

Letter from America

Brooklyn, 21 September, 2007.

Dear Lasallians,

It is 10:00am Friday morning. You may wonder why I am not in school, and have time to write. Since I am 'technically' retired I have the opportunity to do this. There is an experience of which I was a partaker earlier today that I am impelled to share with you.

At 8:00am this morning, I was as at a Staff Meeting of the Martin de Porres High School here in Brooklyn . Two days each week I am 'present' there. The topic today included sharing of Staff member's impressions of the Buttimer workshop. Since I too have made Buttimer I made the time to be there.

The first item was an up-date on one of the students of the High School. Jo'Ann, the Principal gave the information. This student, a teenage girl, goes home each day to a most 'un-loving' situation. Last evening the Police responded to a call of domestic abuse. The girl and her step-mother were taken and incarcerated. This teen was in the "holding' cell with men and women. She was the only teen. Eventually, the Social Worker obtained the approval to remove the girl. There was no place for her to go! She could not return home. No relative was available. In answer to the Social Worker's question the girl could only recite the name of the Principal, and other women Staff members. The Social Worker feared she was hallucinating. That Worker, however, did call the Principal, so Jo'Ann brought the girl to her house. Jo'Ann prepared her 7 year old grand-daughter's room. This morning when Jo'Ann went to awaken both her grand-daughter and the Teen, she found the grand-daughter asleep at the foot of the bed of the Teen.

The little girl said "I didn't want her to be alone!"

This is a reality and a moment which touched me greatly, and for that reason I wish to share it with you. What a great blessing it is that a young person in need looks to her school for help. This is truly a Lasallian School .

The Dance Instructor came into the room after the Staff had left. We began talking and she give me part of the story of how she came to the

Martin de Porres Ministry. This teacher was conducting a Dance Studio, but then moved to another job. The girls from that studio found her and pleaded with her not to leave them. Looking around for a location to hold those dance sessions she went to the Springfield Gardens School which has a most significant After School program. The Lasallian in charge told her that the only way he could let her use the facilities there was for her to become a Staff member. She did. At the sessions of the Dance Studio she noticed a teen boy standing around. Getting to know him she realized that he was a real 'street kid'. Yet, he came to all the rehearsals and did all the 'job' things which she needed done. He was very devoted. One Saturday he had been there all day. At the next rehearsal he told the Teacher that on that Saturday his 'group' had gone to 'do some work'. He excused himself because of the rehearsal. That entire 'group' is now in jail on severe charges. The young man thanked the teacher for taking care of him that day.

Others gave their reactions to the Buttimer experience, and I gave mine. When I was there I found a community of people from all over the USA , and other countries, pursuing the same vision, and inspired by John Baptist de La Salle. Brother Alfred Calcutt in his biography "De La Salle, the Urban Saint" points out that maybe the real contribution De La Salle made to education was the testimony of a group of men who had consecrated themselves to God to provide a school for those in need, and that group of 'teachers' were all of the same vision and inspiration.

All this was between 8:00 am and 8:45 am this Friday morning. I do hope that my 'inspiration' to share sounds alright to you. If this is what Martin de Porres High School is doing, and what all our "ministries' are doing, we have in our 'care' a great treasure.

With prayers and best wishes, I am, sincerely,

Brother James Loxham.

Martin de Porres High School, and the De La Salle, Brooklyn , Community.