

Brother Héctor Hernán Santos, Vice Chancellor of Bethlehem University: “Our students are the reason for our hope”.

“This time at Bethlehem University is particularly complex after the strikes of 7 October (2023)”. This is how Brother Héctor Hernán Santos, Vice Chancellor of the University, begins his account in an interview with LaSalle.Org, stressing that **“this is not the first time that we have had a troubled situation”** in the region, which substantially affects the students and teachers of the University, as well as their families.

Inspired by the witness of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the community of Brothers who run the University – today as more than 50 years ago, since its foundation in 1973 – **decided to stay and “remain together”**, in the certainty that “unity” is the answer to uncertainty and adversity.

Giving reason for hope

With his deep gaze, the Lasallian religious still remembers the first day of the new academic year, when, addressing more than 800 students entering the University for the first time, he discovered that “these young people are full of hope”, and he was moved by their desire “to dream of a better future”. **“I believe that this is the greatest motivation we have as educators, as religious men: our students are definitely the reason for our hope, the reason for our existence as well.**

In the face of the current unrelenting violence, Bethlehem University is committed to peace. **“For a long time, the University has been conceived as an oasis of peace in a land of conflict”**, confirms its Vice Chancellor. Therefore, “what we are trying to achieve now with a new educational model is that we not only have peace within the University campus (...)”, but that “our students are peacemakers in their respective communities”.

“I think hope in this time is about helping students to find their true potential. It is not an easy task to think about hope in a place where life is threatened all the time (...) It is not easy to build a sense of hope in such a place”. However, Brother Héctor Hernán concludes that “the sense of community” is essential to achieve this, because **“when one has a community of reference, where one feels respected, loved and cherished”, it is possible for to be “builders of hope in a very complex world”,** he concludes.