

IN THE LIGHT OF OUR SHADOW



BROTHERS DARING GREATLY
TO REFOUND THEMSELVES

Dear Reader,

Many years ago in 1977, the De La Salle Brothers gave me the opportunity to join other FSC's from across the country and the world in a three month desert experience near Santa Fe, New Mexico. We had daily lectures and discussions on all aspects of psychology, religious life and mission. One topic more than any other has stayed with me since: Brother Joe Schmidt explained Carl Jung's take on dreams and how paying attention to their content can help us understand some of the hidden assets in our unconscious.

Fast forward to 2008 when I was invited to participate by the LINE District in the first cohort of the Spiritual Direction Internship held in Narragansett, Rhode Island. Felicia McKnight, a jungian spiritual director and the facilitator of the experience, presented and led discussions on Jung and dreams. I found myself bringing my dreams to her each time we met for supervision. Jung's concept of shadow particularly captured my interest. At the time, I was finishing many years as Executive Director of a South Bronx community based organization and I was **intrigued by the possibility of an organization having a shadow.**

About two or three months ago I read a lengthy unpublished article, *A Time of Grace* by Brother Miguel Campos. In calling ours a historic moment he was inspired by the 2014 General Chapter statement:

“We are living a time of grace, a time of transition, a time to return to the heart of our charismatic and Gospel-centered history. It is a time that inspires us to return to the freedom, audacity and creativity of the first mystical experience. We face this moment as a call for a personal and institutional conversion toward the world of the vulnerable and impoverished” (45th G.C.1.15)

After reading his article many times and remembering so many conversations I have had with Brothers over the last three years as Auxiliary Provincial, **I decided to write my own short article.** Beginning with breakfast discussions in Sangre, enhanced by Jung's shadow discussions on the internship and inspired by Miguel's article, I give you the following—my insight on how the De La Salle Brothers (especially of DENA) could **begin to achieve the call of the general chapter by daring greatly to refound themselves in the light of their shadow.**

Ed

Br. Ed Phelan, FSC



INTRODUCTION

I've spoken with about 100 individual Brothers during the past year concerning their lifelong work with poor children and their families. In speaking about the past, they all had examples of teaching in elementary or high schools in poor neighborhoods, working in the institutions for child care, or at Lasallian colleges and universities. In talking about their current involvement, almost half spoke about their teaching, directing, managing, administering and most of the rest felt limited by age, health, or opportunities to serve.

After pushing the issue with this latter group, I found many of them are currently engaged in significant activities, including:

- Raising money for a San Miguel School
- Accompanying students on mission trips to urban areas and native american reservations, volunteer at Dorcas Place adult education program
- Tutoring special needs students or those in danger of dropping out
- Teaching Teilhard de Chardin to adult wisdom seekers
- Helping Palestinian students speak and write English in Bethlehem
- Diocesan Council of Religious, Brothers think tank
- Vocation promotion
- Food bank
- Board member
- Archivist
- Chauffeuering seniors from home to appointments and shopping

- Writing position papers for presentation to the UN Security Council
- Director of Senior Activities, DENA
- Taking university courses to connect with learning and learners

Many of the above men refer to their activities as a ministry of presence to people young and old. Some carried this notion to another level—for them, living mindfully with a focus on the present moment and in acceptance of their limitations was their ministry, the example of gospel values for all to see. Some in nursing care pointed to their peers in palliative care as teachers to all of us on how to embrace end of life. Personally, these interviews allowed me to experience a depth of spirituality in these men that I had never experienced earlier in my life. It was easy to move from their stories of service to their relationship with God, but they needed to be invited there.

These lengthy conversations also gave me an insight into our religious family — the De La Salle Christian Brothers of DENA. I realize this family is an organization and, as such, it has a group persona. For current Brothers like myself it is the way we describe ourselves in public documents or in chapters. It's our commonly held opinions, attitudes and values developed over many years. It's our culture. I suspect we hold strongly to these because they emanate from our organizational shadow.

Organizational shadow is a term that describes aspects of an organization that it doesn't admit to having. Because they are hidden, they stop the organization functioning in a healthy and productive way. It is important to bring them to light so that the organization can be more honest with itself and more functional.

Carl Jung used the term “shadow” in relation to individuals. Jung's shadow describes all the aspects of a person that he or she can't face up to. As a result, the person represses them and then projects them on to others (angry people see anger everywhere, victims see injustice everywhere). I believe that organizations behave in the same way.

Jung said that, to be psychologically healthy, the person has to bring these features to light and integrate them into their conscious life. The same is the case for organizations. This can help them face up to their shadow and to change for the better.

Some of our traditional values can become part of the shadow even though they are rich and powerful, and in some cases the reason for the founding of the Brothers. But holding them tightly when the times, the needs of youth, and the membership of the order has changed is not holding tradition but rather traditionalism.

Embrace Our Organizational Shadow...

Deeply held values and attitudes, unchallenged and unrecognized from within but with vast potential for those who dare greatly

Humility prevents us from sharing God talk, or God influence in our daily lives, except under special circumstances.

Real productive Brothers teach a full schedule and moderate band or a sport after school; before long they become counselors or school administrators.

Ownership and canonical sponsorship by the Brothers make certain institutions very special.

Our identity is in what we do.

If a thing's worth doing it is worth doing perfectly. Be perfect as....

In retirement, after teaching or administrating, many expect the quality of their life to be a small fraction of what it used to be. At best, it is being unproductive or being helpful with some menial task around school.

Our mission is really in teaching teenagers, and we can push that a little earlier to junior high and ahead to college students.

Chapters and committees operate best when votes are unanimous.

We call good managers good leaders.

Mission preservation in our Lasallian institutions today is principally in the hands of board members and presidents; power/control is important.

Members of District Council and Mission Executive Council are principally concerned with preservation of successful institutions because that is

their experience. We shore up models that have been successful.

Board members, presidents, and principals of schools and institutions have traditionally been males, and the best and brightest we can find; it has worked for many years.

We generally meet new ideas with all the reasons why they will not work. Doubt and fear dominate.

"But" is so often used in these conversations. "And" seldom. "What if" so often over "why not." Some even suffer from Misocainea — the aversion to anything new.

We cling to fears and doubts because of the security in familiar pain. It is safer to embrace what we know than to let go of it for the unknown.

Responsibility for the Lasallian mission is in our Brothers' hands where it has been since the founding and, as necessary, we share it with partners.

Meetings and chapters are predictable, agenda has information overload and few share opinions that differ from the meeting leader.

We provide comfortable, safe, secure religious communities for all members. Hired staff provide many services.

Conversations have lots of self-referencing, nostalgia, defeatism, efficiency and effectiveness.

We seem to be grieving some loss that eludes us but shows in a low level depression; some try to numb the feeling.

Many people don't learn how to move past their fear of diminishment, even when it stares them down or gently invites them. Similarly, brokenness is not very attractive.

Shame is the voice inside saying: "you're not good enough...don't do it...not powerful enough...it is not your job." Or the outside voices saying, "Who do you think you are?" The feeling of being disconnected from people and God. Different from guilt.

Fear lives in the loss of influence, power, numbers, energy, the holy...

Our minds manufacture a hundred excuses for remaining right where we are, afraid to try something new.

We often tell people about all the good things we did in the past.

Our position in church is really more like clergy than laity. (authority, dress, title, tax exempt, vows etc.)

For most of our lives we have been invited and assigned to positions, communities and cities.

Risk is always associated with the new ideas or programs and seldom associated with the familiar.

Wish for the return of the 1950's

We live with a very serious vocation crisis.

It is a little embarrassing but it is always true that people outside an organization can see its shadow much easier than its members can. **It is the same with our personal shadow.**

Members who try to shed some light on the organizational shadow are often scorned or thought to be disloyal. Yet embracing the shadow in light will help us meet the challenges of our day, choose life, feel compassion and be ready for tomorrow.

Perhaps we can twist Acts 5:15 to be a message of healing for us.

People kept carrying their sick into the streets and placing them on stretchers and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he went by.

Some deny the veracity of shadow and point out the chapter resolutions, rule, articles, and speeches that contradict the above shadow indicators. However, these documents suggest ideals that are quite different than lived reality.

They say religious groups have a life cycle of: beginnings; expansion; stabilization; breakdown (diminishment); refounding, or minimal survival/dying. I propose our efforts at refounding our religious group have been compromised for many years. This could change dramatically with a little light on our shadow.

Psychology tells us recognition is the first and most powerful way for progress with personal shadow. The same is true for organizations. It is time now to move this process ahead to own and embrace our organizational shadow in the light of day. It is the re-creation of our foundational memory. A certain amount of chaos is to be expected.

...In light to become

In order that "We face this moment as a call for a personal and institutional conversion toward the world of the vulnerable and impoverished" (45th General Chapter 1.15)

Take pride in speaking honestly about God and me. We are weak and vulnerable and it may be our greatest strength. It takes courage, compassion and connection to be vulnerable. This vulnerability is the door to innovation, creativity and change.

Retirement is a magnificent opportunity to refound ourselves and our mission.

The mission changes with the times while the charism stays the same.

Focus is on needy young people and their families.

If a thing's worth doing it is worth doing poorly—spirituality of imperfection.

Waiting for ideal conditions is rarely an option.

Discussion, disagreement, dialogue and debate are healthy and attractive.

Potential leaders are everywhere in our organization (remember Peter Bray's summers at LLI).

Mission preservation is the responsibility of every Lasallian (woman, man, youth, Brother).

District & mission councils need members or a plan that will value thinking out of the box, focus on new needs and imagine the future. The world is changing dramatically. (Brother Bob Schieler's think tank).

Generativity needs affirmation and expression. Study the improbable Biblical parents to find ways to continue generativity beyond our child bearing years.

Listen to the Spirit within each of us before going to experts like Francis or Bob.

Information overload is for the website. Meetings are for sharing of ideas from within, for learning and for ownership of the future. We discover the truth that exists within by listening to each other with open hearts.

Go forth from our comfort zone to reach the "peripheries."

Conversations can be about meekness, mercy, austerity, tenderness, vulnerability, grieving, connection, courage, compassion, wholeheartedness and surrender.

"With" the poor, trusting in them, learning from them, allowing them to be in charge. They are active participants in their own lives; not the mere recipients of our largess. We are the ones on the periphery. Time to play down white and male privilege that some call biased common sense.

Promise all Brother recruits a life of sacrifice, uncomfot, on the periphery, serving with poor people and living responsibly in religious communities. (without employees) "Life weakens in comfort" Pope Francis

God is a verb not a noun. God reveals God's self in what God inspires us to do with our one simple life. We trust.

Find God's dream for me developing in my imagination. "God comes to us disguised as our life." Paula D'Arcy

Share with people our plans for the present and our hopes for the future.

Network with the record number of circles of Lasallians in DENA - associative groups, young Lasallians, Lasallian Women, Retired Lasallians, Lasallian associations, Committees, formation groups (22 at last count). We Brothers are not alone—17 partners for every Brother in DENA. The Missio Dei.

It's not going to be easy. Remember Job and Jesus. All disappointment, sickness, suffering, disease, and pain are our salvation history. God suffers with us. God is present to us especially in our tragedies, in our inadequacy, in our failures — and in those of others near and far.

Ours might be a vocation of mending, of repairing some of the world's brokenness.

We are on the way to something unknown.

"Faith is not the clinging to a shrine but an endless pilgrimage of the heart." Heschel

Invite partners to share residential and non residential communities.

Dream of a new paradigm for the re founding of the De La Salle Christian Brothers of DENA.

Our life and our world are full of paradox...both/and.

Abundance of Lasallian vocations unparalleled in history. No crisis of vocations if we support our partners and the lay vocation in the church.

THE VISION Compelled by pressing needs, enlightened by the Gospel, inspired by our living memory, with light on our shadow, and in collaboration with all our Lasallian Partners we will refound our circle of Brothers to help transform lives through quality education for all.

By daring greatly, a few next steps include:

- ❑ Expand the energy of the vocation summits beyond Brothers to reaching Lasallian vocations
- ❑ Join Brother Robert Schieler in considering a Think Tank of our district.
- ❑ Track down what Brother Robert recently mentioned to the Visitors in Rome about the French district. "There is a promising initiative of 600 Associates and Brothers coming together in an educational fraternity of communities to take responsibility for specific ministries."
- ❑ Consider ways to describe men and women who live in Lasallian communities as members of our district.
- ❑ In time and according to Circular 461, develop criteria for non residential members of the Family and count them as members of the district.
- ❑ Recruit other quality men and women Lasallians to share in our residential communities.
- ❑ Let the resulting increase in membership, decrease in median age and diversity in sex and culture be reflected in all district meetings, councils, committees and chapters.
- ❑ Future participants in "Evangelization and Service with the Poor" weekends include representatives of the whole Lasallian Family of DENA.
- ❑ Provide the means for Lasallians to go over the borders.
- ❑ Daily thank De La Salle for the grace and passion to refound today, in some small way, what he found so long ago.

“The vision still has its time,
it presses on to fulfillment
and will not disappoint.
If it delays, wait for it,
it will surely come,
it will not be late.”

Habakkuk 2: 2-3