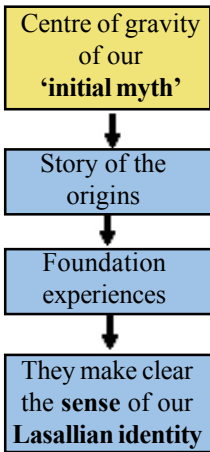
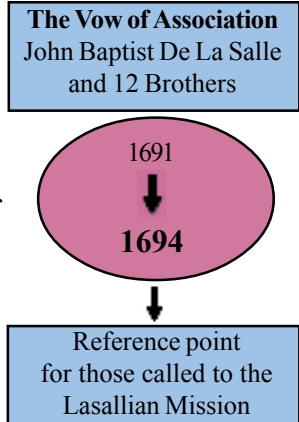


PART I - THE INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

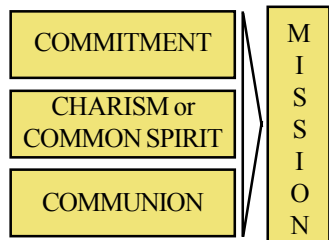
1. 1694: a "source" event

In the story of Lasallian Association, an event occurred in 1694 which is a reference point for all who wish to commit themselves to the Christian education of poor children in the spirit of De La Salle. As the 43rd General Chapter says: "The foundation event which links the Institute today to its origins is that of the 6th of June 6, 1694, when John Baptist De La Salle and twelve of his followers consecrated themselves for life to the Christian education of poor boys. [The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter, Ch. 1, p. 2]



This foundation event was preceded by the "Heroic Vow" of 1691 enacted privately by De La Salle, Gabriel Drolin and Nicholas Vuyart, but the two sets of vows are both part of the same event and we can consider them together as the central point of our foundation "mythology". This mythology refers to our Lasallian origins and goes far beyond the merely anecdotal, because it points to a lived experience which we today are invited to incarnate into very different circumstances, while still being inspired by the same spirit as De La Salle and the first Brothers. [Letter of Brother John Johnson, January 2000] It is in our foundation mythology that we find the meaning of our Lasallian identity, which in turn enables us to feel that, as part of the world and of the Church, we have something special to offer.

Why does this event of 1694 have this generative power which makes it a central feature of our foundation story? The answer lies in the four elements that go to make up an act of association; a) the commitment of individuals, b) the



charism or unifying spirit which inspires the commitment, c) the communion between those making the commitment, d) the mission (the Christian education of the poor), which is the reason for the preceding three points. These four things give the term Lasallian association its special meaning and make it fundamentally different from what is usually meant by "association" in current usage.

2. The roots: the journey of a “community for educating the poor”

The event of 1694 and the developments that flowed from it did not come about by chance. They were part of a process and the outcome of a process and they make sense only when seen as part of that process.

The willingness to give an answer to the educational needs of poor children Lasallian Association had a period of gestation (the 1680's) which coincided with the start of a journey for that first community comprising De La Salle and his first teachers/Brothers, scattered as they were in several houses. That journey involved a meeting point of different lifestyles, which was brought about by the need to find an answer to the educational needs of poor children.

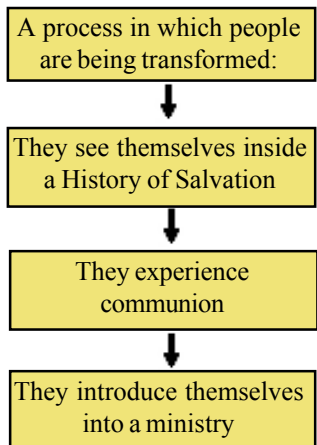
When looking back on that period of gestation we can see that association was not developed for its own sake but for the educational needs of abandoned children and young people, " far from salvation". This call, read from the point of view of faith, was also interpreted as a call from God. The willingness to give an answer to that call of God and of the poor was the driving force of what would become Lasallian association.

It was a journey which transformed people.

They discovered each other within a salvation history that had concrete names and faces.

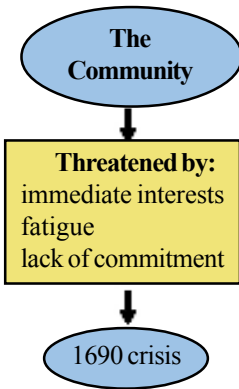
They experienced communion with others animated by the same spirit.

They entered into a ministry which increased their responsibility towards God, the Church and the beneficiaries of their mission.



The result of the process was a new identity shaped by the Lasallian charism.

Their journey, inspired by the charism or spirit, led them to see the importance and necessity of community as a means of fulfilling the educational mission and as a sign of the educational gift they were offering their society.



The journey also showed them the weaknesses of community, stemming from the limitations in the external and internal horizons of the community. Community is threatened by short-term interests, pragmatism and practical limitations, all of which can suffocate it as soon as it loses sight of its mission. Above all, community is threatened by the fatigue and inconsistency of the people who compose it, by a lack of internal commitment and by the absence of roots.

The crisis of 1690, when half the Brothers left the Lasallian community, illustrated most clearly an internal lack of personal commitment, which can only be made by persons who are inwardly secure in God, in communion with their Brothers and responsible for the work with which God has entrusted them.

3. The vow of association: a prophetic gesture directed towards the future



The vow of association in 1691 and 1694 was the real dawn of Lasallian Association. It also resolved a crisis by joining together two parts of the story at the very moment when continuity was in danger of breaking down. The act of consecration linked together three things: confidence in God to whom the work is dedicated; solidarity with the Brothers who are needed to carry out the work; a sense of responsibility towards the beneficiaries of the work.

Confidence
in God

Solidarity
with the Brothers

Responsibility
for the receivers

Externally it added nothing to the mission or to the community, but internally it

set them in a specific relationship with God himself. It gave people greater strength for carrying out the project.

The vow projected into the future what they were already living out. It was a prophetic gesture which affirmed that God was present in the work being done. That is why, in spite of its apparent fragility, they could commit their lives to the work and so give continuity to the experience.

The formula of consecration or act of commitment of John Baptiste de La Salle and his Brothers expressed as a single whole the relationship between the "community" and "association for the mission". The relationship includes a community lifestyle, a radicalness in the objectives of association and in the order of priority among the options to be taken in life. Viewed in this way, commitment means complete solidarity with the members of the community and with the objectives of association to which individual interests and needs are subordinated. In other words, the type of association set up by the commitment of John Baptist De La Salle and the Brothers corresponds to what is termed an intentional community.



Community lifestyle

Radicality of the objectives

Priority among the personal options

The Trinity:
ultimate
Foundation
of the
Association

The formula of vows starts by addressing the Trinity as the ultimate reference for Lasallian association, since it is the model for communion related to mission and because it, rather than people's capacity for commitment or generosity, forms the ultimate foundation on which association rests.

The aim of this consecration is stated as twofold: to glorify God and to form a community for the purpose of educating the poor. By uniting both aims and giving them equal value, the act of consecration is a powerful expression of the unity of the Brother's life.

Unique object at a double level:
To procure the glory of God.
To build up the community for the education of the poor.

The commitment is to "unite myself and to remain in society with the Brothers", and it is made specific in the three vows of "association, stability and obedi-

ence". Each vow reinforces a different aspect of communion for the sake of mission: "I unite myself to these Brothers; I promise to remain faithful and they can count on me come what may; I will accept what they decide". It is worth noting that the three vows addressed to God are directed towards the Brothers with whom one is associating and with whom the goals will be fulfilled.

The commitment: to unite oneself and to remain in Society with the Brothers

The commitment is not, therefore, primarily to the work in schools but to association, that is to say to community for the sake of free schools for the poor. From the very beginning it is quite clear where the centre of gravity lies. It is in communion as the means adopted, which distinguishes the Lasallian project and is found in the fraternal relationship among the members of the Society, rather than in the apostolic endeavour in itself, even though this is the aim of the communion.

The **nucleus** is the **communion**, not the **apostolic endeavour**.

The goal is the maintenance of gratuitous schools and it implies that the preferred recipients are poor children. The strength of association is directed towards the poor, not exclusively, but with a strong preference. It is the aim of the Society and it must be fulfilled by the Society, not by each member individually. That is why each member undertakes to do whatever work he is given in the Society.

The **aim** is that of the Society: each member accepts to do "the job he is asked to"

"Together and by association": This indicates the manner in which the work will be carried out. It also points to the necessary but fruitful tension between on the one hand the immediacy and closeness with the people being helped (something which favours the development of local community) and on the other hand the universality and breadth of vision characteristic of an Institution.

Of those who in 1694 were members of the Community of the Christian Schools, only some expressed their commitment by a vow of association (consecration). However, their action had a prophetic aspect which reached out to the whole community. The rest were affected by the consequences of that gesture and in turn made their contribution to the setting up of the Society and the attainment of the goals. The action of a few benefited all, was a reference point for all and served to bind them all into the Society.

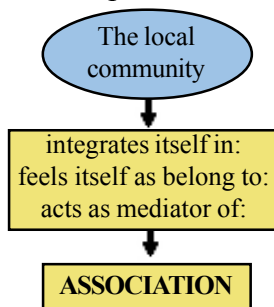
4. Association affirms the community and directs it towards God and the mission

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| ASSOCIATION | Association was born in community and through experiencing community, but it was also a means of giving security and strength to the community both inwardly and outwardly: |
| is born of the Community | |
| is strength for the Community | Association develops the roots of a community and strengthens its internal links so that it can fulfil its mission better. |
| gives roots to the Community | When joined with consecration, association points to God as the foundation of the community and to the work of education as God's Work. |
| gives extension (universality) | |

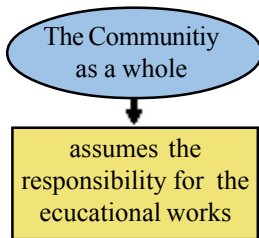
Association universalises in time and in space the experience of "community for the education of the poor". Association guarantees the continuation of the community beyond its concrete existence in a given time and space..

Between community and association there exists a fluid relationship which makes the boundaries between them less rigid

The local community sees itself as an integral part of a wider Association, and because of this feeling of belonging it acts as the Association's delegate or agent to ensure that the local project fulfils the aims of Association.



The Community of the Christian Schools as the totality of local communities acts in solidarity to carry the responsibility for the educational works. The problems or needs of a local community are viewed as the problems or needs of the whole. It is the vow of association that enables us really to speak of a "ministering community".



Association develops bonds of communion among the people in it. Consequently, the collective structures which characterise the Lasallian Association (the Institute first and then each District) tend to organise themselves as com-

munities that foster personal relationships, rather than as organisations for the smooth running of establishments.

ASSOCIATION

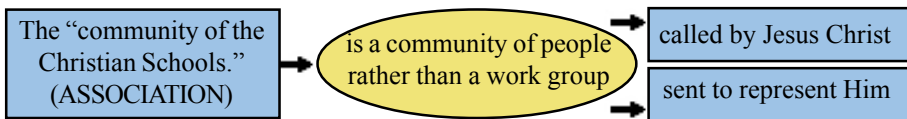
Develops bonds of communion among the people integrated in it

Its main objective: to achieve living communities, signs for the mission

The main goal of association is to promote living communities that can be signs for the mission. The members of an association make it their first commitment to contribute to the establishment of communities.

Consequently, community and association, in the Lasallian context, must be seen not so much as two different realities, but as two dimensions of the same reality. They cannot exist independently of each other.

5. The theological foundation of association is "communion for the mission" a sacramental view of association



The "Community of the Christians Schools" was set up primarily not as a working party but as a community of people who felt called by Jesus Christ and sent to represent him. Lasallian association does not rely on efficient organisation but on the relationship between of people who feel themselves called and sent to carry out God's work.

COMMUNION for the Mission

That is why the mystical and vital nucleus of Lasallian association is "communion for the mission", in its theological and ecclesiological sense.

We are called by God to be his representatives among the young. We feel saved and sent to save others. We experience God's love and we transmit it to the young. This is the spirit of faith and zeal.

We are constituted as an evangelising community: a community of Brothers who announce and promote Brotherhood.

This is the message the Founder wants to convey when he says: "that which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in a Community, is that all who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it." (CR 2,1). He refers to this "community spirit" more explicitly in another text: "Jesus Christ is in the midst of the Brothers" (EM 24-28). It is Jesus Christ and the Spirit who assemble the community for the mission entrusted to it. They supply the community with its specific ("charismatic") identity, so that it fulfils its mission.

"Jesus Christ in the midst of the Brothers"

A charismatic identity

The result of this communion for the mission is a ministering community and a community ministry - a communion which realises it is called to carry out God's work (identified with the education of the poor) and a ministry which is carried out not individually but in a community where the members make their contribution in different ways and in different degrees of commitment.

A community consecrated by Christ's presence in the community

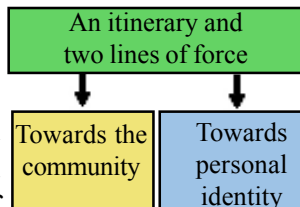
The community is consecrated, not by an additional sacrament or by the canonical vows, but by Christ's presence in it. We are dealing with a lay dynamism which has its source in the sacraments of Christian initiation activated in the spirit of faith. Thanks to this spirit the community discovers God acting in and through it.

It is in community that "charisms" occur, and in turn these charisms produce the spirituality that gives meaning to the mission. This is the origin of the Lasallian identity. The spirituality and the mission are made explicit up to date in and through community.

PART II. DEVELOPING A NEW TYPE OF ASSOCIATION

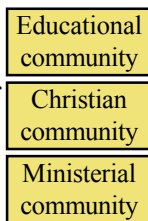
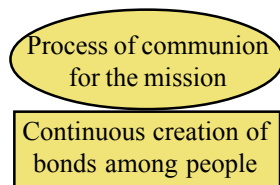
6. The gestation phase: developing a communion of mission through a vocation journey

Developing a new kind of Lasallian association will require a period of gestation, as did the first. It will not be simply generated spontaneously by good will. If we apply to the current situation of the Lasallian mission the phases of development that operated at the time of origins prior to the act of association of 1694, it will involve us in a similar kind of journey, a journey with two main lines of direction: one towards the community and one towards individual identity.

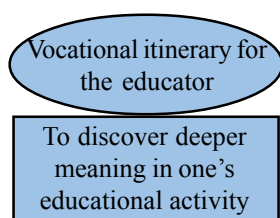


The journey is open to all who are contributing to Lasallian educational activities. It includes a process of communion for the mission, within which the vocational itinerary of each teacher unfolds.

The process of communion for the mission involves the continual creation of interpersonal links among the whole group of educators, Brothers and lay people. Those links promote mutual appreciation, solidarity and co-responsibility. Thus they give life to the educational community; they develop a communion of faith until it gives birth to the Christian community. They come together around God's work, they encourage mutual commitment and the experience of sharing the ministry; they lead to the formation of a ministering community which makes itself responsible for giving life to the educational work according to the Lasallian charism.



The process of communion must include the promotion of each teacher's vocation journey, which leads them all to discover a deeper meaning to their educational activity, including their pastoral work. It develops the vocational itinerary and the community dimension of the teacher's identity. If faith is present in people,



the journey leads them to experience their work in education as a meeting place with God until they come to live education as a ministry based on a firm commitment. However, his last step already brings people to the threshold of full Lasallian association.

To develop the vocational and communal dimensions of one's identity

To live out education as a meeting place with God

In one word, the invitation is to an experience of **communion**. Communion is the relationship that exists among people with a common spirit. Being in communion is not limited to promoting relationships among the people involved in the Lasallian project. It must also develop a shared Lasallian charism. In other words, it promotes a relationship based on the characteristic spirit of the Lasallian charism.

To live it as a ministry based on a stable commitment

The Charism

The Lasallian charism will be present throughout the whole process.

It is the constructive axis of the Lasallian identity

It is the constructive axis in the identity and formation of Lasallian educators. It is the orientation inherent in the whole process, and it implies a certain style, a special sensitivity in the face of certain needs. It involves certain preferences when selecting pupils, certain criteria and options when planning the response and evaluating the mission.

It accompanies the whole process of training

It gives birth to Lasallian spirituality

The charism is the basis for a Lasallian spirituality, which accompanies the whole process of the educator's training:

- 1) revealing the meaning and the human depth of the work of educational;
- 2) showing it to be a privileged place in one's relationship with God.

The charism is made visible in an historical heritage which brings along with it a particular culture. Lasallian culture refers first of all to the historical journey of De La Salle and his Institute, to certain pedagogical achievements and to certain expressions of faith. All this can be communicated at given moments of the training, depending on the receptivity of those for whom it is intended.

It is made visible through an historical heritage

The end of the process

The natural result of this process is the integration of individuals into local communities at different levels, whether that of an educational community or that of a community of faith. On a more general level we can talk of a Lasallian spiritual family.

Educational community

Faith community

It must be remembered that we are dealing with a long and complex process, since it involves starting out on a life journey which implies personal transformation. It also means entering into a new system of interpersonal relationships and an historical heritage which offers motivations and requires a time of training. Its development is absolutely necessary before people can choose to make a commitment to Lasallian association

The people who join, consciously or not, in the Lasallian spiritual family are personally enriched and collaborate in certain aspects of the mission. However, they have no obligation (apart from a moral one) to commit their whole self. They benefit from a share in the Lasallian heritage to varying degrees, but they have not established a relationship of belonging or membership. They are only working with the Institute or Association. Their responsibility regarding the mission is limited to the conditions they set down at any given moment. We are not yet talking about "associates".

7. Commitment as a life option: the starting point of a new kind of Lasallian association

Undergoing a course of Lasallian induction, even when it helps to give a meaning to one's actions, is not the same as committing oneself completely to Lasallian association. The former is a general goal desirable for as many as possible of the lay people who collaborate in Lasallian educational works. Commitment is a question of vocation, and can be expected from only a much smaller number.

The first form of Lasallian association came into being through the commitment embodied in the act of association of 1694. Similarly, the starting point for any new forms of Lasallian association must also be a commitment accompanied by a symbolic act, because association cannot exist without a visible commitment by those who are associating.

Motivation

the educational needs of the children and the young "far from salvation"

and the willingness to answer this call

in a process of relationship

Motivation. Just as at the beginnings of Lasallian association, any new form of association must find its core motivation in the educational needs of the children and young people who are "far from salvation", and in the desire to respond to what is seen as a call by God. The commitment is part of a journey in relationships in three dimensions: God, the community, the children. Individuals may start the journey via any of these dimensions. Once on the way, the driving force and the motivation for the process is the call of the abandoned children and the urge to answer it. It is this purpose that shapes the other two dimensions and justifies the existence and the process of association.

Commitment. The setting up of a project depends on everybody involved in it, including those whose involvement is only temporary and whose motives are different. But if a project is to continue, especially on the broader scale, it needs stability in the form of people who are committed to staying and making the maintenance of the project their priority above their own personal interests. The faithfulness of the project to its initial purposes and to its preferred beneficiaries depends on the presence of "prophets", in the form of people willing to make a point of ensuring that faithfulness. Commitment that is both stable and principled is what allows "association" to fulfil its purpose.

Commitment

The continuity of the project needs stability.

The faithfulness to its purposes needs radicality.

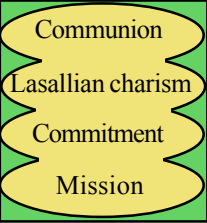
In an itinerary

Part of a journey. Acts commitment are not decided on overnight. They must be discerned as part of an itinerary in which people are discovering the direction they want to give to their lives and what God is asking from them. Account must be taken of the individual's capacities and of the implications of the commitment. Even then, it is a risky venture. The process of communion for the mission mentioned above is what prepares the way for commitment to association, and without that process the step cannot be made.

The process enables us to relive the foundation story ("myth"). Little by little we are empowered to narrate our own story as the actualisation of that myth. The

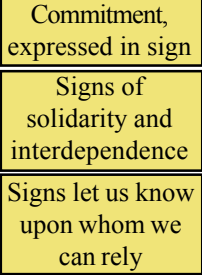
To revise and update the “initial myth,” where the essential components of Association come together

story will combine in various ways the essential components of association: communion, Lasallian charism, commitment, mission. Commitment to association should not be made before achieving a certain harmonious synthesis of these four components.



Required for Association:

Symbols. Association is established through signs which symbolise solidarity and interdependence. Commitment needs to be expressed by agreed symbols which embody the essence of the commitment. We need to support one another, and we need to know who we can rely on, who we can count on and to what extent.



In Lasallian Association the commitment is with people (associates) rather than with work.

The commitment required for association relates to people (the other members of the association) rather than to activities. It does not refer primarily to the work or task, nor does it consist in doing extra things. It is a commitment to the Lasallian community on one level or other. It involves relationships, sharing, communion. Finally it manifests itself in belonging. It is a bond that

It refers explicitly to the Lasallian Community, not to its task.

It is translated into relationship, sharing, communion

creates solidarity between people and makes them dependent on one another. It is not just a question of "taking part in" but of "belonging to", "depending on", or better still: "being interdependent". That is what creates association. The symbol by which people commit themselves also makes the community a more visible

It shows itself in membership, in being interdependent

The sign tends to make the sign of the community more visible.

sign, just as the first goal of association is to set up community as a sign.

Consequently, any commitment to association should be followed by, and frequently preceded by, active integration with the other associates through the various community structures at both general and local level.

Community is inseparable from its purpose and is justified by it. To commit oneself to the community is to strengthen the sign it gives when it serves its purpose: the evangelisation of abandoned youth through education. It is the "Community of the Christian Schools".

To commit oneself is to adopt the aims of the Lasallian community as one's own:

- "abandoned" children as the preferred beneficiaries especially the poorest;
- giving them an all-round education which is gospel inspired.

Consequently, it means involvement in the process of evaluation and discernment of the educational work to make it match the Lasallian project more closely.

To commit oneself means solidarity with the process of evaluation and discernment of the educational works.

8. Commitment introduces people into a process of transcendence

Lasallian Association

more a
communion of people
than an organisation

The commitment to association can take various forms. All of them have as their common denominator the will to incarnate the Lasallian charism today, in communion with other Lasallians, for the Christian education of youth, especially the poor, and to do it with a certain stability.

Whatever form it takes, the commitment to association is a leap, big or small, because it involves a change of levels from the concrete and the particular to the universal. It is not a flight from reality because the leap always returns to discover the universal dimension lying in the concrete and the peculiar.

Overcoming the immediate
to feel oneself an instrument
in the Work of God

The commitment involves, first of all, transcending the immediate so as not to be dominated by the concrete circumstances that surround a project, refusing to be dependent on the success or failure of the project, or to limit one's enthusiasm to the concrete recipients of the project. And all of this happens because the person, illuminated by faith, has transcended the particular situation and feels that he or she is partaking in the Plan of God, the Work of God, the Kingdom of God. People have learned to see themselves as instru-

ments in the service of that work, and from that global perspective they return to the particular project in which they fulfil, here and now, the mission received from God.

Overcoming the bonds of the immediate community,



turns us into a ministerial community.

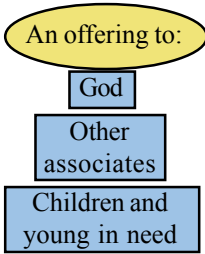
Commitment also implies transcending without renouncing the bonds characteristic of local community: personal sympathies, abilities and interests of specific individuals, internal plans. These are related to the wider horizon of communion for the Lasallian mission. This communion includes other people whom we have not chosen but with whom we share a call to the Lasallian mission. The commitment underpins the mission which is the authentic foundation and motivation of community. Thanks to this commitment, community becomes a ministry. The responsibility assumed in community before God and the Church regarding the mission and the projects in which the mission is specified becomes a priority, rather than the personal whims or wishes of the moment.

Finally, commitment to association implies transcending the strategies we use to analyse the situation of poor children and look for answers, not because they are unimportant, but because the Lasallian charism or spirit goes beyond strategies. Those who commit themselves to Lasallian association have already discovered in their hearts the light with which God enlightens "those whom He has chosen to announce his word to the children" (MR 193,1). That is why they are not content with a technical analysis but need a spirituality which will enable them to find the meaning of what is being done and to live it wholeheartedly. Commitment implies the decision to live by Lasallian spirituality so as to incarnate the Lasallian charisma in the Church and in the world today.

Overcoming the strategies of analysis and of search for answers, to rely on the Spirit.

Lasallian Association: more a communion of people than an organization

The commitment to Lasallian association is more an act of offering than a contract, even if it also has the characteristics of a contract. In the same way, Lasallian association is more of a communion of people united by the Spirit to serve the educational mission rather than an organisation, even if it is an organisation as well.



This act of commitment is usually expressed as a personal offering in the form of a vow, promise, sign of availability, etc. indicating the three recipients of the offering: God as origin and end of our offering, the other partners in the association as mediators of the offering and those who are the reason for this association, the young people and their needs.

The mediators of the offering are the other associates. In a general sense, this includes all those who share in the Lasallian mission, but in a specific and explicit way the commitment to association refers to the people of a group or institution with whom we agree to work in an interdependent way so as to achieve the purpose of the association.

The act of commitment expresses substantially the reasons for the association. Historically, the Lasallian charism arose for a clear purpose: "the human and Christian education of the young, especially the poor". Nevertheless, while respecting the integral unity of the project and without losing sight of the whole, it is possible to stress some core aspects: education for justice, the strengthening of the community in all its educational aspects, the growth of interiority and of faith. Above all, new situations and needs of the young can give rise to new ways of applying the Lasallian charism and living it in community. It is the Spirit who decides.

The object of the offering, the substance of the commitment, is oneself. It is a life that is at stake. People commit themselves to a way of life, in solidarity with other people, because of attitudes which guide their life in a particular direction. We should make a distinction between benefactors who give of their time or their money and the Lasallian associates who give themselves and become interdependent with others.

What is offered is oneself.

Commitment is life. It goes far beyond the sign by which it is expressed and must not be confused with it. Association needs signs if it is to have the visible and institutional form which is a necessary condition for its continuity. However, inside the association not everybody needs to express his or her commitment with a sign. What is really necessary is that the associates live their commitment visibly. They do this in two ways.

Firstly, communion for the mission is lived out with a clear feeling of membership and interdependence on two closely related levels:

Membership



● On the local level, in a group of people with whom we live in communion "here and now" and share and deepen the Lasallian charisma. With them we try to build or strengthen the local community as a sign for the recipients of the mission. For that reason we work to develop bonds of communion with other groups of associates whether lay people or Brothers and with all the others who share the mission.

In the local community.

● On the more general level, through the Lasallian institute to which the group is attached. It is the point of reference for maturation in the Lasallian charism. Solidarity with the rest of the Lasallian association is taken place through the Institute.

In the Lasallian Institute.

Availability for the Mission

Secondly, the lifelong availability for the mission becomes operative when embodied in a more or less structured and detailed plan, which follows in main outline the two levels of interdependence:- that of the Lasallian institute and that of the local group or community. The plan is directly related to the type of associates (lay or religious) and to the Lasallian spiritual direction suitable for each type. It will need to specify:

- its relationship and participation in the Lasallian heritage;
- the relationship of its specific Christian identity with the Lasallian mission
- the contribution to creating the community;
- the experience of the Lasallian spirituality;
- the availability for the mission;
- the interdependence with the Lasallian institute;
- permanent formation.

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