

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

MISSIONARIES FROM HOME

LASALLIANS IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

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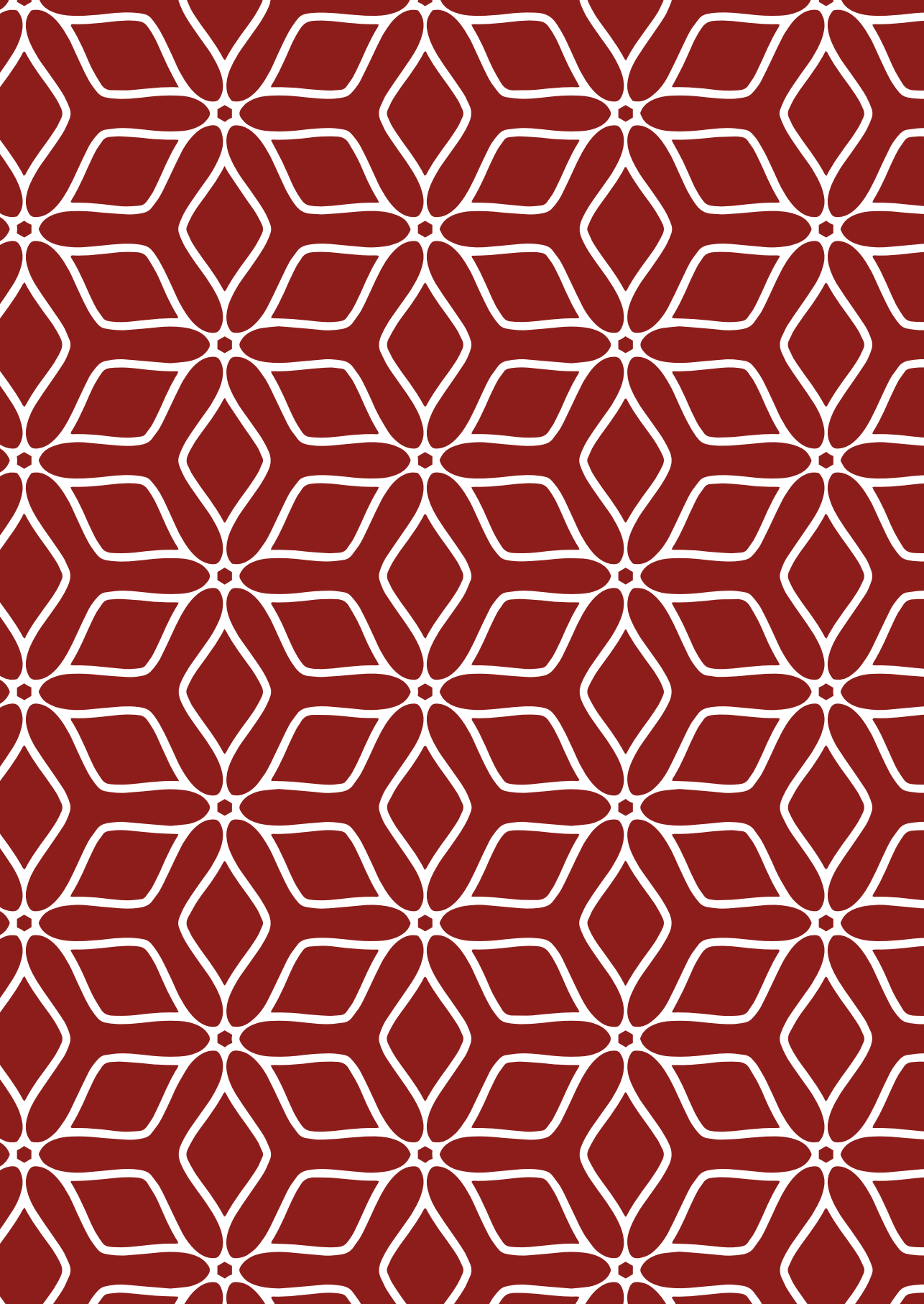
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I. THEY LEFT AND BOARDED

I. They left and boarded

“Great things are possible” was the theme that guided our journey during the 2019-2020 academic year. No one ever imagined how much these words would resonate in our lives, especially beginning in March 2020 when the confinement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic began in Mexico. From one day to the next it seemed that everything was suspended: the rhythm of life, school, work, the plans that each one had, projects; everything was affected by this event. Suddenly, it was not possible to go out to the streets and it was not possible to carry out the activities that had been planned months in advance, such as the Holy Week Missions in this case.

However, the theme continued to resonate, perhaps not consciously in the mind, but in the heart, along with the words of our Founder: “It is necessary for the school to run well” and “It is a good rule not to worry so much about knowledge itself than about knowing what to do with what you know perfectly.”¹ Faced with these facts, a group of Lasallians from the District of North Mexico, Brothers and lay people, were concerned about the imminent suspension of the missions, so they got together to dream about possible things and they imagined what could be done. And that is how the Missionaries from Home project came about.

In a few days and after many virtual meetings, the project was designed and those in charge of the District groups for children and other youth were invited to participate in order to make modules, to lead, and to promote the various activities that were intended to offer a way of living out Holy Week while setting up Lasallian communities from home during the time of confinement.

Once the experience was carried out and having verified its enormous wealth as well as the fact that we were forced to leave our familiar grounds and experiment with new ways of evangelizing by making use of social networks and the technology at our disposal, it was considered important to document the experience and to make it known. That is how this booklet came to be and it aims to give an account of the *Missionaries from Home*

1 De La Salle, Personal Writings, 1685.

project, analyzing its scope and limitations in order to learn from this experience and to integrate the findings into future pastoral practices.

As this is a document written in retrospect, it has been structured from the context in which the experience was lived, sharing both where it came from and the reasons for carrying it out, presenting the time it took to develop and the people who participated in its different phases. Subsequently, the visions of some authors that supported the work were incorporated, deepening the meaning and implications of the characteristics of society in this digital age as well as the demands that are presented in the process of Evangelization. All of this was guided by the Lasallian heritage that continues to engage educational and pastoral work with enormous relevance today.

This theoretical foundation allowed for an analysis of the results obtained from the indicators of connections and participation that occurred in social networks during Easter 2020. The analysis of the evaluation carried out, both with those who were supporting the project and the participants, which was also an important aspect that allowed us to understand the scope and limitations of this experience.

The purpose of the document is to share an experience that was carried out in the Lasallian District of North Mexico through which the great challenges that the virtual and social networks within our pastoral work was discovered. If words of hope and salvation is not delivered through these new environments, there may be many other words that could fill those gaps. Saint John Baptist De la Salle would surely send us today to seek out those girls, boys, adolescents and young people who are lost on the Internet in order to accompany them on their journey and to help them find their path of salvation. The Missionaries from Home project was a first step in that direction. Its realization was not on the horizon, but in responding to the need to evangelize in the midst of a pandemic, we were successful. Of course, there were many factors, but the support of one another was highlighted, thus living out the slogan of this school year: Great things are possible, because we are all part of the miracle.

II. THAT NIGHT THEY CAUGHT NOTHING

II. That night they caught nothing

The year 2020 was a year of great challenges for the whole of humanity and in a particular way for educational institutions. The arrival of COVID-19 generated a pandemic whose dimensions were difficult to imagine. At the beginning of March and due to the speed of the infections, some educational institutions in Mexico announced that they would move forward the Easter holidays that were scheduled to start on April 6 in order to try to stop the wave of infections. This situation immediately raised a question regarding the Holy Week Missions that each year the Lasallian District of Mexico North organizes in various regions of the country.

In mid-March, the decision was made that this District activity would be suspended due to the pandemic generated by COVID-19. In an imperceptible way, what began as a distant and alien illness came to modify several projects that the District groups for children and other Youth Ministry activities had planned, and even the preparation of the Missions was already being developed. This situation was accompanied by doubt, desolation and hopelessness, as well as by concern about misinformation and lack of clarity on this topic.

However, and as the Word of God says, Behold, *I make all things new*² little by little a light and a way were being shown so that the spirits of those who participated in this project could overcome and face the challenges presented. The District Youth Ministry program, which encourages apostolic groups of Lasallian educational institutions in North Mexico, driven by the concern of those who were going to participate in the missions of Holy Week, began to devise different ways for this experience to continue with the formative aspect of these missions that favor a social commitment and a growth in faith. The difference would be that the mission would not be in person in the communities but in a virtual way for everyone who wanted to participate.

In this way, the Pastoral team of the District of North Mexico was established as the coordinating team of a new mission's project. It would be

² Revelation 21:5.

responsible for creating ideas and the different channels to get the project to Lasallian students, former students and families. It also put forward the scope, identified those responsible for the project channels, made video calls and shared materials, among other tasks. All this in order to make the best use of the digital tools available and to be able to establish schedules for the transmissions of the celebrations of the holy days.

Those who participated witnessed an experience that is worth systematizing and making available to everyone, since a different way of living, sharing and celebrating the mysteries of our faith was established. The creation of work networks, creativity and initiative were key aspects in structuring this project. The *Missionaries from Home* initiative had a hopeful result for the youth and pastoral movements of Lasallian institutions since the mission was carried out but now from a different perspective, taking care of the essence and above all responding to the call that each one has as a baptized person.

The field of technology and social networks are very present in today's world. In today's society it is a constitutive element in social relations, in economic and political processes but, above all, in the world of youth. Followers, tagging a post, likes, stories, and images are part of many people's everyday lives. And in that environment the Church and the evangelizing process have very little presence. Hence, the situation that arose due to the pandemic meant an opportunity to take advantage of these spaces where young people are present and gradually to make the missionary impetus move to this field and to realize that young people themselves were in charge of spreading and taking the lead to carry out each of the activities of the *Missionaries from Home* project.

The activities carried out were varied. There were times for video catechesis that were designed to serve both children and youth and adults as well as multiple resources to care for spirituality and live out the celebrations of the Easter Triduum. The topics covered the entire Holy Week, from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. To organize the collaboration of the people who were involved, a manual was developed to guide the experience of Holy Week at home. Other proposals were also developed, such as service to the elderly, which consisted of helping them to get food and various activities

that will be mentioned later.

This project succeeded in promoting the unity of the apostolic groups of the institutions, making the Kingdom of God present and making the theme *Great things are Possible* a reality. This slogan was offered by the Center of the Institute and it invites us to respond to current challenges from the biblical perspective of Joseph, the Dreamer.

The mission not only changed its name, it changed its recipients and its form. The missionary experience was able to reach local communities, parishes, youth groups and homes, counteracting the despair, anxiety and stress that were beginning to emerge due to the pandemic. The missionary work could be adapted to using social networks in order to pray, go more deeply, reflect and participate in acts of popular piety.

This experience opened up new ways of understanding faith from a daily spirituality rooted in the reality that was being experienced, where the encounter had the same depth, only now it was mediated by the screen of a computer or other electronic device. In addition, the rise of networks and the possibilities of technologies were used to reach more people, even from other areas in Latin America.

“Missionaries from Home” went out to meet family members, people with whom the mission is shared and managed in order to transcend geographical limits, adding color to a Lent that was turning increasingly gray. In addition, it faced indifference by uniting faith with daily tasks to strengthen fraternal relationships in the context of the confinement mentioned previously. This experience was a means to respond to the challenge that was presented and to make sense of the reality that was being lived. It favored the development of an interior life together with those who share daily life at home, journeying to an encounter with the God who approached the most intimate area of the home, of a family, of a community.

This experience becomes relevant because in the current evangelization process, technology, social networks and other means of communication play a crucial role in responding to the call that is made to us: *“Go, therefore,*

*and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*³ Therefore, the media become a tool that contributes to this mission. A mission that began with the sending of the Son carried out by the Father, who, inspired by the Spirit, chose those whom he wanted and “*sent them to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*”⁴

Since the birth of social communication media and technology have been present in the daily life of the human being. These tools permeate areas of life such as educational, cultural and political. Its importance is so great that the Church, since the Second Vatican Council in its decree on the means of social communication “*Inter Mirifica*” points out that it is a situation that must be addressed because they contain in themselves great potential: “*The Church recognizes that these media, if properly utilized, can be of great service to humankind, since they greatly contribute to entertainment and instruction as well as to the spread and support of the Kingdom of God.*”⁵

Today, Pope Francis also insists on the need to make use of technology in the evangelizing process, pointing out that:

“The digital environment is characteristic of the contemporary world. Broad swathes of humanity are immersed in it in an ordinary and continuous manner. It is no longer merely a question of ‘using’ instruments of communication, but of living in a highly digitized culture that has had a profound impact on ideas of time and space, on our self-understanding, our understanding of others and the world, and our ability to communicate, learn, be informed and enter into relationship with others.”⁶

Therefore, it is of vital interest that in the Church’s evangelizing mission effort, this everyday reality is taken into account, especially in the world of youth, so that digital media also become agents of evangelization. In an effort to create closer ties with the reality of youth, Lasallian spirituality seeks to enter into dialogue, through new technologies, with the people behind

3 Matthew 28: 19-20.

4 Luke 9: 2.

5 Vatican II, *Inter Mirifica*, 1963, number 2.

6 Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 2019, number 86.

the screen in order to “*build educational bridges that promote human dignity, honesty, concern for others: a voice and an opportunity for all.*”⁷ Promoting young people to be protagonists of this mission is how a new channel of the transmission of the faith is carried out so that the evangelizing process has greater scope according to the number of followers of young people to whom the message reaches in the first place.

This communication effort leads to rethinking the evangelizing processes by integrating the communication media among its strategies to be used from a critical approach and that at the same time promote equality, justice and tolerance. It is intended that the educational project be focused decisively on the human person and “*to make it possible for them to live with dignity as sons and daughters of God.*”⁸ This vision is what makes it possible for technological means to achieve a harmonious relationship both with education, as well as with mission and evangelization, as expressed in the document working document (Instrumentum Laboris): The new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith:

“The perception of ourselves, others and the world depend on the influence that such technologies exert. These and the communicative space generated by them must be considered positively, without prejudice, as resources, although with a critical look and an intelligent and responsible use.”⁹

The Church, beginning with the Second Vatican Council, invites Catholics to use the media in an effective way as evangelizing and apostolic means, adapting to the circumstances of the time and of the moment.¹⁰ For this reason, the *Missionaries from Home* project took these words to heart and made an effort to evangelize in the networks, to use the technological channels that are available so that no one is left out of the message of salvation. Given that reality itself made this request, the mission takes these means to make itself present in the lives of families, communities and each person.

7 La Salle General Council, 2016, page 6.

8 Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2015, number 13.

9 Synod of Bishops, Instrumentum Laboris, number 60.

10 Vatican II, *Iner Mirifica*, 1963.

The importance that the laity have in the proclamation of the Gospel is also pointed out by the Second Vatican Council. In fact, it encourages them to be in charge of vivifying the media with a human and Christian spirit and to transmit the hope that comes from the Word of God.¹¹ Thanks to this project, the Brothers and laity as a Lasallian Family, and in the spirit of “together and by association”, strengthened ties in this new call from God. Collaborative work through the different digital meeting platforms opened up many possibilities, expanding the scope of the tools and resources that were developed. As a Church and Institute, this team of Lasallian missionaries managed to carry out the mission of Holy Week from home to attend to the contingency situation that was being experienced locally and worldwide.

The impact that the *Missionaries from Home* project had crossed geographical limits, because it was shared with other sister Districts of the Lasallian Latin American Region. Thus, not only were the forces combined so that Holy Week could be experienced from a worldwide reality, but also there was a witness of unity and brotherhood. Thanks to the Lasallian charism with which they have identified, several people joined this project; and the fact is that, since the beginning of the Institute, the possibilities that the idea of “together and by association” generates have been constantly favoring the glory of God by the salvation of souls. “*This creative impulse comes from birth, when John Baptist de la Salle, going beyond the social and religious borders of his time, brought together a heterogeneous group of lay teachers who, in a spirit of association, became first a community, then a society and finally an Institute.*”¹²

That is why today, after verifying the wealth that the *Missionaries from Home* Project generated, the object of this publication is to share this wealth by publicizing the experience of Youth Ministry carried out in the District of North Mexico in relation to the experience of the Lasallian Missions of Holy Week under the modality of online evangelization and human promotion.

We also want the construction process of the project to be documented, as well as the materials produced and the means that were used to carry it out. Finally, we want to know the impact that the project had, both in terms of

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Lasallian General Council, 2017, page 11.

the electronic media used and through the testimonies of the participants (recipients and organizers). In this way we will be able to assess the purposes of the project and share the experience of online evangelization and human promotion. The construction process of this project and its implementation was something that left a great richness in all of us who participated in it. That is why we want to make it known: for its possibilities, for the experience it favors and for the noble purposes to which it brings us closer: that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

FOR REFLECTION. Sharing horizons

Analyze, as you would do an X-ray, of the:

- use made of social networks for pastoral purposes.
- use that educators at your institution make of social networks.
- publications on social networks made by the students of your institution.

1. What stands out in these publications? What do you conclude from the knowledge of educators regarding social networks?

2. In what way can we “build educational bridges that promote human dignity, honesty, concern for others” (cf. p. 8) through social networks and new technologies?

**III. LOWER THE NET ON
THE RIGHT SIDE AND YOU
WILL FIND SOMETHING**

III. Lower the net on the right side and you will find something

3.1 The sea on which we sail

Today's world is characterized by a series of constant and dizzying changes produced largely by information and communication technologies that allow a greater connection between people and which facilitate knowledge to spread more quickly, reaching a large quantity of people.

The digital age in which we live involves a virtual space.¹³ This is possible thanks to the existence of the Internet, whose characteristics and possibilities have substantially modified the way people interact and along with it the social environment in which we operate. This situation means that access to knowledge is much faster, easier and without restriction of time and space; although it has also meant a saturation of information that is not always reliable, and this generates confusion because it makes it difficult to determine what is valid or true.

Social relations, on the other hand, have not been able to avoid these characteristics. Ubiquity, immediacy, over-information, the sensation of feeling close and connected through electronic devices are other peculiarities of the digital age in which we find ourselves. These features have led to an increase in the interdependence between people and the information they have access to through various mobile devices.¹⁴ Therefore, the way of perceiving reality, of communicating, acting, thinking, seeing and expressing ourselves has been modified. The world and people are perceived through the filter of social networks and the virtual environment in which they are interacting, which sometimes makes it difficult to have a true experience of the place where they live.

The historical moment that corresponds to this second decade of the 21st century is characterized by the relevance that technology has in life as a

13 Téllez, 2017.

14 Pérez Gómez, 2013.

means of communicating, informing, working and learning. The current reality forces us to live by being dependent on the digital world. This is exemplified by the fact that in 2018 every 60 seconds there were 3.7 million searches on Google, 38 million WhatsApp exchanges, 18 million text messages, 481,000 tweets and 187 million emails were sent; figure that has continued to grow exponentially.¹⁵

In addition to the importance of technology in life, and closely related to this technological accessibility, is yet another characteristic of the current time. This is the supremacy that knowledge and knowing have in today's world. Thanks to technological devices, the information is totally at hand in a practically immediate way. However, it also has a very close expiration date, either because interest is lost or because there is new knowledge to replace it.

Current sociologists point to globalization, flexibility, change, virtuality, individualism, transience or, as Bauman conceptualizes it, liquidity as features of this digital planet.¹⁶ This "liquid" or fluid world is opposed to past times that were characterized by being stable, by being rooted, by having repetitive processes, values and clear certainties. These characteristics can also be seen with respect to the accessibility of information. While it is true that you have the data you need at your fingertips, there are risks. For example, when searching for something on Google or any other search engine, a large number of entries related to our point of interest are obtained and it must be discerned which ones have pertinent, truthful and precise information according to what is needed. This makes it difficult to have a clear and precise frame of reference, while favoring a certain relativism in relation to what is wanted, imported or valued.

In this sea on which they are sailing, today's young people are characterized by the use of technology being part of their way of being and of the way of managing their lives. A high percentage of their daily lives are carried out in the digital world since they were born with the Internet, smartphones, gadgets and apps. All these tools practically require them to be connected to feel part of a social group. Social networks mediate the relationships of young

¹⁵ Desjardins, 2018, in García Aretio, 2019.

¹⁶ Bauman, 2002.

people and influencers have become the new social and cultural references whose influence has sometimes reached the academic and moral sphere.

The premise for these young people seems to be that, if you are not online, you do not exist, which is why the border between the private and intimate and the public has been blurred. The *selfie* generation exemplifies the importance of the visual in this world where nothing is permanent, where the only thing that matters is the present moment, the “here and now.”¹⁷ Intimacy is then confused with public experience because the person has the need to be seen to feel that he exists in this precise moment that, from his perspective, is all that he has. This exposure on the network is also a manifestation of the consumer culture in which we live, where the object of consumption is the same publications of the person, the same image of him or her or in a radical extreme, the same person. The person becomes “public” to be seen and when seen is consumed and discarded; hence the imminent need to continue publishing in order to continue “being.” This becomes a great challenge for the companions who must help the child, the adolescent and the young person to discover their intrinsic value, beyond images or perceptions.

On the other hand, these generations feel more citizens of the world than of their own nation, so the concept of being rooted in a place, be it territory, space or lifestyle does not fit their interests. Young people feel that the world is a place to be known, to be photographed and to be uploaded to the networks. Traveling from one place to another is part of this multi-cultural vision with which they have grown up and which has also led them to be much more open to diversity in all its manifestations.¹⁸

This diversity also implies living with a language and a way of thinking that seeks inclusion and that goes beyond it, by proposing non-discrimination from an increasingly wide range around the concept of gender and multiple everyday situations that are beginning to be considered as possible discrimination. This *selfie* generation is predominantly urban and has a family experience that is not always tied to a nuclear family as it was

17 González-Anleo, 2015.

18 Díaz-Sarmiento, López-Lambráño & Roncallo-Lafont, 2017.

traditionally conceived.¹⁹ In addition, today, in a large number of cases both parents work so that the children have been raised by someone else or have been alone for a long time in the “care” of the media.

Another characteristic of this generation is the need for young people to be protagonists of the interaction process that occurs through the media. That is why television is not a medium that attracts their attention because they feel that they have no possibility of making decisions or of interacting. Instead, they prefer streaming services to watch series, movies or to listen to music, since these allow them to make decisions about what, how and when to access certain content.

All these characteristics must be considered when rethinking the evangelizing task to understand the profile of current children, adolescents and young people in order that the companion can guide them in their formation in an assertive, relevant and meaningful way. Therefore, in order to educate and evangelize in this digital age, a paradigm shift is required. It is not possible to continue under the scheme that the educator is the one who carries out the training process through his acting or speaking about it. If we continue with this methodology, it will be very difficult for us to earn the attention of the students and furthermore, that the training process that is desired is significant and affects their daily life.

García Aretio opens an interesting discussion when he points out that digital natives do not automatically possess the digital skills required to live adequately in a virtual environment.²⁰ He even calls them “digital orphans” by pointing out that no one teaches them to use the large amounts of information with which they interact on a daily basis. Most of the time, this author continues, children and young people spend their time “liking” publications, sharing photos or watching videos of fashion *influencers*, without the information they have access to becoming knowledge or as a source of some kind of learning.

19 Nobrega de Lucena, 2018.

20 García Aretio, 2019.

This reality poses very specific challenges to education and specific challenges to the work of evangelization, since it is necessary that the way of presenting the Gospel does not become just one more message among many that are on social networks. The evangelizing announcement in the digital environment must be able to touch people's hearts and to initiate a transformation process that goes beyond a simple like or comment.

To change the educational paradigm and really put the student at the center, the first thing that is necessary to do is to know their traits. The student who is in a formal educational process at the end of the second decade of the 21st century is a person who lives connected to the virtual world, so he constantly reviews his accounts and profiles on the network.²¹

It is in this virtual environment that the student develops his social life and that is where he communicates with his friends, colleagues and even family. For this reason, the line that distinguishes the real and the virtual, the private and the public, is difficult for students to distinguish. On the other hand, sharing your data, as well as your digital identity does not pose any problem. One aspect that must also be considered is that their attention is generally dispersed, since they are used to doing several tasks at the same time, as well as belonging to different groups or communities where they can develop different interests in parallel.

These children and young people are impatient because they are used to getting quick answers, quick connections, immediate information. For this reason, it is sometimes difficult for them to delve into what they read, since they are not willing or used to spending a lot of time on just one thing. More than texts, they prefer audio-visual or graphic messages because this format allows the message to arrive faster and without much effort. It is not uncommon, for example, that if we ask them to read a book, they ask us if there is a movie that they can see to get the job done.

This virtual space has accustomed them to interacting in playful environments, so in order for them to be interested in something they need to see it as fun or as a challenge. It is useless that the didactic processes

21 *Ibidem*.

focus on giving them information, since they always have it with them in their technological devices and it is much more up-to-date than what the teacher could provide them. The important thing is that they learn to use that information, to distinguish true data from false information and that they awaken the curiosity to know, the desire to research and go more deeply into the topic.²² Along with this, the teacher must help them make sense of the information to which they have access, so that they integrate it into a meaningful whole that allows them to question and to understand the world in which they live.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects for an educational process to be meaningful in today's world is that it takes into account the almost omnipresence of the virtual and the digital. To achieve this, it is necessary to consider the learning, the information and the experience that students bring with them in order to use these as a starting point in the didactic process. The best teaching that a mentor can provide to students is to guide the process in which meaning, order and depth are given to the data and stimuli that students receive on a daily basis.

On the other hand, it is necessary to work with heterogeneous groups in relation to age and the resources available to them, since this is the reality in which they interact on social networks.²³ This should help to make education current, one that is based on collaborative learning processes and on interdisciplinary projects that require interaction with people who are not in their social circle, who are beyond their interests and even their location.

Achieving critical thinking requires learning that is open, active, and interactive. This process must be carried out in community and have a social focus to it. In addition, to take care of those who live in the digital age, it is necessary to consider flexible projects that allow students to be innovative and to develop their creativity. In order to achieve the above, the teacher is required to allow them to build the solution proposals based on the problems raised. He must help them to discover the complexity of the variables involved in each learning experience and prepare them to

²² Nobrega de Lucena, 2018.

²³ García Aretio, 2019.

offer strong arguments based on what they discover. Another indispensable component is that they listen to the arguments of their classmates, question them and validate them so that through this process they enrich their point of view and their understanding of the problem and the environment in which they find themselves.

3.2 The voice that guides us to proclaim the Good News

The Church over time has sought to respond to the needs and concerns that history poses. At present, a great challenge for the church is to inculturate the Gospel into the new virtual environment in which society navigates and interacts. In order to do this, the Church must understand virtuality, as well as the different features that it brings with it in order to bring the Gospel message closer to the individual of today. To achieve this, the Church must use the media as allies in evangelization in order to spread the Good News everywhere.²⁴

The digital age has settled in our world and it is changing people's lives and relationships. The Church cannot ignore it, since if it did, its message would not be received by a large number of individuals. One of the characteristics of today's society is the importance it gives to the media in order to be "connected" at all times; it is enough to think that today it is impossible for us to leave the house without carrying a cell phone.²⁵

In the media and social networks, there is a paradigm shift in the way of communicating. The person is no longer important, whether it is the person who transmits or receives. In the networks and in the virtual world, it is the message that assumes all the leadership.²⁶ This becomes a great opportunity to rescue the kerygma (proclamation), the Good News, as central to the evangelizing process, beyond individuals. The evangelizing proclamation must be faithful to the Gospel and communicate an immense YES to man, woman, life, freedom, peace, and solidarity. To be able to transmit the message with fidelity, one must experience the Good News with eyes and

24 Bastante, 2015.

25 *Ibidem*.

26 Sánchez, s.f.

hearts flooded with faith; one must understand that it is a proclamation that communicates life with simple and everyday words.²⁷

Pope Francis, in various communications, has encouraged Catholics not to be afraid of the digital world and he has invited them to know and to use social networks to help the Church open up and go out to meet people, wherever they are found. He also pointed out the need to be aware of the dangers posed by the Internet such as exclusion and manipulation,²⁸ but he stressed that it is necessary to go further and to use networks to create a sense of unity among people that leads to solidarity and the search for the common good. On the other hand, he definitely encourages evangelizers not to be afraid of becoming citizens of the digital world.²⁹ But he emphasizes that it is necessary to approach virtuality as a coherent witness to the Gospel in order to be credible witnesses of the Risen One.

The Latin American Bishops meeting in Aparecida, Brazil in 2007 already considered in their declaration that the existing media culture implied the need to recognize new languages in order to be able to use them and to favor a process of the humanization of society.³⁰ Likewise, they pointed out that the Internet “can offer magnificent opportunities for evangelization, if it is used with competence and a clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses.”³¹ Thirteen years have passed since that declaration and it is time to ask ourselves if as a Church we have made progress in this regard. If we are today more prepared to incorporate the Internet and social networks in an evangelizing effort that leads us to meet those people: children, youth and adults who do not frequent the “temples.” If the Church does not ask itself this question, it will be leaving aside the possibility of proclaiming the Gospel according to the needs of today’s world.

Today we need to rethink a new evangelization that takes into account the characteristics of this emerging culture, where faith has to enter into dialogue with the culture and values of today’s society. Otherwise the

27 Bastante, 2015.

28 Francis, 2014.

29 Bastante, 2015.

30 Arboleda, 2017.

31 CELAM, 2007, p. 487, cited in Arboleda, 2017.

message not only would not be accepted, but it would run the risk of not even being perceived. In the world we live in, it seems that it is necessary to make noise and to raise your voice in order to be heard. However, evangelizers must understand that the Good News must continue to be proclaimed as a message of peace, brotherhood and joy.³²

The Church, moreover, must be aware that in today's society the idea of God is becoming more and more irrelevant or is relegated to certain practices that are carried out in a "temple" on a certain day of the week, but which have little impact on daily life. If we do not start from this perspective, the message would not be taking into account the needs and characteristics of the recipients to whom it is addressed.

The meaning of the new evangelization remains the same as when this concept had its origin in the last century, that is, that Jesus Christ be rediscovered as the living God and the God of life; that the civilization of love and life be promoted so that human beings rediscover the meaning of history and humanity.³³ The new evangelization consists of proclaiming Jesus Christ with new fervor, with different methods and with new forms of expression. It is the same message but adapted to current times.³⁴

For this to happen, it is necessary, according to Bishop Berzosa, to re-proclaim the historical Jesus who unites humanity and divinity, who proclaims a personal God who seeks the salvation of the entire human person without the message of division between the sacred and the profane.³⁵ The Church requires taking up again the current values such as ecology, human rights, inclusion and integrating them into the evangelical proclamation. She must also re-position the experience of religion, taking it out of an individual and private sphere and bringing it to a dimension that has public and community resonance; in other words, it is necessary to evangelize the current culture with a pastoral heart that knows how to discover the value of today's world. To do this, it is necessary for the person to approach the school of Jesus Christ, since his language adapts to the

32 Bastante, 2015.

33 Berzosa, 1998.

34 Pajuelo, 2017.

35 Berzosa, 2013.

moment, to the person and is always perceived as fresh and innovative. His words illuminate the cultural environment in which they were spoken, but they also have a lot to say in every moment of history.³⁶

The emerging culture presents the evangelizing process with a series of challenges that are not new, but their characteristics correspond to the features of today's society. To evangelize, it is necessary to consider that we live in an ideological pluralism where there are no more absolutes or prescriptions, so the message of the Gospel must be lived out and witnessed in order to be accepted. On the other hand, it is necessary to find ways to live with new values such as tolerance, dialogue, freedom, feminism, pluralism and inclusion that often question religious principles and distance people from religion.³⁷ Evangelizers need to approach them with courage and seek meeting points based on the Gospel.

In a world that promotes individualism and which, although it values solidarity for certain causes or times, finds it difficult to live the community dimension beyond social networks, the Church faces another challenge: to get closer to persons in their realities in order to help them go beyond their own needs so as to go out to meet others. To do this it is necessary that a comfortable, dogmatic, narcissistic or moralistic Church is not sensed. Close, coherent evangelizers are required, those who seek being more than having, doing or power. Evangelization, therefore, must put the Kerygma as what is really important, put Jesus and his message at the center, they being the important thing. This will require living out what is proclaimed in order to be credible in this world that sees everything and questions everything. It will involve respecting the process of others and being willing to become companions on the journey in order to creatively tell the story of salvation.

To achieve this in today's world, you have to reach out to virtual environments. Cyber evangelization is nothing more than evangelizing in this type of environment. And to evangelize, as Jesus points out at the Ascension, is to proclaim the Gospel to all so that they become disciples of the Lord Jesus.³⁸ Entering this sphere means making it possible for the

36 Bastante, 2015.

37 Berzosa, 2013.

38 Cf. Matthew 28.

Gospel to meet digital citizens and to respond to the missionary vocation of the Church.³⁹ In order to carry out this evangelization in the digital world, it is necessary to be aware of the characteristics of cyber-culture, which is distinguished by certain features among which are speed, immediacy, tele-presence, as well as the formation of a new language that brings with it new symbols, values and ways of relating and experiencing both things and people.⁴⁰

In a digital environment, mediation is no longer carried out between people, but now experiences, knowledge and relationships are mediated by technological devices that have become omnipresent and that do not respect times or places, as they invade the privacy of the person. It is in this context that the Church must enter in order to carry out her evangelizing work.

In the digital world, there are no longer defined borders and the cultural characteristics themselves are becoming more and more homogenized. The experience of being in a global village is coming closer to our experience but, at the same time, being aware of our differences and seeking to take care of what distinguishes us has exacerbated the nationalisms that divide. It is in this virtual environment that physical presence ceases to be important along with the concept of authority and social conventions. This allows people to express themselves more freely, without thinking about the consequences or without considering the other, who practically does not exist because the other is diluted among the enormous numbers of people the message can reach.

All of the above presents an enormous challenge for today's evangelization. It is not just about taking advantage of the Internet to do virtually what was previously done in person. It is necessary to make a serious reflection on the characteristics of the network, the relationships and the type of communication that is established there to "live the faith from the logic of the digital network."⁴¹ For this to happen, it is necessary to understand cyber-culture, know its language and its possibilities to live, express and bear witness to the faith in this new environment. It is necessary to avoid

39 Bastante, 2015.

40 Arboleda, 2017.

41 Spadaro, 2014, in Arboleda, 2017, page 170.

falling into the temptation that permeates the media and that seems to indicate that the one who makes the most noise or shouts the loudest is the one who wins the battle. The Good News must continue to be transmitted as a message of peace, joy and brotherhood.⁴²

The strong boom that the Internet and social networks have had responds to the fact that people feel an enormous need to meet, to interact with others.⁴³ This search for encounters must be considered as the starting point for cyber-evangelization. This is what Pope Francis has indicated when he said that the Internet favors the encounter and solidarity between people, which is a gift from God.⁴⁴ However, for this to be possible it is necessary for evangelizers to use creativity and to make digital environments become places of salvation, dialogue and communion. For this, it is necessary to teach that the network is a continuity of the real world, that it is not dissociated from it and that for this reason it is very important to promote authentic testimony and humility in the virtual sphere.⁴⁵

In order to face the challenges that digital evangelization presents to the Church, it is necessary to train pastoral agents in different dimensions: in technical knowledge of technologies but also in spirituality so that the message is not disembodied. In creativity in order to get in touch with new cultures and in the knowledge that stimulates love and appreciation for the message that the Tradition of the Church offers. In the study of the Word and in the ability to imagine ways to make it arrive through new languages.⁴⁶ Only in this way will the Church be prepared to face the challenges that the world today presents to her.

Spadaro points out six challenges that arise in a digital environment with regard to evangelization.⁴⁷ They need to be considered to ensure that the Gospel message is meaningful to children, youth, and adolescents who make constant use of social media and the Internet.

42 Bastante, 2015.

43 Pajuelo, 2017.

44 Francis, 2014.

45 Pajuelo, 2017.

46 *Ibidem*.

47 Spadaro, 2017.

The first challenge is the need to move from the pastoral ministry of answers to the pastoral ministry of questions. This challenge is closely related to the saturation of information from which we currently suffer. In previous paragraphs it was pointed out that, as mentors, the paradigm on which the teacher stands must be changed so the teacher is not seen as the one who has all the information and transmits it, but as the one who guides a learning process. In this way, the student can be helped so that, considering all the information he has, he can discern what data is relevant, valid and reliable. Another essential aspect is to guide him to use this data giving meaning and sense to the world in which he lives.

Faced with this reality, Evangelization cannot simply become just another source that offers answers. Given so much information, young people should seek to identify the valuable information, decode what to do with so much data and above all ask the questions that are important for their lives.⁴⁸ This represents what we know as spiritual discernment; it is a challenge that must be addressed in the process of evangelization.

A second challenge is to move from a content-centered to a people-centered ministry; this simply implies having the ability to establish a dialogue. This requires knowing how to communicate a message, but above all, knowing how to listen, distinguish the interests, concerns and preferences of the people who must be evangelized. Access as evangelizers to the digital world can be wrong if you only care about developing content that seeks to reach a certain number of audiences. That would be repeating a paradigm that is out of date and does not work today.

The digital world and networks are set up so that young people have a great capacity for participation and feedback regarding the messages they receive. Therefore, nothing bores them and alienates them more than feeling that they are passive recipients of a message that does not take them into account or that does not allow them to interact.

Closely linked to this, the third challenge requires that we move from the pastoral ministry of transmission to the pastoral ministry of witness.

⁴⁸ Spadaro, 2017.

The innovation that exists in a digital environment has to do with the fact that relationships play out within a network, which emphasizes the process of sharing.⁴⁹ Mutual relationships are shared, but also what each one publishes is made known to those within the network itself. So, in the virtual world, the content that is made public cannot be separated from the person who has published it. This implies that for digital evangelization to be meaningful, we must try to create an encounter between people and not just settle for an ambitious and well-defined plan to make the basic contents of our faith known. Testimony, therefore, is the indispensable means of communicating in this world that is marked by the prevalence of the image and where it is required to see reality rather than just hear about it.

As a fourth challenge, the transition from the pastoral ministry of propaganda to the pastoral ministry of proximity should be considered. This challenge is not about evangelical marketing but about making the Gospel known, shared, and brought to life. This will only be achieved to the extent that, considering the previous challenge, witness is given and communities that share the faith are created either in person or virtually. The experience of the community will be the one that allows us to experience the Gospel that demands closeness to one another, that calls to live in solidarity and mercy. In a digital environment, creativity is important so that evangelization has concrete and close resonance for those who are close to one another.

Moving from a pastoral ministry of ideas to a pastoral ministry of narration is one more challenge for the work of evangelization; not only when speaking in the digital world but when working in any context. This narrative fosters the creation of meaning and allows the person to get involved in the message that he is hearing, make it his own and personalize it. Everything that is done on the Internet leaves a footprint of each step that is made in the network, which builds the profile and history on the Internet from the sites that are visited, updates, the publications that are “liked,” the comments that are written and any other action that is carried out.⁵⁰ All of this makes up a kind of “life movie” that is shared with contacts on social networks.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ Spadaro, 2017.

This experience that makes the network possible is what must be achieved with the work of evangelization – to build a narrative that involves a dialogue, a life story that is shared and lived with others, with those with whom one lives in the virtual world. If it is possible for each person to be a “live link” that communicates the message and the good news through their social networks, it would be possible to revitalize and give interactivity to the process of evangelization.

The last challenge that Spadaro poses is a pastoral ministry that is attentive to interiority and interactivity. This is a double challenge if one considers that the world in which the person finds himself is characterized by constant change, immediacy and superficiality. The dynamics that are promoted through the Internet favor hypertext, jumping from one side to another and a kind of lightness both in reading and in sharing publications or statements. In addition to this, the network favors interaction between people more than internalization, so that in order to achieve these processes of interiority and interactivity it is necessary that the message be built between people, in addition to all participating so that the experience is like a fabric in which everyone contributes experiences with meaning and significance.

In a virtual environment, it is very important to become aware that the process of evangelization goes much further than transmitting a message, of spreading the good news. The proclamation of the message is important, but above all it is required to promote an encounter with Jesus and with brothers and sisters that leads the person on a path of conversion and solidarity. Therefore, it is necessary to question how much the new means of communication influence the transformation of people, since immediacy, being impersonal and superficiality are characteristics that do not help in the work of evangelization.⁵¹

Cyber-evangelization should not be satisfied with the fact that one “participates” in virtual celebrations, that messages are read or shared without these having consequences in people’s lives. All activities, messages and publications that are transmitted through social networks and the Internet must have as their purpose an encounter with Christ and

51 Sánchez, s.f.

with one's brothers and sisters.

The culture of the encounter is a feature of the Christian faith that implies that "faith only becomes culture if it is itself a culture of encounter that embraces every culture, that serves the encounter of people in all their traditions and cultural movements."⁵² For the Church, dialogue and encounter are ends that must be achieved, so when the network is used to evangelize we should not fill it with religious messages. It is necessary to create meeting spaces that allow entering into dialogue with cultures and with people, specifically with those who are far from God or those who are not in the "temples" because they do not agree with what they hear in the Churches. The digital environment allows us to listen to them and to build bridges that help share the path of life and the message of the Gospel.

To be able to make the network a space for evangelization, you need the ability to come into contact with those who have ideas different from your own, to listen without wanting to impose moral mandates. Without renouncing your own beliefs, you approach people without pretending to be the only ones who are right and who have the absolute truth. To do this, it is necessary to delve into what the relational paradigm of communication implies.⁵³ In this way we will understand that it is not possible to evangelize by offering a one-way message and that religious contents do not evangelize by themselves. For the message to reach the person, an encounter must happen and for both the encounter and the message to be credible, the strength of witness is required, be it in the real or virtual world.

3.3 The other disciples got into the boat

The key to being able to offer pertinent answers and with the intention that what is being done is to get closer to discovering God's will and to act accordingly, is to be attentive to events and to the signs of the times. This is because reality itself is doing the speaking and it is reality that indicates to us, from the point of view of faith, what it is that God is asking for.

52 Pajuelo, 2017, page 6.

53 Pajuelo, 2017.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle's attention to reality led him to act with the intent that each action was a reflection of what God wanted from him. This had such profound repercussions that to this day, God's plan, initiated by John Baptist de La Salle, is still in force. The actions undertaken by John Baptist de La Salle stemmed from his constant awareness of remaining in the presence of God and from a deep look at reality in order to discover the will of God in it. On the other hand, this allowed him to spread the spirit of Christianity in all the people and circumstances in which he was immersed. In other words, for the Founder, the search for God's will was a coming and going between what God wants and what was happening; with a look of faith on reality and with the reality that allows itself to be penetrated by the loving look of God.

The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools begins with the words "deeply moved." These words accurately describe the turnaround in the history of salvation of our Founder and the first Brothers and, therefore, in all those who to this day feel identified with the Lasallian charism.⁵⁴

This is why the living out of the Lasallian charism leads to generating responses that correspond to immediate reality with a view to eternity. That is to say, they are not answers to solve only emerging or urgent situations, but rather they lead to commitments that call forth the transformation of reality, especially that of the person.

One way to explain this response would be to consider the following table as it develops an interpretation of the virtues of the companion in online education. Its purpose is to update the explanation of Brother Agathon of the virtues of the good teacher according to Saint John Baptist de La Salle.⁵⁵ This update is only intended to be an extrapolation of how those who accompany the online process of evangelization should live them out. It is worth mentioning that the definitions are an exact copy of the aforementioned writing and the update is our own elaboration, based on lived experience.

54 Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2015.

55 Brother Agathon, 1785, in Gonlieu, 1785.

Virtue	Definition	Skills that promote the development of the virtue
Gravity	This virtue puts in order the teacher's exterior behavior in conjunction with modesty, decorum and good order.	Non-verbal language expresses what the mind, heart and spirit mean by means of the word recorded in sound and image.
Silence	This noun designates prudent discretion in the use of words so that the teacher knows how to be silent when he should not speak and to speak when silence is inappropriate.	Being aware that the message to be shared on social networks should be able to generate reflection.
Humility	This is a virtue which does us justice in that it generates some low feelings about ourselves, thus making us know who we are, according to these words of the Apostle: <i>What do you have that you have not received? And if you have received everything, what are you boasting about?</i>	Inspiring feelings in the messenger so that the Message is more important than the missionary.
Prudence	Prudence is a virtue that tells us what to avoid, and it indicates the safe and legitimate means to achieve a laudable end.	Discerning which is the best digital tool for the message to arrive in a relevant way.

Wisdom	This is the virtue that makes things known to us according to the excellent principles, and moves us to act according to them.	Knowing in depth the use and management of digital tools and social networks, so that through them what is shared is of good quality.
Patience	This is a virtue that helps us to bear things without murmuring to submit to the divine will, all the ills of this life. It helps teachers to bear the hardships involved in the education of the young.	Serenely control the possible failures in the connection, upload or playback of videos, that is, what happens outside of what is planned. It also helps to cope with the response rate and reception of the message through digital media.
Measure	This is a virtue that makes us inclined to speak and act with discreet moderation and modesty.	Prepare scripts and messages according to the digital medium that is used to enhance the response.
Meekness	This virtue inspires within us kindness, mercy and tenderness.	Upload in networks everything that inspires others to correct and amend attitudes that separate them from kindness, mercy and tenderness.
Zeal	Zeal is a virtue that moves us to seek with great affection the glory of our Lord God.	Innovate and create with a view to pleasing God.
Vigilance	This is a virtue that infuses us with diligence and accuracy in the fulfillment of our duties..	Being attentive to monitoring <i>engagement</i> to foster constant and ongoing improvement.

Piety	This virtue helps us to fulfill our duties with God with dignity.	Discover in social networks a means to get closer to God, dignifying them through good use.
Generosity	This is the virtue by which we voluntarily sacrifice our personal interests for those of others.	Give everything you have: time, knowledge, creativity, resources.

Source: original design.

The Lasallian heritage has been enriched by these virtues which, in a transversal way, the Lasallian companion brings to life in the educational task and today, through this project, it is updated through digital skills that help to continue building and fostering the appropriation of these virtues.

In turn, this Lasallian heritage is enriched by the watchword of Lasallians the world over – the expression: *“Live, Jesus, in our hearts... forever”*. Wherever there is a meeting between Lasallians from different regions, this prayer is a way of knowing that they are part of this great family.

To maintain the vitality that gives strength to a phrase like the one above, it is necessary to base it on the experience of communion. This experience is dynamic so it is constantly changing as it goes from getting one’s attention to reality. The latter is inherent in those who call themselves Lasallians. Thus, the person is attentive to the circumstances in order to give answers, not individually but together with others for the common good. This dynamic, coupled with creative responses, give vitality to people who, in community, are part of the changing scenarios of the 21st century.⁵⁶

The work carried out in the *Missionaries from Home* project maintained the dynamic that we are talking about. A need was recognized that led us to respond with creativity and innovation as a community. A community

⁵⁶ La Salle General Council, 2015.

was formed that looked for digital tools to plan, develop and evaluate accompaniment in online evangelization. In fact, if you want to characterize the community formed to give life to this project, it is possible to use four concepts that are considered in *Circular 461*: unity, diversity, response and flexibility; they are all mutually intertwined. This is the way we understand them.⁵⁷

Unity is inherent in those who consider themselves Lasallians, and it has a purpose, it does not occur in function of itself. It is lived out in such a way that it seeks to foster transformation, change, learning, and not only for the immediate community but for all those who enter into relationship with the mission that arises and feeds this unity. This unity requires faces and charisms, and diversity comes from that. Each of the people who make up this unit contribute their wealth and experience so that the mission is fostered and the results are ongoing.

Therefore, the responses generated are the result of the union (community) of people who, thanks to the diversity that each one of them represents, makes it possible to build new scenarios so that the responses generated have two characteristics: they are consistent with the will of God and they have the spirit of faith that characterizes all things Lasallian.

And finally, the response must be flexible. In this case, it is the feature that has had the greatest strength, because the resources available for online evangelization varied a great deal and, therefore, the adjustments made were a constant feature of the *Missionaries From Home* project. For this reason, the experience carried out was that the “long distance” Lasallian community began in unity, attended to diversity, and it enriched itself in providing pertinent answers using resources that favored flexibility.

The 45th General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools manifested Circular 470, issued by the General Council (2015), the structure of themes and sub-themes that gave a common perspective for the journey of the Institute and the Lasallian Family. That is why, in the 2017-2018 school year, the theme of *Lasallians Without Borders* was proposed and, in due course, guidelines were

57 La Salle General Council, 2010.

given for living out this theme in *Lasallian Reflection 3*.⁵⁸

The Lasallian enterprise is a global community where the possibilities of sharing experiences have increased due to the fact that communication between educational works throughout the Institute has been fostered. This was possible thanks to the fact that networks have been used and strengthened by means of information and communication technologies. The above is a clear example of how educational and pastoral work goes beyond borders, since experiences can be known from anywhere in the world, even synchronously.

The document recognizes the demographic changes due to migratory phenomena, which have existed since the human being inhabited the earth. However, the impact is different depending on the era in which humanity is found. In the 21st century, according to *Lasallian Reflection* number 3,59 the transformations have gone from changes in the family structure and the role of women as an economic force, to the religious map of the world.

According to this document, the participation of Lasallians has brought important innovations in relation to these transformations, when you consider two principles. The first of these has to do with recognizing that the Good News is for everyone. For this reason, the *Missionaries From Home* project focused the message on creating new ways of sharing the Gospel and taking it anywhere, where circumstances became the pretext for such innovation to be carried out and to reach as many people as possible. The second principle is the continuous process of discernment that is lived out at the Institute level in order to recognize what the borders are and so that the actions are pertinent. In our case, it implied recognizing that the physical limits to evangelize were constituted by the missionaries' own house. It was then that the discernment to innovate made it possible to connect the traditional work of the Holy Week missions with online evangelization using information and communication technologies.

⁵⁸ La Salle General Council, 2017.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

In this way, we learned from experience that knowledge, understanding, the proclamation of the Good News for all and discernment are axes for Lasallians to carry out creative and innovative work in evangelization. On the other hand, we also can state that when speaking of the Lasallian Educational Mission, borders do not exist.

FOR REFLECTION. Sharing horizons

What are the social references that our students take into account to assess their life and their actions?

In what way can we work on a pastoral experience that goes beyond the photo, the selfie for publication and that is capable of going out to meet the other?

If one of the characteristics of current generations is the need to be protagonists of the interaction process that occurs through the media, how can we promote the positive action of our students in the evangelizing process?

Considering what Sánchez (s.f) says that in the virtual world the message is the one assumed by all leadership, how can we take advantage of this to spread the Good News of salvation?

What challenges do we see to evangelize in our own concrete environment?

IV. IT IS THE LORD

IV. It is the Lord

Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers of the Institute were always looking for innovative and concrete ways to fulfill their mission. Following their example, in March 2020 the Children's and Youth Ministry Program of the District of North Mexico announced the "*Missionaries from Home*" project, which was an invitation to *organize new forms of prayer, evangelization and participation in the liturgical celebrations of Lent, Holy Week and Easter by means of digital media.*

For the carrying out of the activities, it was emphasized that the work should be done virtually and remotely by using a device in the home. In no case should one interact in person, thus avoiding putting the members of the missionary community at risk. Some of the initial proposals that were shared in this call were the following:

- Share content from official accounts using similar publications on social networks with the use of the hashtags: #WeareLaSalle, #MissionariesFromHome, #GreatThingsArePossible.
- Coordinate and organize with the parishes and areas that would have been visited at Easter to:
 - Include local pastoral ministers as much as possible in this initiative.
 - Send teaching materials for catechesis.
 - Share testimonies about Missions.
- Create "Oratory at Home" for the virtual following of liturgical celebrations.
- Produce and distribute short video-catecheses for each day of Holy Week.

- Serve older adults or sick people in the local environment to help with purchases and needs by Extraordinary Ministers of Communion.
- Hang messages of hope to decorate windows, balconies, roofs.
- Create “challenges” with Gospel content.
- Prepare virtual shared prayer services for the groups that would normally attend the Holy Week Missions.
 - Morning: Gospel of the day and a commitment.
 - Evening: Share fruits of prayer and “challenges” with the official hashtags.
- Promote in the working teams comments on any of these books:
 - *Witnesses of the Lord Jesus*, Enrique Ponce De León.
 - *Paper Contemplations*, José María Rodríguez Olaizola.
 - *Of wounded love*, Emilio Mazariegos.

In order to show the success obtained with the activities carried out, it is necessary to use a language that adapts to the reality to which the project was responding. For this reason, words such as *engagement*, *likes*, *re-tweet*, *tagging*, etc., will be used. These words speak of the participation of people and the success that the materials achieved. Rather than giving a report on the results, we could talk about aspects that were significant in the evaluation process in order to share what was achieved along with what we consider to be areas of opportunity to take into account in future projects of this type.

The analysis regarding the interaction with the content will be carried out based on the subsequent results obtained from the Easter activities.

The web analysis tries to know the *engagement* by means of the behavior shown by users through their activity on digital platforms. To do this, a series of metrics are obtained, quantifying variables such as visits, time spent, and the number of followers or clicks such as “*I like,*” *sharing and comments.*⁶⁰

The analysis presented below integrates the three blocks of activities that were carried out during the week of activities of the *Missionaries from Home* project. These activities were divided as follows:

- **The campaign of expectations**, that is to say, the dissemination of publications that were made before and during Easter.
- **The week of the execution of activities** refers to the time in which the video catechism, crafts, virtual challenges, prayer days by video call, among other things, were carried out.
- **Online liturgical celebrations**, which also generated participation and interaction in the different platforms where the traditional celebrations for the experience of Holy Week were carried out, from different perspective and significance.

Hoffman and Fodor (2010) evaluate success in social networks through a three-stage framework: “The first of them measures the user’s awareness of the information on digital platforms by means of the number of fans, the second calculates a level of engagement based on the number of likes and comments, while the third stage refers to word-of-mouth propagation by users, for example, by sharing posts.”⁶¹ The people who participated shared in their networks the planned activities in which they participated; hence, the analysis also integrates the dynamics of the activity, the characteristics of the publication, along with other elements that will be described later.

60 Ballesteros, 2018.

61 Hoffman y Fodor, 2010, page 105 in Ballesteros, 2018.

1. The Campaign of expectations

In the Campaign of expectations, the activities prior to Holy Week were addressed. Through the use of District networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, publications were made to inform followers of the actions that would be carried out. When analyzing the publications that had the most interactions and which were shared the most times, we found that it was the first publication made. This consisted of an open invitation to join the “*Missionaries from home*” project. The program of activities and the schedule of the transmissions that would take place over the next few days was the other publication that had the most interaction and which was highly shared.

These two variables can be called contextual. Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) define them as variables that have three elements: 1. content; 2. publication format; and 3. the time of publication.⁶² The content of the invitation mentions: “follow, share, and spread the publications of the District networks,” along with the title “*Missionaries from home*.” The format of the publication ranks the use of the hashtag *Missionaries from home*, with the District logo and in the center the words “coming soon,” along with the aforementioned phrase (see publication 1). The time of publication was a week after the quarantine was declared in Mexico. The idea was to take advantage of the momentum of the institutions with respect to this activity and to offer an alternative to the usual missionary action.

The second publication with the most interaction or vigor, which according to Ballesteros (2018) is the activity that includes the three buttons of “Like,” “Comment” and “Share,”⁶³ was the program with the activities. In the contents were given the activities, the date, time and place for the transmission of the liturgical celebrations for Holy Week. This post was released the Friday before Palm Sunday (see Publication 2).

62 Cvijikj y Michahelles, 2013 in Ballesteros, 2018.

63 Ballesteros, 2018.

In this area, we can conclude with what Ballesteros mentions:

Regarding the type of content, it seems that the most strictly informative content is not the one that causes greater engagement on the part of the followers, compared to persuasive content that includes emotional or philanthropic appeals, or with entertainment type content, that is, they do not refer directly to the brand or the products of the administrator of the page, but rather they raise a question, a slogan or a game, in what could be a kind of gaming strategy⁶⁴.

Publications:



Publication 1



Publication 2

64 Ballesteros, 2018, pages 111-112.

2. Week of activities: video-catechesis and crafts

a) Video-catechesis of Holy Week.

With the collaboration of many members of the Pastoral Ministry Coordination team in the District, Video-catechesis was shared with the intention of deepening the faith based on the events celebrated and experienced during Holy Week.

These types of catechetical events were available on the different District social networks, mainly through live broadcasts on the YouTube channel of the District of North Mexico, from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. The thematic line that was carried out, based on the theme “Great things are possible”, was the following:

#	DAY	THEME
1	Palm Sunday	Great things are possible with Jesus.
2	Monday	God has made great things possible.
3	Tuesday	God's mercy is wonderful.
4	Wednesday	The Almighty has done great things for me.
5	Holy Thursday	Love makes great things possible.
6	Good Friday	Jesus saves us through love.
7	Holy Saturday	Christ LIVES.
8	Easter	My life, my mission.

The general structure for each video-catechesis was as follows:

#	COMPONENTS OF THE CATECHESIS	TIME
1	Welcome-greeting (remind them of the day of the week for this catechesis)	30 seconds
2	Opening Prayer	1 minute
3	Presentation of the topic	30 seconds
4	The acts in our lives	45 sec. / 1 min.
5	The Word of God enlightens our life	45 sec. / 1 min.
6	We express our faith (it could be personal or linked to a commitment)	45 sec. / 1 min.
7	Commitment (present, particular and effective)	30 seconds
	Total	De 5 minutes a 5.5 minutes maximum

Materials adapted to the various age groups were created:

- Boys and girls aged 5 and 6
- Boys and girls aged 7 and 8
- Girls and boys aged 9 and 10
- Girls and boys aged 11 and 12
- Adolescents aged 13 and 14
- Adolescents aged 15 and 16
- 17 and 18 year olds
- Young people aged 19 to 21
- Young people aged 22 to 25
- Young adults aged 26 and older

Regarding the interactivity of the video catechisms, most of the recordings on Sunday had a large number of views and dissemination. However, in the days following the interactivity was power. When talking about interactivity, this refers to the three classic buttons (Like, Comment, Share) that can have different formats in each social network. Gerodimos and Justinussen (2015) find that these three actions are different not only in terms of effort, but that they assume “different meanings and constitute different ways of interacting with a given message (...) a ‘Like’ is possibly a form to affirm or ratify what is said; a comment allows you to express your opinion, and to share is to spread information with your own connections.”⁶⁵

In order to analyze the differences in behavior around this variable, the following questions arise: what content was handled in the video? What was the profile of the person working with the video? How long did it last? It is also necessary to consider other elements of the context such as what day was it published? What time of day? As well as aspects of the context of the publication, which video had the lowest visualization? To which age group was it aimed?

Why did the number of views decrease? Well, there are several things that are possible. We may recognize that there is a general profile for the people who helped make these videos. However, the number of followers they have on their own networks is a factor which, although it is not a determining factor for the level of interaction of video-catechesis, it does influence the dynamics of sharing on social networks. In addition, there are other factors that also affected the situation analyzed with regard to video-catechesis. Among them we have the basic experience in the use of networks, the competitiveness that exists in the creation of digital content, the pressure of time due to the moment in which the health contingency was announced and some others that were presented. However, the experience did manage to have a positive impact, despite the fact that interactivity was reduced as the days of Holy Week passed.

65 Gerodimos y Justinussen, 2015, page 9 in Ballesteros, 2018.

b) Activities for the Lasallian Children's and Youth Movements

The Children's and Youth Ministry movements for the District of North Mexico consisted of the Lasallian Child and Youth Movement, which were made up of the following levels of training:

- Star Group (primary school girls and boys).
- Chevron Group (pre-adolescents from elementary school).
- Tower Group (high school adolescents).
- Salla Group (high school youth).
- Indivisa Manent Group (young university students and former Lasallian students)

It is important to point out that this year, due from the Pandemic, was the first time that all members of the Movement were invited to participate in the Holy Week activities. The offerings by level were the following:

- **Star:** Live broadcast of crafts with catechetical content.
- **Chevron:** Messages of hope and search for clues in short Instagram videos.
- **Tower:** Challenge Rally on Instagram and TikTok.
- **Salla:** Spiritual reading online (by video calls), publication of results and phrases on social networks.
- **Indivisa Manent:** Daily meeting on Telegram for prayer and shared reflection.

c) Remote mission

Every year, several members of the Lasallian educational communities of the District of North Mexico carry out evangelization activities in various marginalized areas of the country. Due to the health contingency, in 2020 the ordinary programs could not be carried out, so the proposal was made to organize a remote mission that would allow for “creating a link between the missionaries and the communities, providing remote accompaniment to families and to proclaim that, in one way or another, Christ provides the means to reach every heart.”

3. Virtual liturgical celebrations

Given the fact of the impossibility of attending the liturgical celebrations in person due to the health contingency, a manual was produced for liturgical accompaniment for all the members of the Lasallian community. The document called “*Manual of Liturgical and Spiritual Experience of Holy Week at home*” contained a prayer for each day of Holy Week structured as follows:

- **Internalize:** Prayer moment of the day.
- **Celebrate:** A time to remember as a family the experience of the holy days (Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday).
- **Join:** Live broadcasts and District celebrations through a social network.
- **Remember:** Close for the day. Space to remember what was internalized, the celebrated and the lived.

The transmissions in the “Join” section were:

- Celebration of Palm Sunday from the Inter-District Postulancy in Mexico City.

- Lasallian Vocation Day from the La Salle Formation House in Guatemala.
- Holy Hour from the District Scholasticate in Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico.
- Way of the Cross led by families from the District of North Mexico.
- Orientations for the Easter Vigil led by Brother Alejandro González Cerna from the Holy Land.
- Easter Celebration from the Community of El Salto, Durango, Mexico.

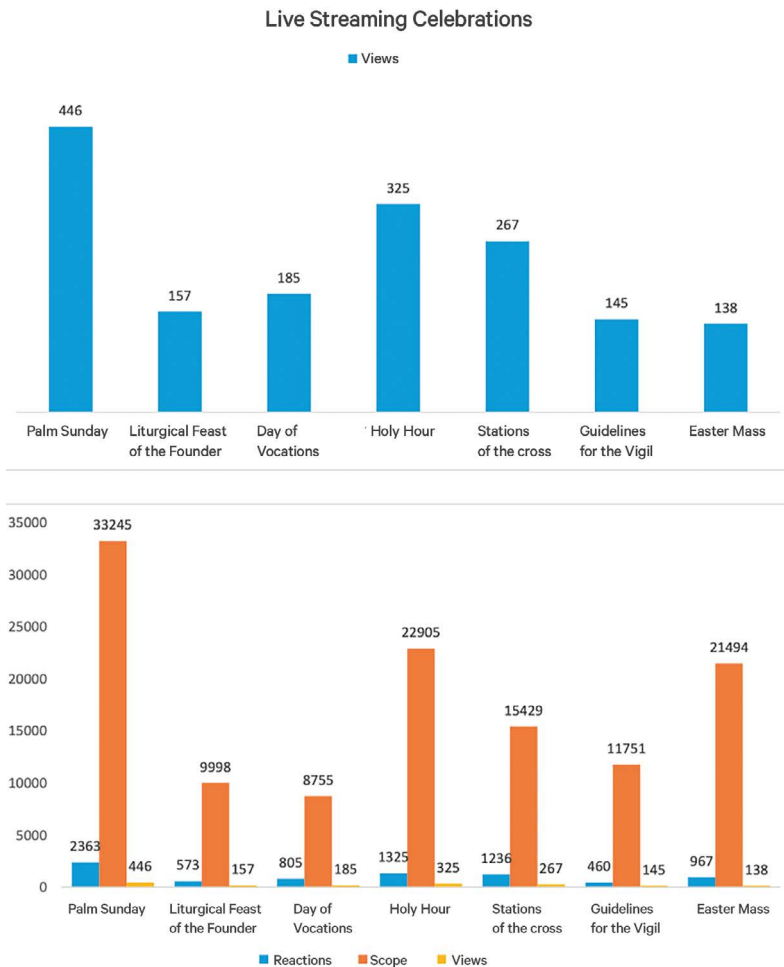
It is important to note that although there were various live activities, these were the ones that had the most interaction on social networks. Every day there was a publication on the three District social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to remind the followers of the time and place of transmission.

For these events, the previous trend was repeated in which after Sunday there was a decrease in interactions, as in the case of video-catechisms. However, we note this area due to the significant reaction that there was, since they were the transmissions that were shared the most and that had the most views. Their impact was positive and with a scope that exceeded the expectations of the coordinating team thanks, perhaps, to the use of Facebook – the platform with the most followers – and thanks to the influence of the people who carried out each of the transmissions, (See graph 1).

As Linares (2013) mentions: *“Consumers are increasingly taking advantage of their networks of friends, fans and followers, to discover, analyze and purchase goods or services, in increasingly sophisticated ways.”* Castells et al. (2007, page 61) point out that *“in web 2.0 the Internet user is at the same time receiver and sender, this is possible thanks to the so-called social software, a set of tools, services and computing devices that allow for the production of content that later circulates on the Internet.”*⁶⁶

66 Linares 2013, page 41.

For the purposes of this analysis, consumers can be defined as the people who helped to carry out the liturgical celebrations, since it was they who disseminated the publications in which the “live” hour was presented on Facebook. As the need to make an adjustment was seen, the managers communicated to the coordinating team the details to be improved. This dynamic of continuous evaluation was valuable, since it allowed us to make improvements for the next celebration. Although the trend was downward, the impact was mostly positive, an aspect that was not seen in the video-catechisms or in the pastoral groups.



Graph 1

Lasallian children, youth and adults who lived and collaborated in these *Missionaries From Home* events sent their written testimonies. In them they describe the learning they acquired, the activities that they took advantage of the most, the values that they reinforced and their point of view of the “*Missionaries From Home*” project.

This initiative allowed Lasallians to have a unique experience of Holy Week. For example, Patricia Martínez comments that “*it was a very special mission and experience of Holy Week,*” in addition, several young missionaries were encouraged to continue their mission work in this way from their homes, which is where our Lasallian Family begins to form.

It is interesting to know that, in most of the testimonies, people talk about the union that emerged in their families during these missions. The children, in the few words they write, show how much they liked being accompanied by their parents and siblings throughout Holy Week.

For most Lasallians, according to their testimonies, faith is the value that strengthened them the most in these missions. Michelle Gámez comments: “*My faith was really getting stronger and stronger.*” In addition, the young missionaries took the opportunity to put into practice in their families everything they have learned in their experiences of previous missions with the various communities they visited.

The most useful activities and means that were pointed out in the testimonies were the video-catechisms directed at the general public on YouTube, the *Manual for Holy Week*, spiritual readings for young people and crafts for children.

These very different missions allowed the children to learn more about the life of Jesus through the activities they did. On the other hand, adults and young people say they enjoyed the reflections made with the material provided. Several Lasallians testified that this mission from home paid off in their lives. Ana Carolina Sandoval said that “*the fruits of this Holy Week from home were peace and hope in these difficult times.*”

The collaborators who participated in the development of this project consider *“that the proposal is innovative, current and very practical for the situation we are experiencing worldwide,”* as was mentioned by Emiliano Saucedo. In addition, they claim to have had an enriching experience. For example, Claudia Cervantes participated with her family in the Stations of the Cross and mentioned the following: *“As a family, we were helped to begin this quarantine more united, knowing and feeling everything that God did for us, who as a man had a lot of pain, suffering, but never hesitated to do the will of the Father. Many times we complain about what happens to us, we deny because of our tiredness and we complain about everything ‘bad’ that happens to us, but now, I understand that something ‘bad’ never happens to us without a blessing behind it. Let us never stop having faith, let us never stop following the will of the Father and may He be the one who guides our lives to serve and to do his will.”* As part of this Lasallian community, the collaborators consider it a blessing to have had the opportunity to create content for this project and they feel honored by it.

For Adriana Victoria Hernández *“this experience of digital missions was a great challenge, but the result demonstrated the tenacity and perseverance of many Lasallians willing to continue with the mission.”* And Carlos Adrián Sánchez said: *“Great things are possible because I consider that this work went beyond what was expected.”*

Due to the comments received by the different participants and collaborators in this Holy Week from home, it can be concluded that it was a project that generated very positive experiences in the families; furthermore, it allowed the different institutions of the Latin American Lasallian Region to unite in a single mission with the objective of continuing to evangelize despite the current situation.

FOR REFLECTION. Sharing horizons

1. What creative experiences of evangelization have you had in your educational center?
2. What dreams can we make possible to be fostered in our students and in ourselves, the personal experience of the Risen Jesus?
3. What plan or pastoral keys should be implemented to evangelize with institutional social networks? What characteristics should this campaign have? What resources to use?

V. THE NET DID NOT BREAK

V. The net did not break

The journey made during Holy Week 2020 and during the process of documenting the *Missionaries From Home* experience was similar to the experience of the disciples who at first did not recognize the Risen Jesus. He also had to point out to us where we should throw the net to carry out our work of evangelization. For this reason, we wanted to share what we experienced because we know that this sea of the virtual realm is a terrain where we must also proclaim the Gospel. As we have seen, if young people do not encounter us and listen to the Word of God in those spaces, there will be others who will convey their own message and their life plans.

The result of this experience, beyond making it functional, helped to structure learning in previously unexplored fields, in a different missionary area, such as in the virtual realm. Teamwork, the Lasallian identity and the mission of Holy Week, managed to overcome inexperience in the use of digital media for the building up of the Kingdom of God. And although the time to respond was very short, it opened new possibilities for us to re-think the mission of Holy Week and various pastoral ministry projects that are read in light of that exhortation of the Council: “The signs of the times.”

Will there be more projects like this? Will the long-awaited normalcy return? This and other questions invite to encourage formative processes in which the educational community is involved, in this case, the District community, to take part and contribute their gifts to carry out a mission. Our hope is that this experience opens the way for other ways of carrying out the educational mission within situations that displace us from what is usual and customary.

The crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic helped us to think the unthinkable: “How can we go on missions if we don’t go to the towns?” However, the situation in which we lived and our Lasallian identity urged us to do something, which helped us to experience firsthand the novelty of technology in evangelization and thus glimpse its potential. There is no doubt that social networks are one of the best means to evangelize the world today. If we want the message of Jesus to reach many people and touch their hearts, the network of networks is the medium or the “digital

continent,” as Pope Benedict XVI pointed out: “To you, young people, who almost spontaneously feel in tune with the new means of communication, the task of evangelizing this ‘digital continent’ corresponds to you in a particular way.”⁶⁷

This crisis, this contingency, these signs of the times that untimely brought a pause in the world, invite us to join forces to be alert and to create scenarios that promote salvation for those who have been entrusted to us. The crisis prompted us to go beyond the borders and to consider other contexts so that this project did not remain only on the District wall, which was another barrier that the mission from home project managed to cross. This project crossed boundaries that go beyond geographical areas and allowed us to go further when we thought we would not go anywhere.

In a speech, His Holiness John XXIII, during the opening of the Second Vatican Council, said that the Church “must look at the present, at the new conditions and ways of life introduced in today’s world, which have opened new paths for the Catholic apostolate;”⁶⁸ that is to say, that we as a Church must be constantly seeking to adapt to the needs of our world and to find new methods of evangelization. If the Church does not adapt to the needs of each era, she will most likely lose the ability to positively influence society.

This project is a clear example of how the Church can adapt to the needs of today’s world: use the most popular and far-reaching digital media. We, as Lasallians, have integrated ourselves into this new way of evangelizing which the Church has proposed. We have done it thanks to the need that arose to find a new way of living out Holy Week due to the limitations that arose because of the contingency. It is interesting to think that a project that arose in order to continue with evangelization, despite a crisis, could be the basis for the development of new projects in which this new way of evangelizing is put into practice. The present experience shows the great scope of these tools and the current possibility of fostering the development of faith.

67 Benedict XVI, 2009.

68 John XXIII, 1962, page 3.

In this way, we verify that great things are possible when we work in making Together and by Association a reality. This experience was a clear example of how each one offered what they had so that the *Missionaries From Home* project could be carried out. The documentation of this process allowed us to identify aspects that are necessary to continue working, but it also clearly pointed out a path that we must not forget. The Gospel passage that inspired us said: "*Lower the net*" ... and the disciples found that the net did not break. The Risen Lord today says to us: Go to the networks and evangelize also in the virtual realm and today we answer: In your name, Lord, I will lower the net.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Cf. Luke 5:5.

APPENDIX

Appendix

Use the following QR code and hyperlink to access the *Missionaries From Home* project resource library:



<https://www.lasalle.edu.mx/misioneros-desde-casa-ss-2020/>

The materials that are available are:

1. Manual of Liturgical and Spiritual Experiences of Holy Week at Home
2. List of materials for the Stars group's video crafts workshop
3. Guides and templates for challenges of the Chevron group
4. Virtual Challenge Rally of the Tower group
5. Guide of spiritual readings for the Salla group
6. Manual of prayers of the group Indivisa Manent
7. Playlists of the Video - Holy Week Catechesis 2020
8. Description of the Long-Distance Mission sub project
9. Testimonials

GLOSSARY OF DIGITAL TERMS

Glossary of digital terms

App: An application designed for a specific use, such as the publication of multimedia content, visualization of images, social interaction through the network, and so on.

Challenge: This is an Anglo-Saxon term that in the world of social networks, is used to name a viral trend or challenge in which Internet users are invited to do something specific.

QR Code: Module to store information in a dot matrix or in a two-dimensional bar code.

Engagement: The concept, by itself, refers to how involved the individual is in a specific activity. In the world of digital marketing, it indicates the level of interactions of an audience with respect to an information campaign through social networks.

Facebook: It is the social network with the most users in the world. It offers endless possibilities in its services, including text publishing, multimedia content, streaming services, sale of goods and services, and more.

Gadget: Small device that has a specific purpose and function. It is generally small, practical and innovative at the same time. It tends to be more ingenious in design than current in technology.

Gamification: It is the application of game strategies in non-playable environments, in order for people to acquire certain knowledge or behaviors.

Hashtag: Set of characters preceded by a hash mark (#) that serves to identify or label a message on micro-blogging websites.

Influencer: It is a person who stands out in one or several social networks on a specific topic and who has great influence on many people who follow him or her.

Instagram: Application and social network whose function is to share photos and videos with some editing tools, accompanied by texts of limited length.

Search engine: It is a digital mechanism that shows results to users based on keywords.

Social network: Digital global communication platform that connects a large number of users.

Follower: A follower is a term used in social networks to designate a user who is following another's account.

Streaming services: Web page and/or application that is dedicated to the digital distribution of multimedia content, so that the user has the possibility of viewing the product by simultaneously downloading it. There is a wide variety of streaming platforms, mainly dedicated to the distribution of movies, television series, music and video games.

Telegram: It is an instant messaging service, focused on sending various digital files and mass communication.

Tiktok: Short video creation and sharing application that allows users to create short 3-15 second music videos and 30-60-second-long videos.

Tweet: It is a message published on Twitter that contains text (no more than 280 characters), photos, GIF or video

Twitter: It is a social network that focuses on micro-blogging, allowing users to post short messages which contain mainly text. The main characteristic of this modality is its simplicity and synthesis, since it allows to write a defined amount of characters.

WhatsApp: It is an instant messaging service for smartphones which allows you to send a wide variety of messages such as text, images, videos, voice recordings, documents, etc.

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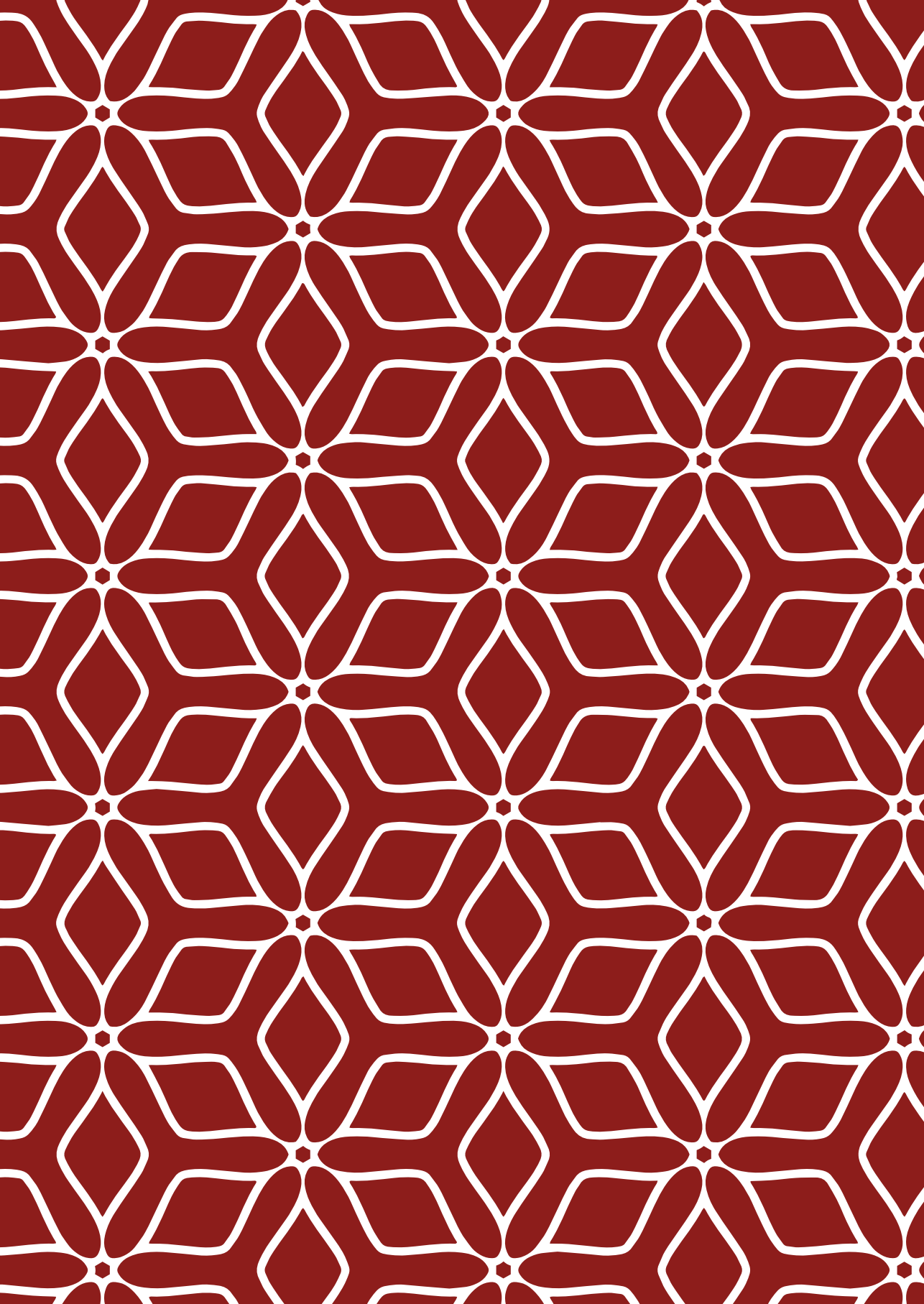
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