



**7. Sharing responsibility
for the Mission:
a condition for maturing**

7.1 Delegated Supervisors in the District of France

*Gérard Sant,
a layman, Delegated Supervisor of the South-West of France*

What is “a Delegated Supervisor”? What is the role and what are the responsibilities?

According to the task description four essential aspects stand out:

- Accompaniment of the leaders of establishments and their officers in their mission (relationships and mediation).
- Animation and support for the establishments in the region.
- Monitoring the management practices of the establishments.
- Linking with the Administrative Council of the La Salle Association, recruitment of leaders of institutions and other institutional functions such as supervisory visits.

This set of tasks must be illuminated by two essential, motivating expressions: availability and a listening ear.

There is no end to learning again and again how to welcome the unexpected. In addition, the task goes beyond the framework fixed by the above description since there are calls to spend regular and not insignificant amounts of time in meetings

with the dioceses, the bishops and the representatives of other congregations as well as commitments as representative of the supervisors.

New facets that came to light in the mission and the association:

In comparison with my previous task as leader of an institution, I have a better grasp of the notion of network and the fact that we are all links in the same chain, united and very close to one another through the reality we experience and the day to day routine in the field in the service of the young. In particular, we are close through all that wealth that the mission suggests that we explore more, an immense wealth of mind and heart which constitutes an encouragement to press on and a daily reflection on our well-springs. That enables us to start again each day giving thanks to the Lord for all the good things he gives us.

But we are also close by means of our deficiencies which must be accepted and confronted. The one I have noticed most over the last three years, and which I already knew in my position as leader of an establishment, but which has struck me more strongly from the broad perspective of a position of wider authority, is the debasing and sad weight of personal conflicts, founded on the primacy of the “I”.

As a consequence, I often feel called to be a point of connection to re-establish ties broken or harmed, as far as that can be done and with all the simplicity and transparency necessary in bringing people together. In this task nothing is possible without the help of the Lord to give us the strength to act, and to teach us simplicity and humility in everything.

The changes brought about by the role of Delegated Supervisors in the District and within the communities.

I have been carrying out my present duties for



Photo: Andy Stafiniak

three years. There were delegated supervisors previously. What is plain to me is that the layman will never be able to replace the Brother-connection, which has a canonical status from which flows a sort of veneration; it is not rational, nor can it be explained, but that is how it is. However this de facto status does not hinder continuing along the path traced out by John Baptist de La Salle in the service of young people nor living a fraternal relationship with the leaders of the works and the members of their communities, to whom I feel very close. The syzygy of this “layman status” can prove to be as much an asset as an obstacle, depending on situations and reactions.

Relationship with the Brothers and the Layfolk

I think I am equally welcomed by one group as by the other.

I take great pleasure in collaborating with the Brother Auxiliary-Visitor and the other Brothers in positions of responsibility, Visitors or Delegated Supervisors and in listening to their sensible words backed by their life of commitment and their experience. I am always welcomed, in communion of mind and heart, by them and the Brothers of the communities I visit in the course of my travels, around a table or sharing time in prayer...These time always go too fast and they are too short.

I am also well received by the committed lay people with whom we cooperate in a good spirit in the service of the children. I am even welcomed by those I did not know and who did not know me.

As for knowing what they think of the supervisor, I would not allow myself to take their place to obtain an answer to that question.

Difficulties and challenges.

Difficulties are numerous, but they are enriching in that they make us realise how small we are. I do not know that I am going to refer to all of them.

These come immediately to mind:

a) those pertaining to the task and its framework:

- *The size of the area to be visited.* Monday in Montpellier... Wednesday in Bordeaux... Friday in Avignon... It is hardly reasonable, there is a limit, it is possible only once. You wear out physically and when the physical strength becomes dulled mental vigour can also follow... but there is always faith which comes to our aid and urges us forward: tomorrow can be a better day than today.
- *The multiplicity of fields of action* which demands a great capacity for work but also a great facility to change channels constantly, from one file to quite a different one, without any transition: for example, scarcely has one opened a file dealing with property and which would require a longer consideration, than one is already scheduled for a morale-boasting meeting which transports us perhaps in a few hours to the other end of the delegation.
- *Lack of time* to complete all the tasks which are presented. One day has only 24 hours, of necessity you would like it to be longer. And in addition, how many hours lost in getting from one place to another, sometimes longer than the time spent on the spot working. Is it bad organization? That is a side track veering to a customary explanation, but everything is essential or must be addressed because for each of the players the daily life of his institution is, in spite of everything, the highest priority; and even two simple ceremonies planned for the same day can thus pose a real problem: you must always be there

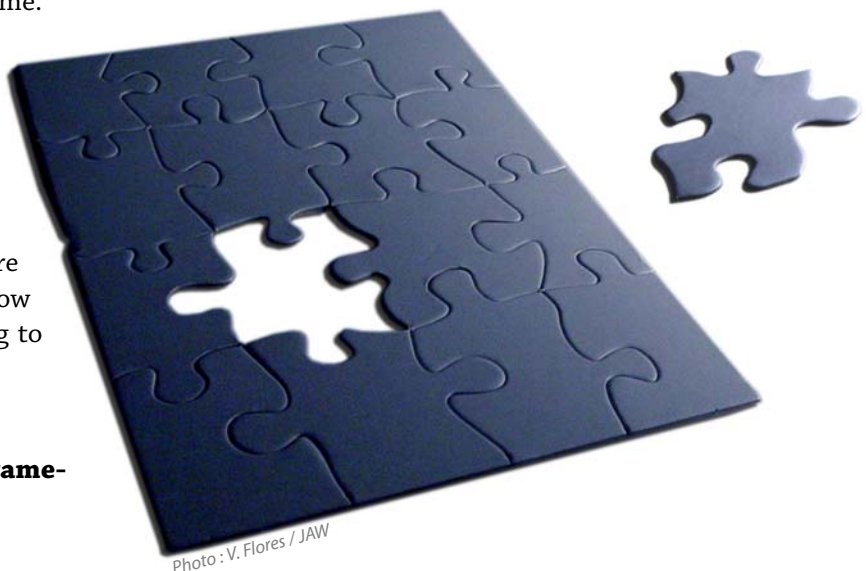


Photo: V. Flores / JAW



and be seen - even if it is not essential. And the time spent discerning or preparing in the office is short and some weeks non-existent. And if the load keeps on increasing, that is all right for there is still, and always, plenty to do.

- *Discernment* is at the heart of all action and is never easy.

b) Those of a personal nature:

- *My character and weaknesses*, which can sometimes become an obstacle to fulfilling this mission of service well. But that is valid for each one, for a leader of a work to begin with.

- *My qualifications* together with my modest experience as leader of an establishment, even though I have been in the service of the network for 32 years.
- *My pride* which urges me to bring everything to a successful conclusion and in addition to do so well and quickly... that is also a factor.
- *The inevitable feeling of loneliness* which I sometimes experience in the face of questions and problems requiring solution (even if I know that a dozen or a hundred kilometers away people are close to me in perfect solidarity): sometimes you are a prey to doubt, and that is when you feel rich for you know that He is there.

These difficulties pertaining to the person are not dealt with as fully but they are certainly harder to bear than those pertaining to the mission and its framework.

In the **challenges department**, I shall cite only one, essential for me: to succeed - with those in charge and the members of our communities - in welcoming and “inculturating” (that word is perhaps poorly chosen) new personnel, beyond the programmes of limited formation which are in place, into the daily life in our communities. That is a challenge which is not new, which fits in with our time... and the more time passes, the more urgent it is.

7.2 The Lasallian Partners Council in the Philippine District

*Carmelita I. Quebengco
Philippine District*

The Lasallian mission in the Philippines began in 1911 with one school in Manila. Due perhaps to the known quality of education it offered, as seen in its commitment to high academic standards, the demand for Lasallian education grew stronger. As the first La Salle school developed in prominence, more lay educators desired to join its growing academic community.

The Philippine District has grown much over the years. It now has 15 District schools, 32 supervised schools, and numerous non-formal education programs and projects with more than 6,500 Lasallian Partners, but only 52 Brothers, serving about 98,000 students. Partner participation in the conduct of the Lasallian mission is clearly very strong, and the focus on Shared Mission is considered most appropriate and desirable.

Although it was obvious that the Filipino Lasallian Partners participated actively in discussions of vision, goals, and objectives of the Lasallian mission, it eventually became apparent that the partnership with the Brothers was only partial. They had a voice in the deliberations, but there was no structure that permitted them to vote. This was viewed as a very real weakness in the implementation of the concept of Shared Mission, especially considering the lop-sided ratio between Brothers and Partners. Hence, the first Lasallian Synod held some six years ago approved as one of its action plans: to “ensure full participation and empowerment of Lasallian Partners” (MAP8). This was officially approved by the 11th Philippine District Chapter in December 2000.

The Brothers guaranteed both

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voice and vote for the Partners through the establishment of the Lasallian Partners Council, an advisory Council to the Bro. Visitor on matters pertaining to the Lasallian Family, partners’ formation and animation, and justice and peace. The Council is composed of five Lasallian Partners appointed by the Brother Visitor from among nominees proposed by the Philippine Lasallian Family Convocation. These nominees are chosen according to the following criteria: geographical distribution, gender representation, and professional expertise to respond to current areas of need in the District.



Lasallian association finds concrete expression in the Lasallian Partners Council, which is co-equal to the Brothers’ District Council as regards its areas of responsibility. Both Councils meet quarterly. On two of those quarters they meet as one body to discuss issues and concerns of mutual interest. They then make the necessary recommendations to the Brother Visitor, who usually approves them. They also hold joint planning and evaluation workshops, usually once a year. The Lasallian Partners Council is represented in all District commissions and committees.

The Philippine Lasallian Family Convocation mentioned above





represents yet another structure that promotes association and shared mission. The first Convocation was held in May 2003 with the active involvement of both the District Council of Brothers and the Lasallian Partners Council in its planning and implementation. The Convocation process used a highly participatory method that lasted an entire year, and involved a wide base of Brothers and Lasallian Partners in several workshops. Every member of the Lasallian Family had the opportunity to offer feedback and recommendations on issues and concerns affecting the Lasallian mission.

During the Convocation proper, at which final decisions on District directions and broad plans were made, the general assembly was made up of 82% Lasallian Partners and 18% Brothers. This was perceived by the Partners as an indication of the sincerity of the Brothers to substantially implement the concept of Shared Mission, and assure the Lasallian Partners of both voice and vote.

In the past five years, the Lasallian Partners Council has proven its mettle as equal partner to the Brothers, exercising both voice and vote in deciding the conduct and the future of the Lasallian mission in the Philippines.

7.3 The Council for the Lasallian Mission, in Egypt

*Br. Régis Claude Robbe
District of Proche-Orient*

For many years the Brothers in Egypt have been relying on the support of numerous Lay Lasallians in their pedagogical and educational work. This is due, especially, to the development of institutions, to the reduction in the number of Brothers and to the fact that most of the Brothers are foreigners. The Nasser revolution of 1952 also developed, for a time, a somewhat nationalistic spirit.

Little by little, the Lay Lasallians were asked to take over direction of colleges. Towards the end of the 80s, four lay directors were in place out of six establishments. This presupposed on the part of the Brothers, reflection, calling into question, a new look at identity... Links were developed between the lay directors to support each other; these four lay directors regularly met with the Brother in charge of the Egypt Sector of the District in order to share the mission, pray together and discover other aspects of Lasallian service being lived here and there in Egypt.

This then evolved into a regular meeting between the six directors of establishments, since whether Brothers or lay persons, they were each at the service of the same mission. From these sharing sessions and reflections emerged the setting up of Lasallian formation days for various people in positions of responsibility and for teachers. At this stage, the Council of the Brothers in Egypt remained the Council of the Brother in charge.

In 1993, the Brothers set up the "Council of Lasallian Works", made up of some Brothers and lay Lasallians; this body considered, with the Brother in charge, all school and educational questions relating to the colleges. The Council of the Brothers studied questions on the life of the Brothers and

the Communities. This marked an evolution, an enrichment for reflection, since the Lasallian mission was beginning to be carried along by the Brothers and the Lay Lasallians. This Council set up several work committees including the pastoral ministry committee, the educational and formation committee and the finance committee. Educators were freed part-time from their normal duties to run these committees and to provide between the diverse Lasallians presences. Sessions for formation and sharing began to develop between Cairo, Alexandria and Bayadeya in Upper Egypt.

Since 1996, an annual Lasallian assembly has allowed about sixty Lasallians to meet for sharing and reflection in June. This helps to make Association felt and to make the Lasallian education plan specific and concrete.

In 2000, an experienced Lay Lasallian was freed in order to become secretary-general of the "Lasallian Works"; he develops organisation and formation sessions for the benefit of the colleges and follows up all questions relating to Lasallian Mission, along with the Brother in charge of the Sector. In the spirit of the orientations coming from the Centre of the Institute, the Council for Lasallian Works has reviewed how it is run and now calls itself the Council for the Lasallian Mission.

At present there are still 11 Brothers in Egypt. This country forms part of the District of the Middle-East. The six colleges are run by lay directors. In recent years, links have been developed with Lasallians in the Middle-East in spite of the political tensions in the Region.

In the coming months, other sharing sessions, at District level will develop the common mission. May the Lord bless our association.

7.4 Association in Argentina: An Option for Re-foundation

*Santiago Rodríguez Mancini
District of Argentina-Paraguay*

The history

Shared mission, as we refer to it today within the Institute, has a tradition of over fifty years in Argentina. It is a process of profound change in the way of considering what mission and community mean. Soon this process will lead us to a new understanding of spirituality. This change, which has its roots in a series of experiences that have faded over time, is an option for re-foundation for the District Chapter of the Brothers, and for the Brothers' communities. We will highlight some of the more recent of these experiences.

- The progressive decline in religious personnel in schools and their replacement by lay personnel, mostly women.
- The increase in educational services and their qualitative diversification.
- The founding of new works that serve the poor directly.

- The forming of Boards of Trustees.
- The participation of lay persons in District commissions, both those dealing with pedagogy and with pastoral ministry, and in the Economic Council.
- The participatory drawing up of a common mission statement for our schools (1978 - 1980), which we call "Basic Line of Action."
- Week-long sessions and meetings dealing with Lasallian spirituality, courses in pastoral ministry, catechesis and pedagogy, since 1978, meetings of administrators and teachers, work in pastoral ministry in various areas of the District...
- The various forms of transferring or ceding works or placing them under new management and their successes and failures.
- The participation of lay persons in District Chapters since 1980.
- Full acceptance of the "Argentinian Educational Association" made up of lay men and women members in 1997.
- Creating other organizations with lay participation in carrying out the District's mission within organizations that we call "Northwest Center" (2000) and "Lasallian Pastoral Ministry Region of Paraguay" in 2003.

Towards 1994 experiences and ideas had converged sufficiently to draw up a proposition about institutions that would take into account the new school and community situation.

The District Council and the District Chapter that year began to think about and to propose the creation of a foundation that would take charge of running the more traditional works, especially those that did not deal with the poor directly. The presence of lay people and the reflection of many Brothers in that process called into question the



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understanding that we had about mission - a mission that is distributed is not the same as shared mission. As a District made up of Brothers and lay persons we did not want to have a two-tiered structure but one where there was a sense of mutual belonging. The conflictive nature of that situation led us to a difficult synthesis in terms of understanding and acceptance.

We thus passed from a model of Foundation to a model of Civil Association. Renewing the "Argentinian Educational Association" (which was in existence since 1905) meant renewing its members. The dilemma was no longer the model of Mission but the guarantee of the Charism, the way in which we Brothers would be able to assure ourselves and to ensure the Institute that we would be faithful to the Mission which the Church had entrusted to us Brothers and lay persons. At first, we thought about a proportion of two-thirds Brothers to one-third lay persons. But the work on the Statutes led us to guarantee only the Brother Visitor and to trust in the overall group of members, represented in the Administration Commission by equal parts. This whole process was not without its debates and conflicts.

So we came to the Assembly of Members in 1998, during which we elected a new Administration Commission of Brothers and lay persons who were to begin to make changes. At that time it was about the running of the shared mission while guaranteeing fidelity to the Institute.

The excellent results obtained for District leadership made us think about analogous structures with different characteristics for the works which, for various reasons, remained outside the jurisdiction of the "Argentinian Educational Association." In that way, the District Chapter constituted a region for the works in Northwest Argentina and for the works in Paraguay. These were organizations which, while not being civil associations, were also participatory and part of the overall structure.

This was our beginning history of re-foundation.

The meaning

What is the real meaning of this historic fact, of what has been set up, of the original dynamic of what we call Pastoral Ministry Regions of the District?

To read the spiritual sense of Association as realized by the participation in Regions can lead us to a memory that could be dangerous. "Dangerous memory" - the expression of J. B. Metz - because it is a permanent reminder of Jesus, of his presence and of what he means for those of us who believe in him.

Let us say in general terms that Association has to do in the spiritual sense with the story of our own identity. Accepting Association and accepting members as such leads us to tell the life story in a new way, different from the previous one. Even for the oldest members among us, the novelty of members who have come to be accepted reconfigures the existence of everyone.

The first facet of this "dangerous memory" - God does not speak through special channels, he does not speak exclusively through religious. He journeys through life with us. Even more important is the fact that we only understand his Words through our words. Furthermore, his Word only interests us when it is our word, when he speaks of our interests, when he comes to meet our desires.

Association links us with the Church in a new way. Even when our Association is a civil one, the fact that it is an institution means that it is viewed clearly as a Church entity. This association that we constitute is a form of Christian commitment that is entirely lay. To belong is to be a part of something, but there is a shade of process. Belonging never ceases. To belong is to show that you are



available for others. But to be available in a creative way, that is, by participating with your own creative efforts to resolve life's difficulties. This creativity among ourselves is called professionalism. We were associated for a task, that of Christian education, especially for the poor. To promote justice based on education is the hinge of the activity of this association. This is not achieved without professionalism. To belong is to be available for effective educational and pastoral ministry. We are called to this. Vocation is fulfilled in belonging, the encounter corresponds to availability and identity with professionalism. Availability has the dynamic of fidelity, as a continual process of growth. Professionalism has the dynamic of the realization of pedagogical-pastoral-administrative systems, and its institutionalization is its growth process.

Here is one more element of the "dangerous memory" of our Association. To be available to others is

nothing more than to be available to the calls of the Spirit of God. To listen to God is to listen to others. We speak about issues that are obviously very secular. It is there where the God's Spirit pulsates.

Finally, we want to emphasize the sense of hope that we can read within Association. This Association is presented to men and women from Argentina and Paraguay as a sign of community. This is our significant hope, a community that rises up as a sign in our country. A sign of communion and of participation. Communion, which is the result of an encounter that makes us available. Participation, which is the professional activity of those who are known as members. Wherever there is a member, all are with that member to create communion and participation, the visible parts of identity and meeting, of availability and professionalism. Members are like the seeds of community, managers of the educational community, promoters of communities of faith in each work in particular.

Our Association is a sign of community, of justice, and of freedom. Not just any model of organization lends itself to hope as a sign of community. Not just any group activity has anything to do with truth, goodness, God's beauty, which is the life of men and women in the world, for all mankind and for the entire world. Our community must be a sign of the future, when communities will be deeply inclusive and creative; and when, by their availability, they can accept the voice of those who are excluded as those they wish to serve.





8. The Horizon which is beginning to appear

The new District of Associates

8.1 Challenges in Association

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Gery Short
International Commission for Association

“Association” for the mission as a fundamental character of the Brothers’ vocation and of the Lasallian mission has been a consistent element in the Brothers’ vow formula from 1691 to the present. In light of the history of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, many Lasallian educators today recognize that “together and by association,” working in solidarity and communion with one another, is as central to the Brothers’ vocation and to the Lasallian mission as the educational service of poor students.

The theme of the 43rd General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rome, spring 2000, was “Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor.” In spite of their special attention to the topic of association, the Chapter delegates rec-

ognized that time was too limited to do justice to this dynamic topic. The discussion required far more collaboration with their partners than was available to them during the Chapter.

Hence the Superior and General Council formed the International Commission on Association, whose primary task is to continue in a more studied, extensive and collaborative manner the work begun by the 43rd General Chapter on the topic of association.

The Commission has met annually since the spring of 2001. Each meeting, lasting one week, has resulted in a new level of understanding of association in the Lasallian world and an evolution in thinking.

The challenges I present here arise from conversations, presentations, observations from my Commission work these past four years, and interactions with Lasallian educators, Brothers, and Partners internationally, regionally, and, most extensively, in the District of San Francisco.

The Role and Influence of the Brothers

In spring 2002, the International Commission on Association studied the responses to a global survey of *associates*. One question concerned the most valuable and important formative experience. The most important and significant formative experience for the respondents is a relationship with a particular Brother or a Brothers’ community. The first challenge, with the dwindling number of Brothers in the north and the younger age of Brothers in the south, is to identify who can provide this formative experience for so many people, especially those new to the Lasallian mission.

The issue of association raises a number of canonical issues. The Brothers hold the essential link to the institutional Church. How can the Brothers continue to serve as this link and also promote the association with laypeople, especially with regard to governance?



Photo: JAW

Over the past forty years, the Brothers have been prophetic in their declarations and courageous in their response to the urgings of the Spirit by welcoming and recognizing the critical role of their brothers and sisters (married, ordained, single, and vowed) for the mission. However, some Brothers seem reluctant or hesitant to share authority, especially with their lay partners or associates. In some areas of the world, especially in “younger sectors”, the young brothers might feel ambivalent or threatened by the growing Lasallian movement and resist efforts toward shared decision making and authority. Some laypeople are overly deferential to the Brothers and reinforce this “clerical mentality.” Finding ways to move beyond these hesitations among some Brothers and lay associates who are dependent upon the Brothers is an important challenge.

Integrating Life Commitments

As the discussion of association advances, we must acknowledge, validate, and embrace the

life commitments of partners and associates. As deeply and personally committed as I am to this mission, my first responsibility is to my family, my spouse and children. If I ignore or diminish this responsibility, I undermine my vocation. Any expression of association must provide for and recognize these life commitments. Often I feel that we might inadvertently give the impression that putting our family and spouse in front of our responsibility to a school or our professional role limits our commitment. We need to celebrate these commitments and find a way to integrate these life choices (what the Church calls “states of life”) into the discussion of association.

Structures and Language

Any new model will require new structures, perhaps new language. The 43rd General Chapter opened the door to develop new structures for mission, including mission councils and assemblies for decision making related to the promotion of the mission. We must continue to monitor the development of these structures to assure their effectiveness.

Some people believe that the words “associate” and “association” are too connected to the Brothers’ life, history, and vocation and that we need a



new word or words to dispel the confusion. At its meeting in April 2004, the Commission addressed the question of language, especially the term *association*. In spite of the historical complications that exist, many Commission members agreed that the word *association* must continue in use. The historical expression and the power of its meaning are too important to the Institute and to the Lasallian movement. Many Commission members recommended that we “re-invent or redefine association” rather than replace it with something less meaningful. The term *association*, so fundamental to the Institute and to the Lasallian movement, must be carried into any “refoundation”.

Formation and Providing Opportunities

The Institute must continue to emphasize the development of effective formation programs and resources. These programs must reflect the needs and the circumstances of the participants. For example, in the USA/Toronto Region, a popular program has been the three-week summer program over three years, the Buttimer Institute. To create a schedule more “family friendly” to laypeople, partners, and associates, the Region designed the Lasallian Leadership Institute, which requires only one week during the summer and two weekends during the school year over three years. These types of adaptations need to be considered in the development of new formation experiences. Simply adopting the Brothers’ program model and schedule might be too disruptive to families.



Many Lasallian educators are looking for more than what present programs and structures provide; specifically, they want to share more deeply in the life and spirituality. We must create more formation opportunities to support individuals and groups, along with the structures to satisfy these hungers and requests.

Providing more meaningful leadership opportunities is a critical step in the continuation and further deepening that follows formation experience and leads to a more profound and ongoing commitment to the mission.

The Mission

Keeping the mission in front of us during this discussion of association is critical. The only reason for this conversation is the mission. De La Salle and the Brothers have recognized over the years that through association, the mission becomes more stable and effective. Our challenge is to make association the critical means to this end. Over the last five to ten years, Districts in the USA/Toronto Region have founded many new schools and works to serve poor students. One reason is the number of laypeople who have stepped up and taken responsibility for the mission alongside the Brothers. A new sense of association will ultimately free Brothers and laypeople to participate in the mission, especially to poor children who deserve this education.

8.2 The New District of Lasallian Associates

Br. Antonio Botana
Secretary for Lasallian Associates

The New District is Birthing

There is already much that is new, even though we may not know how to define it. Life precedes words and the signs that we have chosen to include in this Bulletin - there was not space for all of them - show us an overall view of new life that is flourishing, the Lasallian charism that is incarnated today in different forms of association for the educational service of the poor.

The District (or its local equivalent - Delegation or in some cases the Region) is the place where new forms of Lasallian life are recognized. Also, as the 43rd General Chapter said, the District tends to be the "frame of reference" where structures of the new Lasallian reality of association take shape (cf. Circular 447, page 9).

But at these heights along the journey, and after having paid attention to the signs that we have presented, we realized that the horizon that is beginning to appear is a new kind of District, because new realities go beyond the classical District. We need a "new wineskin" which is able to contain "the new wine" that is coming.

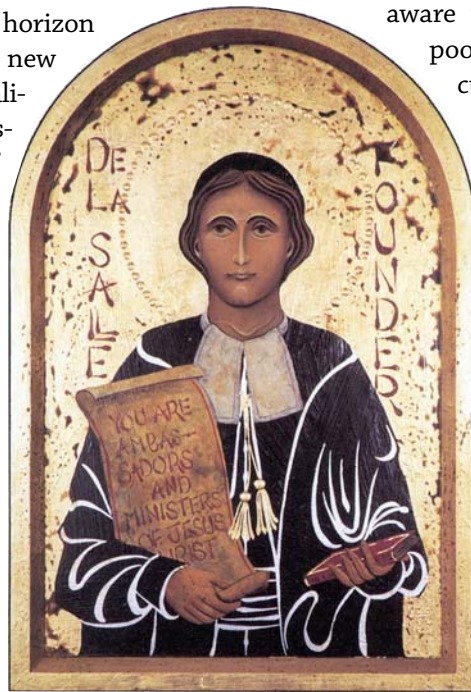
The new District is shaped, first and foremost, as a "community of Lasallian communities." There was the time when it was made up only of communities of Brothers, but now it must shape itself in accord with Lasallian communities that are much more diversified.

The new District allows for the concrete practice of communion which should exist among

**"Remember not the events of the past,
the things of long ago consider not;
See, I am doing something new!
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"**
(Is 43:18-19)

the different "planets" of the "Lasallian solar system" (cf. MEL Bulletin Number 2, "Lasallian Association: The Ongoing Story, section 5.2), to serve the mission "together and by association" (educational service of the poor) based on fidelity to the Lasallian charism:

- It guarantees that formation in the Lasallian charism reaches all its members.
- It promotes human relationships, and, based on them, communion among the Lasallian communities and among the members of these communities.
- It sees to it that all those in charge of providing guidelines for Lasallian educational works are aware that educational service of the poor is a fundamental priority (Circular 447, page 11).
- Where there exist diverse Lasallian institutions, the District community promotes a coordinated response to the needs of the mission, both in its discernment of current works as well as in beginning new works.
- It promotes solidarity in the shared search and choice of responses to the needs of the mission, co-responsibility in preparation of programs, and subsidiarity in action among all those who share the mission.



- Based on the above points, a sense of belonging should be instilled among its members: to the District, to the living Lasallian story, to the overall group of Lasallian associates.

Moving from the Traditional District to the New District

The traditional District is the “District of the Brothers,” with whom a certain number of lay persons collaborate, following guidelines from the Brothers. Structures of District leadership in this District are, basically, those which correspond to a “Religious Province,” and which were thought out for the Brothers, although some lay persons (normally chosen by the Brothers) may be allowed to be present in some of these leadership structures, but not equal in voice and vote.

The new District, that of Lasallian Associates, cannot be established based on traditional District structures which have been more or less broad-

ened or adapted so that lay persons can fit in; because if that were the case, the “patches of the new cloth” would pull away from the “old cloth” until it would rip it and make it unusable. New structures are needed to assure the participation of lay persons in the exercise of the mission, both in the area of decision-making as in the carrying out of the mission (Circular 447, Proposition 5 and previous guidelines). New structures of communion are needed, above all, that respect the diverse Lasallian identities, promote their diversity, and encourage complimentary roles.

Moving from the traditional District to the District of Lasallian Associates happens progressively, as we have been able to confirm throughout this Bulletin, but not in a similar way nor in the same rhythm does this happen in all places. Decrees cannot be imposed for the entire Lasallian world; but neither can the process be postponed or the structures developed in such and such a District be imposed as a model to be followed by everyone.

Experiences that have been recounted in this Bulletin are signs that can aid us in discovering where the Spirit is leading us and calling us. This question needs to be formulated in each of our “traditional” Districts, and it should be answered in the real context of each of them. Because the new District of Associates will not emerge “in spite of” the “traditional” District, but as the result of the creative fidelity of the traditional District which has learned to discover and respond to the call of the Spirit in Church-Communion, and which makes it fertile, giving space for the new life within, even though at times it may be going through the painful experience of feeling that “buried seed.”

There are many reservations and questions that we bring up during these times of transition. We have to go forward in the semidarkness and not wait to have full clarity. It is a time for experimentation, and the possibility for error is part of the strategy. At the same time, we Brothers and lay persons alike, need to promote the attitude and spirit of discernment within ourselves, which should be explicitly integrated throughout the entire process and put into practice in each new experience or structure, in such a way that we are willing to correct the errors that the process may produce, but also we need to be able to identify the



real causes because of which a certain experience was not satisfactory.

The worst option would be to close in on ourselves, within that small reality of the District itself. It is time to be open to other horizons, experiences, and processes from other Districts, not to copy them but to allow ourselves to be questioned and enlightened by them.

Some Clues Become Clear

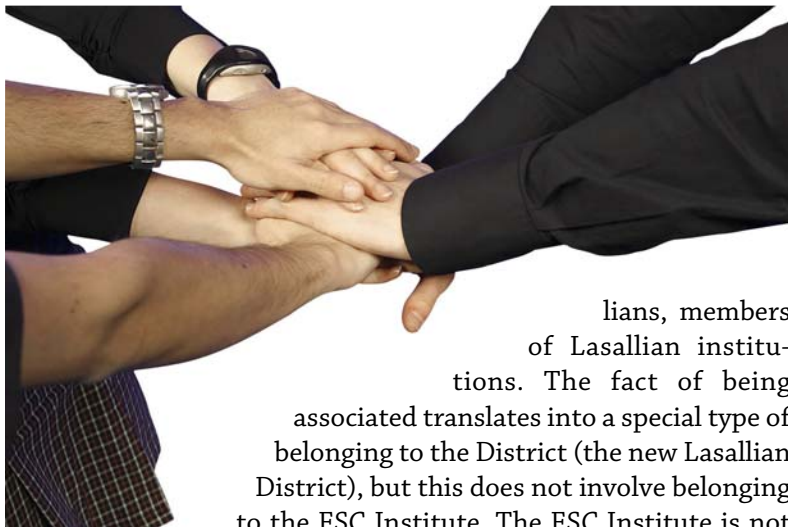
Based on experience and the light that comes to us from this horizon which is already part of the journey, and based on the reflections of the International Commission on “Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor,” we can hazard some clues which are already answers for many of the questions that have occurred to us:

1. The “basic unit” of the new Lasallian District continues to be the community (not the works). This is a clear sign that the Lasallian charism is present. Surely there will be a great variety of communities, variety in terms of the identities of those who compose it, the rhythm and the intensity of life in common...Diversity is not a problem; but within that diversity it is important to inspire a type of prophetic vision, without imposing this on everyone. This prophetic vision involves the option for a certain radicalism in commitment, in the quality of community life, or in the commitment to some basic aspect of our charism, and in living it publicly as a sign for themselves and for others. Prophetic vision, whether of the community, of persons or of educational projects, is put forward as a service to the group, and not to produce an “elite” who is separated from others or goes ahead of others. The strength and the vitality of a District will depend in large measure on the existence of these prophetic communities at its very core, and of the significance these communities have or the influence they exert on the overall District.
2. The commitment that joins one person to the District is, first and foremost, the person’s availability based on his/her concrete situation. The act of association shows the commitment of his/her life, the “totality” of his/her person. The commitment of a Lasallian associate does



not refer to the development of a work or a particular activity, but to solidarity and communion with other associates, in order to carry out the Lasallian mission together. It is not about taking on “another commitment,” for a determined period of time, but it is about availability, based on the one’s personal circumstances and other factors.

3. Association “in fact” is prior to “formal” association. It finds expression in:
 - a steady attitude of solidarity with other Lasallians and commitment to the Lasallian mission;
 - the search for sustenance and meaning in Lasallian spirituality; the awareness of collaborating in God’s work;
 - a clear sense of belonging to the Lasallian story and to the District; regular participation in District or area meetings;
 - participation in some community experience with other Lasallians;
 - an interest in and an openness towards the universality of the Lasallian mission.
4. The traditional District, that “of the Brothers,” is a territorial organization of the FSC Institute. The new Lasallian District is a territorial organization of associated Lasallians, or more broadly, of those who share the Lasallian mission; here is where the Brothers are, lay Lasal-



lians, members of Lasallian institutions. The fact of being associated translates into a special type of belonging to the District (the new Lasallian District), but this does not involve belonging to the FSC Institute. The FSC Institute is not expanded by the entrance of lay associates within it, but the Institute itself is joined to another broader reality which is the new group of Lasallian Associates, religious and lay.

5. The new District is not the result of the overall indifference of Lasallians, but the fundamental communion of many Lasallians of different identities. The communion and participation of all associates must be combined with a healthy autonomy as regards each identity. Differences among the various identities are not hidden but they are valued and cultivated as a treasure for the whole group. Therefore, it would be usual that, in addition to meetings (for formation, celebration, discussion, retreat...) that would gather all Lasallians, there would also be other meetings specifically aimed at Brothers, lay persons, which could include observers or not.
6. The District of the Brothers, as an organizational entity of the FSC Institute, will continue to exist, although it will be integrated with the new Lasallian District and, in many respects, it may be mistaken for it. Nevertheless, the demands of the mission may require a greater flexibility in the geographical boundaries of the new District, in

such a way that the District may incorporate several traditional Districts; for that reason, the sense of belonging on the part of the new associates may not correspond to the limits of the traditional Districts. The experience of the San Miguel network of schools in the United States seems to be leaning in that direction.

7. The FSC Institute, because of its historical relationship to Lasallian roots, is responsible for exercising a certain role of leadership within the ensemble of the Lasallian Associates. This leadership is not exclusive, and it respects the autonomy of the various groups and institutions that make up the Lasallian ensemble. As the new District becomes a reality, that leadership must be shared.

A concrete example of this is the acceptance of new associates, whether they be persons or groups. According to the 43rd General Chapter, official recognition is up to the Brother Visitor and his Council. Obviously, this leadership power fits into the traditional District's provisional way of thinking about the Brothers who "receive" the new associates. But to the extent that the new Lasallian District becomes real and new communities of associates continue to be diverse, it is to be expected that representatives from these communities will have their own say in the discernment and recognition of those who want to become associates.

8. The Brothers, by their particular religious consecration, maintain a special relationship with their immediate superior, the Brother Visitor, and with the superiors of the Institute. That is to say, in the new situation, the Visitor preserves his role as a religious authority ("Major Superior," in the language of Canon Law) with respect to the Brothers and he continues to be for them their immediate reference to the mission (they are "sent"

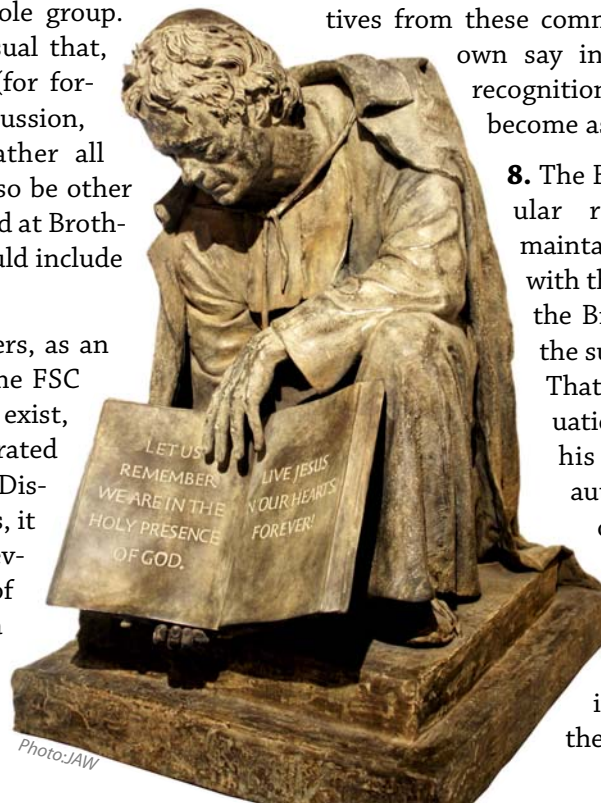


Photo:JAW

by him, both to play a concrete role and to be part of a community); in the same way, he continues to be the “guarantor of the unity” among the Brothers, a role that is given him by the Rule (number 132).

These roles of the Brother Visitor do not apply in the same way to the rest of the associates that make up the new Lasallian District. Surely he plays a leadership role for the District overall, but that leadership must be shared, according to various cases, with leaders and animators from other Lasallian groups who make up the District.

9. In the transition from the traditional District to the new Lasallian District it will be necessary to determine which structures proper to a “Religious Province” need to be preserved and/or adapted, and which of its functions can be transferred to new organizations of association. For example:

- The District Council of Brothers (FSC Rule, 136), as a canonical entity that advises the Major Superior, must separate or share its powers, in order to reserve to itself only those that correspond to it in its role as representing the Brothers and acting in a complementary way with other structures of District leadership.
- The District Mission Council, where there is representation of the diverse groups of Associates and Partners that make up the District, can take on decision-making and discernment roles that were formerly left to the District Council of Brothers.



Photo: Kevin Cloutier

- What has been said about the District Council of Brothers and about the Mission Council can also be applied, respectively, to the District Chapter and to the Mission Assembly.

Many questions are still to be answered on this journey that we have barely begun. Some questions will not have universal answers and they will have to be raised in each District (for example, What should the financial contribution of each community be to the common organization of the District?) For other questions, there is not yet sufficient experience that can guarantee a guiding answer. One step will lead to another, and to the extent that we can accept the immediate commitment presented to us, we will be prepared to respond to the next commitment. This is the Lasallian style of making a journey and creating history.



9. I commit myself...

A Collection of Sample Formulas for Making a Formal Commitment to Association

■ The Brother of the Christian Schools' Consecration formula

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with profound respect before your infinite majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to you to procure your glory as far as I shall be able and as you will require of me.

For this purpose I, . . . promise to unite myself, and to remain in society, with the Brothers of the Christian Schools who are associated to conduct, together and by association, schools for the service of the poor. I promise to go wherever I may be sent and to do whatever I may be assigned by the body of the Society or its superiors.

Wherefore, I promise and vow chastity, poverty, obedience, association for the service of the poor through education, and stability in the Institute according to the Bull of Approbation and the Rule of the Institute.

I promise to keep these vows faithfully (for a period of . . . years) all my life.

In testimony thereof, I have signed. ...

■ "Signum Fidei" Consecration formula

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with profound respect before your infinite majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to you to procure your glory as far as I shall be able and as you will require of me.

Therefore, fully aware of commitment I made at baptism and which has taught me to recognize throughout my life the sign of your continuous and merciful love, I now join the other members of the "Signum Fidei" Association, in order with their help to further uphold and defend the all-embracing education of young persons and adults, especially of those who have strayed from the way of salvation. I want the education I offer to be inspired by the person of Jesus Christ and to be based on the spirit of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

I wish to make my commitment specific by accomplishing the following definite apostolic work:

With this in view, I intend working sometimes by myself, at other times with colleagues; I shall also use every means in my power to achieve it, I shall trust in your help and follow the example of Our Blessed Lady.

I commit myself to making the Gospel and its Law of Love the principal rule of my whole life. Therefore, I accept the "Way of Life" of the "Signum Fidei" Association, and promise to follow it for one year

■ Associates from the Delegation of the Antilles

Based on the interior call to live in accord with the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, in spiritual peace of mind, before God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and this fraternity,

I, ... ,freely associate myself, with the Lasallian partners and associates from the Delegation of the Antilles and from the world, and with the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to make educational service of children and the young, especially the poor, a reality, in... (place of commitment) or wherever God may send me, in discernment with those in charge of

the Delegation, to make stronger and to energize the commitment I now make to be a messenger of Faith, Fraternity, and Service.

I make this commitment for a period of one year.

May the Lord, who is the light of the world, and Mary, our mother, grant me the grace to be faithful to this commitment.

■ Associates from the District of France

Lord,

With reference to the life and work of John Baptist de La Salle,
in the spirit of association for the pastoral educational mission ,
with and for young people, especially the disadvantaged,

I recognize that I am in solidarity with the Brothers of the Christian Schools
and lay Lasallians,
and I wish to bear the responsibility for the Lasallian educational mission
in the District of France along with them.

For this purpose and with your help, I commit myself, within my institution and its environment, in an ongoing attitude of openness,

- to promote the Lasallian educational project,
- to form myself in Lasallian pedagogy and spirituality,
- to participate in periodic renewal.

My commitment is for a period of... year(s).

■ From the “Galilee” community, District of Valladolid

Lord,

In your presence, and after a process of reflection and discernment
in my community to which I am totally faithful,

I,...commit myself to association with the Brothers of the Christian Schools
and to other associates,

for the human and Christian education of young people,
especially the needy, and to service of other educators involved in this mission.

Therefore, for this purpose, i commit myself:

- to be an authentic Christian educator,
- to be a consistent witness of my faith,
- to educate in justice and in solidarity,
- to dedicate myself in a special way to those most in need,
- to be available for all that is required of me by association and by my community.

I promise to keep these commitments for a period of one year.

Lord, give me the strength of your Spirit to be a faithful witness of your truth
and an evangelist in the society in which I live,
united to all the members of my community. Amen.

The seed has been sown...

Our Association stems from our convictions or deep beliefs in the following:

- love for children and the hope we find in them;
- meaning in our work - providing education for the young and especially the poor (in direct or indirect service) that we believe is liberating and transformative;
- life-giving relationships whether in educational communities or living together as Brothers, brothers and Lay, or in an all lay community - which is continuously a source of energy and inspiration;
- joy in discovering one's vocation as a Brother, married or single lay in the participation of the mission



The seed grows...

And this plant at the moment is...

- growing in the strength of support of community of people with names and faces committed to the same vision and mission;
- Focus is needed: that the reason for association is: **the children who are in need of love and salvation**;
- as pilgrims in the same journey we continue to feel God's active presence as evident in the voices we hear and the hearts we touch;
- we have our doubts, our fears, and even our mistakes but we also definitely have our faith and our hope that the future of the mission is our to make

Today as we continue to nourish the plant...

We see and believe that

- we are in a juncture / intersection in our story when we need ongoing formation of both Brothers and Partners which could mean constant dialogues, discernment, and even evaluation (together by Brothers and Partners) done in the spirit of openness, respect, and humility;
- this ongoing formation be focused on personal and communal growth always at the service of the mission;
- relationships of empathy, intimacy, availability, and self-giving be given utmost importance.

Finally, we believe that **association** is a new way of being. And that whatever the moment or process brings we embrace it for we choose to live in the **present**, choosing **life** for the mission and for those entrusted to our care!

*Jossie Burgos
Philippine District*



Photo: Chuttiporn Chaitachawong

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