

**THE LASALLIAN FRATERNITY
FOR MISSIONARY WORK
(FML)
(Santo Domingo)**

Lasallian Fraternity for Missionary Work

The FML is a Lasallian Youth Group and we its members try to follow Jesus in a more than average way, whilst basing our conduct on the teachings of De La Salle. We therefore work together in an apostolic manner, and hold sessions for self-improvement; during the summer we have time to do work of longer duration.

Our work is our Mission Camp, and has been so far undertaken among the children who live in the Sierra (San José de las Matas, Dominican Republic).

The name: "Lasallian Confraternity for Missionary Work" speaks for itself:

FRATERNITY: This word comes from the Latin and means "Brothers and Sisters together", so we are a community based on the Divine will and we hope directed by it; we trust that through community, that is being together, we can achieve the evangelical goals laid down by De La Salle. Community is a fundamental aspect of De La Salle's teaching, and it is through our community that the persons we help can be influenced by our words and profit from our actions.

MISSIONARY: This word comes from "to send", so we are sent by God to announce the Gospel and to do that especially for poorer people.

LASALLIAN: We have decided to follow the ideal of Saint John Baptist de La Salle with its three pillars of Faith, Brotherhood and Service; our aim is to live completely in a Lasallian way at this time and in this place.

**HOW THE LASALLIAN FRATERNITY
FOR MISSIONARY WORK CAME ABOUT.**

It was the "Lasallian Congresses" in the Dominican Republic which inspired the idea of the FML. At those congresses young people from every Lasallian Institution in the Republic and of neighbouring Puerto Rico were present. There it was that certain young people had the idea of following Jesus more closely in imitation of De La Salle.

To be fully committed became more than a wish, when a group of young "Dominicanos" from De La Salle Schools organised in the summer of 1987, the first Camp called "The Celestina-Lasallian Mission".

Time passed, and we realised that one meeting a year was not enough. We wanted more commitment and more permanent contact between the missionaries, in fact, we wanted to live the ideals of Faith, Brotherhood and Service with greater depth.

That was the origin of our FML: a desire, as we have said, for greater commitment to the group and to God, a commitment to being Christians which would not beat about the bush, but which would mean giving ourselves to the poor in as disinterested a way as we could manage.

Who are the members?

The members of FML are young Christians who have been greatly influenced by the philosophy of De La Salle through the example of the Brothers and certain Lasallian lay people.

We now have eighty members: students and former students of the Brothers and even some others who were not educated in De La Salle schools, but who have been impressed by the style of our founder.

This rather large group receives support from Brothers who guide and direct it with their spiritual help.

What do we do?

In the summer camp we try to help in the education of the children of the area who will be the men and women shaping our future.

The camp lasts a fortnight and during that time we attempt to give personal and communal help to the poor by concentrating on hope, peace and justice.

This work has three strands: 1. information on ecology, nutritional science, hygiene and religion. 2. attitudes about patriotic values, mutual respect, how to act with others, cleanliness, including brushing of teeth and washing of hands, communal sense. Those are the main points covered. 3. Physical activity: games, gymnastics, handicraft, drawing, songs and dancing: these awaken creativity and imagination.

However the above list cannot cover the essence of our goals, which are that we try to live in a lasallian way and be really committed to our faith.

The work does not end for us when we have done our task in the camp for the children, because during the afternoons and evenings we lasallians begin what could be called the "internal camp", which comprises religious formation and prayer together.

There is morning and evening prayer, on the themes chosen for the actual formation programme. For example in the last camp our basic theme was "Building the Kingdom".

The "internal camp" is the most important part of the fortnight, for it is there that we receive the formation needed for our work and which strengthens our sense of mission, undertaken through these ordinary, but necessary activities.

HOW THE WORK HAS GROWN OVER THE YEARS.

For the past five years the Mission Camp has been held in the Sierra, a mountainous region in the centre of the country.

We have joined in the "Sierra Plan", a project to improve social and economic conditions in the area.

The growth of the group is linked with that of the Mission Camp and can be seen in the following statistics:

	Camps	Missionaries	children
1987	2	15	120
1988	2	28	190
1989	2	35	250
1990	8	43	650

There was a dramatic change in the camps in 1991, not in their essentials of course, but in their externals. As for numbers, the children we helped reached 1,700, which meant a need for the 70 young and adult lasallians who helped out.

The newest trait was the increase in camps to 50 in the whole Sierra, with Lasallians working in 18 of them, and teachers, parents and young people from those various areas looking after the other 32. In this way the number of children reached by this cultural and educative project was 6,000.

Bringing in teachers to run the camps and the young people and their parents to help out, meant that the camps were a success without there being necessarily the actual presence of the missionaries, which shows how important was the work of the groups in their communities in trying to find out what was best for everyone. Now therefore we are reaching not only the children, but also persons who represent every aspect of the society in the Sierras.

FML AS A SIGN OF LIVING FAITH

You could say that our strength comes from above and from depth, instilled by the Lasallian spirit, it shows our commitment to being Christians and is based on faith, fraternity and service of the kind seen in De La Salle.

Our group forms at the same time a mission, a spiritual experience, shows reliance on the Gospel and is the answer of young people to the urgent needs of society.

Sharing prayer, reading scripture together, going to Mass seems like the life of the early Christians once again.

We can be called ministers of Christ to the children, and we feel as though De La Salle is with us too. We are building God's kingdom, and he is showing his love through our free, youthful work.

The Lasallian Fraternity for Missionary work is a new way of showing togetherness, brotherhood and service; it is based on the Gospel, is full of life, and gives us pleasure whilst we serve others, there is the human feeling of giving yourself like a young Christian and Lasallian.

Plans for 1992

We are looking at the possibility of extending the camps to other areas of the country which are as deprived or even poorer than the ones we have recently been helping in the Sierra.

We have also begun preparing work on our theme for this year's "interior camp". This time we shall follow what the South American Ministry has been doing, namely, reflecting on the "New Evangelisation", which is a new way of approaching society constantly on the move.

For five years our group of young Dominicanos has observed and seen God's action in our lives, and we have shared with others the gift which was given us free of charge, the gift of education, a relationship of affection which has suddenly appeared in us, in the children and in all those we help.

The first appeal by Our Lord to give humble missionary service has now become more than a mere adventure or a novelty. It's as though the Lasallian star is shining on young people in Santo Domingo. The founder is alive among us, because faith, brotherhood and service have meant hard work and sweat, but also smiles and salvation, joy, feasts, solidarity and affection.

Experiences like these show that hope and strength still exist, and they promise a place in our memories and a lively sense of Lasallian presence. They show that the spirit of De La Salle still flourishes among us and that it makes young people ready to give themselves to a cause. We have lit a flame which will not go out because today it is we who are De La Salle.