

Pastoral Visit to Japan  
Message to Faculty/Staff/Student Presentation  
July 15, 2016  
Brother Robert Schieler, FSC

It is an honor for me to be present with you today. I come to you because you are part of an incredible global network of Lasallian schools that trace their origins back to 17<sup>th</sup> Century France in Europe. You are members of a worldwide network of educational institutions that are recognized for their quality. Within this global network you are members of a Lasallian unit we call the Lasallian East Asian District (LEAD). This District includes Lasallian teachers and students from Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan. Think about that for a moment.

Our world today is one of opportunity and conflict, of solidarity and consumerism, of altruism and selfishness, of extreme wealth and extreme poverty. Our world is all of these things at one and the same time. The Lasallian mission of human and Christian Education exist in this contradiction-filled world. It exists in nearly 80 countries around the world and every day of the week nearly one million students of every race, culture and religion attends a La Salle school. And in these schools the more than 80 thousand teachers and brothers not only relate to their students as professors teaching them the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in life; they also relate to them as caring and compassionate older brothers and older sisters.

A Lasallian education, when it is true to the vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle is conducted not by individual teachers but by a community of educators working closely with one another for the benefit of the students. It is an education of relationships; teachers to teachers, teachers to students, students to students. “The new style of relationship that De La Salle indicated for his school gives life to the love and tenderness of the educator. He realized that education is above all a relationship of confidence, goodness, generosity and affectionate kindness, and that without love the most skillful techniques run the risk of being ineffective in the stimulation and growth of the person.”<sup>1</sup>

As students, you have the wonderful privilege of attending this excellent school that offers you a quality education. It is an education that has been valued and

desired by millions of young people, parents and family for over three centuries in those 80 countries around the world. During your time here you learn what is true, valuable and important in this world. The “school curricula of a Lasallian school are marked by their concern for the promotion of justice and peace, and the integrity of creation. The Brothers [and teachers] take care to safeguard the rights of children and young people”.<sup>2</sup>

The education you are receiving comes with expectations. We have expectations of you. For example, you learn that dignity is inherent to human nature; respect and love for your fellow classmates and for all people is essential if we are to live in peace and harmony on this planet that all humanity shares. We expect you to respect this inherent dignity of all persons, including those with whom you may not like or disagree with. If you truly want to enjoy peace and harmony, you must be able to disagree, discuss and argue in a civil and courteous manner. This is what we want you to contribute to our contradiction-filled world – your teachers expect it of you, and more, the world needs it from you.

My expectation of all of you is that you as teachers and you as students create an educational environment that builds bridges to unite people for the common good and tears down walls that alienate us from one another. As I look out at you, I see so much enthusiasm and good will. I truly believe that you are capable of significantly contributing to a society that is more inclusive, just and respectful. As Saint La Salle told his first brothers, “you can perform miracles by touching the hearts of those entrusted to your care”. Please keep your eyes open and let your hearts be touched by people who are different than you. I hope you will listen to people and discover their joys and sorrows, their dreams and frustrations. Please make a commitment to serve the common good and, in a special way, to the well-being of those who live far from the benefits and opportunities of contemporary society. Thank you.

Notes:

1. Lasallian Themes, Vol. 1, p. 226.
2. Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Rule*, Rome, 2015, 17.1.