

RELAF NEWSLETTER N°37

Brothers of the Christian Schools



Lasallian Region of Africa



December 2020

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EDITORIAL

On the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, the Holy Father Francis proposes to our meditation his Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde*. This letter finds a special resonance in us Lasallian educators. Indeed, John Baptist de La Salle, our beloved founder, recommended¹, long before this declaration, a special devotion to St. Joseph as "Patron and Protector" of our Institute. Moreover, he saw in him an excellent model of educator². The tenderness inspired by the example of Joseph is what he expects from us towards our students. He sums it up in this sentence: "If you have the firmness of a Father towards them, to remove them and keep them away from disorder, you must also have for them the tenderness of a Mother, to take them in and do them all the good that depends on you."³ This tenderness, which he recommends to us, comes in response to that of God.⁴

Pope Francis echoes what we already know. He describes St. Joseph as a "father in tenderness"⁵. "Jesus, the Pope said, saw in Joseph the tenderness of God. "He adds that he teaches us "that having faith in God also includes believing that he can act through our fears, our fragility, our weakness..." The Evil, on the other hand, pushes us to sadness because of our fragility, to look at it with an evil eye. Now, says the Pope, "The pointing of fingers and the judgment we use against others are often a sign of our inability to welcome within us our own weakness, our own fragility; only tenderness will save us from the work of the Accusatory⁶. Only tenderness will save us from the work of the Accusatory." In contrast to this figure of a "father of tenderness", many consider the patriarchal family as the first of the oppressive and repressive institutions. They are seeking to substitute, as an equivalent alternative, an association of two people of the same sex with the right to resort to medically assisted procreation. Procreation ceases in this case to have the erotic desire between a man and a woman as its natural anchor. The child becomes the fruit of genetic programming and manipulation that makes it a product that conforms to the will of its "parents". The result is that the child becomes the object of **manufacture** and the family becomes a **pure social convention**.

Seeking to submit everything to our will to power, starting with procreation, is to pursue the project of a world without tenderness. Tenderness, the antithesis of power, does not come from a will to dominate. It is **a gift** given to us as we receive and discover the other, especially the child. Sexual difference, far from being a trivial fact, is at the core of the family's procreative power. Procreation is not a priori an educational or political project. It represents the place for manifestation of the **mystery of existence as a gift received**. The erotic desire between

¹ Especially in his Testament, without considering his many other writings. This is also confirmed by the Bull of Approbation of the new Institute.

² Cf. Meditation 110

³ Cf. Meditation 101,3

⁴ Cf. The article by Brother Lorenzo Tebar, Goodness-Tenderness in Lasallian Themes 1. Rome. February 1993.

⁵ Cf. *Patris Corde*, P. 4-7

⁶ Cf. Apocalypse 12, 10

a man and a woman does not prepare them directly for the welcoming of a child or for a lasting love between them as wife and husband. The child is always a surprise and love is an adventure that one should restart always. This remains true as long as we recognise in the other a free being, in the image of God, and not in the image of our own desires.

Christmas is therefore the divine surprise of a child who comes to share the Father's tenderness with us. The child is already present in the dream of tenderness of the parents who love him without yet knowing him. Christmas is the entry into the tenderness of God and the welcome of this child, the gift of his tenderness for us. Dear Sisters, Dear Brothers, Dear Lasallians, our hope is in tenderness; without it, we have no future! Live Christmas in our hearts! Forever!

Fraternally, Pierre OUATTARA, FSC

VOCATION'S WEEK 2020: COLLÈGE LA SALLE OF LEA



In recent years, a tradition has begun to take hold at the Collège La Salle de Léa. We are in Bata in Equatorial Guinea, District of Central Africa. Indeed, each year, together and by association, is organised within the school, "una semana vocacional", a vocational week. Brothers and collaborators try to be possible triggers of a vocation through testimonies of matrimonial, priestly and religious life, and in particular, of Lasallian religious life in all its forms. It is, in short, a week of talks and sharing to motivate our young people, especially those who are in a period of search for meaning and discernment, those of "cuarto y Bachillerato", that is the whole group, the future of our society, so that they may remain attentive to the voice of God. This year the theme chosen to accompany our young people in this process was "Cuenta contigo", translated as "He is counting on you".

Indeed, many people and God in particular counts on each one of you young people, to respond to the needs of our world: He needs our intelligence, our hands, our feet, our mouth, our eyes, and who we are. It is a great honour, but it is also a great responsibility:

because we are asked to strive to be light, to do good, to discover the place and the concrete way in which God asks us to collaborate.

From the 16th to the 20th of November, there were various life testimonies, prayers for vocations and interviews. That was wonderful.

With faith, we continue to wait gracefully for the fruits of this tradition of "semana vocacional": to see young Guineans join us in the Father's vineyard. This is a desire, a necessity for our District of Central Africa, our Region, and our Institute. May the Father answer our prayers and make us more nourishing for the young people to whom he sent us.

Cuenta contigo



Brother Parfait Francis FADANKA, DAC

BLOOD DONATION ORGANISED BY THE LASALLIAN YOUTH IN BURKINA



« a bag of blood can save a life, let's be heroes' » « Be a hero donate blood »

The Lasallian Youth (LY) is a Lasallian movement that, beyond the school programmes, aims to be a citizen's movement. The young people who are active in this movement allow their environment to challenge



them. The observation they have made is that in this winter period there is a strong demand for blood in the different hospitals in Burkina Faso. In a spirit of solidarity and in order to relieve the sick,



the Lasallian Youth (LY) of Ouagadougou (La Salle Badenya, La Salle, the LY from Universities) organised a blood donation session at the Lycée La Salle Badenya on 28th August 2020, in collaboration with the Centre

open to all people of good will who were at least 18 years old and weighing 50 kg. Many LYs did not meet these conditions. nevertheless, they were there to encourage others. The strong mobilization of the LYs surprised the team from the National Centre



(CNST) who had only brought 50 bags that could collect blood. The team regrets having underestimated the number of donors. Mobilised for the good cause, it was in a good-natured atmosphere that our young Lasallians carried out this blood donation activity. Through this gesture, the L.Y wants to call on the youth of Burkina Faso as a whole to be attentive to the needs of its society. The slogan chosen to galvanise the group and other young people to donate blood is as follows: **"a bag of blood can save a life, let's be heroes"** **"Be a hero donate blood"**. This blood donation is part of the concrete manifestation of the slogan of the Lasallian Youth of the World, which is "Lasallian with a burning heart, star of the youth".

Brother Toua Denis TRAORE,

Coordinator of the Lasallians Youth of the District of West Africa

MEDITATION BEFORE THE ICON OF THE MERCIFUL TRINITY

Although the mystery of the Trinity is at the centre of the Christian faith, the representation of the Trinity only appears late in Christian art, in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts from the 9th to the 12th century in the form of Trinitarian images (hospitality of Abraham, baptism of Jesus...). In the 12th century, there is a great blossoming of images of the



Trinity represented outside of time: the Father in majesty, with the attributes of creation, Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father carrying the Cross-, symbol of salvation, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove radiating between the two. The images in majesty evoke the greatness of God and his sovereign power. In the twentieth century, especially after Vatican II, artists tried to depict, with great creativity, dynamic aspects of the Trinitarian action, including depicting amazing qualities in God such as his humility and compassion. Religious images have always had a catechetical concern; "bible of the poor", they allow the humble to access and understand with few words the mysteries of faith. The icon that we present, came to us through a diocesan Sunday leaf some thirty years ago. Imagined by a handicapped person in Buenos Aires, a nun specialised in icons who wanted to remain anonymous put in the form of an icon. Sr. Caritas Müller, a Dominican nun in Cazis, Germany later took it up in ceramic form. In the painting, we

contemplate the Trinity that surrounds a man, representing suffering, wounded, and powerless humanity. Around him, surrounding him, and as if embracing him, there are three circles inclined towards each other with the three persons of the Trinity. The Father, the most prominent person, puts his hands under the arms of the human creature to support it. He gives him a kiss as a merciful Father. The

Son supports man's feet, bows down on him and serves him in a gesture reminiscent of the washing of feet. He wears the garment of the servant. The wounds on his hand show us that he is the Risen One. Through the Resurrection of his Son, we know that God is on the side of the poor and the afflicted of life. The Spirit realises the action of the Father and the Son from within. He seeks to penetrate the heart of the man. He strengthens humanity that suffers. It is the expression of acting Love. In the form of a dove and ardent fire, he is the one who gives him life.

THE MERCIFUL TRINITY

Our time wants the man to be at the centre of everything. He would be the measure of all things. He defines himself as self-sufficient and master of his destiny. He pushes his Creator to a secondary if not, to a useless plane. In this icon, the man is indeed at the centre. Nevertheless, what a man! He is not the autonomous man, conscious and proud of his own values. No, it is rather the human being in all his weakness and misery. Here, too, God seems to be on

the side, in a secondary role, but in a reversed direction. The man is clearly at the centre, a fragile man. However, the merciful God surrounds him on all sides. His relationship with him has a Trinitarian character. The Father welcomed this prodigal and suffering son with tenderness. The Father welcomes him with lowered



eyes as if to show his sadness at seeing him in this condition and at the same time the deep joy of his return and to be able to give him forgiveness without belittling him. "I have called you by name, you are mine... You are precious in my sight and I love you" (Is 43:1ff) "Even if a mother could forget her son, I will not forget you... See, I have engraved your name on the palms of my hands" (cf. Is). For God in fact, the man is the centre of his attention. God kneels before him and wants to become the centre of his life. This is how he will stand up again and be able to fulfil his mission of being the guardian and cultivator of the work of Creation that he has entrusted to him (symbolised by the globe). The Son assumes our fragile condition as human beings. His attitude as a servant shows us his immense love: "There is no greater love than to give one's life for those one loves". It is love that makes man free and alive "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (Jn 10). In Jesus, God lowers himself to become in all things like man. He does not look down on him,

but makes himself his brother and stretches out his hand to him as he did to Peter going into the water. The human being, made of the clay of the earth, is the

darkest figure. It has the colour of the earth. A being that God created, who would have no life without it. «What is man, that you are mindful of him? And the son of man, that you visited him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and have

crowned him with glory and honour " (Ps 8). The image on the right reminds us of the kiss, the breath of life that God gave him. He wants the human being to be a living being, an interlocutor, a being who radiates life, capable of loving, and a being who is like him. "In the beginning the Spirit hovered over the waters" (Gn 1:1) the dove of fire flies towards the being who lies down at the end of his strength. This dove of fire reminds us of Pentecost. Full of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles, fearful as they were, became bold witnesses of Jesus, men who were ardent for God. How good it is to be able to find ourselves like this in the HEART of such a God! That we may live in Him, through Him and with Him all the days of our lives.

N.B. to deepen the reflexion:

<https://www.carmeldemetz.fr/media/files/TriniteMisericordieuse.ppsx> link to the slideshow made by the Carmelite community of Metz presenting the ceramic icon.

Brother Joan SALA
Regional Bursar

MESSAGE OF BROTHER SUPERIOR GENERAL TO THE BROTHER NOVICES



*A pilgrimage takes time;
it involves pauses along the way that provide
opportunities for insight
and renew the pilgrim's motivation to continue.*

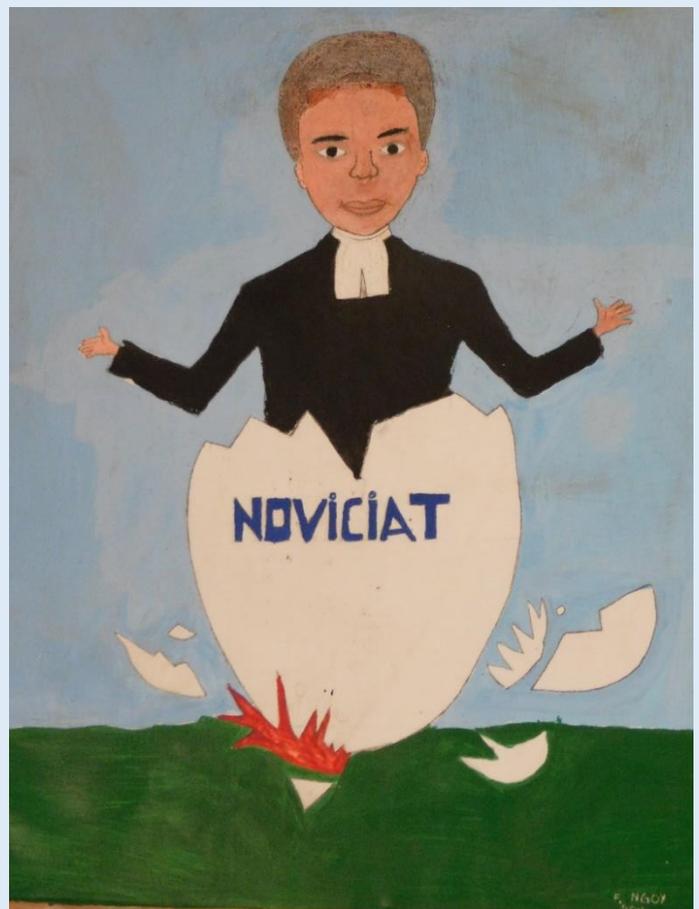
(Pilgrim's Handbook: Lasallian Formation for Mission). Our life-long pilgrimage begins at birth. Baptism orients us towards the destination and introduces us to a community of fellow travelers. As in any long journey, we pause along the way to refresh, reorient and restock. For those aspiring to the life of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the novitiate is a necessary rest stop that provides a wonderful opportunity to deepen one's relationship with Jesus Christ and to consider John Baptist de La Salle's experience of committing his entire life to the Reign of God.

The Holy Spirit leads the pilgrimage and promises a trip filled with surprises, unexpected vistas, detours and interruptions. During this year, I hope that each one of you is able to recognize and appreciate the ups and downs inherent in any travel and attentively follow the signposts that will keep you on the path of spiritual transformation:

Spiritual transformation is a profound process that does not happen by accident. We need a repeated discipline, a genuine training, in order to let go of our

old habits of mind and to find and sustain a new way of seeing. To mature on the spiritual path, we need to commit ourselves in a systematic way.

I am grateful to your Director and staff who will provide a detailed itinerary to help you along the way and assist you in the acquisition of the life sustaining habits of recalling God's presence, responding in practical ways to the concrete needs of the poor and witnessing to the Gospel through the ministry of human and Christian education.



My dear novices, all of us are counting on you to share your experiences of God, your dreams for the future of religious life and your insights regarding the best way to announce the Gospel to young people, especially those who are impeded by poverty in their quest to live life to the fullest.

Brother Robert Schieler,
Superior general

THE MISSION CONTINUES DESPITE THE GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS

LINKED TO THE CORONAVIRUS / COVID-19

At a time when the world is plunged into anxiety and the fight against the health crisis linked to covid-19, Christ invites us, without tiring, to move forward, never



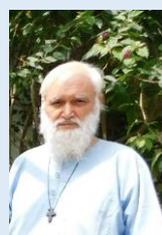
specialised school of the educational centre. The list of the day's activities included the welcome address by the Brother Director of the Centre. Then, the intervention of the Brother Director of the specialised

giving up, but rather to always keep the flame of hope in our hearts. He constantly invites us to work in his



field, to continue his mission, as his disciples in the footsteps of Saint John-Baptist de La Salle. It is in this same dynamic that the Brothers' community of the Foyer Akwaba / Foyer de La Salle began its new community year 2020-2021, on Saturday, September 05, 2020 with a recollection at CELAF-Institute. In addition, from 14 to 30 September 2020, we have held refresher courses at the Ecole de Base (that is a specialised school) of the educational centre, marking the launch of the school year 2020-2021. On 1 October 2020, the new school year began at the

school, followed by the meeting of the Brothers and the Educators with the children of the educational centre, commonly known as the children of "Family Life", as well as those from the neighbourhood enrolled in the school and known as "children from outside". Each Brother in the community of the Akwaba educational centre has responsibilities both



in the community and at the Centre. Thus, Brother ESCANO i DURAN Josep Enric assumes the responsibilities of Director of the

Community and of the Centre, Bursar of the Community and of the Centre. As for Brother Régis-Emmanuel Lonibo PALENFO is Responsible for "Reintroduction into the family through Education": Director of the specialised school, the Formal School and Literacy.



He is also responsible for the Centre's library, the Community and Centre infirmary. Brother MESSAN Koassi Michel is the Head Director in charge of

Listening and Aid Relations. In addition, he is promoter of the pastoral ministry of vocations and representative of the Community in the parish catechesis of adults group. Brother Le Van Vinh



Joseph is in charge of welcoming people, taking care of the Community Chapel and is co-responsible for “Reintroduction into the family through Work” at the

Centre. As for the two young Brothers, Augustin RATSIMBAZAFY and Jeannot Patrick ANDRIATSIFERANTSOA of the District of Antananarivo, having completed their studies at CELAF-INSTITUTE and who are in transit in the said Community, they ensure the permanence with the children of the "Family Life" and are also educators at the level of the specialised school.



This brief presentation of the responsibilities of each Brother shows that the mission is indeed abundant but the workers are few. It therefore invites each one of us to have a wider vision of the mission and not to remain focused only on what we know or master. At the same time, it is a call that also requires a spirit of openness, patience and sacrifice on the part of each Brother and each Educator. This is, for the Kingdom that Jesus announces, him who is protector of the

children, the little ones and the weak, might reach everyone and touch their hearts. Jesus makes a special appeal to us, to have a loving care for children, to be attentive to their daily life. It is in this sense that the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI affirms: "... children are a gift of God to humanity; they must therefore be the object of special care on the part of their families, the Church, society and governments because they are a source of hope and renewal in life" (AFRICAE MUNUS No. 65). In addition, we can add to this that the mission of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is to take care of these children, the little ones. This is what the Brothers of the Community of the Foyer Akwaba / Foyer de La Salle are trying to do for the children of the "Family Life" and the pupils of the Centre: to be educators and companions of these children. We should therefore note that in order to accomplish these tasks, the Brothers must have certain personal charisms to transmit the messages to their interlocutors. The experiences lived daily with these children show that a Brother must have the charism of listening, of paying particular attention to the needs of the children, of being patient with those who need it most, of having time to accompany them and above all of showing love towards these children. This is what Jesus, the Prince of Children, asks us to do: to be closer to them since they are the hope and joy of the Church, the future of the society. Dear Brothers, dear Lasallians, at the end of my words, I would like to invite each one of us in our ministry to have the hidden meaning of God's unconditional love for his children. Live Jesus in our Hearts. Forever!

Brother Jeannot Patrick ANDRIATSIFERANTSOA,
District of Antananarivo.

MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF BROTHER VISITORS WITH THE NOVICES

From 02 to 05 November 2020, the Brother Visitors held their conference in Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the Conference met with the Brothers of the community of the Novitiate Notre Dame de Grâces on November 04th at



11 am. The Spiritual Animation Commission (CAS) marked the opening of this meeting by words of prayer. Then followed the presentation of all the



participants in this meeting. Brother Anatole, Visitor of the District of Central Africa and moderator of the sessions of the Conference of Brothers

Visitors, read with pleasure the letter of Brother Superior General, Robert Schieler, to the Novice Brothers and their formators. In his message, the Brother Superior General said that he accords great importance to the novitiate, which he sees as a time of pilgrimage. A pilgrimage that takes time, including stops, renewing one's own motivation to continue. The novitiate is a necessary halt to consolidate and deepen one's vocation. The novitiate is also the place where one disposes oneself for a spiritual transformation. This transformation, which does not happen by accident, requires an abandonment of old habits and a systematic commitment on the part of each individual to make himself accessible to God's

grace. Brother Robert Schieler says he counts on the novices to share their dreams and reflections for a more fruitful way of proclaiming the Gospel,

especially to the poorest of our times, through human and religious education. Before ending his message, the Brother Superior also expressed his

gratitude to the Brother Formators, whom he encourages in the mission entrusted to them. After the reading of this letter, the Conference asked to the Brother novices to say in a few words what they would respond to what they have heard. Taking the floor, they recognised that indeed the road of this pilgrimage is long but, counting on the grace of God and the support of their elders, they hope to reach the good port. It is besides this sense that they welcome this word of the Brother Superior General. They understood this message as a stimulus for them to take their formation seriously, and to take their rightful place in the Church in general, and in the Institute in particular. Some have gone as far as to



compare the Novitiate to a garden where the Institute plants and maintains them. Being aware that they should not only receive but also give, they assure

that they will know how to give good fruit in its time,

always relying on the grace of God and the support of their confreres. Brother Pierre OUATTARA, General Councillor for RELAF, for his part, insisted on the

and asked the Novice Brothers to share what costs them the most in terms of these renunciations. With an open heart, the Brother Novices underlined several



commitment of each one for an effective success of the novitiate time. He encouraged each one to carry out personal research work in order to enrich himself intellectually and spiritually for the mission that awaits him. He also encouraged them to learn and master at least two of the Institute's languages. From there, the Brother Visitors asked to the novice Brothers to say which courses were of most interest to them. If for some, all the courses are very interesting, others are particularly touched by the mystery of the Incarnation studied in Christology. They find that both the Old Testament and the New Testament speak of a Jesus who does not seem to be the same. Therefore, they ask themselves which Jesus we are commonly talking. To this question, Brother Pierre OUATTARA rather invited them to discover the third Jesus, who is the one they will have experienced and whom they will announce to the young people entrusted to their care. Brother Paulin, Visitor of the Gulf of Benin, from his part, pointed out that spiritual formation requires renunciations,

points such as leaving one's country, change of habits, isolation, silence, lack of news from the families... Taking this opportunity, the young Brothers wanted to know if the Brothers in the Districts and Delegation maintained contact with their own families since they left them for the Novitiate. All the Brother Visitors and President present answered in the affirmative, emphasising the value of these contacts both on a personal and on District/Delegation level. As members of the same religious family, we each become members of the biological family of the others. It is on this note and at 12.26 p.m. that the meeting ended, with mutual thanks, who for the visit, who for the welcome and openness in the exchanges, without forgetting the encouragement to move forward.

Brother Etienne S. SAWADOGO
Regional secretary

NEWS FROM THE REGION

The Signum Fidei Fraternity elected its International Council on 06 December 2020. The International Council is composed of the Regional Coordinators and the International Brother Assessor. One of the objectives of this Council is to prepare and convene International Assemblies as stated in article 79 of our Lifestyle Manual "The International Assembly is the sovereign body of the Signum Fidei Fraternity. The President and the International Brother Assessor convene this Assembly at least one year before the ordinary General Chapters and in relation to the International Assembly for Mission".

The main mission of this Council is:

- To create communion among all Signum Fidei Fraternities;
- To draw up Statutes for the functioning of Signum Fidei at the international level;
- To prepare for the III International Assembly.

The Council, elected for a period of seven years, is renewable once.

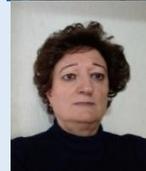
Edith TOUVI, Signum Fidei of the Gulf of Benin District was elected member of the International Council of the Signum Fidei Fraternity. Our congratulations to this new Council, especially to Edith of course. May the Lord pour His blessings abundantly upon them.



Brother Rafael Matas
International Advisor of the Signum
Fidei Fraternities.



Pedro Pérez (Nicaragua)
Vice President



Mercedes Fuentes (Spain)
Co-Secretary



Teresa Castaneda (Philippines)
Director



Elena Tiburcio (Mexico)
Director



Ritha González Murillo
(Central America - Nicaragua)
Secretary



Vilma Paredes (Peru)
Director



Raffaele Bosi (Italy)
Director



Edith Touvi (Togo)
Director

END OF THE YEAR MESSAGE OF THE BROTHER GENERAL COUNCILLOR

The year 2020 is going away, 2021 is coming. The Covid-19 pandemic has deeply affected this ending year. After what we have been through, it seems obvious that nothing will ever be the same again. The pandemic has forced us to take the measure of our fragilities, of the limits of our human securities. It has changed our way of being with others and made us understand that we could do everything differently. If we look at this health and economic crisis with eyes of faith, we can learn some lessons in the form of graces. It is true that there have been many bereaved families, creating new situations of poverty. However, in the midst of anguish and apparent despair, God is present through many signs of hope.

As religious, Christians, Lasallians, we are invited to strengthen the experience of God's presence in us and among his people. Before thinking about the signs of hope, let us admit that Africa has not experienced the catastrophe we thought for in the first and second waves. With the challenges posed by Covid-19, the continent seems to be waking up. People are thinking about innovation and change, especially in the field of education. Africa has shown confidence in itself, in its capacity to resist disease because of the youthfulness of its population, the immunity and resilience acquired through the confrontation with various diseases, thanks to the plants in its pharmacopoeia. Nevertheless, we should recognise that the population is showing a certain recklessness, if not unconsciousness, towards the pandemic; this should be of particular concern to the authorities.

Paradoxically, on one hand, because of the fear it arouses, the pandemic is leading to a breakdown in solidarity with others as a threat. On the other hand, it forces us to be concerned not to put the other person in danger, to live in solidarity with them by protecting them from the disease.

By changing our relationship with others, the pandemic has changed our relationship with time. The pandemic has slowed us down and given us time to sit down and see that life is not a speed race. With the security restrictions associated with the pandemic, many of us have found ourselves alone, faced with ourselves, with time on our hands and not knowing what to do. At the same time, it offered us the opportunity to read, think seriously and pray. It forced us to be patient with ourselves and with others.

The pandemic has thus had a significant impact on our community and family lives. Communication become stronger as members are now able to sit down and discuss among themselves at greater length. It has therefore helped us to appreciate the members of our community and to create links between us. Relationships and community life have become richer with more creativity in mutual support, in common work and longer prayer times. The threat of Covid-19 has helped to create a stronger sense of unity, of union, with the understanding that one does not save oneself. We have become more attentive and understanding towards people and their family situations or precarious working conditions. Finally, another sign of hope, in addition to the fact that many people have been cured, Covid-19 vaccines are coming sooner than expected.

The pandemic, even though we have had very few cases in our schools, has obviously had a heavy impact on school life. Necessary pedagogical changes have almost imposed themselves. We had to show pedagogical creativity in order to be able to continue remoteness learning courses, introduce barrier measures when classes resumed, involve parents more in the follow-up of children... All this, at the same time that we were sometimes unable to pay the teachers and were therefore experiencing financial difficulties. However, some educational institutions were able to mobilise resources and take initiatives to help their teachers, the poor and refugees. This is admirable. Internet access facilities have made it possible to bring education within the reach of a larger school population at lower cost and to have more flexibility in the organisation of studies. Covid-19 has definitely challenged us to be creative online, while reminding us the necessity to collaborate and live in solidarity and not alone.

With the awareness of our limitations in the face of the pandemic, we discovered that there were other ways to come together, to make community, to make school, to make even church. Through all of this, it is a question also of walking humbly in prayer, of going back to a quiet and simple life, of living poverty, of living the essential and solidarity with the poor, with the discovery of our misuse of the resources of our world. Through his messages, the Pope Francis is announcing new things on ecology, economy, fraternity... The Pope has amply emphasised that we cannot save ourselves alone. The Church itself has had to close its doors almost everywhere, putting human life before the rituals of Mass and prayer. She has had to be creative in its pastoral ministry and

accompaniment of the faithful, resilient to confronting adversity and hostile political acts.

We have experienced various painful events. We have lost members of our families, of our communities. We have mobilised ourselves in prayer and action not only in the face of Covid-19 but also around events such as the volcanic eruption in the Philippines or the explosion in Beirut which affected Lasallian schools. We carried the Superior General in prayer and now give thanks to God for his renewed health. In spite of all the hardships we have experienced, there is no lack of reasons for hope in our Region. Several young Brothers are preparing to make their perpetual profession and we are considering the construction of the novitiate in Bobo Dioulasso on a new site. The old site has become too small for the growing number of novices. There are 19 in the second year and 27 in the first year, spread over two sites, accompanied by five Formators. God continues to call young people to the religious life of the Brother, to continue his mission of human and religious education.

Through the La Salle University of Africa project, we are taking small steps towards a credible, large-scale Lasallian higher education in Africa. With the collaboration of the university project bearers of each District, the support of the steering committee appointed by the Brother Superior General, the Conference of Brothers Visitors is moving towards the adoption of a global strategic plan for La Salle University of Africa. As part of our beyond the borders initiatives, La Salle Secondary School in Rumbek, South Sudan, is starting its fourth year and will therefore present its first candidates for the

national examination. It is difficult to imagine from a distance the tremendous hope that this school raises among the local population. Elsewhere, in Issa, Northern part of Ghana, our Brothers got a land for the construction of their community. They have the mission of running a secondary school there, which the Government will build and entrusted to them through the Catholic Church.

I would like to end this end-of-year message by entrusting to our prayers one of our oldest Brothers in the Region. Brother Aloys NDIMUKIHE from the Delegation of Rwanda is 78 years old. For the past month, he has begun to show more physical weakness than usual. Tests have not revealed anything serious and he has taken some prescribed medication. The scans have just revealed an attack on his spine. He cannot walk on his own and therefore needs assistance. He is going to see a neurologist to find out what kind of treatment to consider. Let us not forget to invoke Blessed Raphael Louis Rafiringa for his intentions.

May Jesus live in our hearts for a holy year 2021.

Fraternally, Pierre OUATTARA

GREETING CARD

