Ernest Miller, fsc

World appeal to a new mobilization for childhood

MEL Bulletin 41

Presentation

The present situation of the world in our economic crisis makes still more difficult the fulfilling of the targets for overcoming the great challenges of the millennium. Saint John Baptist De La Salle too had to face the crisis which was being lived at that time in the history of France and centred his action on the education of children and young people as the fundamental strategy for overcoming the difficulties of the period.

Faced with a world situation which mainly affects poor children and young people, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in its last two General Chapters concentrated all its attention on looking for strategies for ensuring that the education mission mainly reaches poor children and young people.

Finding strategies to respond effectively to the great challenges of education in this new millennium and especially in this second decade will not be at all easy, but each Region and District and each one of the educational works of the Institute is prioritizing its reflections towards the search for paths and structures which will permit us to continue with the Lasallian education mission and especially to reach the poorest children and young people of our Lasallian Regions.

One of the big challenges of the millennium is that all the children and young people of the planet should enjoy the fundamental right of education. In one of the latest reports from UNESCO it is claimed that 10% of children of school age are not able to go to school. The 44th General Chapter of 2007, in one of its challenges, invites us to continue working for the defense of the right to education of children and young people.

Br. Ernest Miller and Br. Stephen Tuohy wish, with this new MEL Bulletin, to motivate the entire Lasallian Family so that it will continue the work for the defense of the rights of children and especially that it will go on finding strategies which will allow us to succeed with our Lasallian education mission in the sectors in greatest need.

Br. Jorge Enrique Fonseca Sánchez
Secretary MEL

Introduction

Brothers of the Christian Schools, BICE and rights of the child

The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was a founding member of BICE (International Catholic Bureau for Children) which was formed in 1948 to address the needs of the orphans of World War II. For more than 60 years BICE has been carrying out field operations as well as international child advocacy and research on childhood resiliency. BICE has become a preeminent Child Rights Organization, instrumental in drafting the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

World appeal to a new mobilization for childhood

Over the past two years, in preparation for BICE's 60th Anniversary and the 20th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, BICE convened four groups of experts who prepared Position Papers of the status of Child Rights in: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the former States of the Soviet Union. Representatives of each of these regional groups as well and representatives from North America and Europe then drew up a single Reference Document on the status of Child Rights which in turn led to its World Appeal to a New Mobilization for Childhood which was launched at BICE's General Assembly in Geneva on 4 June 2009.

Who endorsed the appeal and what does this endorsement commit to?

The Appeal´s endorsement was opened to NGOs, educational institutions, youth organizations, social institutions, moral and religious organizations and leaders, committed personalities and the larger public. Endorsement commits to the promotion of a culture based on the respect of the child in order to ensure the integral development of each child and all children. Through the Appeal dissemination, its subscribers also indicate their commitment to defend the dignity and the rights of the child wherever they are violated.

In addition to this introduction this MEL Bulletin includes:

1. A Summary of Lasallian positions on the Rights of the Child prepared by Brother Ernest Miller, the Assistant Director of Mission and Ministry for Mission Formation and Service for the District of Eastern North America (DENA).
2. BICE's World Appeal to a New Mobilization for Childhood.
3. Lasallian Regional responses this World Appeal:
   a. French Canada
   b. PARC (Asia/Pacific)
   c. RELAF (Africa)
   d. RELAL (Latin America)
   e. RELEM (Europe and Middle East)
   f. USA/Toronto

Brother Stephen Tuohy
Director of SECOLI
1st Vice President of BICE

1. A summary of Lasallian positions on the Rights of the Child prepared by Brother Ernest Miller, Associate Director for Mission and Ministry for the District of Eastern North America (DENA)

In May 2000, the 43rd General Chapter of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, listening to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, directed that the defense and promotion of the rights of children be "a major focus of concern" for the Catholic Lasallian educational mission. Because of the numerical power the Lasallian community has around the world, observes Brother John Johnston, FSC, former Superior General, we have an enormous potential to take maximum advantage of the possibilities for significant educational service.

Making the world fit for children is possible through the dialogical relation between the Lasallian mission to provide a human and Christian education to the young, especially those who are impoverished and marginalized, and the active protection and promotion of the rights of the child. In a "Message to Young Lasallians," Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría fsc, Superior General, asserts: "The Rights of the Child invite us to make our contribution to the creation everywhere of an environment and of conditions conducive to a form of education that is complete and worthy of the sons and daughters of the same Father."

What John Baptist de La Salle told the first Brothers echoes today for all Lasallian educators, that is, that the mission given to us "seeks to spread God's reign," providing salvation (wholeness) for children and youth here and now. "This God of goodness," De La Salle writes in the *Meditations*, "places these children in your hands." The children the Chapter delegates had in mind when they asked that the defense and promotion of the rights of children be a new way for living De La Salle's vision are those who are abandoned, exploited, impoverished and marginalized; those who are inadequately fed, housed, and cared for; those who are

lacking the basic necessities of life, including the opportunity for a good education. Indeed, we must see –not simply have facts about– the realities of the children in our own neighborhoods and cities, as well in nations throughout the world.

Probing the inert response to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the 43rd General Chapter offers this candid critique: "Although the Convention was recommended by the 42nd General Chapter and again in Brother Superior's Pastoral Letter on *The Defense of Children, the Reign of God, and the Lasallian Mission* (1999), its contents are little known and understood by Brothers and Partners." Thus, an enduring challenge for Lasallians, is to *actualize* our numerical power–over 827,000 students, 78,000 teachers, administrators and other professional staff in over 900 schools, Pre-K to College, and other centers of education, of striking diversity in 80 countries or put another way, to advocate and commit for the long road by affirming children's rights, safeguarding all aspects of children's development, and mobilizing human and material resources so that each and every child has opportunities to reach their full potential.

This is the joyful task for the Lasallian educational community to attend to in our time. We must discharge this grand task of religion contributing to the common good.

Part One: An Ecclesial Mission

The International Mission Assembly and the 44th General Chapter, convened in 2006 and 2007 respectively, reaffirm the 43rd General Chapter's mandate on the rights of the child. Shaping the main orientations and lines of action flowing from these two meetings are the Gospel of Jesus and Catholic Social Teaching, fertile ground from which to educate, reflect, and advocate, practicing faith-justice for the well-being of children and youth. We know that the Christian tradition instructs us that the preservation of human dignity can only be attained if human rights are affirmed and protected. Mark's gospel speaks powerfully of Jesus' attentiveness to children, with his eyes wide open. And besides the rich and complex tradition of Catholic life and thought, we have at our disposal the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the principal international treaty –it belongs to a vaster architecture of human rights– that enunciates children's rights, proffering a glob-

al vision of the child with a moral and spiritual dimension. "Invoking human rights," contends philosopher and Nobel Economics Prize Winner Amartya Sen, "has become a major way of challenging inequality and oppression in the contemporary world…."

In God's Providence, De La Salle established the Christian and Gratuitous Schools as a visible instrument of God's reign, making salvation real. Faithful to De La Salle's legacy, Superiors General Pastoral Letters, the recent International Mission Assembly, and the last three General Chapters charge the Lasallian educational community to take up the challenging agenda of defending and promoting, together and by association, the rights of children. Yes, these are both high ideals and concrete tasks that will require critical understanding and deep conviction, with buoyant faith and much hope.

Inspired by the Gospel values of love, justice, nonviolence, mercy and the living legacy of De La Salle and the first Brothers bequeathed to us, we are called to –in the paraphrased words of Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement– change the social order by not simply ministering to the "slaves," but by "doing away with slavery" all together (cf. *From Union Square to Rome*). Envisioning new possibilities for the common good with hope, Cornel West counsels: "… the world is incomplete–that history is unfinished, that the future is open-ended, [but] what we think and what we do does make a difference."

In a spirit of faith and a spirit of zeal, reflecting on a prophetic Christian tradition that steps in love and in justice, the second part of "Our Context" puts forward relevant excerpts from the wide Lasallian canon that calls us, encourages us, and directs us towards situating the human dignity and human rights of children squarely in the Lasallian educational mission. It is our calling –from the gospel of Jesus, from the Church, and from the Lasallian heritage– to take conscious responsibility for energizing and galvanizing our numerical power of faith towards justice–the building of the reign of God.

Our Context

It is important to recall the aim of our mission, an ecclesial mission, which is to contribute to the building of the kingdom of God,

whose fullness will no doubt come about in the eschatological kingdom, but whose immanent dimension is identified in the building of a society where all are recognized as sons and daughters of God and who treat one another as brothers and sisters.

Gaudium et Spes clearly presents this finality to us: While helping the world and receiving many benefits from it, the Church has a single intention: that God's kingdom may come, and that the salvation of the whole human race may come to pass (45).

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría fsc

Part Two: The Institute Canon on the Promotion of Justice, the Reign of God, and the Lasallian Mission

The Brother of the Christian Schools Today: A Declaration (1967)

The extent of human need together with the appeals of the Church ought to guide the search and the initiatives to be undertaken. That is why the Brothers [and all Lasallian educators] confront continually the challenges of our time, translated every day into situations or events that we must learn to understand as a community (PC 2d). Examples can be found in worldwide hunger, racism, the exploitation of human beings by their fellow humans, violence, war, a fragile peace, the liberation of oppressed peoples or those who are suffering from lack of cultural adaptation, juvenile delinquency, infirmity, uprootedness, and dysfunctional families. (pp. 25-26)

The Acts of the 40th General Chapter (1976)

The Brothers must integrate... in their institutions the components of Christian education, the ministry of the word, the service of [those who are] poor, and action on behalf of justice in the world. (p. 74)

The Brothers will make it a duty to help young persons form their judgment and become sensitive regarding injustices [that] are institutionalized and maintained by social, political and economic systems. (p. 75)

[The Brothers] will invite their alumni and co-workers to take part in movements that work for social justice and the promotion of the human person. (p. 76)

Another sign of the times is the zeal that has developed in the Church to promote justice in all areas of society, responding to the challenge of the Synod of Bishops in 1972. Our response can best be given through our charism of education, using our varied contacts to educate pupils, collaborators, parents, alumni in the Gospel ideals of charity, justice, brotherhood, as proclaimed by Christ and given application to our day by the Synod. (p. 116)

***The Acts of the Second United States Regional Chapter Second Session* (1975)**

The 39th General Chapter and the first Regional Chapter reaffirmed justice and peace to be fundamental orientations in the life and the apostolate of the [Brothers of the Christian Schools]. (p. 49)

Pastoral Letter of Brother John Johnston fsc, Superior General

***On the Defense of Children, the Reign of God, and the Lasallian Mission* (1999)**

I have given this letter a complicated title: *On the Defense of Children, the Reign of God, and the Lasallian Mission*. My intention is to situate the defense of children squarely in the context of our faith and of our Lasallian heritage and mission.

My purpose is not to pose as an expert. It is instead to promote reflection, dialogue, and I hope, effective action. (pp. 10-11)

The thesis of this pastoral letter is that the situation of the poor children in today's world is an unspeakable scandal and that our Lasallian charism invites us to make solidarity with neglected, abandoned, marginalized, and exploited children a particular focus of our mission. (pp. 41-42)

We Brothers of the Christian Schools –and all other members of the Lasallian Family– should be in solidarity with disadvantaged children on the local, national, and international level, clearly identified with their struggle, and creatively and effectively active for them through our mission of human and Christian education. This focus can enable us to make a major contribution in the

quest for justice for children. At the same time it can be a significant source of renewal of the Institute and of the Lasallian mission. (pp. 42-43)

We can encourage Lasallians –Brothers, partners, parents, former students, board members, pupils– to become actively involved with international, national, civic, Catholic, and ecumenical organizations dedicated to confronting in a political manner unjust structures and inadequate legal protection of the young. I think that our associations of former students can become much more actively engaged in such activity. (pp. 49-50)

The 42nd General Chapter encourages solidarity with associations and organizations that work for the rights of children and youth. Such associations and organizations are many at international, national, and local levels. (p. 55)

Institute Bulletin no. 247 *The Rights of the Child* (2002)

Every member of our educational communities (teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, and parents) should be brought back to the Lasallian Educational Project by this attention to [those who are] poor re-echoed in the demands of the promotion of the rights of the child. (p. 16)

***The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter* (2000)**

Although the Convention [on the Rights of the Child] was recommended by the 42nd General Chapter (Circular 435 p. 23, 2.1), and again in the Pastoral Letter of the Superior for 1999, its contents are little known and understood by Brothers and Partners.

Guidelines.

1. Brothers and Partners need to be more aware of the contents of the Convention.
2. The implementation of the Convention has to be adapted to local conditions.

Proposition 14.

In order that the rights of the child [are] considered as a major focus of concern for the Lasallian mission of education during the next seven years, each District, Sub-District and Delegation should include this question in its plan of action.

– to cooperate with local organizations which work for the promotion of the rights of the child;

– to detect local violations of the rights of children;

– to alert local authorities when children's rights are violated;

– to ensure that its schools and universities teach and observe the rights of the child;

– to maintain contact with the secretariat for the educational mission. (pp. 9-10)

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría fsc, *Superior General*

***Message to the Young Lasallians* (2003)**

Our Institute was born to serve children. Yet, we know that, unfortunately, as much in the North as in the South, children are the most fragile and vulnerable link in our societies. We can call to mind child labour, street children, child soldiers and victims of armed conflicts, displaced or refugee children, children who have been abducted or sold, malnourished children, abused children, children without education, children given over to prostitution, unwanted, unloved and uncared for children. Young Lasallians, we count on you to make the Defense of the Rights of the Child a flag of our Lasallian family. What can you do? I think that you can do much–whether through direct service as volunteers or through an active participation in local organizations that work to defend the rights of children, or by a respectful and friendly treatment of those children with whom you are in contact.

The Rights of the Child invite us to make our contribution ... to a form of education that is complete and worthy of the sons and daughters of the same Father.

Pastoral Letter of Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría fsc

***Associated with the God of the Poor* (2003)**

Brother José Pablo states: "The obligation to work toward establishing a more just social order, not only is in keeping with service to the poor, which is an essential element of our consecrated life, but it proceeds from it" (Circular 412, p. 64). (p. 47)

Education for justice should not be merely a specific subject area but a common thread that runs through the whole curriculum.

This common thread should be reinforced by daily practice within the school. It is important to create a kind of micro-climate which offers an alternative, miniature model that does not support the anti-values which society often presents to us: market worship, corruption, fighting, competition, and consumerism. It is important that within the school there exists an experience of justice in which values, such as solidarity, communion, and participation are top priorities. Otherwise the school runs the risk of duplicating the system and preparing students for a society of privileges, training them in the competitive struggle where there is no solidarity. It is precisely this situation which we have to try to avoid. (p. 50)

Institute Bulletin no. 249

***Educating in Justice* (2004)**

To educate in justice and for justice is something [that] is at the heart of the Lasallian education mission. It springs from the very ministry of Christian education in the service [of those who are] poor. When we speak of [those who are] poor we are speaking of the impoverished. And the impoverished lead us to question ourselves about the causes, diverse and varied, which have led to this situation. They lead us to speak of justice. For this reason it is not surprising that in the Rule of the Brothers we read: "The Brothers have always in view the promotion of justice in the light of the gospel and either the direct or indirect service of the poor as the preferred aspect of their ministry of education" (no. 40). And what is said of the Brother is applicable without any shadow of the doubt, to every Lasallian educator.

Educating in and for justice presupposes, as a result, bringing ourselves and our young charges close to the concrete realities of the poor. It also involves getting to know these, studying and reflecting around them and acting both in an individual and collective way in works of assistance as well as in social activities. (p. 3) The prophetic and liberating power of the gospel is at work in the lives of both teacher and student through their shared struggle to discover the ways of justice. In a world characterized by injustice, service [to those who are] poor invites the discovery of methods of acting that will help free the oppressed and the oppressor from the enslavement of injustice. Search out the causes of poverty with the young or aiding them in an analysis of the systems that

institutionalize the poverty many endure is one expression of the zeal characteristic of the Lasallian education. The mutual efforts of teacher with student to challenge the forces that perpetuate injustice join them in the shared mission to establish the Reign of God initiated by Christ, our Savior. (p. 13)

Report of the International Assembly 2006

Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission

Main Orientation 4 – Pastoral and Faith Formation of Youth.

The International Assembly of 2006 is conscious of the necessity to provide to our students and other young persons a human and Christian education (or spiritual, within a multi-religious context) that facilitates the openness towards other cultures and religions and which makes our students committed to peace and social justice. It also recognizes the necessity to locate the education in the faith that we provide to our students within the framework of the Church-Communion energized by Vatican Council II.

Area of Emphasis No. 1: Human and Christian formation.

The International Assembly 2006 points out the urgency of promoting:

a) Programs which help young persons and others to understand and deepen their faith in the context of beliefs, values, texts and icons common to different religions, cultures and traditions.

b) Programs for education for peace and the promotion of social justice throughout Lasallian works.

Area of Emphasis No. 2: Church Communion.

The Assembly invites:

a) The promotion of adult communities that are references for young people.

b) The encouragement of Lasallian youth groups which live the values of faith, fraternity and service and the creation of structures for their accompaniment that are sufficiently lengthy in time. (p. 36)

Final Reflections, "New Wine in New Wineskins" of Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría fsc.

Our mission is to be attentive to all forms of exclusion. Our mission invites us to have our eyes open before the inequalities cre-

ated by our society and to be creative in our response to new needs. Our mission must not be reduced to mere assistance but rather go to the roots of poverty in order to find structural solutions and educate to justice. (p. 41)

***The Report of the Brother Superior General (to the 44th General Chapter)* (2007)**

The Solidarity Commission thinks that the Institute could commit itself more fully to the promotion of justice, peace and the safeguarding of creation, for example, in a role of advocacy before [the] United Nations and the European Community, in order to defend human rights and the rights of children. Its educational service to the poor should be complemented by a more determined commitment to the transformation of the socio-political and economic structures [that] bring about more and more misery, injustice and despair in the human family. (p. 35)

Our mission cannot be reduced to offering welfare assistance but it must go to the roots of poverty to seek out structural solutions and to educate for justice. (p. 41)

***The Documents of the 44th General Chapter* (2007)**

We Brothers and Lasallians are challenged to be truly convinced that the educational service of the poor is a constitutive part of our Lasallian identity, vocation and mission. The commitment to the transformation of our educational works as instruments of education for the poor, the defense of the rights of children and education for social justice still greatly concerns us (cf. Area of emphasis 5.1 of the IA 2006).

We dream of a network of educational works for the educational service of the poor, that shares teaching methods, seeks resources and allies itself with other educational movements, NGO's and institutions similar to us, in order to produce a greater impact on those societies in which we live and on those structures which generate poverty.

We dream of Brothers and Lasallian partners who continue to take part in building a more just and sharing world. They support and participate in programs, movements, structures, and educational initiatives that respond effectively to all forms of poverty, new and old.

We encourage teachers and young people to inform themselves about the issues of bioethics, the rights of the child, respect for life, and the integrity of creation … Establish, promote, adapt, or create pedagogical, pastoral and catechetical projects that are realistic responses to the situations of poverty today. (p. 34)

Pastoral Letter of Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría fsc

***To be living signs of the presence of the Kingdom, in a community of Brothers consecrated by God the Trinity* (2008)**

… thanks to the efforts of Brother John Johnston, we have made the defense of the rights of children as one of our flagship causes. (p. 12)

You should look upon the children you are charged to teach as poor, abandoned orphans … This is the reason God places them as if under your guardianship. [God] looks on them with compassion and takes care of them as being their protector, their support and their father, and it is you that he entrusts this care. This God of goodness places them in your hands.

Meditations for the Time of Retreat 37.3

2. 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

"The mankind owes the child the best that it has to give"
Eglantyne Jebb
Geneva Declaration 1924

1. On the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** by the UN General Assembly we, the signatories of the following document[1] launch with gravity an urgent Appeal to a new mobilization for childhood[2].

2. The Convention has marked a historic moment. It has generated a new vision of the child[3]. Since its promulgation and its almost universal ratification, children must be considered fully as human beings, true right-holders, entitled to enjoy human rights in an inalienable way and without discrimination. At the same time, because they are fragile and growing, they need protection.

3. According to the Appeal's signatory organizations, experts, and personalities, the translation of the provisions contained in the Convention into domestic laws and into implemented policies have allowed real progress.

4. **Unfortunately, subscribed engagements are still very far from being respected worldwide**. Too often, children continue to be

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[1] The **International Catholic Child Bureau** (Bice) has taken the initiative of this document. Founded in 1948, Bice has actively participated in drafting the Convention in the eighties and since then it has constantly followed its implementation in the field and in Geneva to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

[2] A **Reference Document** accompanies and completes the Appeal. It can be consulted and downloaded from Bice web site: *www.bice.org* or *wwww.biceinternational.org*.

[3] In accordance with article 1 of the Convention, a child means "every human being below the age of eighteen years".

viewed as objects of assistance, or as beneficiaries of certain rights that they receive as charity. Around the world, too many children are deprived of their rights, sometimes even the most fundamental ones.

5. Child soldiers, children working in hazardous and dangerous conditions, children abused, raped, objects of all forms of violence, children obliged to flee incessantly away with or without their family due to wars, famines, natural disasters, children abandoned and rejected by all, forced to live in the street, "sorcerers" children, without education, without a country, with no papers…

6. Children, who are even more vulnerable due to families becoming fragile, massive urbanization, environmental degradation, globalization that deepens inequalities. Moreover, nowadays, a wide-spreading **economic crisis at the planet level** increases threats on millions of them.

It is urgent to act.

7. All these children have something in common: they have been **uprooted**. Physical uprooting, sometimes brutal, from their country or the place they were supposed to grow up; but also psychosocial uprooting - more intimate - causing an even deeper shock when they are not loved, not listened to, when they live at the margin of a family or the society, when they are no more part of a continuum, heir of a human community attached to its culture and history. These children are uprooted from an indispensable human living space, the possibility to grow-up stably in an affectionate and truly respectful environment.

8. **This uprooting must seriously question us; it must be better understood, better studied in its causes and grave consequences for present and future humanity.**

9. Such situations are neither exceptional nor reserved to such or such a country. Worldwide, millions of children live the dramatic loss of landmarks, which inevitably ends up in denying their rights.

10. **We propose to adopt a renewed approach of the child based on his/her deeper needs as well as on his/her right to life and to an integral development, including in its spiritual dimension**.

11. Despite the somber reality of uprooted children, we are often surprised: some children manifest vitality and some energy enabling them to resist, stand up again and overcome in a positive way the grave challenges that life carries with it. We call this capacity, which is inside them **resilience**. Resilience also increases their chances to have their rights respected because it empowers children to fight for them.

12. To bring all its fruits, resilience gains in being developed and supported by different elements:

- The insertion in a genuine family and community caring environment, which is also perceived by the child as such.
- Quality education both at school and within families and communities.
- Being part of an even very modestly self-sufficient family.
- A true solidarity experienced domestically and in the community, which opens children to generosity and to the hope of always finding somebody who will be able to help them.

13. The respect and the promotion of the cultural background also provide **indispensable landmarks** so that children can structure themselves and positively accede to other cultures. Their life becomes meaningful. The **religious dimension** that children may have received earlier must be preserved and developed while respecting their freedom -as it constitutes a deep resource during their life.

14. It is also desirable to favor children's **participation**, their responsibilities, their duties, their solidarity; they become, then, protagonists of their life; contribute efficiently in evolving adults' traditional behaviors and are the best child-rights ambassadors to their peers.

15. Such an approach directly associates children to the promotion and the defense of their rights.

Wherever we have been able to put it into practice, it has showed us its efficiency.

16. **This new approach of the child calls upon our mobilization especially on some issues**.

Among the ten issues that we have identified[4], we would like to highlight specifically:

– *To fight against all forms of violence against children* should it be extreme poverty or violence during armed conflicts, at school, in the work place, in the cyberspace or domestically; it is indeed within families where violence is mostly widespread.

– *To guarantee quality education for all children* so that they are not condemned to perpetual poverty and marginalization. In particular, we have experimented that the intervention of educators-mediators capable to help uprooted children to move gradually towards new cultural references by rising and supporting their resilience, favors their insertion and their development, and allows fighting efficiently against early school leaving.

– *To support weakened families*, namely monoparental families, in order to promote inside them a climate of well-being and strengthen parental educational capabilities.

– *To humanize juvenile justice* and the assistance to young people in conflict with the law. Confronted with the intensification of criminal laws in many countries, we would like to recall that juvenile justice must primarily aim at education and reintegration.

17. **We need to implement in an effective and urgent manner what is required by international human rights treaties and more specifically by the Convention on the Rights of the Child**.

18. **We, the signatories of this document urge States to**:

a) Ratify, for those who have not yet done so, the Convention as well as the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol on the involve-

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[4] The Reference Document speaks about TEN ISSUES:
1. To respect the right to life.
2. To fight against poverty.
3. To fight violence against children.
4. To support families.
5. To take into account working children.
6. To guarantee quality education to each child.
7. To guarantee the right to health.
8. To give their place to disabled children.
9. To humanize juvenile justice.
10. To put new technologies at the service of children.

ment of children in armed conflicts, withdraw reservations and pursue the harmonization of domestic law with the Convention.

b) Respect undertaken commitments, namely by adopting public policies for children and families, which additionally presuppose priority and sufficient budgetary allocations as well as a firm political will.

c) Cooperate fully with the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN human rights monitoring mechanisms as well as with independent institutions (child defenders, …) and specialized NGOs in order to guarantee children the full enjoyment of their rights.

19. **We call upon the international community as a whole to**:

a) Facilitate verification, evaluation and control systems of the Convention, guarantee to the Committee and to the UN system of special procedures, designed to promote and protect human rights, adequate means to fulfill their mandate.

b) Implement a new world governance, namely to deal with transnational questions concerning children (migration, human trafficking, child pornography networks, sale of organs…).

c) Strengthen a human rights-based approach within international cooperation.

d) Require firmly that States respect their commitment to allocate 0.7% of their GDP to developing countries.

e) Favor an equitable production, distribution and trade of necessary goods in view of guaranteeing to families an income resulting from decent work.

20. **We call upon the media to**:

a) Introduce in their ethics and professional committees a reflection on childhood and adolescence in order to give a dignified and respectful image of them.

b) Highlight the value of cultural diversity and facilitate the dialogue among human beings, generations, and communities.

c) Contribute to diffusing a child-rights culture by training professionals of their sector and by issuing and disseminating publications that target children in view of their development.

21. **We call upon moral and religious leaders to**:

a) Enforce, wherever they are active, the respect of the dignity and the rights of the child.

b) Contribute jointly with young people to the intercultural and interreligious dialogue in order to prevent divisions, recognize diversity as well as the equal dignity of everyone.

c) Be more and more concerned to educate to the values guaranteeing a worthy human and spiritual life.

d) Show the value of each human being by clarifying the links between their ethical and religious message with human rights.

22. **We call upon civil society organizations to**:

a) Diffuse the principles of the Convention and the Convention itself while preserving and developing a real culture of childhood in society.

b) Strengthen networking, ensure a more efficient coordination of their actions, share their good practices and exercise jointly pressure on public authorities so that they apply more coherent child-oriented policies.

c) Design their initiatives in a way to include a listening approach to children and their needs in view of strengthening children's participation in social and public life.

d) Realize multidisciplinary studies on childhood and inspire new researches in a perspective of creative experimentation.

e) Issue **an annual report on the status of the rights of the child worldwide** taking into account the most remarkable achievements and the most serious violations.

f) Be watchful to respect the dignity and the rights of the child wherever they operate.

23. **We call upon all men and women of good will to**:

a) Actively monitor that every child and all children can grow up in dignified conditions and in the full respect of their rights.

b) Give the example of solidarity so that each child can experience altruism, generosity and be able to contribute to the common good.

c) Require from public authorities that they fulfill their obligations towards families and children and that they constantly improve their policies in this area.

24. **The child, each child is a present for humanity**. A present that is part of a history and opens new horizons. He/she surprises and amazes us while, on other hand, he/she should be amazed by the world that he/she will inherit.

In order that this world keeps a human face, we have to **respect the child**, to measure up to the child:

"You say: to take care of children is exhausting. You are right. You add: because we have to measure up to them. To go down, to bend down, to bow, to shrink.

Here, you are wrong. This is not as tiring as to be obliged to rise in order as to measure up to their feelings. To reach up to them, to stretch, to stand on our tiptoes. In order not to hurt them."[5]

Janusz Korczak[6]

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[5] Prologue of *When I am little again*, French Association Janus Korczak (AFJK), revised translation in 2007.

[6] **Janusz Korczak** (1878-1942), a famous Polish pedo-psychiatrist, writer, pedagogue, tireless child defender, died in Treblinka where he has been deported with the children of his orphanage that he refused to abandon.

3. Regional responses to World Appeal a new Mobilization for Children for Childhood

The Rights of the Child – a step by step commitment!

Mr. Denis de Villers
French Canada

Gustavio is a little 9 year old boy who comes twice a week to do his homework with the animators of the Saint-Michel Lasallian Centre. But it is only at the Centre and at home that he is called Gustavio, his real name. In school he is called Carlo because he was enrolled under the Christian names of *Carlo Gustavio,*which was too long for the official lists. The school authorities therefore chose quite simply to call him Carlo without asking either him or his parents which of the two names he usually used.

It may seem harmless to deprive a child and his family of a name chosen and loved. Yet we see too often that with bureaucratic decisions of this nature, the door is opened for other refusals, other denials of differences and of rights.

At the Saint-Michel Lasallian Centre they receive dozens of Gustavios. These children are trying to fit in to the Quebec school system and their parents, often recent immigrants, are not able to help them. They have, therefore, at their disposition volunteer animators, students or persons who are retired, who are convinced of the right that these children have, to succeed in their school life, in spite of the barriers represented by language, culture and poverty.

There are also dozens of Gustavios who do not integrate into the system and who drop out, and the Saint-Michel Centre also provides a place for them. The majority of them are adolescents who are looking for a meaning to their lives and have difficulty in seeing their future. Their only chance of finding work and thus achieving autonomy is to get them to come back into the school system and at the same time to offer them support at all times.

The Saint-Michel Lasallian Centre opened its doors in the autumn of 2007. Situated in the depressed, multiethnic and ecumenical area of Saint-Michel in Montreal, this project relies on the age-old tradition of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in exercising pedagogical and pastoral ministries on all the continents and in every social and religious environment.

It consists of a non-formal manner of exercising the mission left to the Institute by its founder. The animators of Saint-Michel will tell you that they are no longer in school, but that they are still among the young, most of the time among the poorest, so poor in fact, that even the school of today does not fit in with their reality. There is therefore a lot of work to be done.

This is because, in spite of the great principles and all the charters relating to the equality of persons, we need to be aware that all children do not start out equal in the race towards educational success. And even a school system as democratic and universal as that which Quebec has given itself, lets too many children slip between the meshes of a net stretched excessively by cuts of all kinds and by a sometimes blind bureaucracy.

But we can always hope. Gustavio finished his third year in June and was among the top students in his class. Better still, he can now help his little brothers who are coming along after him.

At the Saint-Michel Centre they are now thinking of starting formation sessions for animators to whom they will transmit this same desire to accompany and walk along with the young people marginalized by the school system… some yeast in the dough of a family which is growing bigger!

The Rights of the Child

Br. Mark Murphy
PARC (Asia/Pacific)

PARC has addressed the General Chapter's challenges and calls to promote the Rights of the Child in a variety of ways. As indicated in Letters from Brother John Johnston and Brother Alavaro Rodriguez, the commitment we have made must find expression in our practical implementation of the mission to "provide a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor."

The most common form of response has been in the on-going work of the established commitments/institutional ministries in the various sectors. Such expressions include:

(a) the curriculum attention to need for justice and political response to situations where the rights of children are being violated; education in the use of computers and the internet includes attention to the forms of addiction which rob young people of their rights and the abuse represented by pornographic material and the manipulation represented by advertising/consumerism (all are forms of emphasizing critical thinking that is advocated by the Rule, Art. 13 and 13 a-d);

(b) the service programs that put our students and faculties in direct contact with those who need our assistance, especially the economically poor and refugees who may have come into various sectors;

(c) the almost complete disappearance of the use of corporal punishment in our schools and educational works by way of compliance with government policies and institutional practices; while there are still areas where this can be a problem, remarkable progress in evident over the past 10 years; there is also more attention to safeguarding the rights of children from possible abuse by teachers in more subtle ways, for example by degrading language or vindictive responses to behavior problems;

(d) the increased availability of counseling services to students who experience some form of violation of basic rights – both within the educational setting or at home or other situations; while the availability of counseling services is still an area for growth and development, progress is being made;

(e) PARC is pursing the directive from the Superior General / Council to have in place stated policies and procedures for the protection of child's rights, especially in cases where there are various forms of abuse (sexual and/ or physical); many sectors already have such policies in place and others are being asked to produce them so that clear lines of response are in place;

(f) PARC has been attentive to the subject and content of the international agreements concerning Child's Rights and made them known and the subject of discussion at various forms of Regional gatherings/workshops: Lasallian Educator Assemblies (APLEC): 2000 – The Assembly, hosted and located in India was the first response to the 43rd General Chapter's call for attention to UN's emphasis on the Rights of the Child; the location of India gave special emphasis to the local speakers and the impact on the approximate 200 participants from throughout PARC. Subsequent APLEC's as well as Lasallian Youth Gatherings (APLYC) and PARC Leadership meetings have addressed the concern.

Summary: PARC – Formation for Mission programs for Brothers and Partners: individual sectors are making significant progress in programs that train our educational personnel in the Lasallian Traditions and modern adaptations of the Conduct of Schools and Meditations for the Time of Retreat; such programs offer many opportunities to stress the Lasallian commitment/tradition to treat each individual student with great respect as a child of God, thus insuring the pursuit of Child Rights; we perhaps can use the Lasallian Leadership Institute to make more clear how this pursuit is relate to the Institute's commitment to Child Rights.

Individual sectors have also had specific responses / ministries that respond more directly the question and challenges of Child Rights; the following represents just a few examples of such responses:

g) Australia/New Zealand/Papua New Guinea: The operations of Boys Town and its many services has long been an outstanding example for how to address the wrongs and abuses of Child's Rights; PNG provides an effective learning center to assist young people with training for employment; Brother Paul Smith, Executive Director of the Lasallian Foundation of Australia, gave an effective address in the year 2000 to an international meeting regarding the pursuit of the Rights of the Child and the work of the Foundation and its grants give practical evidence to the support for projects that implement the concern for Child's Rights;

h) Philippines: the Bahay Pagasa program for young offenders who are remanded by the courts to this alternative in lieu of a prison sentence; this highly successful program is a positive response to insuring Child's Rights; the District has also been a clear example of making public statements of protest to unjust and criminal actions on the part of the government as a way to pursue the sense of Gospel justice, including the ways in which the rights of children are systemically abused;

i) India / Sri Lanka: both sectors have had long term programs to address the specific needs of those young people who were being excluded from training for decent employment because of their lack of academic success; the Boys Town operations in both sectors; the LCES in Colombo and the SJDT and RTU programs in Madurai area are examples in addition to the work done in the school commitments normally located and serving the economically poor;

j) ANZPNG / India: the response of Brothers (3) to the Institute's call for service in the Sudan is an example of leaving the known and tested to work in a whole new venture that will educate teachers;

k) Thailand: the Bamboo School is a developing commitment where young factory workers and children of the refugees who are caught in the political struggles of Myanmar and Thailand are being given a chance to go to school; the hope is that this commitment can be a joint project of both the Thailand and Myanmar sectors;

l) Pakistan: the long term commitment to sponsor and supervise primary schools that serve the minority Christian students and provide English medium schools available to Muslim and Christian families has addressed the deprivation of Child Rights effectively for some time; the Farm, as a place for young men to regain sobriety in their addiction to alcohol and drugs is a special form of restoring such rights;

(m) Myanmar: the Lasallian Learning Center is a low cost alternative to the young for an education that will improve their chances for employment in a political system that denies such rights to young people.

All the examples given represent only some of the present commitments in individual sectors that are practical responses to insuring that young people will have their Child Rights respected.

It remains a challenge to be more explicit in our commitment to attend and promote those opportunities at conventions/meetings where Child Rights are being addressed, such as the recent meeting in Bangkok of SIGNIS (Oct. 2009) in which one Brother did attend and acted as translator.

From Intiganda to Akwaba

Br. José Manuel Agirrezabalaga
RELAF (Africa)

On one of my last visits to Africa, I once again visited the two centres run by the De La Salle Brothers for street children in two cities in two different countries. The first, which is in Butaré, the university town of Rwanda, is known as the Intiganda Centre. The second is in Abidjan, the economic capital of the Ivory Coast and is known as the Akwaba Home.

The Intiganda Centre celebrated the 20th anniversary of its foundation in 2007. The Akwaba Home started 10 years ago.

Both centres are responses to calls perceived by missionary Brothers, one Swiss and one Spanish, and taken on and promoted by the Brothers' communities in these two places. They are experiences similar to those lived by John Baptist De La Salle in his native France at the end of the 17th Century. La Salle, moved by the situation of abandonment of the "children of artisans and the poor" of his era and our present-day Brothers moved by the abandonment of the street children of these cities, respond in the light of faith, creating new educational works in the service of abandoned children. Dedication and much faith are needed, to prepare themselves, to be bold and creative, to set up teams of educators, programs, to look for financial resources, to build….

In Rwanda they call the centre Intiganda, which in the Kinyarwanda language means "the resourceful ones": they take in the street children just as they are, children from whom life has demanded that they fend for themselves from their earliest years and those that the dynamic of the centre, with its limited means,

will be asking to face up to many things in daily life. In the Ivory Coast, on the other hand, the centre is called Akwaba, which in the local language, Baoulé, means “welcome”: the children are welcome in their new home and they are received by the educators, come voluntarily and are never detained. The doors are always open so that they can leave or come back.

The teams of educators in each of the centres are made up of Brothers, both missionaries and Africans, as well as lay African educators. Some educators go around the central streets or the densely populated quarters of the two cities - places where the children meet and live their lives. They make contact with them, talk to them, take an interest in their needs, offer them protection and security and invite them to the centre. And some do come. At present, there are some 70 children between the ages of 6 and 18 living in the Intiganda Centre while the Akwaba Home is housing come 40 between 6 and 16 years old.

The first thing that is done in the centres is to face up to the elementary needs of the children with regard to health and personal hygiene and cleanliness. The educators make an effort to create a family atmosphere with affection and freedom. The children and adolescents are organized into small groups.

Listening is one of the fundamental activities of the educators: speaking with them and above all listening to them. They are, in general, lovable and docile children who are hungering for adult affection. Taking into account the schooling level of each one, the centre organizes courses for those who are very backward so as to prepare them for joining a normal school; others are enrolled in neighboring schools; the majority are given some initial professional training either in the centre itself or by being sent to work as apprentices with some artisans.

One important objective of these centres is the satisfactory reinsertion of the children into their nearest family environment. For this purpose the educators make efforts to contact family members who can take in the child or adolescent in suitable conditions. Prior to the new insertion into the family environment, it is indispensible to do some mental and other preparation both for the families and for the children themselves, so that the insertion will be undertaken in a positive way by both. The children usually live in the centre for one or two years.

On Intiganda completing 20 years, the French Brother in charge of the centre wrote; "20 years of service to the children is magnificent" and he continued, "but 20 years without having found a solution to the problem makes one sad."

In many more or less large towns and cities of the South, the existence of children living in the street, relating to each other, using their wits in order to survive, without shelter or a family home, is a social fact. Some of them have arrived on the street fleeing from a bad family environment which mistreated or exploited them; others in order to find means of subsistence since the family had abandoned them or gave them nothing to eat. There are some who have ended up as street children because they have no family or home as a result of wars, something quite common in Rwanda after the genocide of 1994.

For their everyday running, neither of the centres receives financial help from the government of the country. They find ways to get some resources by means of alternative activities such as making postcards (Intiganda) and cyber computer work (Akwaba). But the biggest financial resources come from outside the country: at Intiganda mainly from Switzerland and in the Akwaba Home through the Lasallian NGO Proyde.

The names of the centres, although quite distinct, are complementary and by joining the two names we are able to give the key to the spirit of each one of the centres: the children who continue to be "resourceful ones" (Intiganda) are accepted as such and are "welcomed" (Akwaba) in the centre which will be their home for some time and in which they are going to live and grow as children and adolescents so as to prepare themselves for family and professional life.

Lasallian educational observatory for the rights of children and young people in Latin America and the Caribbean

Br. Cristian James Diaz
RELAL (Latin America)

The Lasallian Educational Observatory for the rights of children and young people in Latin America and the Caribbean was con-

ceived of as a strategy for observation, the building up of knowledge, learning, formation and coordination of visions, missions, purposes and processes, regarding education and educational practice, *from the perspective of rights. The perspective of rights involves re-thinking the entire* concept of education in order to integrate the curricular and cultural dynamic of educational works in a political-ethical dimension.

To accomplish this it is important to reflect on this from the point of view of rights, as regards how educational management is orientated, how members of the school community work together, school regulations, teaching programs, the curriculum, the criteria and educational mechanisms among other items. This discussion needs to be animated by formation programs, systematization, and research that can establish the state of the practice, knowledge and Lasallian ethical-political thought.

Observing for reflecting, interpreting, understanding, improving and transforming requires: defining indicators, guidelines for analytical reading, spaces for registry and analysis; experiences of interchange; integrating all Lasallian educational works in a learning network (high schools, universities, social works); and building a Lasallian educational discourse made up of the questions of contemporary education in terms of human sustainable development that is just, in solidarity, balanced and inclusive.

The Lasallian educational observatory for the rights of children and young people in Latin America and the Caribbean emerged as a strategy from the lasallian regional agreement for children and youth: a commitment for education and inclusion. This emerged as an educational, social, and religious initiative in the framework of the international convention on the rights of the child, the millennium objectives, and the guidelines from the 44th General Chapter and the International Assembly on Association for the Lasallian Mission.

Objectives of the Lasallian Educational Observatory

General Objective:

To generate a culture of rights in Lasallian educational works that will contribute to the improvement of the quality of education.

Specific Objectives:

- To strengthen Lasallian educational practices in terms of rights.
- To broaden the framework of theoretical-practical understanding as regards rights in the field of education.
- To promote education in and for human rights.
- To guarantee the recognition of and respect for the rights of children, adolescents and young people in Lasallian works.
- To consolidate the social impact of the Lasallian educational work in globalized societies.

The journey thus far:

Over the course of 2008 - 2009 the Observatory has gathered numerous experiences from the Region that will provide a guideline for working on the theme of the rights of children; at the same time, it has opened its own web site (*www.observatoriorelal.org*) it has made visible some of the programs and initiatives that are being carried out in the Region on the prevention of child mistreatment, the formation of care and good treatment managers, as well as priority attention to children who are at-risk; it has also made known some inter-institutional academic events (BICE network-Colombia), always looking for constant reflection on the need to take on this important option as a challenge of major importance.

In addition, the systematic work of reflection and focused research has allowed the progressive configuration of a leadership team made up of teachers and university researchers coming from De La Salle University Bogota (Colombia), and Unilasalle Canoas (Brazil), as well as personnel from the Lasallian District of Bogota and from the RELAL office. Aware of the effort that this involves to sustain an initiative such as this one, the participants on this team come to promote a shared international agenda whose interest is focused on research and intervention as strategies for the realization of propositions of the Observatory.

The Rights of the Child

Marie-Claire Tulliez
RELEM - France

"We, Brothers and Lay Lasallians, in virtue of the foundations of

our identity and in conformity with the orientations of the last General Chapter (Proposition 14), ask the Brother Visitor and his Council to create between now and January 1st 2003, a permanent work group "Rights of the Child" within the District of France"[7]

By this declaration, promoting the rights of the child became a requirement for the District of France.

• Created in 2002, the Work Group on the Rights of the Child (GTDE), animated by F. O. Wurth and M. P. Richard, gave itself several objectives: defining the content of a campaign on the Rights of the Child, creating a work instrument, looking for contacts, inciting actions. It has launched a campaign on "the right to schooling and rights in the school". It also seeks to establish local contacts in the District delegations. An information and formation session was held in Parmenie in November 2004.

• In 2005 the founder members of GTDE wished to be relieved. A group was set up, coordinated by two lay persons, with a view to keeping the campaign alive over a period of two years by working on its visibility both in the different structures of the network at national level and within the delegations, as well as finding a local correspondent in each establishment.

• From the beginning the group ran into a certain amount of resistance proper to the French educational world which often finds it difficult to cast "a look of hope" at children and young people: "Children have too many rights, they are not reminded often enough of their duties". Many teachers and other school personnel have still not discovered that CIDE while obviously concerned with children, addresses itself to the adults who have the responsibility of educating each child to exercise his/her rights. The members of our District have sometimes manifested these reservations quite strongly: "the campaign *'the right to schooling and rights in school'* is **A** campaign in the network and not **THE** campaign of the network". It was impossible to find correspondents in certain delegations of the District. From 2006 onwards the group has no longer any institutional existence since it no longer constitutes one of the priority axes of MEL.

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[7] Proposition 11 of District Chapter 2002.

• Nevertheless, the faithful support of the Visitors of France and of some persons in posts of responsibility has allowed for the passing on of information and making the network aware of the rights of the child: different tools have highlighted the link between the Lasallian education project and the rights of the child. A space has been created on the national web-site *to make mutual and enhance pedagogical experiences*, to promote each year since 2006, *a Lasallian day (November 20th) on the rights of the child, which proposes a theme for action with the appropriate tools*. The group has been present at the events of the network ("The Springtime of the Faith", "The Autumn university – Justice and Education"…) It has collaborated with other organizations (BICE, Defenders of Children…), has allowed for the participation of Lasallians in the French coordination of the decade for peace. Finally, in certain institutions, the coordinator or the contact group for the rights of the child is associated closely with the project of the establishment.

• In future, at the request of those in charge of the Lasallian network, our group will be called *Commission for education in justice/rights of the child* so as to find a wording which will allow for broader support. So, in France, where the crisis first of all strikes the most needy, crystallizes inequalities and leads to violent behavior, Lasallians are becoming committed with conviction and combativity to the service of the promotion of Justice and the Rights of the Child in communion with the International Lasallian Network.

The Rights of the Child

Br. Manuel Jesús Ceballos
RELEM - Spain

In the year 2000-2001 the first campaign concerning the Rights of the Child was set in motion. In each center the position of Defender ***of the Minor*** was set up. A series of reflections took place on the rights of children. (5 reflections per month in each cycle of Primary and Secondary schools). This was certainly rich material. A 'childhood letterbox' was produced with a ballot to find which of the Rights of the Child was least carried out according to the children of the Lasallian Centres in Andalucia. Statistics

were drawn up on the right which was least fulfilled. Several montages were made on the Rights of the Child as well as a short film about the same subject, using different cartoons.

In 2001-2002 reflections on the different rights came to an end. A **Manual of the Defender of the Minor** was put together in which were recorded all the regulations existing up to them about abuses and ill-treatment of minors, the protocol for action in case of ill-treatment or abuses of every kind, as well as possible indicators for detecting abuse and ill-treatment.

In the academic year 2002-2003, a campaign was carried out as well as a drawing competition to choose the drawing which could serve as a poster for the following year's campaign. Informative leaflets for the campaign and the position of the Defender of the Minor were produced as well as a Training Manual, and tutorials with a leaflet.

In the academic year 2003-2004, the campaign centered on Internet abuses, under the title: "Security on the Internet", with interesting activities and competitions such as: a competition "The Rights of the Child and New Technologies", recording short films, radio programs, short stories…about the Rights of the Child.

In the year 2004-2005 it was "We must all participate", with various Power Points containing animated drawings to illustrate the campaign.

In 2006-2007 the campaign created a "**Program of mediation among equals**", divided into two parts: Pupil Helpers and Pupil Mediators of Conflicts. This theme experimented with the formation of pupils from three pilot centers and still today this program continues to be used in the centers. Also during this academic year there was created a "**Protocol for welcoming immigrant pupils**".

The Rights of the Child

Br. Ernest Miller
USA-Toronto

The USA/Toronto Region is undertaking an educational and advocacy initiative on the Rights of the Child, an exciting opportunity

to give witness of evangelization and catechesis, the principal purposes of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Lasallian educational mission.

The 44th General Chapter gives us this directive: "establish, promote, adapt, or create pedagogical, pastoral and catechetical projects that are realistic responses to the situations of poverty today." Thus, the Region is beginning a three-year focused effort on the Rights of the Child, underscoring the intersection of the Lasallian educational mission and social justice promotion and advocacy.

With the rights of children as the major focus of concern, this Regional initiative aims to integrate the educational, formational, and transformational aspects of evangelization and catechesis in a Lasallian context. In turn, this critical pedagogy leads to interiorizing "a culture of action on behalf of the rights of the children and youth," John Johnston, FSC, states, "a culture that will shape the way we see, the way we think, the way we judge, the way we decide, the way we act as individuals, as educational communities, as Districts, as Regions, as International Lasallian Association."

Moving towards achieving the aims expressed in recent General Chapters and the International Mission Assembly, the Region plans to hold a Lasallian Student Convocation at the United Nations, 25-28 April 2010. Bringing students and educators together from the diverse community of Lasallian secondary schools and higher education institutions for the first time in one place, the Convocation presents a unique opportunity to foster among students and educators alike a spirit of faith and zeal towards action on behalf of justice and peace. The UN gathering will include dynamic speakers and discussions with officials from UN agencies, world ambassadors including the Apostolic Nuncio/the Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the UN, and representatives from Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs); interactive workshops on the Millennium Development Goals and the Rights of the Child; a leadership and advocacy seminar; UN Tour; cross-cultural exchange; building connections among fellow Lasallians.

<table>
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<tr><td>Remarks from
• Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio. Permanent observer of the Holy see to the UN
• US Ambassador to the UN
• UN special representative for violence against children
• Brother Superior General (remote)
• Brother General Councilor, USA/ Toronto Region</td></tr>
<tr><td>Setting the Catholic Lasallian Context</td></tr>
<tr><td>Multi-media Presentation</td></tr>
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Monday
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Tuesday
April 27, 2010</td><td colspan="2">Keynote Addresses</td></tr>
<tr><td>Thematic Workshops</td><td>War Affected Children,
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<tr><td colspan="2">Advocacy & Leadership Seminar</td></tr>
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<tr><td colspan="2">Evening Prayer (Monday)
Evening Liturgy (Tuesday)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Tour of the United Nations</td></tr>
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With the Brother Superior General and the General Council attending, the official launch of the USA/Toronto Region initiative took place at the Huether Lasallian Conference, 19-21 November 2009, in Cincinnati, Ohio. The theme of the conference was Providing Sanctuary for Children and Families in Crisis.

As a result of the Convocation, in addition to the longer-term educational and catechetical aims, the hope is to begin actualizing our numerical power, joining the national advocacy campaign for

US ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child within the next three years. As the *Rule* states, "The Brothers train their students to adopt a critical stance towards contemporary society… They become increasingly conscious of the reasons for the poverty that surrounds them and so become earnestly involved in the promotion of justice and human dignity through the educational service they provide" (13c, 14).

For sure, the cause of the defense and promotion of children's rights can serve as the lens through which Lasallians can boldly respond to the call of the Church and the Institute to engage in social justice promotion as an integral dimension of the Lasallian educational mission.

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