



La  Salle



**Set out in Haste:  
Association for the  
Lasallian Mission**

**2017**

**Pastoral Letter**

Br. Robert Schieler, fsc  
Brother Superior

PASTORAL LETTER TO THE BROTHERS

**Set out in Haste:  
Association for the Lasallian  
Mission**

Brother Robert Schieler, FSC  
Brother Superior  
December 25, 2017

*“The magnitude and urgency of this evangelical challenge could lead you to a state of alarm, when you frankly analyse the disproportion between your resources and the immense tasks which require your commitment. Thank God, that for several decades now, you have been finding, with realistic humility, the perfect way to increase your apostolic potential. You are seeing with greater and greater clarity and with excellent results, that those persons who are working at your side can be, not only your cooperators in the work of education, but also partners in your mission and in the charismatic legacy of the Holy Patron of all Educators.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Homily, Eduardo Cardinal Martínez Somalo, 42<sup>nd</sup> General Chapter, April 5, 1993.

Dear Brother,

Our stories are really important. They are the glue that holds us together. Our stories carry our memories and memories are conveyors of grace. Think about how our lives as Brothers are celebrated and conveyed in stories. These thoughts from a presentation by Sister Mary Pellegrino, CSJ, remind me that for over 50 years we have been creating a wonderful story: Lasallian Association for Mission.

Sharing the Lasallian charism is for us a clear “sign of the times” that erupted with the 39<sup>th</sup> General Chapter and the publication of the *Declaration*. As I travel around the Lasallian world, my encounters with Brothers and Partners who enthusiastically embrace Association for Mission inspire me and fill me with hope.

The emerging stories of Lasallian Association indeed are manifestations of God’s grace moving us to increase our apostolic potential. Tales about the mysterious workings of grace, as we know, are respectful of the human condition. There are many narratives of Partners and Brothers walking together as beacons of hope for children and young people, especially the poor, vulnerable and marginalized. There are also accounts of Brothers who are fully committed to our ministry of human and Christian education while, at the same time, confused and anxious about our present circumstances.

## Go and sell what you own!

*Please pause now to read and reflect on Mark 10:17-22.*

“The man would have become part of a sharing community and he would have had the security that comes from trusting his brothers and sisters – and God. But he was not sufficiently *detached* to do it.”<sup>2</sup>

*Are you sufficiently detached to “go and sell what you own”? In other words, do you trust God and your Brothers enough to let go of former models of ministry and ministry governance in order to increase our apostolic potential with the effective and practical incorporation of our Partners at all levels of ministerial activity?*

*Are you sufficiently detached so as to be able to go “beyond borders” to encounter the poor?*

Brothers and Partners without limits – or borders – is more than a geographic metaphor; first and foremost it refers to the call to personal and communal transformation. It also refers to the transformation of our educational communities where the “primary concern is the educational needs of those whose dignity and basic rights are not recognized. By its mission [the Institute] seeks to make it possible for them to live with dignity as sons and daughters of God. The Institute establishes, renews, and diversifies its works according to the needs of the Reign of God.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Nolan, Albert, *Jesus Today, A Spirituality of Radical Freedom*, Orbis, 2008, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Rule*, Rome, 2015, Art. 13.

“Personal transformation begins when we follow Jesus into the desert by setting aside time for silence and solitude.... We also need time to read, reflect, to pray, and to allow the spirit of Jesus to seep into our bones.”<sup>4</sup> As each one of us, and all of us together, consciously enter into the dynamic of conversion, our communities and institutions are also transformed.



I am convinced that a valuable contribution of Association for Mission is the compelling voice of our Partners that challenges us to the personal and communal conversion indispensable to the detachment that permits us to go

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<sup>4</sup> Nolan, p. 99.

beyond borders. Over the years, Partners have certainly challenged me to cooperate with Jesus' project for the Reign of God in ways consistent with our Institute's documents.

*Have you ever been similarly challenged by your Partners?  
By your students?*

Sharing our mission with so many women and men who desire to journey with us as Lasallian educators is a great blessing. Our Christian Partners experience their ministry as an expression of their baptismal commitment to Jesus and his kingdom. Our Partners of other spiritual traditions feel inspired to enhance their professional duties with the example of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and his Brothers.

Stirred up by the Holy Spirit – who seeps into our bones – and through an attentive listening to the voices of our Partners we can discover new invitations to conversion. In this regard, I believe that we Brothers must create new dynamics of encounter and conversation with one another and with our Partners. We must take the lead in being signs of hope for the future of the Lasallian mission. “Leaders of hope create new forms and structures for a new kind of organization... [and] Leadership becomes a cooperative venture; we must imagine our organizations in new forms.”<sup>5</sup>

## **Open your heart! Be ready to change your mind!**

We, like the disciples at Emmaus, must open our hearts,

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<sup>5</sup> Doohan, Leonard, *Courageous Hope*, Paulist, 2011, p. 113.

change our minds and set out in haste in order to announce the Gospel to the poor.

***Before continuing, please pause and read Luke 24:13-35.***

*The Road to Emmaus* is the action-filled longest post-resurrection story in the gospels. The story recounts an experience of grace. Luke describes the disciples who are so overwhelmed that they set out in haste to tell their friends of what had happened on the road.

Guided by the insights of Brother Miguel Campos, Lasallian scholar and former General Councilor, let us take some time to reflect on Lasallian Association for Mission in light of Luke's portrayal.

The story opens with the two disciples speaking to each other. Their mouths are open and we are listening to their account of all that had happened in Jerusalem during the







previous days. They were discussing their own understanding of God's plan of salvation for his people. They were sharing their hopes and dreams for the kingdom promised by Yahweh to the Israelites. We could say they were sharing their expectations that seem to have died with the crucifixion of Jesus.

Let us reflect on the scene: *...and they were talking together about all that had happened.* Imagine that the two disciples are two Brothers speaking in the aftermath of the 39<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. At first, they were thrilled with the Chapter's decisions and the inspiring message of the *Declaration*. They were filled with hope and dreamed of a bright future. However, in a few short years thousands of Brothers left the Institute and the vocation well was running dry. Their expectations, like those of the disciples, seemed to have died. These two Brothers, however, faithful to their vow of stability, are still with us. They are older and wiser co-authors of our continuing story.

Today, the two disciples might be a Brother and a Lasallian Partner sharing their enthusiasm for our shared ministry of human and Christian education. They might be talking about formation opportunities in Lasallian spirituality and participation in ministry governance structures. They recall

their appreciation for the consultative participation of Partners in the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter. And they remind each other that “we are not convinced that the present style and format of the General Chapter will be appropriate for the future, given the increasing participation of Partners throughout the Institute”.<sup>6</sup> The Spirit has seeped into their bones and they marvel at God’s plan for the Lasallian Mission.

In the above examples we glimpse the Institute’s experience regarding our rapidly changing demographic reality and an encouraging sign for our time: Lasallian Association for Mission. Even as the Institute traversed the tumultuous decade of the 1970s, it was at the 40<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (1976) that the *Signum Fidei* members made their first consecration before the relics of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and in the presence of Brother Superior José Pablo. During those same years, the General Council published important circulars on our life as Brothers. The circulars, together with Lasallian formation programs, assemblies and chapters, can be imagined as two disciples telling the story of our evolving appreciation for our vocation in light of Lasallian Association for Mission. These writings and experiences are expressions of our Spirit-enlightened expectations for the contemporary Lasallian Mission.

Returning to Luke, we see that *Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him*. The “stranger” begins to speak and as they listen to the story of God’s plan of salvation their ears are

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<sup>6</sup> Bulletin of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Rome, No. 246, 2000, p. 44.

opened. They begin to harmonize their expectations with an emerging reality.

Like the two disciples, we are called to reconcile our dreams and our expectations with God's unfolding plans for us and our Lasallian mission of human and Christian education.

*Does your community provide times and places for listening to God's plan for salvation? Do you and your Brothers have sufficient opportunities to reflect on the best way to harmonize your expectations about our ministry with the reality of today's Institute? Do you and your community have frequent recourse to the Gospel, our first and principal rule?*

*In my last letter to you, I spoke about the many voices through which the Holy Spirit communicates with us. Are you and your community paying attention to these voices? Are you really listening? What are these voices (the poor, our Partners, the Church) saying about the best way to increase our apostolic potential?*

## **Open your ears and listen!**

For those of us committed to the apostolic ministry of human and Christian education I insist on the importance of listening: "There is power in listening because you honor the needs of others by truly hearing what they need. We listen to learn, to erase assumptions, to nurture the other, to uphold human dignity, to bring peace, to connect and to grow. We shall build relationships globally to empower all communities of the world to live justly, act tenderly and walk humbly in our shared mission."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Thompson, PJ, Lasallian Women's Symposium, Auckland. Blog.

***Can you and your community dedicate more time to listen  
to your Partners speaking about our shared charism  
and mission?***

Toward the end of the Gospel story there is the simple prayer that the disciples, with hands open, utter to Jesus at the end of the day when he made as if to go on, “come, stay with us”. Saint John Baptist de La Salle taught us the prayer of simple attention, the pinnacle of the method of mental or interior prayer, and provided us with practices for frequently placing ourselves in the presence of God.

Simple attention to the presence of God is a characteristic of Lasallian spirituality and is an element of a profound interior life:

*One of the principal messages of the 44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter was the call to develop a deeper interior life. It urgently called on all the Brothers to be men of interior lives in gospel simplicity. The report of the Chapter tells us to understand in earnest a process of spiritual renewal which will show itself in a spirituality that is visible, credible and prophetic, and which will underpin the contemplative dimension of our lives and lead us to revise our way of life so as to become once again “poor Brothers whom the poor people seek out”. In this way our communities will be recognized by their spirituality.<sup>8</sup>*

Today, to be visibly recognized as credible and prophetic, our communities must be intentionally open to Association

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<sup>8</sup> Circular 466, *They will call themselves Brothers*, Rome, January, 2013, pp.43-44.

for the Lasallian Mission. The 44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter urges us “to open the community to Lasallians who seek to develop their faith and deepen their spirituality and understanding of the mission by their sharing with the Brothers”.<sup>9</sup> Programmed times are needed for Brothers and Partners to gather together to share their experience of God’s presence and discern the will of the Spirit for the mission today. Let us commit ourselves to inviting our Partners to “come, stay with us”. Let us create opportunities to listen to each other and to break bread together.



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<sup>9</sup> Circular 455, *The Documents of the 44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter*, September 15, 2007, p. 21, N° 2.3.3.

## Set your heart on fire!

The story continues and the disciples' hearts are finally opened: *Were not our hearts afire when we heard the words, when he explained the Scriptures to us?* Through our prayer and daily attentiveness to the presence of God, we, too, encounter Him in the depths of our hearts.

***What more can you and your community do to insure that your students and Partners see that your hearts are on fire with the Good News?***

Like the two disciples after their experience of the breaking of the bread, we, too, are compelled – by ardent zeal - to set out in haste and tell the story. This is our ministry, born of our daily encounter with Jesus Christ our brother who calls, consecrates, sends, saves and transfigures us.<sup>10</sup>

The grace-filled experiences of the disciples at Emmaus, like de La Salle's fortuitous encounter at Parmenie, "represents a call and a choice. For the Founder, it was whether to stay at Parmenie or to return to Paris. For the disciples it was whether to keep heading to Emmaus or to return to Jerusalem. Of course, in both cases, it was more than a change of direction; it was a change of heart. It was a call to choose life over death, hope over despair".<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Rule*, Rome, 2015, Art. 21.

<sup>11</sup> Circular 469, *The Documents of the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter*, 30 November 2014, 1.11.

*The disciples did not remain in Emmaus and John Baptist de La Salle did not stay in Parmenie. What about you? What about us? Do we stay put or do we adjust our expectations to reality and set out in haste to more effectively announce the Gospel to the poor?*

## Set out in haste!

Impelled by hearts on fire with the experience of the risen Christ, the disciples now *set out in haste* to announce to the eleven and their companions that they had seen Jesus. We, together with our Partners, are also called to set out and announce the Good News. De La Salle reminded his first Brothers the gift of their ministry and the experience of God in their lives was intended to be shared: “this gratuitous gift transforming their lives was not bestowed on them for themselves alone. They have the mission of sharing that gift with others....”<sup>12</sup>

Besech this Divine Spirit, therefore, to make known to you all the gifts with which God has favored you, so that you can communicate them, not in the words of human wisdom. But with those with which God’s ministers are inspired.<sup>13</sup>

Stories are conveyors of grace. Luke’s account of the *The Road to Emmaus* can help us enrich our own narrative of Association for Mission. Like the two disciples, we share

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<sup>12</sup> The two missing Chapters of Announcing the Gospel to the Poor, Michel Sauvage, FSC, and Miguel Campos, FSC, in, *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 3, no. 1, 2012, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Meditation 189,1,2.

our dreams, concerns and hopes and harmonize our expectations with reality. Through conversations, assemblies, prayer and chapters we are trying to discern the best way to increase our apostolic potential.

Association for Mission with our Partners sets our hearts on fire with apostolic zeal and prepares us for the surprise of unexpected grace. The unrealistic expectations of the disciples, through conversation and communion with Jesus, were enlightened by revelation. “The disciples left Jerusalem because they had not experienced what they expected. They returned to the city after experiencing what they did not expect. What happened in the middle was revelation. What happened in the middle was communication and communion.”<sup>14</sup>



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<sup>14</sup> Upchurch, Cackie, in Give Us This Day, May, 2014, p. 57.



## Remember and reflect!

*Our stories are important. What are we learning about Association for Mission through conversations and communion with Jesus, each other and our Partners?*

Let us now return to the beginning of our own narrative:

The founding event that links the Institute of today with its origins is that of June 6, 1694, when John Baptist de La Salle and twelve companions associated themselves to dedicate their lives to the Christian education of poor children... [This event] is also the source of the Lasallian association of laity and religious who wish to join the Lasallian mission. This is where new responses originate in association for the mission. (43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter)

Through the “eyes of faith” we see that communication and communion open the door to receive revelation. A brief review of our developing story of Association for Mission is enlightening.

Twenty years (1997) ago in “The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission” the General Council suggested new forms of association still needed to be invented:

“Association, such as it was lived by the Brothers, had a deep impact on the organization and functioning of their schools. It was a decisive factor in helping their cohesion, effectiveness, and creativity. Today, under new forms still to be invented, the same spirit of association should continue to inspire and give life to the

Lasallian Schools where colleagues are in the majority. The challenge now is for Brothers and other Lasallian educators to discover together in open dialogue how to found and promote in new foundations the associative dimensions of their commitment on behalf of the human and Christian education of the young, especially the poor.<sup>15</sup>

In a presentation following the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter (2000), former Brother Superior John Johnston summarized the Institute's experience with Lasallian Association: "It is very satisfying to me that we are moving gradually, prudently, but decisively toward a new, creative, and dynamic understanding of Lasallian Association, an Association that:

- Expresses the international communion of Brothers, Partners and Associates, persons living the Lasallian charism in distinct ways and collaborating in the Lasallian Mission;
- Respects unambiguously the distinct vocations of all those living the charism;
- Has its own appropriate governmental structures at all levels;
- Exists for the human and Christian education of youth, poor youth particularly".<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *The Lasallian Mission of Human & Christian Education: A Shared Mission*. General Council, Rome, 1997, N<sup>o</sup>. 3.31.

<sup>16</sup> Johnston, FSC, John, *Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor*, May-June, 2000, p. 5.

Former Brother Superior Álvaro Rodríguez wrote in his 2001 Pastoral Letter:

It seems to me that we should look upon association as a time of grace and renewal.... We know that the charism came from a movement.... We know that the charism came from a movement and we have made it into an institution. This is an inevitable and necessary process. But it is important to revive the fire that gave us birth and to re-live the mystical moment of our origin. Are we not living in a time of new charismatic freshness with new blood and a new reading that is being done by lay persons? Might not this new reading be an opportunity to renew our community life?<sup>17</sup>



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<sup>17</sup> Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC. Álvaro, *Being Brothers in Community: Our Primary Association*, Pastoral Letter, 2001, p. 31.

Bulletin 250 (2005) offered examples of how association was being lived in Districts, ministries and communities. It reminds us of the need for creativity and innovation. The examples “invite us to dream, not simply by repeating formulas from the past, but by inventing Lasallian Association for the new millennium with boldness and creativity.” It goes on to say, “this Bulletin proves to us that Association does not exist for itself. On the contrary, its reason for being, its strength lies in the irresistible passion for Christ and passion for children and young people who energize the lives of those who have been associating themselves with the Church throughout the centuries”.<sup>18</sup>

Two years later, echoing the above reality, Former Brother Superior John Johnston, in his message to the capitulants at the 44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (2007) said:

We Lasallians live in unity, a unity very evident in this Chapter but we live very different realities. A number of you represent areas that are blessed with vocations. You look at your institutions and are confident that their future is assured. Others of you have had few or even no vocations in the last decade or several decades. You have numerous Lasallian institutions. What is your plan? Do you intend to turn the schools over to others who will conduct them without direct reference to our Lasallian heritage? Or are you in the process of creatively, dynamically, courageously creating structures that will assure that our institutions continue as Lasallian – with

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<sup>18</sup> *Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission*, Institute Bulletin no. 250, 2005, p. 4.

Brothers we hope, but without Brothers if necessary. To create such structures of governance and of Lasallian formation is a formidable task. We have no time to waste.<sup>19</sup>

Circular 461 (2011) continued the description of our experience:

At the present time, no universal model or system of association exists for colleagues in Lasallian educational ministries. What does exist is a kaleidoscope of experiences lived out in various countries and cultures pointing to new directions for the future. These experiences appear in two complementary global contexts: Christian and multi-religious. New forms of communion and of participation in the Lasallian charism are emerging in both contexts.... The challenge is to find ways to appreciate, acknowledge, and perhaps give form to this action of the Spirit. The opportunity is to identify and expand in the future this new and significant presence of the Lasallian charism in the world of the young, especially the poor.<sup>20</sup>

Because of the rich and complex cultural diversity of the Institute, there cannot be a universal model of association. Structures of association will continue to evolve according to local realities. The protagonists of this evolution –

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<sup>19</sup> *44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter*, Institute Bulletin no. 251, April-June, 2007, p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> Circular 461, *Associated for the Lasallian Mission... an Act of Hope*. General Council, Rome 2011, p. 34-35.

Brothers, Partners, or Brothers and Partners – will continue to be identified as conversation - communion – revelation progress.

Brothers Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos attested to the Founder’s intuition that the organizational structure of the Institute followed the lived experience of the first Brothers.

*Does our lived experience indicate that the organic development of Lasallian Association for Mission should continue at its own pace? Or, should we move towards a more intentional process of creating a more structured model (albeit culturally contextualized) for Association?*

## **Be a part of the story!**

All of us can participate in the dynamic “conversation-communion-revelation” regarding Association. I suggest that both with your community and with your community and Partners, you carefully look at the following issues:

- The rapidly changing demographics of the Institute.
- The fact that, until now, Lasallian Association for Mission has developed with the support of the Institute’s organizational structures and financial support.
- The survival and flourishing of Association for the Lasallian Mission without the presence, or the memory of the presence, of the Brothers.
- The survival and flourishing of Association for Lasallian Mission in an educational community

where there are no longer Partners who co-ministered with the Brothers.

The whisperings of the Holy Spirit, the invitations from the Church, and the demographic changes in the Institute obviously urge us to “set out in haste” to examine these issues as we attempt to discern the best way to insure that the poor, the vulnerable and all those seeking a human and Christian education will continue to find welcoming Lasallian educational communities.

Signum Fidei, the International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU), the La Salle Fraternity in France, the Lasallian Educational Network (VLP) in North Belgium, programs for Lasallian volunteers in México and RELAN, and communities of Brothers and Partners in ARLEP and RELAN are among some of the examples of Districts’ initiatives that foster Association for Mission. When a District, Delegation or Region sets out in haste, the mission benefits!

Other noteworthy examples include Lasallian orientation programs for new members of our educational communities. The 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter called for the formulation of criteria to strengthen these programs in order to increase a sense of belonging to a Lasallian ministry. In this regard, a Declaration on Lasallian Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is being prepared.

Most people attracted to Lasallian spirituality and our charism do not identify with traditional forms of religious life. New expressions of Lasallian vocations are emerging.

We should pay close attention to these new ways of being Lasallian. Like the two disciples, we should open our ears, eyes and hearts and be ready to be surprised by God's plan. In my experience, His plan for our mission is often communicated through communion with our Partners.

Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, reminds us that:

A sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God's holy and faithful people for the good of all. Something truly new brought about by the Spirit need not overshadow other gifts and spiritualities in making itself felt. To the extent that a charism is better directed to the heart of the Gospel, its exercise will be more ecclesial. It is in communion, even when this proves painful, that a charism is seen to be authentic and mysteriously fruitful.<sup>21</sup>

Our charism and our religious vocation are directed to the heart of the Gospel and are, therefore, authentic. Because of their ecclesial character they are open to the voice of the Spirit. We believe in our life as Brothers of the Christian Schools. We invite young men to be attentive to the Spirit's voice and to respond generously if they are called to be Brothers.

***Can you envision new and creative ways for you and your community to invite young men to "come and see" our fraternal life? Have you asked your Partners to join you in this venture?***

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<sup>21</sup> Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, November 24, 2013, N<sup>o</sup>. 130.



The experience of one Lasallian Volunteer is an example of a young person listening to the Spirit's promptings. Quoting a member of his community, he wrote in a letter to former Brother Superior Álvaro: "You are sent to the ones whom no one heard when they cried."<sup>22</sup> This man experienced, through his contact with the Brothers, a call to a new expression of the Lasallian vocation – that of a Lasallian Volunteer.



We must commit to accompany all Lasallian vocations, both to the Brothers and to new vocational expressions and stories.

From the very beginning of the Lasallian story a call is heard. It is a cry that comes from “children of the

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<sup>22</sup> Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC. Álvaro, *Consecrated by God the Trinity, as a community of Brothers, to make visible his gratuitous and supportive love*, Pastoral Letter, 2007, p. 25.

artisans and the poor”, and it is chanted by all children and young people who are in need of education. The cry does not abate throughout the entire narrative; in reality it is sustaining the story, it puts into action its protagonists and it attracts new actors to participate in the story. We can see to it that the story will end when that cry is no longer heard.”<sup>23</sup>

You and I are called to accompany the new actors in the story. Each one of us must be committed to the accompaniment of those called to the Lasallian mission: “All Institute levels – Regions, Districts, Sectors, and especially at the community level - will contribute to the creation of a ‘culture of accompaniment’ for all Lasallians throughout their entire lives.”<sup>24</sup>

***Do you and your community accompany all Lasallian vocations? Do you invite Partners, young men attracted to our life, volunteers and other Lasallians to conversations and communion that open us to revelation?***

I hope this letter encourages you to be an active participant in the evolving story of Association for Mission. I invite you to include Circular 461 and Bulletin 250, *Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission*, on the agenda for reflection both in your community and ministry. These documents may be found at [www.lasalle.org](http://www.lasalle.org).

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<sup>23</sup> Bulletin of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Rome, N°. 250, 2005, 2.1.

<sup>24</sup> Circular 469, The Documents of the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, November 30, 2014, proposition 30.

Concrete expressions of Lasallian Association must, of course, be incarnated in the rich and varied cultures of our worldwide Institute. Please be sure that you are helping to make Association relevant to Brothers and Partners in your own District or Delegation.

Set out in haste: Be a Brother of hope! Be a Brother who invites young men to join our fraternity! Be a Brother who encourages his colleagues to associate with us for the Lasallian mission! Be a “detached” Brother willing to go out and meet the poor!

Remember: *“Radical hope is apostolic and a characteristic of our Lasallian history. Hope is disruptive and does not tolerate inertia. It calls for mobility and flexibility, for going to the periphery and beyond the border.”*<sup>25</sup>

Recall the prophets who “not only announce to the people an end that the community cannot admit; they also proclaim a hope that the people can hardly believe.”<sup>26</sup>

## **Be a living sign of the presence of the Kingdom!**

The essential is not to know if we are going to survive, the most important thing is to know if we are contributing to the creation of a world that is more human, starting from Gospel values. What is important is to exploit the dynamism of our founding charism, to

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. N<sup>o</sup>. 10.4.

<sup>26</sup> Massingale, Rev, Bryan N. “See, I am Doing Something New!” Prophetic Ministry for a Church in Transition, <http://www.jkenirp.com/massin.htm>.

know how to take risks while looking ahead. The most important thing is that our present has meaning, that our life is worth the effort, that many, thanks to us, discover the face of the Father and his maternal tenderness, that the Gospel be proclaimed to the poor, and the young people find in us the support they need.<sup>27</sup>



Brothers, engaged in daily communal and personal prayer, are actively engaged in the dynamic of Christian conversion. I encounter Brothers who, with our Founder, know that “the demand of a permanent conversion is found at the base of every journey toward God. Seized by God who calls one to His service, the person is constantly tempted, nevertheless, to close one’s heart to the interior word, to turn back egoistically upon the self, to fabricate and install new idols. To continue one’s journey toward God, one must ceaselessly tear oneself away from the bonds

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<sup>27</sup> Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, Álvaro, To be living signs of the presence of the Kingdom, in a community of Brothers consecrated by God the Trinity, Pastoral Letter, 2008, p. 30.

one knits for oneself, bonds that deaden one's enthusiasm".<sup>28</sup>

I am personally encouraged by so many Brothers whose hearts burn with the love of God and all humanity. So many of you inspire me by crossing personal borders to live fully your consecration to the Trinity for the glory of God and the wellbeing of his daughters and sons.

### **Go and announce the Gospel!**

I completed the RELAF pastoral visit in May. The Lasallian Mission in Africa and Madagascar is dynamic, vibrant and diverse. The Region is blessed with both English-speaking and French-speaking novitiates and scholasticates. Young men from different countries pray, study, work and live together in a spirit of fraternity. They witness to the reality that we are all members of one human family. General Councilor Brother Pierre Ouattara and I were particularly pleased by the increase of alternative educational initiatives for the poor and vulnerable, including programs that promote the education of girls and women. In a special way, I express my appreciation to Brothers and Lasallians in those countries I was unable to visit: Niger, Eritrea, Nigeria and Guinea Conakry.

The Region remains committed to achieving self-sufficiency and greater collaboration among the Districts

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<sup>28</sup> The two missing Chapters of Announcing the Gospel to the Poor, Michel Sauvage, FSC, and Miguel Campos, FSC, in, *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 3, N<sup>o</sup>. 1, 2012, p. 63.

and Delegation. In August the second regional CIL was held at the CELAF Center in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The three-week program was organized in one-week modules and open to Brothers and Partners. The themes were: Association and Mission, the Pastoral Ministry of Vocations, and Catechesis and Evangelization.



The Institute has recently taken responsibility for the Ethiopian Catholic University – La Salle in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I am grateful for the generous collaboration of University President Brother Augustine Nicoletti (District of Eastern North America), the Lwanga District, the Board of the International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU), and Brother Amilcare Boccuccia, Secretary for Solidarity and Development. The Visitors of RELAF are also considering the establishment of another Lasallian University in Africa.

Meanwhile, Solidarity with South Sudan, a joint project of the Unions of Women and Men Superiors General continues its commitment to this newest nation trapped in

a civil war that is delaying the realization of the country's human and social development. Brother William Firmin (ANZPPNG) continues his selfless service as the on-site administrator. His term was to have been completed last year; however, a replacement has yet to be found. We are grateful to him, Brother Joseph Alak Deng, and Brother Denis Loft, now at Bethlehem University, for contributing to this most important ministry of the Church.

### **Carry new life!**

I was blessed to participate in two symposia for Lasallian women: in México (May) and New Zealand (July). *Billums* were among the gifts shared during the Lasallian Women's Symposium in New Zealand. A billum is a colorful Papua New Guinean carry-all bag. Mothers often carry their babies in a billum. The billum can, I believe, symbolize both gatherings; in the words of one participant, "we are called to carry new life". All over the Institute I see Brothers and Partners bringing hope and "new life" to the daughters and sons of God.

Approximately 250 women participated in these symposia. They reflected on and celebrated the role, identity, and contributions of women in the Lasallian Mission. Lasallian women are essential to the future sustainability of the mission. They "carry new life" to us, to one another, and to our students.

The quality and quantity of women sustaining the mission is a particular richness of our Lasallian Association. Women are the majority of educators in three of the five Regions and



nearly so in a fourth. They are important voices that require our attentive listening. As one symposium participant wrote:

*I thought a lot about what it really means to ‘share our story’ as Lasallian women and to carry on this important work...to truly breathe in the stories of others and breathe them back out again so others are seen and heard. It’s a simple truth that no one will know your story unless you share it. So, I made the decision to attend one event, host a study, speak for a group or attend a conference and share – at least twice a month. I’ve gone to various places and talked about the importance of our Lasallian tradition or introduced others to what it means to be Lasallian. It’s my simple way of sharing what I learned and who we are with others. I can spread awareness of our Lasallian tradition.<sup>29</sup>*

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<sup>29</sup> Thompson, PJ, email, October 25, 2017.



## **Live with enthusiasm!**

Contributing to the vitality of the mission are the annual gatherings of young Brothers, Lasallian Youth, and Young Lasallians organized by Districts and Regions.

Castletown, Ireland, hosted the 2017 assembly of Young Lasallian Professionals from the Districts and Delegation of RELEM. I was happy to be with approximately 40 young women and men enthusiastically engaged in the assembly's theme of *Lasallian Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Together we reflected on the conscious awareness of the presence of God, the desire for experiences of communion, and other opportunities that give fuller meaning to our lives.

## **Appreciate and encourage!**

In 2017, the General Council and I met the RELAF Visitors' at the conclusion of the Pastoral Visit (April). In June and October, I participated in the RELEM Visitors' Conference: and in August, I was with the PARC Visitors. Brother Jorge Gallardo, Vicar General, participated in the RELAL Visitors' Conference and joined the RELAN Visitors through video conferencing. These are important fraternal gathering that allow us to thank and encourage our leaders. They also keep us attentive to the outcomes of the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter and the implementation of its propositions.

## **Set out in haste, Brother! Invite others to join you! Continue to announce the Gospel to the poor!**

Let our founding story and its subsequent chapters be a source of grace and hope for you:

With not thought of turning back, John Baptist de La Salle and his Brothers opened a path to holiness for all educators. The Brothers, the first guardians of the Lasallian charism, are happy to see numerous Partners wishing to deepen the knowledge of the Founder revealed in his life, spirituality and work.

In the growth of association with men and women who walk side-by-side with them and identify themselves today as the sons and daughters of John Baptist de La Salle, they see a sign of the times which fills them with hope.



As a consequence, the Brothers feel they have a special responsibility to share their pedagogical and spiritual heritage with all those they work with. Through this sharing they receive the calls of the Spirit to be Brothers today:

- The call to be brothers with them and to live fraternally as a sign for all Lasallian educators;
- The call to be for them and with them a channel for the light with which God “himself enlightened the hearts of those he destined to announce his word to children”;
- The call to be among them and with them the heart, the memory, and the guarantor of the Lasallian charism.<sup>30</sup>

Brother, “I thank my God whenever I think of you; and every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped to spread the Good News from the day you first heard it right up to the present”.<sup>31</sup>

## Let us pray together

*Father, may we realize that the gift of educational service to the poor that all of us offer the world comes from you. Bless our pastoral ministry with more Brothers and Lasallian vocations so that we may be able to promote your glory and reach many*

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<sup>30</sup> Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Rule*, Rome, 2015, Art. 157.

<sup>31</sup> St. Paul, Letter to the Philippians 1:3-5.

*more through our ministries, for our post-modern world does not seem to know you.*

*Righteous Father, help our Brothers and the larger Lasallian Family know you as Jesus knew you, with that love that you have had for us before the foundation of the world. We have tried, through our frail efforts, to make your love known to them. May the love with which you have loved us truly be in them. Amen.*

From a prayer by former General Councilor Brother Victor Franco, FSC,  
at the conclusion of the 44<sup>th</sup> General Chapter

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bro. Robert Schieler". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

Brother Robert Schieler  
*Brother Superior*



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**Supper at Emmaus**

Caravaggio.

1602

National Gallery

London