

Considering Alternative Futures & Choosing an Horizon

Br Bernard Westcott

[This article stems from considerations of "Being Brothers Today" May 2006 Rome - Toward the 44th General Chapter & following this publication a series of examinations of "Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission" The Report of the International Assembly 2006 – Rome.]

The Lasallian Network in Britain

**The Lasallian Educational Council for Mission (LEM).
Council for Lasallian Formation.
The District Council of Great Britain and Malta.**

**The Heads of Lasallian Schools in GB.
Administrators in Lasallian Schools.
Teachers in Lasallian Schools.
Assistant teachers in Lasallian Schools.
Managers and caretakers in Lasallian Schools**

**Governors of Lasallians Schools.
Students in Lasallian Schools.
Parents of students in Lasallian Schools.**

Administrators & Directors of Lasallian Projects like the following: The Kintbury Team, LAMB in Bristol, and LDWP, Clayton Court, St John's.

**Former Kintbury Team Members.
Former De la Salle Brothers.
Former Students of De la Schools.**

**Parents of children within the Lasallian Network & beyond the Lasallian Schools.
Lasallian Youth: c/o Mr Chanel Lalley and Mr John Caherty, Br. Sean Sellors, Br. Ben Foy, and Br. John Deeney.**

De la Salle Brothers.

If you look at the table above you may find your location in the Lasallian Network in Britain. You are as I think of you in a place among many places in this network. I hope to say something about the dynamic presence of God among us in this Lasallian Network which I think is engaging us in extraordinary, unpredictable, and unimaginable changes that take us into the depths of the Lasallian story and forward into an unknown future for the Lasallian Mission in GB and other places globally.

The fact that the De la Salle Brothers in GB are ageing, is a difficult demanding journey of change for us. De la Salle Brothers and you, if you wish, need to search together for a new horizon and a new sense of God abiding with us.

With no younger generation of Brothers joining us Brothers are no longer able to entrust what has been entrusted to Brothers in the past to other Brothers in GB. We are, as De la Salle Brothers are in many ways, uncomfortable caretakers looking on at what we formerly cared for and served because it is beyond our direct care being mostly now in the hands of men and women.

Consequently, the Brothers are increasingly freer than they were in the past. They have space to reflect, to pray, to converse, to live anywhere and in what ever style they choose. This is an enormous change for them. Unexpected as this is I believe it is what God requires of them.

The Brothers and perhaps also yourself need to **decide ways of inviting men and women and Brothers that we know, to engage** in conversations about these educational works. The Lasallian Assembly in GB this Easter is part of this conversation.

This group from the Lasallian Network needs to **explore and discern what these entrusted educational works are. We must speak about** money, properties, personal and collective skills, collective and individual histories, capacity for changes, mobility for services to the needy, the centrality of education to life and justice, our vision as caretakers rather than owners, and our behaviours regarding a future that, while it is unknown, is directed and empowered by God.

In particular we need to understand, clarify in our minds, and articulate to ourselves and to others, perhaps with you, the nature and the manner in which all of us are caretakers in administering the legally registered De la Salle Trust in GB.

This Trust is about caretaking, not owning. It is a particular instrument which embodies the radical Lasallian nature of Lasallian Education. Lasallian Education is cared for, not possessed. It is this public and legally binding De la Salle Trust that is the specific tool that Brothers presently direct in GB.

The challenge for Brothers and women and men in the Lasallian Network is to take on this Lasallian manner of directing all that has been entrusted to us for the purposes of an ever unfolding Lasallian Educational Mission to a world around us that is in great need. De la Salle Brothers are at the moment responsible for and publicly accountable for directing this Trust.

Inviting Brothers and men and women (future Lasallians and perhaps you are one of these) to explore the nature and the possibilities of developing this Trust; and examining how together we may direct our caretaking of this trust is an important task. Furthermore we must find ways that allow the De la Salle Brothers in GB to entrust to future Lasallians what has already been entrusted to them. This means speaking about money, property, persons, time and skills (locally and globally), for the always new and unpredictably emerging Lasallian Educational Mission directed especially to the poor.

THE ESSENCE OF LASALLIAN EDUCATION

I think it is important to understand what is central about being **Lasallian Educators** and consequently to understand what the **Lasallian Education Mission** is about to day. These concepts are not nouns or states or things, they are verbs and actions of change. These terms describe unpredictable changes in the lives of people and practices in education.

It took several years of many changes for De la Salle and the Brothers to grasp what they had become involved in. Additionally this grasp evolved as their understanding and educational practices developed, and changes in their membership occurred. During these early years their understanding and the situations they found themselves in were always unpredictable. This uncertainty led De la Salle and two other men to make to each other and to God a life commitment to the work of education that they had begun to understand had been entrusted to them no matter what occurred. Later as the years went on more men likewise committed themselves to stand by one another. Some did this for their whole life others for part of their lives. In this way there has been a continuing and changing delivery of a Lasallian Education service of what has been entrusted God to each generation which is now global. This commitment which we continue to call **Lasallian Association** is the fundamental visible expression of several key aspects that are central to Lasallian Education and the Lasallian Educational Mission to the poor.

Lasallian Association and Lasallian Education are terms that encapsulate the unpredictably and unimaginable changes which open towards an uncharted future. Over three hundred years ago De la Salle

with his Brothers could not know what is happening today. The Brothers as we knew them have globally numerically declined in recent times. In GB no one is joining the Brothers. While at the same time globally there are hundreds of thousands of women and men engaging in an increasing number of forms of Lasallian Education. Some of these are in this country. This is an enormous and surprisingly unexpected change and creativity.

The key to seeing this as a creative and important change is a particular Lasallian view of life and education. This is a view that all life is entrusted to us by God. Our very being and all that we have the use of comes from God. As Lasallians, we own nothing. We are caretakers. Lasallians see each other as directed to distribute what is in our care for the purpose of Lasallian Education. It is this radical grasp of the nature of life that directs us to give to those in need who search us out, what God has entrusted to us. We, as at the beginning over three hundred years ago, refer to this view as a gift of the **“Spirit of Faith”**. Like the group of De la Salle and the first Brothers the **“Spirit of Faith”** takes time, perhaps many years, even generations, to desire, acquire, nurture, loose at times, then regain differently, and then live and continue to grow in this always changing understanding of each other and those in need.

Lasallian Association, the Lasallian Educational work and the “Spirit of Faith” are inseparable terms encapsulating continual changes. This is because in relating to each other, shoulder to shoulder, and to God, and to people in need, we are being changed and taken, individually and at the same time together, somewhere we have never been before.

Every one us in the Lasallian Network: single, parents, teachers in schools, administrators, advisors, those offering services in the community, former students studying or working, unemployed, in broken relationships, sick, and dying; all of us own nothing, all of us are entrusted as educators.

This Lasallian view has enormous implications for our personal lives, the way we relate, and the manner and practices of how we educate each other, and serve those in need. If we take this seriously we will be able to take risks, and perhaps we may be daring and together engage in great risks.

We need to begin to explore this more fully in the Lasallian Assembly 2007.

Let me illustrate this with something of Terry Fox born in GB who recovered from cancer, after having a leg amputated. With one good leg and an artificial leg he began, in 1981, a run across Canada to raise awareness and money, especially for

young people and adults, who were dying from cancer.

At the beginning of his run no one knew, no one cared, and no one understood; except his team and his family, and a few volunteers. It was in many ways a crazy dream. When challenged about the futility of his quest he replied, "I don't care if no one knows. I have survived cancer and people here are dying, hopeless, alone, and in need. They need a sign. I cannot do this on my own. Will you (to his closest team and to his few supporters and family) help me? They said yes to him and became part of the "Marathon of Hope." This was an extraordinary act of faith.

He ran 3,390 miles in 143 days. Young Canadians via information from GB who had cancer were the first came to meet him. Later the Canadian press and television attended. But because the cancer continued to spread through out his body he died on 28th June 1981 and was unable to complete his run of 5,364 miles. He raised millions of pounds for cancer relief and thousands were inspired and engaged.

The entrusted view of the work of Lasallian Education for those in need that I outline here has always been a crazy dream. It is also a tried and tested great work for over three hundred years which requires many with courage and different gifts. Will you participate in a discussion of what this important work might be for yourself and other men and women? Do you want to stand shoulder to shoulder with others in this work?

A particularly relevant description of this Lasallian conversation and Lasallian Association for me is provided by M. Pines (1996 'Dialogue and Selfhood; Discovering Connections', *Group Analysis* 22:329)

"In organisational terms, the human group is an organised system, formed, maintained and changed by the flow of meaningful information (communication) between its members. This is a group matrix, the communicational channels that link and join the members into a whole."

THE EASTER LASALLIAN ASSEMBLY

**FRIDAY EVENING MARCH 30th – SUNDAY
LUNCH APRIL 1st 2007**

Let us now consider the Easter Lasallian Assembly 2007 which has as you may know the following agenda previously set out in this publication:

- **Input, reflection, and sharing on Lasallian Education.**

- **Input, reflection, and sharing on Lasallian INSET (in service educational training).**
- **Discussion of a Lasallian Formation Centre and Resources Centre.**

In the light of what I have written this agenda suggests to me that during the Assembly there may arise a conversation along the following lines.

A first conversation:

A description is provided of what has been entrusted to the Brothers in GB and what is already being entrusted to men and women. Because of this information possibilities are explored of how this mission is being collectively entrusted to future Lasallians in GB.

A second conversation:

A description of the De la Salle Trust GB is presented, and following this the Assembly examines what this may imply for us as a Lasallian Assembly and as a future emerging Lasallian Network.

A further conversation: continues to explore possible avenues that might be pursued in order that women and men (here and elsewhere) are able to become caretakers of the De la Salle Trust that serves the Lasallian Educational Mission in GB.

Finally as an Assembly:

The Assembly establishes a structure and named persons that will develop a new plan to direct the entrusted resources in the De la Salle Trust GB to the work of Lasallian Education in GB.

If you wish to attend this Lasallian Assembly, everyone is welcome, contact Brother Sean: seans@clara.co.uk or Tel. 01865 311332 or Fax. 01865 554356

If you are unable to attend this open conversation at the Assembly and wish to contribute please write, e-mail or fax before Friday March 30th to the Lasallian Assembly:

The Lasallian Assembly

St Cassian's Centre
Wallingtons Rd.
Kintbury
HUNGERFORD
Berks
RG17 9SR
kintbury@aol.com
fax. 01488 657292

bernardwestcott@yahoo.co.uk