involved in hospital ministry. Other religious orders followed: the Ursuline Sisters, the Sisters of the Infant Jesus, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, the Society of Jesus, the Salesians of Don Bosco, and, of course, the Lasallian Brothers.

Living together trains and educates...



In the nineteenth century Protestant missionaries came to Thailand, first with the Baptists in 1835, working with the Chinese-Thai in Bangkok. They were more concerned with evangelization but later developed hospitals, hostels, theological seminaries, language centers and educational programs in urban and rural areas. The Presbyterians were next, primarily involved in education and hospital ministry. Other Protestant denominations arrived later in the twentieth century doing similar works and expanding their apostolate.

THE LASALLIAN BROTHERS COME TO THAILAND

In 1951 there were a number of French Brothers in Viet Nam. It was two years before the French collapse at Dien Bien Phu, that Brother Zacharias, Assistant, ordered the French Brothers out of Viet Nam. The older Brothers returned to France but several younger Brothers went to Djibouti (East Africa), Hong Kong and Cambodia. This met with the approval of Brother Cyrien, the Visitor of Viet Nam.

Brother Zacharias just happened to be in Bangkok, when he had the occasion to meet Bishop Chorin. The bishop thought it was providential that a Lasallian Brother told him about leaving Viet Nam, because the bishop was thinking of having a religious order take over a Chinese school in Nahkon Sawan that had been closed for many years by the Thai government. Brother Zacharias sent the four young French Brothers to Bangkok, along with the ex-Visitor of Saigon, to learn the Thai language and later sent them to Malaysia to improve their English. The ex-Visitor of Viet Nam left, leaving four Brothers in the school.

There were problems of land and ownership, as well as choosing a name for the school. The Chinese intervened to call the name "Chotiravi", after a well-known businessman. Many years later "La Salle" was added to the school name.

The primary reason why the Brothers went to Sawan was that middle-class Chinese businessmen wanted to have a private Catholic school for their children, so they would not have to go to Bangkok. Likewise, it would be a place for the Vietnamese Brothers to go, in the event that communism took over.

Ten years later, in 1962, the Brothers in Thailand (there were no Thai Brothers at the time) thought of the possibility of going to the town of Chantaburi, 300 km south of Bangkok, near the Cambodian border, because it was a heavily Catholic area, a good place for vocations. Most of the priests in Thailand come from Chantaburi.

The Brothers took over the one and only parish school in Chantaburi. The Brothers taught the boys and the local Sisters taught the girls.

Brother Joseph Mertz, who had been in Nakhon Sawan, came to Chantaburi and built a new school on the edge of town. Three Brothers joined him. The school was to be called "La Salle Chantaburi", the second Lasallian school in Thailand.

It was one year after the completion of La Salle Chantaburi that the Brothers went to Bangkok, to an area now called Bangna, to ask the Gabrielite Brothers about where to buy land for a school. Much to the surprise of the Brothers, the

Gabrielite Brothers gave them property to build a new school. This being the case, the third Lasallian school was built in a distant suburb. This third school was opened in 1963 and was the only structure on eight hectares of land. The school was to be called "La Salle College", with kindergarten through high school.

WHY TEACH IN A COUNTRY THAT HAS LESS THAN ONE PERCENT CATHOLIC?

This question often comes up and it can easily be answered by the fact that with children coming to our schools, it is their first contact with Brothers and with Catholicism. Some Buddhist children have converted to Catholicism but it has been their own free will to do so. The Brothers do not proselytize. In fact, some Buddhist converts to Catholicism have actually become Lasallian Brothers.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN LASALLIAN SCHOOLS IN THAILAND WITH REGARD TO HELPING THE POOR, PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL, CONCERN FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE AND WORKING TOWARD ECUMENISM

EFFORTS TO HELP THE POOR

The Thai government allows private schools to fix the limits on their school fees without receiving governmental financial help. The Brothers prefer to accept this financial help in order to keep the school fees as low as possible. With an enrollment of over 4,000 students in all three Lasallian schools, some financially pressed students are assisted.

In **BANGKOK**, sixty-two students are given free tuition, twenty-six students are helped with free school materials; twenty-five are given free meals; six boarders are aided for their expenses.

In **NAKHON SAWAN**, the school has La Salle House, a residence for semi-abandoned poor students of problem families. Also, Miguel House is a residence for poor scholarship students. Another institution, La Salle Center, provides day-care for small children, who are given lunch and some rudiments of instruction daily.

In **CHANTABURI**, all students who apply to the school are admitted, even if they might be financially burdened. They have Miguel House, with forty-four boarders who are above average academically but financially burdened.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

In Bangkok, lessons in Christianity are taught weekly for all students, Catholic and Buddhists alike. Catholic students, however, are taught the catechism twice weekly and attend Mass on a regular basis. A school assembly is held on

December 8th and an explanation of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception is told to the students. A formal ceremony of placing flowers at the foot of the statue of the Blessed Virgin, along with songs, make it a very festive event. Likewise, the Catholic students take part in a Christmas Pageant for the entire student body, before the Feast of the Nativity. Being a school event, the entire student body is present, participating in songs and prayers.

In **NAKHON SAWAN**, Catechism is taught to the Catholic students but not to the non-Catholic students, mainly Buddhists. Students are made aware of religious feasts celebrated throughout the year. The Brothers and some students join the local church for various activities and charitable works.

In **CHANTABURI**, the Brothers give catechism lessons to the Catholic students in a Buddhist temple school. The Brothers also give evening classes on the Bible for adults.



Donation to the Buddhist monks...

In each of the three Lasallian schools, there is an elaborate ceremony on the Feast of St. John Baptist de La Salle, with students and faculty taking part with bouquets of flowers, songs and prayers. The feast of the Founder is generally celebrated in mid-January, because in April or May students would be on holiday.

CONCERN FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

In all three Lasallian schools during the catechism classes, the subject of social issues is discussed, as it applies to the children in their given towns and villages in Thailand. This particular topic is not as advanced in Thailand, because children are sometimes unaware of happenings in the world at large and in Thailand in particular. Democracy and peace exist in Thailand, so there is a general feeling of tranquility.

WORKING TOWARD ECUMENISM

On this topic, La Salle College in Bangkok seems to be in the forefront of working for ecumenism, with regard to the Buddhists. In Nakhon Sawan and Chantaburi, efforts toward ecumenism are guided carefully by the local Catholic church. It is interesting to quote this passage from the Standing Rules of



Everyone celebrates Christmas together...

the Presbyterian Siam Mission:

"In modern Thailand, the sharing of his knowledge (the missionary) may not always be appreciated. He may be called upon just to fulfill the role of conservator of culture. The secret of his success may lie precisely in his ability to maintain intact his role as an agent of social change." (*Christian Missionaries and Thai Education*, Joseph Van Khoi, FSC, Ph.D. La Salle Brothers, Thailand).

It is not compulsory for every Thai to give alms to the Buddhist monks every morning. However, the majority of the people observe this charitable practice. They give alms in order to help the monks in their temple, to get merit for their deceased parents, to get the blessing of the Almighty, or to pay in advance one's own fate in the next life. Moreover, the Buddhist monks make their rounds collecting alms very early in the morning, after their 4:00 a.m. chanting of psalms. At that time, children usually are still sleeping. Most of the time, the parents accomplish this act of charity alone.

At La Salle College in Bangkok, there are over 4,000 students; 184 of them are Catholics and 100 more are of other demoninations.

The Brothers profited by the 2nd Centennial of the celebration of the Foundation of Ratanakosin or Bangkok, to start the commemoration by the invitation of 201 Buddhist monks in the Buddhist year of 2525, or 1982 A.D. From that date on, every year, on Friday before the celebration of Children's Day, the second Saturday in March, a well organized distribution of food, or alms, is given to the Buddhist monks. For weeks, students gather food from their homes or donate money so food can be bought for the distribution, when these monks come from four nearby temples to La Salle College. Then a Buddhist monk, usually a good orator, gives a sermon to the Buddhist students in the Gym Hall. The Catholic students go to the Chapel to attend Holy Mass said by the Chaplain. At the Offertory, each Catholic student has an offering to present to the Chaplain: money, canned food, etc., like the Buddhists do for the monks. It will be up to the chaplain to do the charitable action as he likes. Meanwhile, the Buddhist students give their gifts to the Buddhist monks by putting food in a big container held by the Buddhist monks. It is then brought to the temples.

All the Buddhist parents appreciate very much the innovation of helping the Buddhist monks and have only felicitation for La Salle College for its broadmindedness, which helps them fulfill their religious obligation, along with their children.

DAILY MORNING AND AFTERNOON PRAYER GIVEN BY BUDDHIST AND CATHOLIC STUDENTS

Every day at the beginning of school and after school, students in all three Lasallian schools in Thailand generally sing the Thai National Anthem and say a prayer. This basically is what is said by the students:

MORNING PRAYER

We pray that our merciful and Almighty God will watch over us and bless us with intelligence, so that we may comprehend all the lessons completely throughout the day. May we be progressive and creative forever. May we be honest in our morality. May God bless our country, our King, our parents and our teachers. Please make all the people on earth happy with love and peace forever. Amen.

AFTERNOON PRAYER

We pay respect to Almighty God who is holy and merciful. We are thankful for having been kept safe from harm. Each day goes by perfectly as we have built up our knowledge. May our country, our King, our parents and our teachers be protected forever. Amen.

REASONS STUDENTS GIVE FOR ENROLLING AT LA SALLE COLLEGE, BANGKOK

La Salle is situated in a suburb where the traffic is not as heavy as that in the central part of Bangkok. The school compound is so large that it can provide enough parking space. It has pleasant surroundings with a lot of shady trees.

The school is open to children of all religions, not just restricted to Catholics. The classes range from kindergarten to high school. It also admits boarders.

Teachers here are efficient and attentive. They make wise counsellors as well. Like other Catholic schools, La Salle places emphasis on language study. The students start learning English as a second language in kindergarten, which is three years earlier than those in government public schools. There are a few foreign teachers teaching ESL to the high school students.

La Salle is famous for strict disciplinary rules and regulations, so the students are required to be obedient, courteous and properly dressed.

The students are encouraged in all kinds of extracurricular activities: sports, performing arts, religious ceremonies, etc. The school is well equipped with facilities for study. There are three scientific laboratories, a language lab, a computer room, a mini-zoo, a swimming pool, a football field and a few courts for basketball and volleyball. It also has two newly renovated canteens.



1994-1995 primary school staff with the Brothers.



Sports competition is a way of socializing...



Our Schools in Hong Kong

Our schools in Hong Kong are open to pupils of whatever creed as well as to those who do not profess any religion. The latter are, in fact, the vast majority.

Whilst most of our students profess no religion, they are generally well disposed and live a moral life.

It is a normal practice for our schools to teach religion, Catholic doctrine, Bible... to all our classes, even though there may be hardly any Catholics in particular classes. All students in fact sit for the same examinations in religion and often enough the Buddhists or Muslims will score the highest marks.

Of course there are common values such as telling the truth, honesty, not cheating... These are often reinforced by the traditional Chinese values of obedience to authority, respect for the elderly and filial piety generally.

Our school apostolate is very much in a Chinese cultural milieu. The normal language spoken is Cantonese except where English is demanded. 99.9% of our students are Chinese. We try to respect Chinese customs and philosophy of life, while inculcating Christian values through the person of Christ. A steady trickle convert to Catholicism or Christianity.

Outside the more formalised classroom relationships, we mix freely enough with staff, students, parents and old boys.

One odd thing is that we almost invariably find our non-believer Lasallian family members very anxious that we continue to be a Catholic school, teaching religion, having school Masses, etc...

Generally speaking, parents have no objections if their offspring wish to become Catholic. Becoming a Brother and to a certain extent a priest, is a different matter, especially in the existing regular situation of a one or two child family.

Practical Situations

The following practical situations are considered normal here:

1. All our students, no matter their religious belief, bless themselves and say the Hail Mary, Our Father and Glory Be, as class prayers.
2. All our students study Catholic doctrine and the Bible and are examined in this as a regular school subject.
3. So far, we have not been approached by parents or students wishing to "opt-out" of the above.
4. Many parents of children of other religions say they want their children in our schools because
 - they are well run
 - they trust us
 - they appreciate the human and Christian values inculcated
 - there is good discipline.
5. Persons of other religions will sometimes attend school Masses.
6. All learn something about the life or work of St. La Salle and respond to invocations: St John Baptist de La Salle, pray for us; Live Jesus in our Hearts, forever.
7. Staff who are not Catholic will either lead the class in prayer or ask a Catholic student to do so.
8. Not all of the Principals of our schools are Catholics. They seek, however, to strengthen the moral or spiritual atmosphere in school.
9. While there are some specifically Catholic activities, there are many projects to help the disadvantaged, run mainly by a mix of students and supervised by teachers. To provide a service for the blind or for the elderly knows no religious barriers.
10. The Old Boys' Associations are very strong with sister links or Chapters overseas. The Old Boys have generally a strong attachment to their Alma Mater and to their former teachers. They actively support the schools, financially and morally.
11. Similar to the above are the Parent Teacher Associations, except that they are somewhat newer and still finding their way. Parents mix freely, irrespective of creed.



The Rotary Club's cultural ceremony at the La Salle primary school in Hong Kong.



St. Joseph's College catechetical group.



A day of celebration and sports at Hong Kong's La Salle College.



NIHON - JAPAN

A Look at the Country

Someone who has recently arrived in Japan after one month feels capable of writing a book about the country; at the end of the second month he feels himself capable of writing a good article; at the end of a year he hardly feels able to fill a sheet of paper.

Japan, for those who look at it from the outside, is the land of the rising sun, a land full of mystery and surprise. It is a country which, devastated by the War a half-century ago, is now the second world power.

In theory, the world is sufficiently informed about this country through a wealth of publications and the communications media. But, curiously, a good portion of this information comes from people who have visited it, but have never lived in Japan.

Japanese products have inundated the world market and citizens everywhere use machines and appliances that are produced in this country in their daily lives. In this way Japan is present on highways, in offices, on wrists, in the ears of music lovers and in many different ways in homes. Japan is no stranger to any of us, but a life companion.

Therefore many times it is easier to define and describe this country from the outside rather than from the inside.

De La Salle: From Canada to Japan

The first four Brothers, French-Canadians, arrived in Japan in 1932 after a long epistolary exchange and visits between Bishops and Superiors.

It was October 2, 1932, when Brothers Marcien Laurent, Marie Liguori, Marie Marcel and Melan Daniel left Canadian soil, together with several Dominican

priests, on their way to Japan. As they left the coast of Vancouver, these brave missionaries intoned their beloved song, "Oh, Canada..." Seventeen days later they arrived at the port of Yokohama.

It was the French-Canadian Dominicans who were persistent in their requests for De La Salle Brothers in Japan. And it was they who offered to lodge the Brothers until these were able to have their own community. These Dominicans also introduced the Brothers to the Church and Japanese society.

In spite of all this, at least at the beginning, the zeal of our first missionaries in this country and their effort at integrating themselves therein was blocked by difficulties in learning the language. But soon they managed to become involved in the parish of Hakodate in the north of the country where they established their first community.

In a short time they began to teach language classes. They worked with other teachers in minor seminaries or as language teachers in secondary school and university preparatory school in the northern part of the country.

Plans to establish the first Lasallian school, after acquiring the property, were frustrated by the threat of an imminent world war. Once the war began, very few missionaries obtained permission to leave the country. The rest were concentrated in a few communities or in public buildings as if they were prisoners. During the war years, the De La Salle Brothers, like so many other religious, lost their freedom.

The Postwar Years

Once the war was over, the Brothers managed to return to Canada and then returned to Japan two years later, in 1947. During this period there was an increase in urgent need in Japan and any outside help was well received and greatly appreciated.

During the postwar years, the presence of the United States in Japan played a crucial role. Among the officials who were authorized to sanction the opening of new schools was a former student of the Brothers and it was he who cut through the red tape and used his influence so that the Brothers were able to open their school.

So, in 1948, the community in Sendai was opened, some 350 kilometers north of Tokyo. There the Brothers established a boarding house for orphans. Two years later, in 1950, the first school in the southern part of the

country was opened in the Kagoshima prefecture which at that time was one of the poorest regions in the country. And in Hakodate, where the Brothers had first established themselves before the war, they managed to recover their property after a long period of litigation. There a second school was opened in 1959. The Canadian district totally financed the acquisition of properties, the construction of buildings as well as their maintenance.

In 1952 with the increased number of Canadian Brothers combined with the necessity of language study, a house was purchased in downtown Tokyo as a residence for the student Brothers.

The Canadian Brothers not only sent generous and brave Brothers to Japan, but they also established the means so that it was possible to reach Manchuria. But the presence of the Brothers in China ended as a result of the war.

The Japanese Brothers

The congregations that arrived in Japan before the war were blessed with uninterrupted vocations. But those that came later were not as fortunate in their vocational efforts.

Lay institutes dedicated to education like ours found even greater difficulty. The identity of the "Brother" here, as in other parts of the world, has not always been well understood by Christians. The vocation of the teacher has been recognized in society and sometimes even venerated; but the mission of the male teacher is currently less attractive. It is also necessary to keep in mind the number of Catholics which in Japan is about 450,000 faithful that represents about 0.037% of the population. The number has changed very little since the 1950's.

Our Institute has been blessed with Japanese vocations. The first was in 1938, six years after the Brothers arrived in Hakodate. He was Brother Mizukami who has since passed on. The Dominican fathers were instrumental in sending vocations our way. Currently there are seven Japanese Brothers and they form the nucleus around which the mission is centered: thanks to their knowledge and generosity, the Institute is inculturated. By means of them and through them, the De La Salle Brothers are responding to the call of the Church.

Interdependence with Mexico

In 1985 Brother Superior and his Council asked the Districts in Mexico to cooperate with Japan. Canada's inability to send more Brothers and the loss of some young Japanese Brothers necessitated help from other Districts. The two Mexican Districts responded in a positive way.

Currently, within the Delegation of Japan, along with the seven Japanese Brothers, there are seven French-Canadian Brothers and five Mexican Brothers who are taking care of the schools. Two more Mexican Brothers are now being prepared to work there.

Co-responsibility and Shared Mission

In all the Lasallian ministries of Japan the Brothers have counted on the help of lay persons since the very beginning, sharing with them responsibilities such as those involving organization and administration and more recently those of leadership.

The proportion of lay Catholics who help in our institutions is 5%, which exceeds the percentage of Christians in the country.

Teachers find in our institutions a favorable atmosphere in which to develop themselves as professional educators. Education is the center and the heart of the encounter between the De La Salle Brothers and the lay teachers.

In Japan, the De La Salle Brothers have not introduced any particularly special educational system. Our cooperation with the Church and society has been low-key, on the one hand due to the limited number of religious since 1932 and on the other hand because of the difficulties involved in inculturation.

In spite of our small numbers, it is necessary to recognize that it was that very fact that opened the door to lay colleagues in our ministries. And along with this we have arrived at a true and broad sense of CO-RESPONSIBILITY and we also by default have engaged in a type of approach to SHARED MISSION.

Preferential Service to the Poor

The Brothers as well as their lay colleagues in all our institutions pay special attention to the less favored students and in a special way to those who are victims of new forms of poverty that are now emerging in economically developed countries.

The first four French-Canadian Brothers who arrived at Hakodate on October 22, 1932.





Students from Hakodate practicing sumo.

No institution has a school counselor but the master teacher in charge of each group acts as a counselor for the academic or social-psychological problems of the students.

As required, all the teachers meet together to discuss and discern the best possible solution. The effort that educators spend in time and talent in order to help students who are in difficult straits is the normal way that direct service of the poor is manifest in this type of society. They also cooperate in preventive programs which foster the institutional creation of a community atmosphere that favors cordial relationships, mutual respect and freedom.

In addition, communities as well as former students finance scholarships for students who find themselves in an economic situation which is at the breaking point.

Finally, both former students and the schools themselves have begun to cooperate in Institute programs through SECOLI.

SENDAI:

A Center for Those Most in Need

When the Brothers returned to Japan in 1947 after the war, they decided to establish a center at Sendai and this work has profoundly noted our congregational presence.

This has been the ministry that has attracted the majority of the local vocations and it is the preferential ministry of the Delegation.

At the beginning it was financed by the French-Canadian Districts, but now it is the Japanese government itself that supports it economically.

For many years this boarding house received orphans exclusively. Currently, the government sends children there from families who are having integration problems as well as orphans.

The number of children always varies, but there are usually between 65 and 75 during the course of the year. These are minors between the ages of 3 and 15.

Although basic obligatory education includes six years of primary school and three years of secondary which the students follow while they are at the center, nevertheless each year there are some adolescents who want to



Students from Kagoshima during an organized sports session.

continue on in their studies, in the technical field or for the baccalaureate and they want to continue living with us. These boarders are housed in a building which is annexed to the community and they remain under our care.

The primary age youngsters have their classes in the same house. The older ones have recourse to primary and secondary schools near the boarding house.

HINO: Opening to the Church

As has already been said, in downtown Tokyo there was a community that served as a residence for the student Brothers. Later on some former students were welcomed as guests. As the demand increased the residence was moved to Hino, a suburb of the capital. A building was built as a dormitory for university students and for the central community.

As the economic level of the population improved, the need for this residence service diminished until it ceased completely.

So the thinking was to convert it into a group meeting center. Some building modifications were made and at the present time it is used by several churches. Often this center hosts bishops, major superiors, religious, parish movement groups or groups from other Christian churches or cultural organizations.

Thanks to its geographic location and the reasonable prices for service, the center is almost always in use. In addition, its chapel serves as an auxiliary parish site.

TWO ACADEMIC MINISTRIES

KAGOSHIMA:

Kagoshima is located in the extreme southern part of the country. The first Lasallian school opened there in 1950.

It started as a pre-university baccalaureate boys' school. Now there are 450 students in the secondary school and another 750 in the baccalaureate program.

From its beginnings the school has been characterized by the quality of its studies and therefore it enjoys an excellent reputation at the national level, both in academic prowess and in its integral approach to the training it imparts.

The parents of the students work very closely with the school to create a community atmosphere which is characteristic of our institutions. For the majority of citizens, a mention of the word De La Salle in Japan automatically conjures up an image of the Lasallian school in Kagoshima.

HAKODATE:

The city is located in the northern part of the country where the population is less dense and where there are great open spaces. This influences the more liberal character of its inhabitants and this is also reflected in the school where there is a very fraternal type of conviviality.

In this city the school opened ten years after "La Salle" in Kagoshima.

The Brothers managed to recover the property purchased before the war with the proviso that they open a school.

And so this second school came into existence in part by legal pressure and in part by a form of nostalgia in that it was the first city that welcomed the Brothers 28 years earlier.

The school takes care of 900 students in the baccalaureate program. Like Kagoshima, Hakodate has a boarding section that serves 60% of the school population.

The De La Salle Legacy

In Sendai as in Kagoshima and Hakodate, the young people who are educated in the Lasallian schools are grateful for having received a Lasallian education. The majority show their gratitude for the education they have received.

The former student movement cooperates with the respective schools and recently it has also begun to cooperate with Institute programs by means of SECOLI.

A tea ceremony, Japanese style.



Former students feel proud to be LASALLIANS like those of any other school in other countries. Perhaps they do not employ the same vocabulary but they live the same SPIRIT. Nevertheless, there is much still to be done in the area of the continuing formation of former students so that they might better integrate themselves within the Lasallian Family.

Several former students are now teachers at the two teaching centers and their presence reinforces the educational style of the institutions. They are the direct extension of the Lasallian charism.

In Japan, perhaps more than in other countries, the students in general and also in our schools are happy to be students and they have a special respect for their teachers.

Looking towards the Future

The new realities and needs of the country invite us to look at internationalization at the present time.

Japan, in the world context, must participate more actively and responsibly with the rest of the world. Education should help to create this international atmosphere which should begin within the educational community.

From the point of view of the De La Salle Brothers in Japan, the future has already begun, as it is often said. Ministry and the fostering of vocations have been and are one of our constant concerns and, as a Delegation, we are committed more and more to fostering our own vitality.

Our movement towards the future should be not only inter-community but also inter-institutional. Our educational communities renew themselves as they respond to the new needs of society.

Lay educators identify with De La Salle, the man who was attentive to the needs of his time and to his own style of educational responses.

Day after day, De La Salle enters the hearts of generous educators, the majority of whom are Buddhist. The Spirit is free, here and now, and it is incarnated in these educators who are becoming the new heirs of the Lasallian charism.

Students from the Sendai boarding home.



ST. JOSEPH'S DEVELOPMENT TRUST ST. JOSEPH'S BOYS' VILLAGE

*"It is an ever fixed mark
that looks on Tempests and is never shaken;
it is the star to every wandering child;
Being an oasis in the desert,
it cares for the unwanted in its sanctuary,
its name is Boys' Village."*

Boys' Village is a living phenomenon since its establishment by the De La Salle Brothers at Butlagundu on the foothills of the Palani mountains. It has spread out its wings of love, concern and dedication to shelter the numerous deserted people of different villages by promulgating integrated educational, health, economic and vocational programmes for their upliftment. While hailing the generosity of the benefactors, the staff put forth their stupendous effort in carrying out the mission under the Scubilion Village Outreach Programmes.

"Educating a child is better than building a thousand temples"

Education is the crux of life just as the axle to the wheel. Boys' Village is the axle that wheels the lives of thousands of students through education. Under the Scubilion Outreach Programme, Boys' Village is carrying out a proper education programme with teachers through Tuition Centres for school going students from 1st to 10th standard. Boys' Village is the saviour of the students who are denied the basic amenities of life such as food to grow, clothing, water, electricity and education.

The T.C. functions before and after school

Having a lot of doubts and no one to clarify them, these students approach the staff of T.C. for guidance and enlightenment. Several Tuition Centres with good environment for nearly 2,000 students at different villages are put up to ensure the progress of these students. As a result they come out of the school with flying colours to show their gratitude that they owe to their sanctuary, the Boys' Village.

Indoor and outdoor games play a vital role in bringing out the hidden talents of the students. Leadership quality is infused in them so that the future world will be a sound place to live in. They are

encouraged to participate in social welfare activities, and hygiene classes are being held to provide awareness in keeping their surroundings neat and tidy. Thus Boys' Village acts and performs its motives in accordance with the sayings of our beloved father and founder St. John Baptist de La Salle:

"You should look upon the children whom you are called upon to instruct as poor, abandoned orphans; ...it is for this reason that God has appointed you their guardian. He has pity on them and cares for them as being their protector, their support and their father. But the care He has for them, He makes yours."

"Health is wealth"

The efforts and care put forth by Boys' Village in health education for people of difficult circumstances are astonishing ones. Lack of awareness and proper facilities may ruin the health of the poor. Owing to the health and hygiene classes that are being held by Boys' Village, the people come to know the need for good health for a better life. Making use of skilled lecturers on subjects such as immunization, nutrition, tuberculosis, child welfare and family planning, Boys' Village paves the way for enriched life on the whole.

Video shows depicting the calamities of Aids are screened to ensure the safety of people at various villages.

Health camps are conducted and treatment is given for those with ear or eye problems and polio. Many thousands of students from Balwadi T.C., a centre of non-formal education, are given full medical check-ups with the help of competent doctors.

A lesson at St. Joseph's Boys' Village.



Boys' Village shows its love for the handicapped and aged by implementing numerous programmes to live a fruitful life in spite of the obstacles of the society.

If the towns are the body of a society, the villages are its back bone. True to the fact, Boys' Village keeps an eye on the development of village Forums. Boys' Village has extended its helping hands by running 6 village women's Forums and 3 Youth Forums and a Farmers' Forum with the marvellous support of the staff. These Forums meet twice a month to hold discussion with the help of experienced hands. This encourages and motivates their rights in the society. When their identities are questioned and devalued, they rise up to the occasion to fight against the injustice done to them by holding campaigns, hunger-fasts and talks to record their places in the society. Saving schemes implemented by Boys' Village are a boon to them when they are in tight-corners. Loans are given for various purposes with low or no interest, keeping their economic condition in mind.

Boys' Village has laid its hand on the economic development of the villages to enrich the economic status of the poor by promulgating various programmes. The village folk are given loans to purchase livestock, agricultural supplies on low or no interest basis. The beneficiaries also have to put some money to ensure their interest in improvement. The village Forum holds the duty of selecting potential beneficiaries, keeping in mind the financial needs of the family, number of persons and the aged or handicapped. It also looks into the loan collection. Boys' Village has been put under pressure when the loans around Rs. 345,771.80 were not paid back by nearly 177 beneficiaries. As a result it has to frighten the people for good reasons by telling them that they would be deprived of their assets if the loans are not repaid. But at the same time Boys' Village extends the period of repayment, having in mind the predicaments and the problems (i.e., broken equipment, death of livestock and health problems in the family) faced by the beneficiaries. Through loans, large numbers of people have seen the rays of hope, and prosperity becomes the key word. With hard labour and the enormous support of benefactors, St. Joseph's Boys' Village has helped the poor to alleviate their sufferings and poverty.

The Non-Formal Education Centres play a vital role in Boys' Village programmes. Many students are denied basic education due to the prevailing economic situation. They have to work hard to support their families. Boys' Village has opened its heart to these poor people too. It provides them the opportunity to acquire the ABC of education and a chance to improve their social awareness. The N.F.E. centres are meant for the age group 10 to 25 years. They also look after the school drop-outs too. Boys' Village has 15 centres with 555 students from 22 villages. Social awareness classes are conducted once a month and the people are encouraged and guided to do social work, such as cleaning roadsides, planting trees and maintaining community facilities. The saving scheme introduced by Boys' Village is a gift to them in many ways. Thus Boys' Village has enriched the living conditions of the poorest villagers in an incredible way.

*"Children are the gifts of God;
caring for them is a blessing.
If chance embraces you,
just smile at them;
that's all I ask of you... Dear."*



A period of prayer and reflection organized by the boys themselves.

B.J.T. JUNIOR COLLEGE KEESARA

In 1993, we De La Salle Brothers extended our apostolate in the diocese of Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh, the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. Andhra Pradesh is the land of temples and mosques which combines the age old traditions of Dravidian Hindus of the South with the Muslim cultural heritage. The population of the state is 66,000,000 and the literacy rate is 45% which is lower than the national literacy rate of 52%.

We started a junior college in Keesara to cater to the educational and social needs of 20 nearby villages. The population under our coverage is 120,000. Most of the people of this locality are peasants and daily wage labourers. They depend upon monsoon rains for cultivation, which often fail in this part of the country.

This is a very much neglected area. So, we De La Salle Brothers, started the animation of an educational institution in a rural area as a challenge to improve the standard of education and social upliftment of people, especially the marginalised youth. Our junior college prepares students for higher education and professional courses. Opportunities are provided for youth to motivate them to have a correct perspective of their life. Many programmes are conducted to create social awareness and to develop civic responsibility.

With the generous donation of Manos Unidas, Spain, the new college building is nearing completion and the hostel building will be completed within a year for residential students. We intend to start degree courses and vocational studies in the near future.

*Bro. Antony Arulsamy, F.S.C.
Principal.*

ST. PIUS X BOYS' TOWN, NAGAMALI, MADURAI

This year the thrust has been on the consolidation of vocational training and income generation programmes. Apart from the ongoing training programmes, we have expanded our service to our boys with the introduction of two trades, namely, Agriculture & Animal Husbandry and Motor Vehicle maintenance.

There are about 150 students currently learning these trades. This year's final Government examinations results have been good. Classes for non-formal education are also organised with equal attention and care for the deserving students. In order to update skills and modern technologies, our instructors were sent for exposure and refresher visits to other reputed institutions.

The success of these programmes has also prompted us to undertake organised marketing and sale of products from the vocational training centre.

SPORT:

Competitions in sports, music and dance are a good way of developing the boys' creative talents. Participation by all the boys is encouraged. Encouragement is also given for their participation in various competitions organised by Special Technical Schools in Madurai. It is an opportunity to meet and interact with boys from similar backgrounds and share their experiences.

EXCURSION:

Life for the boys isn't all work. Boys' Town feels that their development into young adults should include a variety of experiences. Excitement and delight were seen on the boys' faces when they were taken on an excursion to "Vaigai dam", Andipatti, a tourist spot. Students from other educational institutions often visit Boys' Town, and this is an excellent opportunity for the boys to be exposed to other students.

HEALTH:

The general health of the boys is good, as efforts are made to maintain the quality of nourishment. Height and weight charts are maintained regularly and health care and hygiene are ensured. Yearly medical check-up is given to all the boys and follow up treatment is provided for tuberculosis, polio and leprosy when detected at the early stage.

PASTORAL CARE:

Pastoral care in the establishment is given the topmost priority. Eucharistic celebrations are held regularly for the Brothers and students. All the boys are encouraged to take an active participation in the liturgy and in all other devotional practices. Three days a week Catechism classes are conducted for all the Christian boys and moral instructions are given to other students.

SOCIAL SERVICE:

By means of Community Service, we try to make students sensitive to the needs of the very poor and the handicapped, and to involve them in helping the underprivileged, so that they can



St. Joseph's Boys' Village: everyone helps out cheerfully during work periods.



Functional Literacy at Nanban Girls' Center.

promote justice and human dignity among the socially deprived native population in rural and urban sectors.

There is a sense of achievement and a feeling of satisfaction that Boys' Town has established itself as a leading Technical Institute for integrated technical education in Madurai, South India.

*Bro. Gnanapragasam
Managing Trustee / Administrator.*



Nanban: a theory class whose content will later be applied in the workshops.

NANBAN CENTRE FOR STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN

Nanban - History

The academic initiative of Bro. S. James, the Secretary of the trust, along with Mr. Velayutham began on 9th March 1990.

Poverty tended to eat away at the soul and emotions of the street children. It eroded and corroded their being until one was near despair at the seeming hopelessness of it all. Moved by this situation, Bro. S. James emphatically convinced the Association of the De La Salle Brothers - India to do something tangible for this unnoticed section of the society. Nanban was initially started as an experimental pilot project.

Nanban evolved along the way, gaining the confidence and trust of the children who began to experience that indeed, they were no more alone, that at last, there was hope... and Nanban, meaning a friend, came on to stay.

Right from its inception, Nanban has been associating and seeking guidance and assistance from various lay people from all walks of life. Nanban has never been bound to any one particular authority, group, sect or religion.



Nanban: at meal time the best tool is one's appetite!

Every child who passes through Nanban undergoes transformation in the three H's - Head, Heart, Hand, before the mainstream society.

Basic Philosophy and Aims

1. Nanban supports the child in his/her efforts to grow and integrate himself/herself into mainstream society.
2. Nanban aims at building a movement towards meaningful social and political action capable of challenging those situations that leave children abandoned on the streets.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ORGANISATION

General objectives

Strongly believing in and supporting the basic principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nanban aims to build up a movement in order to uproot all forms of exploitation and oppression of children, through the protection and promotion of their basic human rights, so that they will be able to enjoy a dignified childhood.

Specific Objectives

1. Work and support the street children.
2. Work for the immediate abolition of child bonded labour and for the eventual abolition of child labour and all other forms of child servitude.
3. Advocate for the child's rights convention for public awareness and its effective implementation in practice.
4. Keep abreast of the realities of working children and children living at risk through regular research, surveys, and studies and disseminating the findings for public information.
5. Organise both local and international concerned groups that will campaign against all forms of exploitation and oppression of children, including child labour, trafficking and sale of children.
6. Formulate and conduct basic child development and support activities for underprivileged children at both local and national levels and develop networking through community connections and collateral programmes with like-minded individuals, groups and organisations for the attainment of the above objectives.
7. Follow Up: We conduct regular internal evaluation every 6 months. Follow up of rehabilitated children is done through correspondence, home visits to the respective villages and sometimes get together.

Nanban - Mode of Operation

The street educators, who were once on the street themselves but are reformed and rehabilitated today, go out into the favourite spots of the runaways and street children, make contact, develop a rapport and bring them to Nanban.

The development workers take over. There are counselling and sharing sessions with the child over a period of time. The child's address, whereabouts and fields of interest are obtained.

The process of correspondence with the parents begins. The child is taken by a development worker for home placement. He counsels and talks to the parents and returns the child to his parents if the situation is conducive.

Those abandoned are admitted to schools to pursue an academic career. Those interested in skill training are inducted in screen printing, welding and wireman's course. The girls are imparted training in tailoring and overlock. Deserving academically-inclined children are sponsored by Nanban for further education at other institutions.

Advocacy of the Rights of the Child

As an advocate organisation, Nanban has been organising massive public awareness programmes on the rights of the child. It organises action, oriented seminars, consultations, exposures, workshops, exchanges, exhibitions etc. with an aim to communicate the basic rights of the child and expose their violations in practice.

Research and Training Programme

In order to identify, understand and expose the magnitude of problems related to child labour and children living at risk and difficult circumstances, Nanban conducts a regular action-oriented survey/research programme. Special training programmes for children, development workers and human rights workers are also organised to enhance the grass roots level conscientisation.

NANBAN - STRATEGIES

Centre Based Activities:	In the Street:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Night Shelter * Home Placement * School Placement * Counselling Service * Parental Counselling * Medical Checkup * Medical Treatment * Safekeeping of Belongings * Saving Schemes and Loans * Job Placement * Job Mobility * Advocacy * Youth for Youth Programmes * Camps and Picnics * Sports Meets * Need Based Education * Socialisation * Maintenance of Individual Records * Come and Experience Nanban * Secondary Data Collection * Survey * Analysis * Documentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Making Friends * Tracing of Missing Children * Co-op with Juvenile Guidance Bureau and Juvenile Welfare Board * Co-op with the Reception Home * Formation of Children's Association * Co-op with the Police Department * Monitoring Police Children's Club.
	With the community:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Seminars * Workshops * Rallies * Panel Discussions * Campaigns * Audio Visual Aids * Newsletters * Networking * Rapport with the Mass Media * Membership in Local and International Forums.

Nanban operates 6 satellite centres all over Madurai. The geographical area we cover is Madurai city and District. Nanban also runs and manages the Police children's club N° 3 and N° 4 of which the Secretary has been appointed as the Honorary Director by the Madurai Police Department.

During the last five years 4248 children came into contact with Nanban, out of which 2204 children were restored back to their parents under the home placement scheme which has always been the main thrust of Nanban.

Achievements

* NANBAN became an associate member of the International Catholic Child Bureau in 1995. ICCB, managed by the General Secretariat in Geneva, collaborates with those who work for the dignity and the best interests of the child. NANBAN has become a member of ICCB in its growing family.

* NANBAN has been requested to assist ICCB - Asia Desk Manila in their attempt to exhibit our photographs depicting the synthesis of street children and their lives, also in the symposium, under the project on "The Year of the Youth" which was held in January 1995 in Manila, Philippines.



Nanban: Brother Xavier leading meditation.

* The Inter-Centre for films for children and young people - Canada, has written to us of their interest in being a partner with NANBAN for the expansion of its Pilot 10th Muse Project to children in some 5 countries. This particular project called "Teen Video Stories", will be accompanied by an ambitious effort to broadcast the children's work in collaboration with producer-director Ole G. Jerstad who co-shares the responsibility for the project with CIFEJ.

* The National Child Labour Action Network - New Delhi selected Nanban for the NATIONAL AWARD - 1991. The nomination and advisory committees found our approach was innovative in the sense that the street and working children are not put in an orphanage, but instead we try to establish relations with other members of the community so that a comfortable future may be reached.



Nanban: Children participating in yoga classes.

* Nanban's street and working boys participated in the All India YMCA Sports Festival for street children conducted by YMCA at Hyderabad in 1992. Our kids won the prestigious All India YMCA Kabbadi Title and the championship Shield and were runners-up in the Football tournament. Our boys also won the first, second and third prizes in the cultural events.

* In April 1993, NANBAN children, accompanied by a few senior staff, participated in the state level working childrens' conference in Vellore.

* NANBAN children generously contributed their total yearly savings to Maharashtra earthquake victims.

* The city cultural Academy gave to NANBAN the 1994 Institutional Award for best service to the street children. This Award was given for NANBAN's innovative approach in handling and tackling the street children's issues, and our consistency at the success of the Home Placement Programme.



Nanban: Birthday celebrations are happy occasions which can strengthen student-teacher relationships.

* The Corporation Commissioner of Madurai gave to NANBAN the Kabilar Kalyana Mahal at Obula Padithurai in 1993 which was converted as Nanban Boys' Centre along with the vocational training unit. The present corporation commissioner of Madurai handed over to Nanban the vacant school building with a huge playground at Kamarajarpuram, which is now Nanban's Transit centre. Both the buildings have been given to Nanban at a very nominal rent.

* Bro. James Kimpton and Anbu Illam's Executive Committee and General Body took the decision to dissolve the Anbu Illam society and transfer Anbu Illam's assets, liabilities and property to Nanban in 1993. Nanban having taken possession, the building after undergoing a face-lift opened in March 1993, an exclusive centre for girl street and working children at Mathichayam.

* The Nanban Headquarters and administrative office which began in a rented building at Goods Shed street in March 1990 when Nanban was initiated, moved to Obula Padithurai Boys Centre in 1993. We are happy to say that in 1994 Nanban has at last acquired its first and only property to call its own, our present Shenoy Nagar Headquarters.

* NANBAN is greatly indebted and grateful to the Madurai Collector, Dr. Rajeevan, IAS who genuinely understood the situation and was kind enough to sanction and give us bulk order and provision for Ration in 1994. NANBAN has probably created a revolution as we were told that no other NGO working with street children has ever been provided with Ration and that NANBAN is the first such organisation to get Ration in the state of Tamil Nadu.

* Under the Vocational Training Programme, a Tailoring and Overlock Unit has been functioning at the Girls' Centre, run in association with the Central Government's "Sheramike Vidyapeeth" since 1993. It operates in 2 shifts benefiting 60 girls who take part in the 6 months training process. In 1 year, 120 girls come out acquiring Tailoring and Overlock skills from our unit.

* Medical check ups, Medical camps and Eye camps along with free medical aid and accessories are held on a regular basis, once every three months at NANBAN's centre, benefitting and attended by around 200 children and families.

* Various clubs and schools of Madurai come forward in one form or the other and participate and offer something from their side for the betterment of NABAN's children: YMCA Women's Wing, Lions Club Midtown, Lions Arati Club, Aristo Club, Madurai Round Table, Rotary Club, Arivoli Movement.

* Women's Grievance Cell, a unit of the Tamil Nadu State government, conducted programmes at NANBAN's 3 centres and adjoining areas for girls only. About 100 to 150 girls/women approached and appealed with involvement and took part in the programme from every centre. There are innumerable problems such as sexual abuse from their

masters at their place of work, mill owners exploitation, dowry problems, husband's unemployment and alcoholism, children's unemployment, ration card issues, etc.

CONCLUSION

Today NANBAN has come to a point, silently marching ahead on and on over the last five years, when we feel that we have had enough of diversifications. The point has come when we now want to consolidate and sow the seed of self support, of growth in the direction of self sustenance in regards to the future.

We are indeed extremely happy with some sense of fulfillment and satisfaction that NANBAN has been able to genuinely assist over 4248 children, both boys and girls, from our inception till today and we have been able to maintain the intensity and consistency in carrying out our primary motive of Home Placement.

We don't want NANBAN to become just a structured institution; rather, NANBAN must become a MOVEMENT. We don't see any advantages or bright prospects in growing bigger structurally and expanding with numerous buildings, centres, staff, vehicles, big boards under powerful lights and more publicity and fame. No, this is not what NANBAN is seeking - yesterday, today or tomorrow.

For NANBAN, every single child that comes into contact is a special gift from God and as His instruments we touch the heart of the child, giving him/her a right shape, sense of direction in

life and an opportunity to lead a normal life like you and me, under one roof with their natural guardians/ parents.

Even though NANBAN is convinced of our non-institutional approach, we have found that a certain percentage of children still very much need institutional care. As NANBAN cannot mobilize resources to give the institutional approach very much required by the child, NANBAN is in the process of seeking and making association and partnership with other existing institutions and convincing them to participate in our approach, getting them to be involved along with us in this noble cause for the child.

NANBAN has had an advantage that over the years we have been very open, associating, and seeking guidance and assistance from various lay people from all walks of life. This has enabled us to view things and function on a broader perspective and with clarity and objectivity, as we have not bound ourselves to any one particular authority, sect or religion.

NANBAN is more for advocacy and active involvement in campaigns. NANBAN will now concentrate on playing a facilitative and animative role with the present setup. We are also contemplating to arrange a general five years evaluation and also an external evaluation.

*Bro. S. James, FSC.
Secretary - NANBAN*



A group of young boys who have found their new "home" in Boys' Town.



Girls at the Overlook Training Unit of Nanban's Girls Center.

EXPERIENCES OF LASALLIAN SCHOOLS IN SHRI LANKA WHERE CHRISTIANITY IS THE RELIGION OF THE MINORITY

THE COUNTRY

Shri Lanka is an island situated in Asia in the Indian Ocean just below India at Lat. 6 N and Long. 79. It is popularly called the "Pearl of the Indian Ocean".

Its people are very warm hearted, kind and hospitable. The present population is 17 million, of four main races, viz. Sinhalese (85%), Tamils (10%), Muslims (4%), Burghers (1%)

While it is generally believed that the Sinhalese are the natural inhabitants of the land, the Tamils are said to have come from (South) India, the Muslims from Arabia and allied lands, the Burghers being the descendants of the Colonial Rulers, Portuguese, Dutch and English, married to local women. There are four main Religions, Catholicism and Christianity (7%), Buddhism (67%), Islam (14%) and Hinduism (12%).

This Country is very fertile and green all the year round, and blessed with several natural resources.

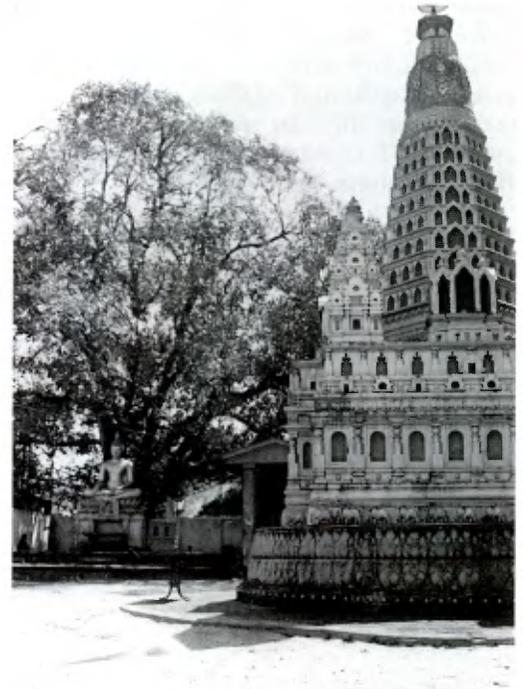
The Country regained independence from the British rulers on 4 February 1948; it was a very peaceful transfer of power without any shedding of blood or loss of life.

Irrespective of Religion or Race and Caste, all four races and four Religions in general seem to blend together and get on very well with one another, in spite of certain prejudices and hurt feelings that each Race or Religion has to bear up with.

A VERY DISTURBED ATMOSPHERE

Despite this kindness and warmth, the selfish planning and scheming of some unscrupulous politicians and other individuals and organisations, particularly among the Sinhalese and the Tamils, who wish to further their own interests at the expense of the Country and its people, have created a very disturbed atmosphere, and now for some 13 years we are saddled with a war, some of the Tamils demanding a separate State. This has resulted in a lot of blood shed and thousands of deaths. In addition some unscrupulous individuals among both Sinhalese and Tamils make capital of the situation, posing racial rights as the apparent reason. With such a hypocritical motivation to deceive the people, an end to this war is sadly a remote possibility.

There is also a deep rooted and long-lasting historical prejudice particularly among the Buddhists against the Christians and specially against the Catholics. This began with the Colonial Rule from the XVI century to 1948, under the Portuguese, Dutch and the English. It is the belief among the Buddhists especially that the Colonial Rulers acted to the disadvantage and detriment particularly of the Sinhalese Buddhists. It is said that the lands of the people and the Buddhist temples were taken by these Colonial Rulers either for the use of the Government or for themselves, or to be given to converts for the Catholics



Two Hindu temples in Shri Lanka.





St. Benedict's,
a Brothers' School.

should yet harbour anger and prejudice against the Catholics and Christians. However, it is heartening that the prejudice is thinning out from day to day, due mainly to the new thinking of the Catholics and Christians after Vatican II, the openness of the younger generation, and the needs of the times. The Buddhists and those of other Religions are also studying English now and bettering their positions in life. To understand the De La Salle Brothers' work in Shri Lanka it is necessary to understand this background and atmosphere.

EDUCATION AND CHRISTIANS

Education was almost the monopoly of the Christians and the Catholics. There were of course a few government schools during the colonial reign, but they were most often Christian (Western) oriented. During the British period (1815-1948), the medium of instruction was English. Quite a number of Buddhists entered the Christian and Catholic schools to obtain an English education. The Buddhists had no schools except the "Pirivena" schools in the temples which exclusively taught Buddhism in Pali, Sanskrit and Sinhala. Until Colonel Olcott, a Britisher who turned Buddhist, opened schools for the Buddhists, they were deprived of a general education.

During the Colonial times and even now, the non Christians and the non Catholics clamour to be admitted to our schools, because of the discipline, character education, the polish and the English education we provide. We were and yet are being accused of proselytizing through schools, though the idea was furthest from our minds and from the minds of the non Catholic/Christian students. And it is not strange that quite a number of renowned educated non-Christian/Catholic persons, particularly Buddhists, educated in our schools harbour serious grudges against us and in certain instances have openly worked against us through the positions they hold/held.

After some time while the Church had Catholic schools scattered all over the country, their medium of instruction in most schools was the vernacular (Sinhala or Tamil). The Schools which the De La Salle Brothers took over from the Church, or established themselves in, always had English as the medium of instruction. In the early fifties the medium of instruction in all schools became Sinhala or Tamil. Until very recently our schools were only for boys. Then and now we always had a very high percentage of Catholic students in our schools, except in the outstation schools where we sometimes had less than half Catholic students. Presently we have girls too in some of our schools.

Cleaning and painting
their own desks.



and the Christians to build churches and schools. In addition to this, the Colonial Rulers are said to have exploited the Catholic and Christian Religions in turn for their own gain and profit. Those who were converted, particularly the Buddhists, to the Catholic or Christian Religion were benefited and had an advantage over the others, because they got the opportunity to study English, get jobs, obtain positions, and thus better their lives. Obviously the Buddhists were frustrated and as a result despised the Catholics and the Christians and all those who were converted. And today, the same position prevails, although it is not always apparent. Even though the present government is controlled by the Buddhists, the Catholics and the Christians are yet at an advantage particularly because of the opportunity to study English and be more exposed to different world experiences. Still, the Catholics and the Christians get the better jobs, and sometimes better positions and appointments, particularly in the Private sector, and even in the Government sector. It is therefore not surprising that the Buddhists

TAKE OVER OF SCHOOLS BY THE GOVERNMENT

The take over of schools by the Government in December 1960 was to hit on the Christian and Catholic schools. It was a general election pledge to please the Buddhists, who were jubilant that the Schools Take Over would equate the Catholic/Christian Schools with the other schools. Before the Take Over all schools were called assisted schools because the Government, besides paying the salaries of all the teachers, also gave an annual grant to each school. At this juncture 42 Catholic schools opted to go private, of which 6 were conducted by the Brothers. This meant that there was no Government aid whatsoever. Three of our schools were not able to

carry on due to lack of finances; the other three are yet surviving, now partly aided with an allowance from the Government since 1987.

There had always been a sprinkling of non Catholics/ Christians in our schools. These students did not have their religions taught to them; instead they were taught "moral science", though some of them opted to study Catholicism/Christianity and even won prizes at various competitions. At all times the students of different religions and races got on very well together, not merely tolerating one another, but accepting one another and binding themselves together as students of the same school.

The Schools Take Over (1960), even more than Vatican II, brought about salutary changes in our educational system. Some of us now consider it a blessing in disguise. Among the several blessings it has brought along with it is the requirement that each student be taught his/her religion – a necessary human right – because without religion it is not possible for man to get a correct perspective of life. Consequently now, all schools in the Country are expected to teach every child his/her religion. This is done to a very great extent by most of the Catholic/Christian schools, though Catholicism/Christianity is not taught in most non Catholic, non Christian schools, generally through prejudice and even bitterness. There are also schools that force Catholics/Christians to study other religions. Some Catholics/Christians study other religions, mainly Buddhism, to make up for the missing subject, Catholicism/Christianity.



Liturgical celebration for the feast of the Holy Trinity in 1995. Brother Superior General was on hand for the occasion.

PREJUDICE AND EVEN HIDDEN BITTERNESS

While there is some prejudice and even hidden bitterness among the non Catholic/Christian students, there is also fear among the Catholic/Christian students, teachers, principals and parents, that those of other religions, especially the Buddhists, will assert themselves and usurp our own rights in our own schools. This is already happening, not necessarily from the Government in power, but by the various non Catholic/non Christian officials working particularly in the Education Department. Several Taken Over Catholic/Christian schools have been given Buddhist names or names of other Religions. Even in the already existing Catholic/Christian schools, efforts are made to have Buddhist shrines, to exhibit pictures and statues of the Buddha in the classrooms, and to invite Buddhist monks to have special prayer services on the full moon days, etc. Obviously the Catholics/Christians, rightly or wrongly, are resentful and disapproving of these efforts. They seem to be fair in the stand they take, since they wish their children to grow up in a true Catholic/Christian atmosphere. There is however a tolerant atmosphere building up particularly in some of our schools, while reminding students of other religions of their own religious duties, our children even help them to organise their important religious functions. In return they too help our children to organise our own religious functions, like Christmas, end of May celebrations, Corpus Christi, etc.

One of the biggest drawbacks we find in our Catholic/Christian schools is the severe dearth of Catholic/Christian teachers. While even in our own private schools we now have a very small number of Catholic/Christian teachers, in the government schools we find that 98% of our Catholic/Christian students are taught by 98% non Catholic/non Christian teachers. The severe dearth of men and women religious, both in private and government schools, and thus of De La Salle Brothers, is one more reason we are gradually losing our schools.

Shri Lanka: a group of Christian students in the school's chapel.

INTEREST IN OUR SCHOOLS

Among the people who are most anxious that the Brothers should remain in the schools and administer them, are the non Catholics and the non Christians, particularly the Buddhists. They seem to value and appreciate more the benefits of a Christian Education than our own people. Quite a number of Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim parents often take a very active part in the different interests of our schools, at times putting our own people to shame. Undoubtedly their primary purpose is to get a good education for their children.

By and large it has to be said that most of the people in our country get on very well with one another irrespective of race,





Catholic cathedral of Colombo.

creed or caste. There is of course an effort made by exploiting individuals to create division between the Catholics/Christians and people of other Religions. Our non Catholic and non Christian people are comparatively less educated and are therefore easily prove to be misled.

In the unfortunate ethnic war that is ravaging the country just now, the Catholics/Christians are labelled "Pro Tamils" wishing to divide the Country into two, because with our Christian Faith and principles we "love" the Tamils, as children of one Father. These and similar prejudices that exist in the country sometimes make it difficult for us to reach the people and do them good.

OUR INSTITUTIONS :

PRESENTLY EXISTING INSTITUTIONS		
Institution	Place	Year
St. Benedict's College	Kotahena *	1868
St. Joseph's Novitiate	Mutwal *	1884
De La Salle College	Mutwal *	1905
St. Joseph's College	Grandpass *	1905
St. Sebastian's College	Moratuwa	1926
De Mazenod College	Kandana	1933
<i>St. Mary's College</i>	Chilaw	1933
<i>St. Anne's College</i>	Kurunegala	1934
<i>St. Anthony's College</i>	Wattala	1942
St. Xavier's College	Mannar	1953
Diyagala Boys' Town •	Ragama	1963
La Salle Institute •	Kotahena *	1971
La Salle Community Education Services •	Mutwal *	1980
Institute of Spiritual Formation of Asia •	Mutwal *	1994
La Salle English Academy •	Mutwal *	1994

* In the Metropolis. The rest of the schools, though in the outstations, are in urban areas.
 • Our own non academic private institutions.
 – One time Private Schools after 1960; in *italics*.

Colombo's mosque.



We may be giving the wrong impression when we say that three of our schools are private. The children in these schools cannot by any means be called rich. In fact we have over 15,000 students in our schools, of all races and religions and castes, of whom over 90% are from the lower middle class and lower.

INSTITUTIONS, BROTHERS WITHDRAWN FROM		
Institution	Place	Period
St. Mary's School	Negombo	1870-1878
St. Joseph's School	Bandarawela	1884-1889
St. Mary's School	Pettah *	1920-1940
St. Bede's College	Badulla •	1934-1962
St. Lucia's School	Kotahena *•	1957-1970
St. Andrew's College	Puttalam	1955-1957
St. Xavier's College	Nuwara Eliya •	1957-1962

• Brothers withdrawn from three schools after the Take Over of Schools in December 1960.
 * These schools were in the Metropolis. The other schools were in the outstations.

PAKISTAN

The immense territory of Pakistan offers an infinite variety of contrasts: there are the areas that are over-populated and others that are uninhabited; highly productive areas and Provinces that are underdeveloped; the cultures here go back thousands of years, but they are all different: there are religions whose origins are lost in the mist of time; there are others that are fiercely exclusive and radical. The culture from a colonial model has been engaged in the process of decolonization, or more positively, indigenization.

In this immense mosaic of races, cultures, stages of development, evolution, traditions and politics, so varied and so different, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools serves the Kingdom of God through the educational apostolate entrusted to it by the Church.

Pakistan is 99% Muslim, with a minority Christian Church which enjoys an exceptionally high profile. This is due in no small measure to its contribution to education, in a country where state education is available to less than 50% of the population. The Brothers run Urdu medium schools for the poor, mostly Christians, and English medium schools, almost totally for Moslems. It is a situation in which the evangelical witness of the Brothers is much in evidence.

Since independence, Islam represents the majority values of national life and culture. Working directly within the government educational system, despite reduced numbers, the Brothers live and work in the very mainstream of national education, their special contribution fully recognized and appreciated. The Brothers run their own schools, as well as

offering close supervision of schools which do not belong to them, in a fully Christian milieu.

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE MINISTRY

How the sub District came into existence

The District of Colombo was asked by the Institute's general administration in Rome to share the mission of the Dominican Missionaries in Pakistan, mainly in the work of Christian Education. The diocese of Multan had begun building a large school on a suitable site in the episcopal city. Brother Vincent Joseph went on a visit of exploration to that Moslem country and found an excellent opportunity was being providentially offered to the District of Colombo to enlarge its apostolic field at a time when the foreign missionaries in Shri Lanka were threatened with limitations and even with expulsion. The District Council studied Brother Vincent Joseph's report on the aspect of the situation in Pakistan and on the conditions of accepting the school in Multan and was unanimously in favour of accepting. The problem then was to find and choose the founders of the new venture, and in this connection the Council's opinion was to offer the best the District could give.

Three persons most actively responsible for bringing the La Salle Brothers to Pakistan, Bishop Francis Benedict Cialeo OP, Superior General Brother Nicet Joseph and Brother Visitor Vincent Gottwald are evidently crucial.

A strikingly distinctive feature of Bishop Cialeo's pastoral care was education. A contract was signed between Brother Vincent Joseph Gottwald and Bishop Benedict Cialeo, and

Faisalabad, Railway Colony School. Even with few comforts the work goes on.



everything was arranged for taking over the new buildings towards the end of 1959. In early December of 1959, three Brothers from the Colombo District arrived in Multan. They were Brothers Stephen Harding, Caesar Albert and Glastian Oliver.

Evolution

"The principles upon which (the Brothers' School) is conducted are as liberal as possible: thus it is open to everyone, whatever his creed may be; and for instance, if a boy of a persuasion different from that of Roman Catholics attends it, no interference whatever takes place with his religion. Public religious instruction is given to Roman Catholic boys during school hours; but at all times the teachers must carefully watch over the morals of the whole, whatever their religious persuasion may be." (Cf. p. 64)

The Brothers school could rightly be seen to have been the standard-bearer for the Church, particularly in respect of other religions. The clergy functioned purely within the often small Catholic community. By contrast, the Brothers witnessed to the gospel in a much larger and more plural context, and thereby helped make the Church better known and give it a clear profile for selfless service and commitment.

With national unity a crucial priority, it was seen that the Brothers' school had made a major contribution towards the growth of a sense of brotherhood among students belonging to different races and religions. In the classroom and on the playing field, friendships developed which made for life-long understanding and co-operation.

In Pakistan the Lasallian Family manifests itself in a rich diversity of groups and a multitude of persons who participate in different Lasallian works and programmes.

Today the staff of our schools and other kinds of educational



La Salle Multan: A dramatic performance on the occasion of parents'

centres, are made up of persons from a rich variety of backgrounds, skills and training: Christians, Moslems, different socio-economic classes, and of course, different academic disciplines.

The average Lasallian school in Pakistan would offer an elementary and secondary education to upwards of 1500 students, staffed by 3 or 4 Brothers, and anywhere between 70 to 80 lay teachers. The membership of the staff would reflect the religious and cultural make up of the country; predominantly Moslems.

In the field of education, Pakistan represents developments stemming for the most part from a colonial tradition or tradition affected by the West through cultural influence. Pakistan based its educational model on the British tradition. The prevailing educational model, while deriving its basic structure from a colonial model, has been engaged in the process of decolonization or more positively, indigenisation. The primary goal of education is practical in nature, with emphasis on vocational and technical orientations rather than the humanistic liberal tradition. Curricula have been indigenised to reflect local rather than the colonizing countries' content; emphasis is on local culture and heroes, while the value of English has not lost its adherents.

The existence of private education and state policy towards private education have much to do with the future of religiously affiliated schools and allow private education at the general education (primary and secondary and higher secondary) level. Private initiatives at the level are now being allowed because of the inability of the state to supply needs of higher education. While private education is allowed, there is no state aid of any kind, thus obliging private education agencies to raise money through tuition with the consequent effects of this policy on the socio-economic level of the clientele.

Current situation

In Pakistan, the Church at the present time experiences perhaps the most phenomenal growth in numbers. Here the Church works within the cultures which are traditionally animist, and there is a greater readiness for the gospel message. Here the Brothers have been working for more than thirty years in close co-operation with the Church, and more recently with the established local hierarchy. Within that period the schools run by the Brothers produced a core of leaders for the Church



La Salle High School, Multan: the flag is hoisted.