



Eboo Patel, Ph.D., founder and director of Interfaith Youth Core based in Chicago, addresses participants in the Huether Lasallian Conference last November. Patel will speak from noon-2 p.m. Jan. 29 at the University of San Francisco's McLaren Hall (Room 252) on "Acts of Faith: Interfaith Leadership in a Time of Religious Crisis."

Conference provides local teachers a global horizon

By J. A. Gray

Teachers and staff from Lasallian schools in the Bay Area - including San Francisco schools De Marillac Academy and Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory - attended the annual Huether Lasallian Conference in St. Louis, Mo. Nov. 20-22 and returned home with a renewed understanding of the global reach and impact of the Lasallian educational mission.

Katie Norris, director of campus ministry at Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, San Francisco said, "What most impacted me was the understanding that I am part of hundreds of years of traditions with thousands of educators from the past and in the present. I felt connected to people I had never met before purely because we work toward the same mission of Lasallian Catholic education."

Amanda Borda agreed. The fourth grade teacher at De Marillac Academy in the Tenderloin said, "The 2008 Huether Lasallian Conference was my first experience interacting with the larger global Lasallian network. I found the participants, who worked in all facets of education, to be extremely inspiring. They have a global vision and they act upon it."

Themed "Global Learning and Social Responsibility Through Lasallian Education," the conference featured speakers including Maryknoll Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, current president of the United Nations General Assembly; Jesuit Father Drew Christiansen, editor-in-chief of the weekly magazine *America*, and Eboo Patel, Ph.D., an American Muslim who is founder of the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago.

The annual conference is named for Christian Brother Francis Huether, the De La Salle Christian Brother who initiated it in 1973.

The opening session this year featured live video links to Lasallian educators in Rome, Bethlehem, Nairobi, Manila, and Mexico City. The Superior General of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, Brother Alvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, who is a Costa Rican, spoke to the conference from Rome.

"Globalization is a phenomenon not only of integration into markets but also of knowl-

edge," he told those assembled. "The dilemma of tomorrow will not be so much between the haves and the have-nots, but rather between those who know and those who do not know. The key to the future is education, and we have an enormous potential in our hands."

The De La Salle Christian Brothers sponsor educational apostolates in 84 countries. These serve some 900,000 students. In the United States alone there are more than 100 Lasallian apostolates in 24 states, offering a wide spectrum of educational services, including 54 secondary schools and seven universities. The western province (called the District of San Francisco with provincial offices in Napa) sponsors a dozen schools in California, Oregon, Washington and Arizona, and supports Lasallian outreach in Mexico, the Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Africa and Bethlehem.

In his remarks to the conference, Father Christiansen spoke about the challenges of educating for justice and praised the Christian Brothers for his own early education at St. Peter High School in New York. He emphasized the study of Catholic social teaching and the nurturing of empathy and organizational skills in students. "By and large," he said, "the people who effect change are not singular prophets but leaders of movements and builders of institutions."

Patel addressed the need to develop interfaith leadership among young people. He spoke of faith formation in a world of diversity and cited service projects involving several faiths as key to developing "religious pluralism."

Father d'Escoto Brockmann, the former foreign minister of Nicaragua and current U.N. General Assembly president, underscored the role of Lasallian educators as natural and strategic partners in achieving international peace and justice. "You must concentrate your efforts to move students from the logic of 'you and I' to 'we and ours,'" he said. "Solidarity and social responsibility must be the guiding principles of all human activity," he said.

Participants had particular praise for Patel's presentation on the need for young people of different faith traditions to understand one another. Scott Drain of La Salle High School in Concord said, "Patel's work in developing

interfaith leaders in his community is inspiring. It is clear that helping our students develop these skills will be vital to their effectiveness in the coming years. I have already begun to re-evaluate the curriculum I use in my religion class and I'm also looking at a number of the clubs that I work with and how interfaith skills can be added to their training. I agree with Dr. Patel that when students learn to interact with people of different faiths, it really helps them to understand and appreciate their own faith in a richer way."

Drain's colleague at De La Salle High, English teacher Cindy Adrian, says that the international reach of the educational mission will enrich her "Global Voices" curriculum in which students read literature from several cultures and do research, exploring contemporary issues in politics, landscape, family/relationships, economics, traditions, religions, and social constructs. "I will be asking my Global Voices students to make video presentations regarding their African research projects and show the links between their research and the literature," she said.

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– Christian Brothers' Superior General Alvaro Rodríguez Echeverría

Lasallian schools in the United States already have a 15-year history of international solidarity through the "Twinning Program" that pairs a U.S. school with a Lasallian school in Kenya, Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia or South Africa. The American schools raise funds to help support their African counterparts, which generally serve very poor populations. Students also engage in projects involving the transnational sharing of art, music and writing.

Brett Klement of De La Salle High summed up the effects of the Huether Lasallian Conference: "Reconnecting with my Lasallian family from all over the U.S. has the blessed effect of renewing both mind and spirit. To feel the power of the Christian Brothers' charisma energizes my passion for teaching and for the legacy of St. John Baptist De La Salle. It is the Brothers' example and our shared heritage as Lasallian partners that makes possible the miraculous educational experience each of our institutions offers the world over."

(The full text of Father Christiansen's keynote address, "Education for Faith and Justice: Some Modest Proposals," was published in the Dec. 4 issue of *Origins* documentary service.)

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Maryknoll Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann exhorted participants in the Huether Lasallian Conference to embrace "solidarity and social responsibility" as the "guiding principles of all human activity."



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