

RELAF NEWSLETTER N°38

Brothers of the Christian Schools



Lasallian Region of Africa

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RELAF Newsletter is a publication of the Brothers of the Christian Schools by the regional team

B.P 1927—Abidjan 08 Côte d'Ivoire

Chief editor: Br. Pierre OUATTARA

Assistant editors: Br Ferdinand BIZIYAREMYE & Br Joan SALA COLL

Infography and Translation: Br Etienne Sombéwendé SAWADOGO

To send articles: relaf@lasalle.org

WebSite: www.relaf.info

EDITORIAL

The articles proposed here have led me to meditate on the particular way in which we, Lasallian educators, transform the world. Our mission, modestly seen, could be summed up as making the world more fraternal. But seeking to bring about a more fraternal **global world** can lead us to confuse the world with “the global”. For us, transforming the world in depth does not mean acting on a global level, in the sense of an action coming from above, **from the highest** possible level. The mistake to be avoided is that of reducing Christian charity to a universal philanthropic work, endowed with important human and financial resources, a voluntaristic work, full of good conscience and good feelings.

It is important to note that the fraternal bond involved in Christian charity is different from an ideological or contractual bond. It is based on the brotherhood already established by Jesus Christ. The fraternal bond established by Jesus Christ is both **incarnate** and **unconditional** because it involves flesh and blood beings of all conditions, cultures and nations. The brotherhood established by Jesus Christ does not undo blood bonds. Blood is the symbol of life that flows from one person to another, through the generations. Under our African skies, we often speak of blood brotherhood, but there is also the exchange of blood that creates a kinship between two strangers and their descendants. The question is always whether our blood **bonds** bind us or **tie us down**, whether they are inclusive or exclusive, whether they dispose us to welcome the widow and the orphan, the poor and the foreigner or not. Tribal or national fraternities are multiple and can be disruptive even in the Lasallian mission. We must beware of this.

Blood is life in the form of a generosity which precedes us and of which we are not the owners. On it depends the effectiveness of our breath. The bloodstream brings oxygen to the cells and removes carbon dioxide. The blood thus leads us to the frontier between the material and the spiritual. As the vehicle of the breath of life, it is at the same time the symbol of a shared life. By living charity in brotherhood, we really share the life of Christ, the life of God. This life of God does not destroy human life in us, but brings it to another dimension of existence. Let us say, to use an image borrowed from physics, that it **expands** our heart. What we bring to the educational mission is **a breath, a fire**, that of the **Holy Spirit**. From this comes our particular way of transforming the world: “touching hearts”. John-Baptist De La Salle tells us on what condition this can be done: “Try to perform all your actions in a spirit of prayer.”¹

Charity operates by **dilating our heart of flesh**². We are naturally attached to a world by our body and by our heart. Before wanting to transform the world, whether it is the one in which we were born or the one in which we live our mission, we must start by **welcoming it**. The spirit of charity asks us never to forget the moment of

¹ Meditation 129 2nd point

² John Baptist de La Salle evokes this kind of dilation of the heart when he speaks of **Saint Philip Neri** in meditation 129 in the second point.

gratitude for **this body and this heart that I am**, and which make me a member of a human family, of a culture, an inhabitant of a land, of a nation to which I have duties. It asks me not to forget either that I am a son of God. As a **son of God**, I am not the exclusive property of any historical society, of any culture and, as such, I must work for **active equality, for a fraternity without borders** between the men and women of this world.

Your Brother, Pierre Ouattara.

MADAGASCAR: THE INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS (FSC) AND THE INSTITUTE OF THE GUADALUPANA DE LA SALLE SISTERS (SGS)

A little history on what has become today the project of the District of Antananarivo. The District had requested from the Brother Superior General John Johnston in 1986, the possibility for Sister Esther Vasquez, Superior General of the Guadalupana De La Salle Sisters to come and make a prospection in Madagascar. This, in the sense of the pastoral ministry of vocation in the Brothers' schools, "*in response to the repeated requests of young girls who wanted to become Brothers.*" The Sister Superior did indeed come, two years later, with two Sister Formators. The two Sisters Formators welcomed the first candidates, accompanied earlier by some Brothers, and began their formation in structures yielded by the District. The Sisters later acquired their autonomy.

165 years ago, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools arrived in Madagascar (in 1866). This year the District of Antananarivo enters its sixtieth year of autonomous existence as a District (since 1961). The Institute of the Guadalupana De La Salle Sisters was founded in Mexico in 1946 by Venerable Brother Jean Fromental. After 30 years of presence in Madagascar (1991), they are celebrating this year the Jubilee of their 75 years of foundation. It is interesting to take stock of the figures and to give an overview of what the two congregations have become today on the Big Island. One detail can serve as an edifying example: while a Mexican sister, after many others, has been a missionary for many years in Madagascar, a native of Madagascar was elected

Vicar General of the Congregation at their last General Chapter.

STATISTICS 2020-2021	FSC	SGS
Year of opening in Madagascar	1866	1991
Status	District	Delegation
Malagasy Brothers/Sisters	65	61
Brothers/Sisters from other nationalities	01	01
Brothers/Sisters in Perpetual Vows	49	32
Brothers/Sisters in temporary vows	17	30
Average age of Brothers/Sisters	46	-
Malagasy Brothers/Sisters in mission	04	08
Communities	14	08
Scholastics	09	04
Novices	18	15
Postulants	15	09
Schools	11	07
Dioceses of implantation in Madagascar	07	06

The brief history and the statistical table are intended to be a rapid presentation of the present situation and the promising future of the Lasallian mission which has taken root in the local soil and after a few decades has extended its ramifications beyond the Malagasy borders. These statistics highlight not only the youth and vitality of the Lasallian vocation. It also highlights the unity in diversity of the Lasallian personnel engaged today in a regional collaboration challenged by the geographical extent, the linguistic and cultural variety of the continent, within a single educational ministry: Brothers/Sisters and Lay Lasallians.



Finally, this brief historical and numerical presentation constitutes an invitation to the Brothers of the District of Antananarivo to a deeper reflection on the meaning of the commitment to the shared Mission. In addition, it is also both an encouragement and a call to persevere in prayer and vocational ministry in RELAF. In fact, the table shows only one aspect, reduced to statistics, of the realities lived and shared regularly in our regional review. It also gives

an account and illustrates well the concerns and the hope expressed in our common prayer in preparation for the 46th General Chapter of the Institute. Yes, "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few"...



Brother Hilaire Raharilalao.

THE TWELVE VIRTUES OF A DE LA SALLE HOLY CROSS COLLEGE PUPIL

EQUATORIAL GUINEA: RECONFINEMENT

- B**e first that you may be of service.
- Acceptance**
To be accepting of others; their race,
gender, creed.
- Cheerfulness**
To spread happiness and encouragement.
- Compassion**
To show concern and empathy for others.
- Faithfulness**
To be dependable and true to one's duty and one's
word.
- Forgiveness**
To show mercy to others.
- Generosity**
To help where needed; providing comfort, care and
hope.
- Gentleness**
To be kind and considerate towards others.
- Honesty**
To be sincere, honest and true.
- Humility**
To be humble and modest.
- Kindness**
To be friendly and show concern for others.
- Respect**
To respect everyone and live in harmony with
people from different backgrounds, beliefs,
cultures and values.
- Unity**
To live in unity and harmony.

Mary Hyam

South Africa

How do you respond to the closure of
classes at Collège La Salle de Lea-Bata?

Since 15 February, following a Ministerial
Order signed by His Excellency Clemente
Engonga Nguema Onguene, First Deputy
Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Higher
Education and Sports of the country
(<https://www.guineaecuatorial>), face-to-face classes
have been temporarily interrupted in all educational
centres of all levels of education, both public and
private, located in the cities of Bata and Malabo. In
order to identify the limits of this governmental
decision and to understand the feelings of the student
population of our school, we decided to proceed with
a purposive sampling method and according to the
availability or convenience of the interviewees: two
members of the school's management team, a teacher
and a senior student. The spontaneity of the
respondents guided this interview. At the same time,
we also made sure that they did not stray too far from
the main topic.

Below is a transcript of what the interview
participants said:



"I must admit that this is a
traumatic crisis that paralyses us
all. What disturbs us is that our
government does not give us right
information on the progress of the health crisis in our
country. Sometimes it consoles us by giving us wrong
figures. If in the name of the community, to protect
our sons and daughters, we have to close classes, then
we should also close places like markets and all those

snack bars in hotels, etc. My advice to the students is that they should not live this suspension as a holiday.



They should work, especially those in 11,12 and 13 years. They should revise the lessons already studied; use all the means at their disposal to do some research in

order to move forward in the school programme.

To my fellow teachers, I say courage: let them make themselves available, let them continue to come to the school to receive in turn or in small groups students who would like to meet them to clarify some doubts and difficulties of understanding. **"Professor Yolanda, Colegio La Salle de Lea.**



"First of all, I would like to point out that this health crisis has brought us closer to our parents, who are now more concerned about our health on a daily basis. We have noticed that they

are more attentive, more vigilant, etc. With the suspension of classes - a decision that many of my classmates and I do not agree with - we realise that we will never finish the programmes of the different subjects. This difficult situation forces us to be aware of our responsibility as students. This might seem to some like a holiday, but it's not: we have more time to work at home, to revise our lessons, to hand in on time the homework that the teachers send us or tell us to do. Speaking of work, this is schoolwork because some parents abuse us and keep us busy with more domestic or commercial work. For my part, I really try to adapt to this situation in order to prepare myself for the end-of-year exam (la selectividad). Secrets or values that I try to cultivate in this case are openness and friendship: when I have some doubts about an

exercise, I turn to my elder brothers and sisters in the family, or I call on the brainpower of a classmate. This is really the time when we need to experience collaboration more; even this collaboration in a face-to-face setting is difficult, we miss each other, we have to send messages, data, via WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.". **Javier, Alumno de Bachillerato 2^º**

B, colegio La Salle de Lea



"This decision to suspend classes puts us in a situation that concerns us all: families, students as well as teachers.

We have to respect this suspension decree and to do with the methods and means that the school offers us to help the children work at home. From my point of view, I remain quite critical of this ministerial decision. As a parent, and as a citizen of this country, I believe that we should conduct the fight against Covid-19 today in the educational system with more wisdom, and in a special way. On the one hand, it is necessary to protect the pupils, it is true; but on the other hand, the Government should also protect their universal right to education. It would be advisable to think about offering them the means to do school differently without suspending it, to review the school calendar, to support the schools' finances, etc. With or without Covid-19, we should think about finding ways to operate without paralysing the process of educating and training students. Imagine if this global health crisis was to last for 40 years! Are we going to suspend classes like that? **"Profesor Pablo, Jefe de disciplina y miembro del equipo directivo del Colegio La Salle de Lea.**

This ministerial decision makes me feel bad because I love my work. I feel that the Government is

preventing me from applying all that I have learned, in my case, in pedagogy. This is very sad. It is a decision that lacks sense and pedagogical wisdom. Instead of closing schools completely, the government would have benefited from reflecting on how to rethink our school education in its means and methods. It should think on how to collaborate more with the heads of schools. This may help to answer the question of how to do school today, a school different from the traditional and different from the one we knew before this world health crisis. Well, the government has decided, we have to follow what they say. I encourage the students to adapt to the new way of studying. At La Salle College, we are proposing to them: to work at home, to live the decided school confinement as good citizens, to go out only for a good reason, such as to come to the college to collect the exercises, that they train in learning by themselves. I extend another invitation to parents and guardians who, for us, are important members of the life and education of La Salle College. That they make sure that their children really study at home, to help them give more time to reading, to revising, and even to help them as far as possible with explanations, means, etc. You parents could also come to the school to ask about the child's school behaviour, to ask if the child is really coming to collect the work, if he or she is handing it in on time, in short, to follow it closely. With the old generation of yesterday, parents had fewer worries; but nowadays it is difficult to educate, to trust your own child. To the teachers of La Salle College, I will give three pieces of advice. Firstly, that they should be more motivated. This is not a time for demotivation but for more commitment as Lasallian educators. Secondly, that they should embark on

more innovation, creativity, consultation, reading, in order to be able to help our students better and better. Thirdly, that they should absolutely be committed as teachers: punctuality in handing in the work prepared for the children, correcting it, etc. **"Profesor Angel Francisco, jefe de estudios y miembro del equipo directivo del colegio La Salle de Lea.**

In order not to take up too much time in writing this article, and to avoid transforming it into a qualitative study of the academic type, we reserve the analysis of these transcribed interviews and their graphic description for the next time. After reading these interviews, we can see the confirmation of our research hypothesis: the suspension of classes today is not the solution to fight against this health crisis in our African countries, case of Equatorial Guinea.

Brother Francis Parfait FADANKA,

DAC, Bata Equatorial Guinea

RWANDA: THE SAINT JEAN-BAPTISTE DE LA SALLE SCHOOL OF KIRENGE AT THE RHYTHM OF CORONAVIRUS

Saint John-Baptist De La Salle Kirenge School is a private Lasallian school of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rwanda. It is open to poor children who study without paying anything. It runs from kindergarten to secondary school and currently has 371 pupils aged between 3 and 22 years old. Like other schools in Rwanda, it is having troubles due to the Coronavirus pandemic that appeared in Rwanda on 13 March 2020.

From the beginning, the school closed its doors on 14 March 2020, after the discovery of the first coronavirus case. It was an officer from the United Nations and working in Rwanda. Students and teachers, at that time, thought they would return to



coronavirus. This calendar provides for the gradual return of pupils in three phases. Today all children are

in school and respect the governmental measures against the coronavirus: taking temperature and

washing hands before entering the school, wearing masks all day, using hand sanitizers in classrooms and offices, social distancing in class, etc. Classes

continue and thank God, we have not yet had a case of coronavirus in our school.

To hear this, one might imagine that everything is going well. Not at all! Covid-19 has disrupted educational practices and school habits. This pandemic has forced schools to have fewer children in class and on the same bench. To this end, the Rwandan government quickly built new classrooms



school after a few days. But it was eight months later that the first group of pupils and teachers returned to school according to a new school calendar in compliance with the protection measures against the



to reduce overcrowding. Today, children attach great importance to cleanliness of the hands and respect for the rules.

However, pedagogically we have lost a lot: some children have not returned to school. We have banned the participatory methods for fear that they could spread the virus; we should not allow children to play during the breaks. In fact, upper primary and secondary school children are currently at the end of the second term of the 2020 school year, while kindergarten and lower primary school children are at the end of the first term of the 2021 school year. For the latter, we have cancelled the 2020 school year because they started school too late.

The school has also experienced financial difficulties due to the fact of being free of charge. The school structure depends on the generosity of foreign donors. Thank God, the Brothers and the various partners of the school have tried to find appropriate solutions. The most important thing is that the work, this Work of God but also our own, continues to serve poor children. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the benefactors of the school, in particular the associations Africa sin frontera from Mexico, AEM from France and the Centre of the Institute. It is thanks to them that the school continues to stand to do great things. Thanks to Brother Juan Pablo Martin, Delegate of the Superior General for Rwanda, for his



role as mediator. Thanks to the school's educational team and support staff, especially those who work on the farm. The

school farm produces many vegetables, milk and meat, which helps us to fight the malnutrition of some of the children who come to us famished.

During the lockdown, we were afraid our animals would go short of food. However, the local



authorities have helped us to get the fodder and feed for our different animals: cows, sheep, pigs, rabbits and

chickens.

Soon it will be the school holidays and I think we deserve them after five months of school. Nevertheless, let us be careful, the coronavirus is still around. Let us protect our students and ourselves. May God keep all Lasallians throughout the world and may Jesus live in our hearts.

Brother Juvénal NIYONZIMA BANGA

Delegation of Rwanda

KENYA: START OF THE NOVITIATE AND HABIT TAKING OF 2021



“The Novitiate is the unique experience of initiation into the religious life of the Brothers,” as written in the Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The ceremony of the Beginning of the Novitiate and Habit Taking (6th February, 2021.) started with the Mass at exactly 11:00am with the Chief Celebrant Rev. Fr. Henry I. Ugese CSSR. The Novitiate Director, Br. Anthony Githahi welcomed all those present in his opening speech during the Mass.

“This is a journey, a journey to see, to listen and to touch”, said Rev. Fr. Henry in his reflection. He further stressed on the importance of the Star. The Star of faith which makes the Lasallian family



unique, as we follow the star who is Christ the teacher which is our mission.

Brother Visitor, shared his experience to the Novices. While speaking during the Eucharistic celebration, He thanked God for keeping all of us safe from the Corona Virus and he thanked the Formators for their good work. He encouraged the Novices on the authenticity of this journey, that the desire should be a conviction rather than mere feelings. This he said, at ‘De La Salle International Novitiate in Nairobi’ marking the start of the canonical year for the eleven first year novices, namely: Andre Julio, Auxilio Alfredo, Benefica Jorge, Tomas Alexandre, and Eurelio Segura, from Mozambique, Polite Ncube from Zimbabwe, Jude Oguname and Samuel Akadu from Nigeria, Justus Matata, Ronald Malala, and Zacchaeus Nderitu from Kenya. The habit taking of the ten second year novices. The ten second year novices namely: Abraham Woldemariam, Ademe Alemayehu, Dawit Yadesa, Admasu Yohannes, Eyob Gebriel, Gosse

Hirpo from Ethiopia, Carolino Azevedo, Januario Felizardo, Mossito Molipiha from Mozambique and Emmanuel Agba from Nigeria. The ten will still be continuing their novitiate.

On the other hand, the eleven first year novices will be involved in different activities

aimed at deepening their understanding of the Brothers' life and at the same time, continuing to acquire the identity of the Brothers.

Meanwhile, in the short speech of Brother Visitor, he started off by reminding Brothers that they have to trust in Jesus and to make sacrifices to find Jesus. For if we are in love with Christ, we will want to be like Him by abandoning ourselves and let His Will be done in us. Spiritual surrendering, he said, takes great courage and self-sacrifices to be a fool for Christ. For it is an active choice to place our person or ourselves and possession into the hands of God.

During Mass, at exactly 12:06pm the Novice Director declared the beginning of the Canonical Year, and naming Saint Benilde Romancon as the Patron Saint for the new novices. This was in the presence of Brother Visitor Ghebreyesus, Br. Philip Ejiro Novitiate sub Director and Br. Kassaye Antuan the Bursar of the Novitiate. The Director of the scholasticate Br. Wole Olanbanjo and the sub

Director Brother Wolde who were accompanied by some Brothers from the scholasticate community.



Before the final blessing, a procession was led by the first year novices for the tree planting which is part of the tradition and the tree planting was

led by Brother Visitor. This was witness by the heavens as the sound of thunder followed by rain began soon after the tree planting. This marked the end of the ceremony. Indeed, this was the day that the Lord had made; we rejoiced and we were glad.

Leave Jesus in our heart! Forever!

Novice Oguname Jude

De LaSalle International Novitiate Nairobi, Kenya.

BROTHER MOALUSI TRIBUTE



3 February 1985 – 21 February 2021

Brother Moalusi, a trusted friend, a beloved colleague, a role model, a man of prayer and a faithful servant of God.

Brother Moalusi was a member of the Tsholofelo Community in Rustenburg where he worked tirelessly and with great love for the young children and the youth in the local informal settlements. He understood their hardships but never waived in his efforts to offer them hope, continually looking for opportunities to empower them with skills. He loved small children and was passionate about his work in the creches, he was upgrading various skills centres for the youth and unemployed in the area. His faith

in God energized and motivated him, no mountain being too high to climb.

One of his dreams was for there to be more contact between the youth that he worked with and the Lasallian Youth. He welcomed the LSY visits to Tsholofelo and attended some of the LSY mission camps. He was always so appreciative of the outreach initiatives of the College, reminding us of the importance to share what we have with those who are less fortunate.

It was with great sorrow that we heard of the death of Brother Moalusi on Sunday 21 February after a short illness. Rest in peace, dear friend.

Mary Hyam

CALENDAR OF THE BROTHER GENERAL COUNCILOR

January	
24 jan-24 March	20 th session of the General Council, with the usual administrative councils
March	
19 March	Videoconference with the Brothers Visitors on the results of the survey on association
26 March au 5 April	District Chapter of Central Africa