

EDUCATION FOR THE POOR (3)

III) WHAT CAN LA SALLE BRING TO POPULAR EDUCATION?

1. Based on Christian faith, a dynamic vision of the work of the Spirit in history

"Fidelity to the specific intentions of the Founder and to the tradition of the Institute is confided to us as living men. It is we who carry on the task of discovering how fidelity to his charism can be lived in the present time". (*Declaration: The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today*, 7.1).

"... the signs of the times stress the urgency of their mission in the world today, the necessity to renew their religious life, their apostolic ministry, their presence among men". (8.1).

"Since they have chosen to work for the salvation that comes from Christ, they should let themselves be guided by the Spirit of God. It is he who stirs up in the Brothers the desire for renewal; it is he who speaks in a mysterious fashion through the events that transpire in the world and through the hopes and aspirations of its people". (8.2).

"These notes have helped the thirty-ninth General Chapter to recognize in the Institute a strong desire to play a much more active part in the life of the Church, a desire for a more determined adaptation of our life and work to the geographical, social, cultural, political and religious circumstances in which the Institute finds itself". (9.2).

"Another element that can be drawn from the notes is the expressed will for greater flexibility in the commitment of personnel to institutions so that when more urgent educational needs present themselves the Brothers will be readily available". (9.3).

"This world has more need than ever, even at the very center of man's temporal pursuits, for a witness given by people who are consecrated and who know and love God as a living being. It is more necessary than ever that an international Institute should exist for the educational service of the people throughout the world". (11.4).

2. A spirituality for Christian educators of the people

We refer to the numerous recent documents that crystalize the thought of Saint John Baptist De La Salle on the Christian Educator'. It will be sufficient to remember these basic themes:

— God's plan for the salvation of all men.

— Christian educators are God's "ministers and ambassadors" so that that plan may become a reality for children and youth, especially among the most abandoned.

— The Christian educator ought to let himself be guided by the Spirit of God, nourish himself with prayer and meditation on the Word of the Lord, and find his support in a community of educators that share his faith, his life and his educational activity. (Faith, Brotherhood, Service).

3. A style of education best adapted for the service of the people and enriched by three hundred years of experience

— Pedagogical realism: starting from life, it adapts itself creatively to reality.

— Child-centered. The subject is the center of the process.

— Personalization of the educative act: follow-through in the case of each student.

— Professional and spiritual training of the educator.

— Relations between teacher and students based on friendship.

— A physical atmosphere of serenity and order; maximum use of time of instruction.

— A will to make the school truly efficacious; a real preparation for life.

4. Concrete experiences

"Concern for the poor ought to lead to the modification of some of the programs we are now conducting and to the complete transformation of some of the others". (*Declaration*: 31.1).

"There is also need for both individual and community effort, based on creative study, to discover new and adapted forms of education to meet the needs of those among the poor who are most neglected". (33.1).

"The General Chapter, then, invites all the Brothers to be responsive to this need in the world today. It expresses a strong desire that in every region there will be many among us who will be qualified and anxious to serve the people of the developing countries". (33.4).

The audio-visual services of SECOLI (SEAV) has put out a whole series of concrete and imaginative slide presentations as to how these guidelines are being put into practice by Brothers in different part of the globe. For a yet deeper treatment of the topic

we refer the reader to Circular No. 412, page 1;7 and following pages.

5. Favorable conditions for a proper experimentation

"Programs for the training of the Brothers, however excellent they may be, can never dispense with the responsibility which each Brother has for his own formation. The achievement of a personal vocation is the life-long task of every individual through fidelity to the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit". (*Declaration*. 15.2).

"In these conditions, you can understand that the General Council wants to use the opportunity provided by the reports to stress the URGENCY OF PURSUING THIS CHANGE, decreed by the Chapters, and to try to do this with a new enthusiasm: THE PROMOTION OF JUSTICE IS AN OBJECTIVE THAT MUST BE ACCEPTED IN PRACTICE IN THE ENTIRE INSTITUTE SO AS BETTER TO ACHIEVE THE SERVICE OF THE POOR. In the field of education, SERVICE TO THE POOR is an integral part of the PROMOTION OF JUSTICE, but this latter goes beyond that. It is not content simply to help the poor, it seeks to fight against the things which unceasingly cause poverty and injustice, even in the richest nations". Circular No. 412, pages 65-66. Upper-case emphasis comes from the document itself.

IV) SUGGESTIONS

1. A whole plan of basic information for all the Brothers and especially for those that are in their

time of initial formation, on the doctrine of the Church on such themes as: Faith and Politics, Faith and Ideologies, Human Promotion, Popular Culture, Christian Liberation, Effective commitment for Justice, etc., in order to avoid simplistic arguments and to clear up ambiguities that seem to be the most paralyzing factors (doubts, fears) for an option for the poor among so many Brothers.

2. A greater sharing of Lasallian experiences in popular education, under whatever heading, and the possibility of evaluative interchanges.

3. The creation of nuclei of teachers and students, as well as parents, who take on a commitment to the promotion of Justice.

"That is why the creation of a core group of animators seems necessary and realistic if the school is to accomplish its objectives concerning service of the poor...". (Circular No. 412, page 33).

V) WORKS CONSULTED

- *Documents of CELAM II. Medellín, 1968.*
- *Documents of CELAM III, Puebla, 1979.*
- *The Charism of De La Salle in Latin America, Perú, April of 1981.*
- *The Evangelical Journey of St. John Baptist De La Salle, Bruño, Madrid, 1980.*
- *Circular No. 412, Rome, 15 September, 1980.*
- *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World of Today, General Chapter, '67.*

Brother Alfredo A. MORALES
30 May, 1984. Antilles.