

Visit of General Councillors to the District of North America East: an experience of fraternity and shared mission

From 11 to 17 January 2025, **the Vicar General of the Institute, Br. Carlos Gomez, and the General Councillors, Br. Ricardo Laguda and Br. Chris Patiño, undertook a visit to the District of North East America (DENA),** to share and accompany the Lasallian mission, while confirming their vitality and dedication.

The visit began with a **meeting with the Vocation Ministry Team and with young men who are discovering their vocations,** encouraging dialogue and support for those who are exploring and discerning a probable path together with the Brothers.

Communion, reflection and dialogue

The following day, 12 January, the Brothers joined the FSC Community Directors at Christian Brothers Academy in Lincroft, New Jersey, for **a day of fellowship, reflection and dialogue focused on community life and the Brothers' mission,** and to share experiences.

On Monday, 13 January, the General Councillors took part in a joint meeting with the leadership teams of La Salle University and Manhattan College, which **promoted collaboration and networking between the two institutions.**

Next on the agenda was a meeting with members of the Philadelphia Area Lasallian Ministries (PALM), where Brother Robert Schaefer, Visitor of DENA District, welcomed participants by drawing attention to **how Lasallian Association is not just a social conscious group [...] but a community of disciples following the example given to us by Jesus.** "We follow people we know. Jesus taught us to follow the Father; De La Salle offered us a way to follow Christ through educational service" [...].

Over the next two days, the General Councillors split up to visit the various ministries and take a closer look at the important work being done to educate young people. **Br Chris Patiño** went to Providence and Pawtucket, Rhode Island, with **Jim Logan**, while **Br Ricky Laguda** visited the ministries in New York City with **Ben Ventresca**. Meanwhile, **Br Carlos Gomez** remained near Philadelphia, accompanied by **Br Robert Schaefer**.

Urban education

Another highlight of the week was the Lasallian Urban Education Summit, held at West Catholic Preparatory High School. Here educators and leaders shared experiences and reflections from their visits to the schools. Andrew Brady, President of West Catholic Preparatory High School, called the summit “chance for faculty and staff from similar Lasallian schools to gather and discuss the challenges we face in urban education, as well as the unique and creative ways we have risen to meet those challenges. Hearing directly from the General Councillors about how impressed they were with our school was incredibly inspiring”. He adds that the Councillors **“reiterated that our schools are an important part of the Lasallian mission and play a critical role in serving the communities that need us most.”** “Overall, it was a meaningful experience,” concludes Andrew Brady, “that renewed my enthusiasm and dedication to Lasallian urban education”.

The visit concluded with a meeting with the District and Mission Councils. On this occasion the General Councillors expressed their gratitude to all Lasallians whose dedication and efforts continue to animate the educational mission.

Spirit of openness

“The connections made and fostered will undoubtedly strengthen our work, collectively, for years to come,” remarked Tara Prout, Director of Advocacy at La Salle Academy in New York. **“We are indeed one Lasallian family, no matter where we are!** All of this was reinforced during our time at West Catholic HS for the one-day summit, where we met and learned from our regional schools how they are addressing the same issues facing our students and cities here in the U.S,” she stressed.

According to Brother J.D. Maciose, “General Councillors’ visit to DENA was truly marked by a shared experience of fraternity and dialogue. As a participant in different sessions with the General Councillors, **I felt that there was a spirit of**

openness around our current realities as a District where Brothers felt acknowledged and heard“.

“I felt that the visit of the GCs also allowed our District **to share our strengths and opportunities where God is calling us to respond in light of present realities**, as well as offered the Brothers of DENA an insight into the current initiatives of the Institute,” commented Brother Macioce, taking stock of the visit.

** Article written in cooperation with DENA. Photo: DENA.*