



ROMAN TIMES

THE WEEK AT SIEL

International Lasallian Studies Session 2012-2013
LaSalle
SIEL

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Week One: A Priceless Richness

Greetings from Rome and the Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, where I have the privilege of participating in SIEL—the International Lasallian Studies Session. This is the first of four weekly reports that I hope will convey some sense of what is happening at SIEL in terms not only of my personal experiences but also of its significance to the Lasallian mission. In terms of its people, its content, its location, and its inspiration, SIEL is a gathering of, as Brother Henri Bedél aptly described it, “a priceless richness.”

In a nutshell, SIEL is a month-long program that is designed to train and guide both Brothers and Lay Partners in the area of Lasallian research. Participants will spend this session focusing on historical and critical Lasallian foundations, as well as on archival and research methods. When the session concludes, each of us will begin seven months of work on a research area that, with the support of on-line sessions and continuous advisement, will culminate with the publication of our results. The long-term goal of SIEL is that we will become regular contributors to the living body of scholarly research and writing that stimulates and promotes Lasallian thought around the world.

Our SIEL community totals 26 participants representing 16 Districts from all five of the Institute’s international regions. There are 15 De La Salle Brothers, 1 Hermana Guadalupana de La Salle, and 10 Lay Partners. The participants from the Spanish-speaking group make up the largest contingent, followed by the English-speaking group and the French-speaking group. There are four Americans in attendance: Brothers Ernest Miller and Phil Rofrano (DENA), and Brother Alphonse LeBlanc and me (NO-SF). We are housed in the International Lasallian Center (CIL), which is part of the Casa La Salle hotel and conference facility attached to the Generalate. The SIEL staff is composed of Program Coordinator Brother Diego Muñoz, CIL Director Brother Alfonso Novillo, and CIL assistants Brothers Manuel Pajarillo and Pierre Ouattara. Brothers Alfonso, Manuel, and Pierre also serve as the translators for our conferences.

Our SIEL adventure officially began the evening of October 21 with an introductory session that featured remarks by General Councilor Brother Claude Reinhardt

and by the Superior General, Brother Álvaro Rodríguez. Both talks reflected the importance that the Institute places on SIEL and the critical work that it serves. In his talk, Brother Claude expressed great enthusiasm and hope for the future of Lasallian research and invited us to “write the next words in the big book of Lasallian education.” Brother Álvaro followed by recalling the 2010 CIL participants’ message of *tradition, transition, transformation*. He went on to reflect on the need for continuous discovery and rediscovery of the Lasallian story, for persons willing and able to serve this need by plumbing the depths of the story and then spreading it both within and beyond the Lasallian family. The priority is to keep our understanding of Lasallian tradition vibrant and responsive for the sake of those that it serves. In a powerful moment for all of us, Brother Álvaro said, “Tradition that does not change is dead. It must be open to innovation to stay fresh to the young people.”

Our first set of conferences featured two of the key figures in Institute research and commentary: Brothers Henri Bedél and Léon Lauraire. Brother Henri led us through the historical context of De La Salle’s spiritual formation, his educational perspectives, and his founding of the Institute. Brother Léon moved further into the origins of De La Salle’s schools, pedagogy, and teacher formation. As historians, they emphasized to us the need for systematic and scientific research and scholarship, for searching for knowledge objectively and thoroughly. As Lasallians, they imparted to us their deep love and zeal for our story and our mission, often recalling with touching affection moments and insights from their own journeys as disciples of De La Salle.

As week one ended, I found myself in the Generalate Chapel, staring at the Founder’s reliquary and pondering my own Lasallian journey, with its innocuous beginnings and unpredictable twists and turns. I look forward to this latest sojourn and to getting to know better the story that has dominated my life for over 40 years and the man whose name is the most used proper noun in my vocabulary.

Live Jesus in our hearts forever!
Bob Carrejo