



Bulletin from the Diocese of Santa Rosa



February 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

In late November I attended a fund raising dinner for the Brother Timothy Legacy Campaign and the Lasallian Education Fund. These two efforts by the Christian Brothers strive to provide quality Catholic education for the poor. This commitment by the Christian Brothers springs from their mission to educate the poor and working classes established by their founder, St. John Baptist de La Salle in 1680 in France. Over the centuries the Christian Brothers have been faithful to this mission. Today locally this mission is supported by the Brother Timothy Legacy Campaign and the Lasallian Education Fund.

This event pointed out to me not only the commitment of the Christian Brothers and their financial supporters but also the importance of education for all persons. How important for each individual child is a good education which imparts knowledge and values. Every child has a right to a good education that prepares him or her to be a person who understands his or her own dignity and the dignity of all others. This is why Catholic education has been a focus of the Church and why so many make so many sacrifices to insure Catholic education is available and affordable.

Good education for all should be a commitment for all citizens who make up our state. Truly no child should be left behind. Yet sadly in California more tax dollars are spent on prisons than on schools which could limit the need for prisons. Prisons, not education, are big business in California. The adult prison population has increased radically since 1980, from 137 per 100,000 residents to 689 per 100,000 residents. The 2007 annual state budget for corrections is \$8.75 billion. 172,284 adults are imprisoned in 32 prisons designed to accommodate 90,000 at the cost of \$35,587 per prisoner. 2,647 youth are also incarcerated in eight institutions and two camps at an annual cost of \$17,616 per person.

I believe that the prison system and its cost would be greatly reduced if we changed our priorities and put education, not imprisonment, as the most important item in our state budget. Education can give hope and hope is essential for the young if they are to develop all their possibilities and talents. Only education guarantees our young will become good citizens.

Is changing our priorities an impossible dream? Is it possible that our state could provide a quality education for all its young? I hope so if not we will continue to build more prisons as we see our schools decline and decay. As faithful citizens shouldn't we get involved?

Assuring you of my prayers, I am

Your Brother and Servant in the Lord,

Most Reverend Daniel F. Walsh
Bishop of Santa Rosa