

Two Young Lasallians report from Australia

"We are called; each of us singly and together, to be Brothers today, associated together in community and in the body of the institute and with many partners engaged in the educational service of the poor, children, the young, the adults, whom we encounter in our ministry."

44th General Message to the Brothers

As a young Lasallian in the UK, it is all too easy to be unaware of the length and breadth of the Lasallian world. It wasn't until I went as part of a team (including Fran Wright, Ruth Corless and Brother Ben Foy) to Rome in 2006 to attend the Young Lasallian Symposium that I appreciated just how influential the work of John Baptist De La Salle is.

Talking to American, Australian and Pilipino delegates, I learnt about the worldwide programmes responding to the Lasallian mission. In America, schools have been established to provide high quality education for pupils in financial difficulty, where the teachers are volunteers. Throughout Asia and India, programmes are being run which maintain orphanages; build schools and minister to local communities. In Australia the scope of Lasallian influence is immense, with De La Salle (or Dee La if pronounced the Aussie way!) schools focusing on so much more than just providing thorough academic and spiritual education. Work includes administering aid and input into aboriginal communities in Australia and New Zealand and local tribes in Papa New Guinea. Furthermore, programmes like the International Lasallian Youth Gathering in Melbourne and World Youth Day in Sydney, makes 2008 the year to be in Australia.

Sharon Davidson, a team-mate from the St. Cassian's Centre 2003/2004 team and a personal friend, and I are 'down under' for six months working as Youth Ministers in Bankstown, Sydney. Our role is to provide, organize and support spiritual development within both the school and community of La Salle Catholic College, Bankstown and the parish community of St Felix. This involves leading

and training Lasallian Youth Leaders and Lasallian Youth for Justice as well as preparing liturgies, retreats and running youth groups. We have just returned from a countrywide Lasallian Leadership Seminar where we were part of a team of five Youth Ministers.

Throughout our time here we will be accompanying Brother Mark McKeon, Director of Lasallian Vocations and Youth Ministry, on his travels around the country to lead retreats and workshops in the many De La Salle schools. We live in community with the Bankstown brothers, who are generous and kind with a great sense of humour which usually revolves around making fun of our English accents! When asked about her experience so far, Sharon said,

"Living in community again has been fantastic. Even though we're on the other side of the world, the brothers qualities of warmth and sincerity emphasise the Lasallian values that are found in their UK counterparts."

Boulos, a young Lasallian teacher and World Youth Day coordinator said,

"It is great to see the International Lasallian community interacting and providing worldwide service to those in need."

It is really an honour to have this opportunity. We intend to bring all we're learning back to the UK. For now though, we'll just be content to enjoy the sunshine, crack open a beer and put another shrimp on the barbie!

Sharon Davidson and Maria Wall, Bankstown, Sydney