

Our Lasallian Universities: A Journey of Mission and of Association

Alvaro Rodriguez Echeverria, FSC, Superior General, *Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Rome, Italy*

INTRODUCTION

I first of all wish to extend a very warm greeting to all the members and officials of the International Assembly of Lasallian Universities, especially to scholars of the Lasallian community. I manifest to you in the name of the Institute our recognition for having wanted to share, by means of your Association, the enormous potential contained in each one of the centers of Higher Education that you represent for the good of young adults and the older persons who are benefiting from your ministry. The common will of your policy, intentionally seeking to live the Lasallian association for the mission, is a reason to be proud of you throughout the world and is a promise of great works to come for the glory of God, through the service of education and evangelization of the poor and the promotion of a more just world which characterize our charism.

Today I have the impression that the exceptional growth of the Universities is a sign of the times for us. You are, in fact, like a miracle in our common history, a happening without precedent in our more than 350 years of service to society and the Church. I refer, evidently, to the growth of the existing Lasallian Universities in the length and breadth of the world, from North America to Europe, from Asia and Latin America to Africa. They are multiplying precisely on those continents where the world population is burgeoning and where the greatest number of young persons is concentrated. They have run risks and have undertaken an adventure with professional men and women who are leading us to places previously unknown to our tradition. Might this reality be a new prophetic call, challenging all Lasallians the world over and convoking us for a renewed mission?

The development of universities permits us to fit our works into a more integral fabric, one in which, from the youngest age to the most mature, individuals can find space, guidance, possibilities for development and a human and Christian meaning for their lives. It does not appear to be a paradox for me, rather something complementary, that in some regions, on a par with the Universities, primary schools are multiplying, as is the case of the San Miguel Schools in the United States. To work with children, adolescents, the young, young adults and even older persons, makes complete sense and resonates to the intuitions of our origins. It allows us to be companions along the way throughout the distinct stages of the human journey.

This associative impulse that inspires you finds its place as well within an even broader panorama of the thousands of Lasallians from all the continents who are also being urged forward by the new signs of the times. Our last General Chapter recalled the steps that we have been taking, from one Chapter to the next, during the last 40 years. From the recognition of the ministry of the lay person in the Lasallian school, in the *Declaration* of 1967, to the degrees of belonging and the first lay experience of association with the birth of *Signum Fidei* in 1976.

From the theme of the Lasallian Family in 1987 to that of Shared Mission in 1993. Starting from 2000 we have been speaking of our association for the educational service to the poor as our greatest challenge as we enter the XXI Century.

One might think that so many changes in our language and in our policies might signify a lack of consistency or a certain instability, just chasing after the latest buzz or mode. Personally I feel that is not the case. I rather think that it resembles an experience lived by St. John Baptist de La Salle who discovered that God guided him from one commitment to another, gently and wisely, to take the necessary steps that would guarantee a Christian education for the poor and the young. By associating ourselves today we are guaranteeing the future.

This process has brought us to concretize new structures, of course at different rhythms: Mission Councils at the local, district, regional and international levels. It has been articulated with greater clarity in the District Assemblies for the Mission, and especially in the Regional Assemblies of the MEL in 2005 in which thousands of teachers, administrators and support staff from all the Lasallian Regions participated. And finally, as Brother Frederick Mueller has presented, all this reflection has been crystallized in the International Assembly of 2006, here in Rome, in which 158 Brothers, Lay Partners and other Lasallians shared experiences, set priorities and decided upon the principal lines of action for the coming years which were affirmed in final form during the 44th General Chapter.

My modest contribution to your reflection here focuses on the role that the Lasallian Universities and our centers of Higher Education play in the overall picture of that associative movement for the mission. Let us see the implications that some points elaborated in our International Assembly have for you. To do this, I set out identifying the urgencies and the necessities that the world sets before us today. How do they challenge the identity and purpose of our projects and programs for Higher Education? Lastly, basing myself on some examples, I would like to re-imagine the dynamic role of the Lasallian Universities.

1. IN A WORLD IN CONFLICT OUR UNIVERSITIES GIVE CAUSE FOR HOPE

In whatever continent where we will find ourselves, none of us can escape the impact that globalization has with its clear priority on the market more than on solidarity. We live in a world in which life is speeded up and where efficiency is a top priority. We are living globalization today, a world without borders, open to cultural exchange and ecumenical dialogue in which the “other” becomes more real and where there is more tolerance. The reverse side of globalization is that, paradoxically, wars have multiplied, the struggle against terrorism is the absolute priority and the policies against immigration have hardened.

It is worthwhile asking ourselves what this might mean for the Lasallian Universities today. Thomas Friedman speaks of this in his well-known book, *The World is Flat*. In a new era of globalization, one in which the world is flattened out, we will all look like Silicon Valley or Bangalore, rife with internet engineers. Unfortunately, the reality continues to put *mountains* in our path. As Paul Kennedy, commentator and director of Studies for International Security at Yale University has expressed:

It is all very sad. The world is not “flat”. Neither is everything totally disconnected. It is a dizzying mix of positive and negative news. Some countries of the world are achieving

real advances, but others are sliding backwards on the slope of civil disintegration, anarchy and disaster...

With Dickens in his *Tale of Two Cities*, we can say that we are living in the best and the worst of times. It all depends on where we find ourselves. *In the United States and in the ten richest countries of the world*, says Aarjun Appadurai, an Indian anthropologist, *globalization is, naturally, a positive concept, one that is current among the elites of industry and their political allies. But for the immigrants, for the persons of color and for others of the marginalized sectors (the so-called "South" as contrasted to the "North"), globalization constitutes a source of worry in terms of inclusion, employment and the most profound marginalization.*

We are living in a world that favors individualism and privacy. On one side we make the passage from Prometheus to Narcissus, from the productive man to the festive man, for whom the main thing is not to work but to enjoy. Zygmunt Bauman, in his book *Fluid Love: On the Fragility of Human Relations*, shows us with great realism some of the characteristics of our world today. Starting with love and how it is different from desire, he describes for us the reality that we can easily slip into today. For love, any distance, as brief as it might be, is felt as something insupportable, because the essence of love is to unite, to fuse, to identify. Desire, on the contrary, only wants to consume.

In reality, even more than desire, what we ought to be speaking about is *what I feel like doing*. And the *feel like doings* can assure neither fidelity nor commitment because what they look for is the multiplication of experiences in accord with where our whims direct us. Love leads to stable, solid personal relationships, while the *feel like doings* or the *fluid* connections can be so easily erased or changed, forgotten or multiplied, according to what my likes are and without being able to look ourselves in the eyes.

We live in a world in which wisdom has been replaced by excellence, and the greatest poverty is occurring between those who have knowledge and those who do not have knowledge. The loss of local values, the advance of the "one only way to think", is bringing about a true cultural crisis. Certainly we cannot deny the richness that the multicultural reality of the world brings with it today, offering us diverse cultural models in order to find meaning and in order to live well. But without a doubt, we must also recognize the moral relativity that accompanies it and the ever growing secularization.

Children and youth, feeling the impact of a culture that is increasingly international, are living in a conflict of values and counter-values as they are constantly being bombarded by the means of mass communication. With the breakdown of the traditional family, this role of the environmental culture is omnipotent. It is difficult for young people to encounter communities in which they can live a harmonious process of interiority and appropriate values that can furnish meaningful experiences, experiences strong enough to become memories that will give meaning and purpose to their lives.

In the symposium *Education, a Pathway to Love*, organized by the Delegation of the Holy See to UNESCO and by Fordham University of New York, held in Paris on the 9th day of November, 2006, where I was privileged to attend, the former Secretary General of the United Nations,

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, confronted us with three threats of globalization as it affects education. The *first* of these is the danger that the Nation States are diminished in contrast to a transnational power since the States are the vehicles that can guarantee a minimum of equality in the field of education. The *second* sees the phenomenon of communities aggressively withdrawn into themselves in the name of diversity. And the *third*, by no means the least, addresses the destruction of the bonds of solidarity. In this respect he said:

*to see individuals, countries and entire regions of the planet sink ever deeper into misery. To observe the ever growing gulf between the **info-rich** and the **info-poor**, between those who are connected and those who are not, between those who have access to information and knowledge and those who lack that access.*

And he added these telling statistics:

the least advanced countries, representing 75% of the world's population, are home to just 10% of the engineers and scientists, and only 5% of the computers. (Education and Globalization, UNESCO, November 9, 2006) .

We ought not forget here the growing wave of violence all over the world -the political uncertainty that we live in many of our countries, and the terror that darkens all the horizons. Whole populations are displaced because of political, economic or social reasons, or because of wars. Millions of displaced persons on every continent, vulnerable to a culture of despair. This culture of despair is fed in a secularized context by ideologies in conflict, or, to the contrary, in a fanatical, despotic religious society by sectarian groups who want to impose a religious or pseudo-religious vision of history.

Before this panorama we must ask, what future will the youth of this generation have? What dreams can youngsters aspire to, those who should be the treasured hope of their families and their nations? And above all, what does all this say to us and what are we called upon to do?

The International Assembly in its action plans emphasized, among other points, two aspects that we wish to prioritize: the breakdown of the family and new forms of exclusion. It seems to me that these are, in fact, two critical areas where the International Association of Lasallian Universities can focus its attention. For my part, in my last intervention, I indicated two urgent situations that are in accord with those indicated by the Assembly: that of immigrants, and of those who are suffering the scourge of hunger.

I am not just speaking about two abstract concepts, immigration and hunger. I refer concretely to real persons with real faces, the millions of men and women, children and youth who suffer because they saw themselves obliged to leave the lands of their birth to move to strange lands where in many cases they are not welcome. I refer to the 850 million who suffer hunger, as has recently been reported by the FAO and as Pope Benedict XVI has reminded us.

These four aspects together -hunger, immigration, the breakdown of the family and new forms of exclusion -might they not be the voice of the Holy Spirit calling us to give a prophetic response at this moment of our history?

1. OUR RESPONSE TO THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

You know well that in recent years and in an almost systematic manner since the Renewal Chapter of 1966-1967, we Brothers and Lay Partners have acted to answer to the urgent

situations in education on every continent. At the Intercapitular meeting of 2004 we were able to evaluate the efforts achieved in the mission and the service of education for the poor. A quick overview will suffice of the 16 *MEL Booklets* on the various Lasallian presences, including the four innovations or islands of creativity, the 11 examples of “popular” education, among others, to offer a good idea of the breadth and effectiveness of our responses. More recently, Brother Nicolas Capelle’s book done in collaboration with Brothers from every region, entitled, “*I Want to Go to Your School*”, gathers a number of significant experiences of contemporary pedagogy in the Lasallian world. The Universities and Institutions of Higher Learning have not remained behind in attending to and answering the signs of the times. Permit me to mention several projects that have strongly impressed me in the past several years.

How can we not but admire, for example, the work carried out by the La Salle Natural Sciences Foundation in Venezuela with its several stations in different parts of the country, especially in marginalized zones? They have been able to develop an educational philosophy that permits them to respect and guard the environment, while at the same time promoting sustainable economic development. They have formed young persons for professional careers adapted to the various regions of the country, protecting rather than exploiting the sea, the cattle industry, the mines, the rivers, the forests, etc., training investigators who are applying the fruits of their research for the development of the impoverished zones of the country.

I would like to call attention to the work being done by the Superior Institutes for the formation of teachers in Perú and in Central America. They strive to form teachers, working for the dignity of the profession all the while bringing them into contact with aboriginal and indigenous populations whom they assist with programs for integral development. In the same vein we must mention the creation of the La Salle University in Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, sponsored by the ULSA of México, in a depressed zone of the immense Federal District and created expressly for the poor.

The help and support that some Universities of the United States are bringing to the San Miguel Schools is noteworthy, particularly in pedagogical formation. On my last pastoral journey to the USA-Toronto Region I was a witness to the development of numerous learning programs for service, in connection with university disciplines, that go far beyond a mere mentoring attitude. But above all, I came to learn with admiration of the “BUSCA” bilingual program at La Salle University in Philadelphia, which welcomes Latino immigrants with English-language learning support so they are able to join and succeed in the regular university system.

I would also call your attention to the growing collaborative efforts on the international scale between our centers of Higher Education such as those of Barcelona, Aravaca and Beauvais with other Lasallian institutions of the world, contributing an enriching exchange of programs, students and professors. In the Philippines, Brothers Andrew González and Raphael Donato, recently deceased, founded universities that reflect the necessities of their country, and they created careers that answer to national urgencies.

It is not my intention to draw up a complete list of these creative responses, and you surely will be sharing many others in the pages of this journal in the coming years. I have simply wanted to highlight some, in order to affirm what we all know, that the Universities and the Institutions of Higher Learning have not remained behind in their interpretation of the urgencies and in their

offer of innovative responses. However, without a doubt we can and we must do more -the challenges that today's world presents to us are enormous.

2. THE CHALLENGES THAT CALL ON US TO ACT

When a quick reading is made of what the Catholic Universities in general and the Lasallian ones in particular are affirming, we are surprised by a tendency to put the emphasis on the excellence and educational quality that are being offered to the students. Achieving accreditation appears to be one of the most important objectives. And at times we are content with forming professionals with a quality education.

The Frenchman Michel Freyssenet wrote in 2004 that the idea of considering the university to be like a magnet of excellence is *ridiculous, scandalous and excluding*. And San Alberto Hurtado, a Jesuit university professor from Chile, affirmed back in 1943: *The first mission of the university is to make the world uncomfortable, and the first virtue of the university is to feel that discomfort, that inconformity as it faces the imprisoned world*. For both what is needed are not so much poles of excellence but poles of inquisitiveness, capable of igniting the intelligence, the imagination and the work of researchers in order to be constructors of a more human world.

Sometimes we cannot but help expressing a certain elitist tone because we are proud and satisfied with what we are doing. But, can we really be content with the criterion of excellence? Is this excellence really what characterizes us? And delving even deeper into the question we might ask ourselves, getting right to the roots of the matter, why do we even have universities? Why are we creating new ones?

To better understand the challenges that we ought to answer, it is a good idea to remind ourselves here about some of the tensions that we felt in the Assembly when we spoke of the Lasallian Mission of Education.

- Tensions between a neutral posture in our educational endeavors and another posture that would take definite political positions.
- Between shared mission and “our” mission.
- Between the explicit proclamation of the Gospel and a mere implicit testimony.
- Between the renunciation of the Christian identity so as to be all-inclusive and being Catholic so as to gather in all religions.
- Between teaching as a profession and teaching as a vocation.
- Between assisting the poor through educational service and studying the symptoms and causes of poverty.
- Between serving poor families by preference and serving more well-to-do families.

These tensions are most likely felt most sharply in the universities and they direct our attention toward very concrete challenges related to our teaching, our research, and our application of knowledge for the transformation of society and for sustainable development.

The “*Magna Carta of the European Universities*”, composed in Bologna in 1998, expressed the challenges to a university in defining terms: “*An academic community which, in a rigorous and critical manner, contributes to the orientation and development of human dignity and cultural*

inheritance through research, instruction and the diverse services offered to the local, national and international communities. We should, therefore, keep in mind these three dimensions: teaching, research and the commitment to effect change.

- + At the level of *teaching*, each discipline, naturally, has a language and principles that are proper to it in its relation to the world and society. We initiate our students in their professional and critical dialogue with the world from a certain perspective. But the specializations are not enough. The university ought to tap into a universal substratum that permits us to find a sense of what we are and what we are doing so that conversations between the various disciplines can contribute to the formation of a critical professional who is attentive to changing reality, and not just for the accumulation of knowledge. In the words of the North American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, “*Beware when God lets a creative person loose in the world!*” At that point all the canons of literature, of science and even of the religious sciences are open for questioning. Are we content to teach the passive acceptance of a body of truths? Or do we want to disquiet spirits who will go on to professionally transform the world and society? The Lasallian University is called to develop a style of teaching that is capable of creating that disquiet and a healthy lack of conformity that will inspire the students to seek the truth and to build a society founded on the values of the Gospel.
- + *Research* is also an important component for our universities. It is research that tries to answer to the needs of the world and society, looking for new pathways, new interpretations and solutions for the future.
- + Imbued with the values of the Gospel, professors and students, as well as researchers, do not live their faith in a bubble. They grow toward an adult faith, *one that makes commitments*, that strives to understand its peoples, the mentalities and the economic, social and political structures of the country and of the world. Enlightened by the Gospel we look for authentic solutions for structural problems, collaborating whenever possible with other groups and institutions that are pursuing the same ends. In the words of St. Paul, it is an active faith in the practice of love and not a mere service of assistance. We must form professionals, then, who will not become the oppressors of the people, who rather become *servants* of their brothers and sisters.

3. PURPOSE AND SPIRIT OF THE LASALLIAN UNIVERSITY MISSION

The first chapter of the Rule of the Brothers is entitled, “The Purpose and the Spirit of the Institute”. I think that it is the most important chapter because it informs us what our purpose is and what the spirit is that ought to animate us. In other words, these define our identity. I believe that we can make an application of this to what has been previously stated of the Lasallian University Mission.

The *raison d’être* and the finality of a university do not necessarily appear in what we see of its buildings or in its *campus*. Its purpose is to contribute to the development and the mentoring of human dignity, helping to find a meaning to life, conserving and enriching cultural patrimony, giving insights in the search for truth and permitting that all have life and life in abundance.

The spirit of a Lasallian University therefore is measured by an adult faith, an unconditional hope and an ardent charity; that is, an energy that mobilizes all the components of the community of education, open to the world, from the core of its charismatic identity.

It has no fear of proclaiming its Christian and Catholic identity. The charism lived in association for the mission is a true ecclesial ministry. But it is not excluding. Precisely because it is believing and Catholic, we feel ourselves impelled to open ourselves to others, Christians of other churches, the faithful of other religions, non-believing humanists and to every human person, making of our centers of higher education, schools of communion. All should be able to find a place under our shelter and all should be made to feel at home.

We do not want to be just any university, renowned for its elitism. We are called to respond, directly and indirectly, to the needs of families affected by new forms of poverty, of immigrants and those who suffer hunger, precisely through the development of sustainable careers for future professionals who will be in their turn the servants and prophets attentive to the needs of the most abandoned.

The needs that we spoke of in the International Assembly 2006 contain then a prophetic call and a challenge for the entire network of Lasallian programs and projects of education. The call and challenge are also directed to the Universities and Institutions of Higher Learning. They question not only our identity and purpose but they also require us to re-think the role that these have in the overall scheme of our works. In the past, not a few times, the Universities seemed to be like islands within the functions of the district. They were not necessarily in opposition to the districts in which they were based but neither did they have vital connections to the same.

It is for this reason that, as the International Assembly has done, it is also necessary to broach the topic of structure. Here the Assembly also pointed out some tensions that arise in this area based on new experiences in the creation of participative structures through which Brothers and Lay Partners together assume decisions for the Mission.

- The tension between a tendency to simply copy or adapt the traditional structures of the Brothers and the creativity of imagining really new structures.
- The tension between hierarchical structures and others with a new collegial style of relations in networks.
- The tension between structures bound to a geographical territory and more virtual structures between similar ministries, going beyond the territories where we are situated.
- The tension between the participation through dialogue with other institutions and the tendency to isolate ourselves in our own institution.
- And finally, I want to add, the tension between the wish to collaborate with other national and international entities of the Church or the State, and that of shutting ourselves off in our own Lasallian world.

Tensions most likely exist as well among the Universities and the Districts, between individual Universities and the other Universities, between the network of Lasallian works and the IALU. And, as an example, even though the Universities were significantly present in the partial assemblies of the Regions and 17 delegates of the International Assembly 2006 came from the Universities, we still ask ourselves about the influence and the real impact that these Universities

have in the entirety of the Lasallian programs and projects, works and ministries in the world. I believe it is important to ask ourselves, how can the Universities be really and meaningfully present in the district, regional and international structures or in the new structures of virtual networks?

As a contribution to this reflection I would like to point out some key concepts through which the influence and the impact of the International Association of Lasallian Universities can make their presence felt with the greatest strength and efficacy.

First Key Concept:

Doubtless it is important and crucial for the future that we continue to pursue an education of quality. Excellence in what we do, even though it is not the only nor the principal objective that we set for ourselves, is important. It is not because we want to be elitist. Nor is it only to compete with other Universities. Nor is it as publicity in order to attract students.

Excellence and quality are necessary for the University to function well, as John Baptist de La Salle expressed when he was speaking of his schools. We recognize the realities of this world, and we take the potential of academic disciplines seriously. We do not want to form just any old professional, but the best, the ones who are most prepared academically, the most motivated to serve society and contribute to the common good.

That suggests that we should be recognized for knowing how to combine academic excellence with the social and political reality in which we live, in ways that permit our students to better understand the problems of structure and to know how to find solutions for the same. All the academic courses, or at least a significant core of the curriculum, should be characterized by that connection, including a component of direct service to the poor, in such a way that the students may not only grasp the key concepts of those courses but also understand their implications in urban, national and international life.

This thrust in teaching should impact on the educational philosophy of all the Lasallian educational works, both in primary education as well as in secondary; in the other projects and programs of popular education, whether formal or non-formal; and in our efforts attending to children and youth at risk.

One aspect that we must not permit to escape is the possibility that the Universities have through their Departments of Education, of contributing to the dignification and professionalization of the teaching profession, and that not just for the teachers of our Lasallian works but of the systems of the public schools. This formation of teachers could have as its specific focus the needs that we have previously outlined, in particular the breakdown of the family and new forms of poverty and exclusion.

We also have an enormous potential in the Departments of Religious Sciences and Education in order to develop ministries that will be dedicated to pastoral ministry, of youth, on the university *campuses* and in all Lasallian institutions, as well as in those of the dioceses where we are established.

We ought to be recognized as those who best promote and defend the teaching profession and the pastoral apostolate for youth that is not disconnected from social reality. This recognition should bring us to cooperation with the dioceses, the unions, the political parties and other groups that promote education and youth ministry, especially for the poor, for displaced persons and the marginalized.

Second Key Concept:

It is true that our budgets do not really reflect a huge investment in research and that the State Universities have the advantage of direct support from the tax base. Perhaps, if we cannot count on this state aid we might be able to find assistance in private enterprise for direct research in the countries where we are rooted. The last two General Chapters marked out for us two very specific fields for university research. In 1993, the 42nd General Chapter asked the Universities to study the very roots of poverty, and the Chapter of the year 2000 requested the Universities to focus on the knowledge and the application of the Rights of the Child.

Such concrete investigations of the principal problems of society could help all our teachers and students to better understand the role of research on the professional level for the purpose of changing inadequate structures and creating a more just world. This vocation of researcher, possibly, will accompany them for their entire lives.

Another important dimension that our Universities can promote is that of research in things Lasallian -research, investigations, and publications that proffer new insights into the charism, spirituality, and Lasallian pedagogy. This research could have a direct impact in all our works. New programs of Lasallian formation for university instructors and for teachers in the whole network of the districts could be articulated based on such research.

Third Key Concept:

If a university places priority on investigations of the problems of society and on quality education for the service of the poor, the marginalized and the displaced of society, it does so for the purpose of transforming that society. And everyone, researchers, teachers and students, should feel themselves called to actively respond through their faith in their concrete professional work.

The faith that we want to foster is not just one of ideas. It is a committed faith in action; it is a faith that seeks to understand and transform. It is a passionate faith, a passion for God and a passion for the poor. The experience of the volunteer movement finds its natural place in this concept as well.

To affirm this disposition in our teachers and professors is also to recognize the commitment that we hope to see become a reality in our former students when they leave our classrooms and in our colleagues when they depart for other academic institutions. Not everyone is called to remain within the network of our works. Among us and for the time they shared with us, they found a school of faith, but wherever they may continue on, we cherish the hope that they go on developing the awareness of their lay vocation in the world, and the will to work with others for

the good of the most in need, actively contributing to the construction of the Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

St. John of the Cross, through meditation on Matthew 25, said that *in the twilight of life, we will be judged by love*. By the love that we have offered to the neighbor. Academic excellence, therefore, will not be enough. What we must strive for is an excellence of solidarity in service, an excellence of the Gospel. This is what we will be judged on, and from now on so we must judge the mission of our Universities. Our centers of Higher Education cannot be reduced to just one more offering for the marketplace.

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink...I was naked.. in prison... (Matthew 25). We are not speaking of an abstract or platonic love but a real love that becomes part of life. Our Universities have a special responsibility to educate the poor or to educate for the good of the poor. They are the poor in the broad sense, naturally, and in first place materially speaking, but also the marginalized, the handicapped, the immigrants, the refugees, the young people that do not find work or who see no sense to their lives. They are the hermeneutic key that should inspire our plans and programs of educations and our processes of transformation.

We are not reduced to the simply technological nor to the laws of the marketplace. What is proper to us is to maintain alive the anthropological dimension in a world that is evermore virtual. What we have is to be custodians of the mystery that each human person contains within himself. Only in this way can we assure what Gaudium et Spes expressed so lucidly and with such force:

“It can be stated with all reason that the future of humanity is in the hands of those who know how to give to the coming generations reasons to live and reasons to hope (GS, 31).

Brother Alvaro Rodríguez Echeverría Superior General