

Tejeiro, Leonardo. Annotation of “La catequesis lasaliana en los últimos 50 años: Identidad y desarrollo desde la postguerra (1946) hasta los años 90” by José María Pérez Navarro. D. Th. Diss., Università Pontificia Salesiana, 2001. *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 3 no. 2 (Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota: 2012).

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ANNOTATION

Pérez Navarro, José María. “La catequesis lasaliana en los últimos 50 años: Identidad y desarrollo desde la postguerra (1946) hasta los años 90. [Lasallian Catechesis in the Last 50 Years: Identity and Development from the Post-War Period (1946) to the 90’s.]” D.Th. dissertation, Università Pontificia Salesiana, 2001.

The purpose of José María Pérez Navarro’s dissertation is to investigate the catechetical dimension of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (Institute) from its origins and specifically from the 1950s, with the following questions: to study the evolution of catechesis in the Institute specially from 1946, identifying problems, challenges, journeys and achievements; to discover the connections between the 20th Century’s “catechetical movement” and the Post-Conciliar catechetical renewal with the catechetical reality of the Institute; to present the main contributions of the Institute to the Church in the catechetical field; and to underscore the position and significance of catechesis in Lasallian education with its specific components. It is important to say that before this research no study examines specifically the history of catechesis of the Institute or any of its components which makes this dissertation essential for those interested in the recent history of the catechetical dimension of the Institute.

Given the extent of the field the author chose to consider he used only the official documents published by the Institute in Rome and left aside other documents having their origin in Regions, Districts and Institutions. He made a selection of both significant persons and experiences. The main source of his research was the Archives and Library of the Mother House.

Pérez Navarro’s method of research begins by identifying and studying essential primary sources: De La Salle’s writings; Circulars of Superior Generals; minutes and documents from the General Chapters with special attention of those of 1946, 1966, 1976, 1986 and 1993; minutes of the International Commissions for Catechetics of 1972-1975 and 1978-1981; and records of the Intercapitular Visitors Meetings of 1983 and 1985. He also identified and studied other sources such as the major Church documents regarding catechetics and other published and unpublished documents about the same subject. In this it is important to name some specialized journals such as *Actualidad catequética*, *Catéchèse*, *Lumen Vitae*, *Revista de Catequese*, *Teología y Catequesis*. He also identified and studied some specialized documents at the Institute level including *Bulletin of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, *Rivista Lasalliana*, *Sussidi per la catechesi (1 and 2)* *Sinite*, *Our Apostolate*, *Apuntes de catequesis para catequistas*, *Catéchistes*, *Temps et paroles*, *La Salle Catechist*. He also had interviews with Brothers specializing in the field. Then he made a classification of the material available in chronological order. Finally he wrote the development of ideas and events, taking into account the evolution of the general history of catechesis and the internal evolution at the Institute level, pointing out the value of major assemblies and conferences.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters in each of which there are chronicles of events and syntheses of the main ideas from the official documents and practices. The first two chapters deal

with history from the founding of the Institute until 1946. The third chapter starts from 1946 (37th General Chapter) to the beginning of the Second Vatican Council. This chapter shows the jump in quality between the conservative point of view of the General Chapter and Circular 371 entitled *Our Catechetical Mission* and takes into account the contributions of Brothers Charles Bruno Prat, Vincent Ayel, Leone di Maria, John Joseph, William Felix and Michel Sauvage, among others. The fourth chapter covers from the Second Vatican Council to the year 1980 and takes into account the General Chapter of 1966-1967 with its documents *The Declaration of the Brother in the Modern World* and the *Rule*. On the other hand it is the period in which the two International Commissions for Catechesis appear. At this time there are important figures in Lasallian catechesis such as José Juan Rodríguez Medina, Anselmo Balocco, Jacques-Didier Piveteau, Gabriel Moran, Gerard Rummery, Enrique García Ahumada, Genaro Sáenz de Ugarte, Israel Nery, among others. The fifth chapter starts at 1980 and goes to the time of the completion of the dissertation, in 2001. It presents the recent documents of the Church on catechesis and the school, the official thinking of the Institute and the thinking of some theologians in the field.

At the end of the fifth chapter the author points out ten essential elements of Lasallian catechesis today: (a) the needs of children and youth as the fundamental purpose, (b) the ministry of Christian education, (c) teachers and catechists - a unity of functions, (d) the capital importance of catechesis in the Lasallian school, (e) the Christian school, a place of evangelization, (f) the creation of faith communities in the school, (g) the Christian educational process of the Lasallian Christian school, (h) the integration into the Pastoral Plan of the Church, (i) the evangelization and catechesis in pluralistic societies – inculturation, ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue and, (j) the necessary and ongoing formation of catechists.

Regarding his conclusions, Pérez Navarro offers eight permanent characteristics of Lasallian catechesis in the historical process: (a) the attention to the spiritual and human needs of children and young people, (b) the school is the preferred means, but not the only one of Lasallian activity, (c) in the school there is an integration between human and Christian education (d) the work of the Brother and of Lasallian educators is a true ministry, (e) a good formation is needed in order to exercise the ministry with competence, (f) in the Lasallian school there is a permanent presence of a Christian community, (g) the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the service of the Church and, (h) the mutual influences between the Church and the Brothers of the Christian Schools regarding catechesis.

Pérez Navarro's dissertation became a book¹ and, most recently, a *MEL Bulletin* published chapters four and five.²

Notes

1. Pérez Navarro, J. M. *La catequesis lasaliana en los últimos 50 años: Identidad y desarrollo desde la postguerra (1946) hasta los años 90*. (Madrid, Spain: Ediciones San Pio X, 2002).

2. Pérez Navarro, J. M. "The Teaching of the Catechism in Lasallian History." *MEL Bulletin*, 17. (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2005).