

Sacramento High School eight years ago. She became friends with Brother Richard Camara, FSC. "Our school's team was in the same league as Christian Brothers High School. We were rivals," she said with a warm smile.

"Lasallian education is different from the public school system, not so much from an educational standpoint, but in its very human way of reaching out to students and to colleagues," she emphasized. "The first thing I noticed about the Brothers was their gracious hospitality. Graduates from their schools reflect this in the way they speak with affection and pride about their educational experience as students. If you have any association at all with Lasallian educators, you can't help but be caught up in it."

Brother John O'Neill, FSC, left Saint Mary's College of California three years ago to join three other Brothers at Christ the Teacher Institute for Education (CTIE) in Nairobi, Kenya (see story on page 8)

Brother John explained that the students in Africa do not seek an education to become independent. Instead, they look at education as a way of becoming members of society. Culturally this is expressed in an African saying that translates as, "I exist because we are." When Brother John spoke about Jane and Jacob's visit to Kenya last summer, he said, "They both fit right into the Brothers' Community. We lived together, shopped together, worked together, and prayed together. . . . While there are some hazards here, we have a safe environment. To their credit, Jane

and Jacob accepted the little things like lighting candles when the lights went out and having to drink boiled water when El Niño turned our water murky. Their visit reminded me of the movie, *To Sir with Love* because the students adored them both."

Little known to many people is the fact that there are also Lasallian religious sisters. The Superior General of the order, Sister Mary Chin Da Han Dam Rong, was a participant at the Convocation. The Lasallian Sisters are located in Bangkok, Vietnam, and San Jose, California. In San Jose, they work in partnership with the Christian Brothers apostolic work, De La Salle Chapel, offering educational services and support programs for the Vietnamese families of the area.

Brother Christie Dorus, FSC, is the Auxiliary Visitor for the Sub-District of Pakistan. He attended the Convocation with Brother Baptist Croos, FSC, the Visitor from Sri Lanka. Brother Christie, a student of Brother Baptist at one time, has been a brother for 36 years. Brother Baptist has been a Brother for 41 years. The Christian Brothers have been in Sri Lanka since 1865 and serve people from four different religions: Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian. Today, they run three private schools, eight government schools, five Boys Towns, and five other apostolates including the Mission to the Poorest in Mutwal, Colombo.

The Brothers have been in Pakistan since 1959, working with a population that is 99% Muslim and 1% Christian. In addition to operating three schools, they also run the country's only Catechists'

Training Center, the Benildus Literacy Center, and a Drug Rehabilitation Center in Sinijhor.

At the Threshold: Courage to Move into the Unknown

At the end of the Convocation, one of the Brothers said, "I really enjoyed this gathering of representatives from all over our District and from other countries. It gave me new energy and brought new meaning to my vocation and our apostolate. I am particularly touched by the enthusiasm, love, and appreciation of our Partners for our founder, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, and for his vision."

As the District of San Francisco moves forward with its Action Plan, it does so with the full knowledge that more women and men are embracing the Lasallian spirit and mission of offering a "human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor...." (The Rule, Article 3)

It is a major shift to move from thinking about the work of the Christian Brothers to the work of the Lasallian Partners, yet this is the threshold at which we now find ourselves. None of us knows what is on the other side. Having seen the faces of everyone as they left the Convocation, however, it is clear that each person now has the courage and faith to support one another and fully participate in the incredible, providential, evolutionary vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

"Saint John Baptist de La Salle, pray for us. Live Jesus in our hearts forever." ☒

They Don't Pay You to Do That?

This summer, I had the chance to go home to California and visit friends and relatives I had not seen in a while. As usual, they all asked, "So what are you going to do when you return to Chicago?" When I explained what I do as a Lasallian Volunteer teaching sixth grade at San Miguel School, their response was, "And they don't pay you to do that?"

Those who know that this is now my third year of teaching sixth grade at San Miguel gave me a sideways glance and asked, "You mean you're still doing that volunteer thing? We thought that was only for one year. Then, didn't you say at the end of that year that you were only going to do it for one more year?"

"Yes," I answered. "But really, this is my last year." I was unable to convince them.

I don't quite know how to explain what being a Lasallian Volunteer has meant to me, or why it has turned into a three-year commitment. I know the statements in the Lasallian Volunteer brochure are true: meaningful work experience, spiritual development, making good friends. But I also know that those phrases fall short of describing the real experience.

Here is what it's really like:

☒ In the first five minutes of my first day in class, I realized that the lesson plan I'd spent three hours preparing would not work at all.

☒ For the next 30 days, I had the same experience.

☒ Unexpectedly, I found out that the Brothers can be really goofy and that some of them are really good dancers.

☒ I learned to express myself in community meetings because, God knows, no one else would do it for me.

☒ Watching another person grow and triumph taught me how to grow and triumph with them.

☒ I came to know a student who on the first day gave me an unwelcome stare, then a few months later came to me crying. He came to me because I had shown him he could trust me.

☒ My mom brags about what I do.

☒ A seventh grader told me he read the book I picked out for him in two days. Then he told me it was the first book he had ever completed. Then he asked me when we could pick out another book.

☒ I now live in the kind of neighborhood that previously I had only seen in the news.

☒ I started this Lasallian experience knowing very little about the teachings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Now I want to be a part of the Lasallian experience for many years to come.

I've told my friends back home that as I start my third year, I feel like the grandmother of Lasallian Volunteers, which of

Voices

By Carrie Kiskila



course I am not. That would be Karin McClelland (SMC, Class of 1990), current Director of the Lasallian Volunteers.

Carrie Kiskila is a graduate of Saint Mary's College of California. This is her third year at San Miguel School in Chicago.

These are the voices of those whose lives are touched by the work done through the District of San Francisco. In some cases, the speakers are current students or alumni, at other times, they are Brothers, Lasallian educators, or others with experiences that inspire and motivate us to examine how our work has the power to change and save lives.