

LASALLIANS WITHOUT LIMITS

CREATION OF
SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES

Radical changes in demographics
and the environment





RADICAL CHANGES IN DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT



For some, a **BORDER** is a natural feature formed by a river or a mountain range; for others, an artificial feature formed by a ditch or a wall. For the migrant, however, the border has been a wound and will always be a **SCAR**.

1. "BORDERS? I've never seen one. But I have heard that they exist in some people's minds".

Thor Heyerdahl

Willingness to migrate now means little - the majority have been forced to leave their homes¹. We are made to see the painful images of families fleeing from armed conflict, of shipwrecked people shivering with cold and fear, of teenagers dodging adults in uniform, all of them fleeing war, political instability, social insecurity, the lack of opportunities for work, natural disasters or the common denominator of all these calamities: hunger. The lucky ones live to send news of their adventures to those they left behind; for the hapless, the tunnel, the desert, the train, or boat have been transformed into a coffin².

Climate change brings about migrations of animals, plants and ultimately of the poorest people. "The increase of migrants fleeing poverty worsened by environmental degradation is tragic"³. The International Bank and the International Monetary Fund maintain

that this large-scale migration will be a permanent feature of the global economy during the next few decades⁴.

2. The CHANGE that we are already experiencing

To a large extent caused by migratory phenomena, the global demographic is affected by the forces of change between generations, in the family structure, and in the role of religion in society.

Although there are regional differences, the demographic trends that are shaping the world are generally the same. In an attempt, partial and incomplete, at pointing them out, and in order to awaken interest in the international Lasallian community, we offer the following list⁵:

- 1 65.3 million people worldwide have been displaced by force. There are 21.3 million refugees worldwide; more than half are under 18. In the world there are 10 million stateless persons. Every day 33,972 people find themselves forced to abandon their homes due to conflicts or persecutions. UNHCR. June 20, 2016 (<http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>).
- 2 As of October 2016, the number of dead migrants already totalled 7,189; by 2015 the total was 5,729. The deadliest regions are: Mediterranean Sea: 4,812 deaths; the Sahara and North Africa: 1,089; United States / Mexico: 409; Southeast Asia: 208; Horn of Africa: 195 and Guatemala/Mexico: 159. Missing Migrants Project (www.missingmigrants.iom.int).
- 3 Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father, Francis, about caring for the common home. Rome, May 24, 2015. No. 25.

- 4 Global Monitoring Report 2015 / 2016: Development Goals in an Era of Demographic Change (www.worldbank.org).
- 5 Based on the article of D'Vera Cohn and Andrea Caumont: *10 demographic trends that are shaping the U.S. and the world*. March 31, 2016 (www.pewresearch.org).



DIVERSITY

▶ **COUNTRIES ARE INCREASINGLY DIVERSE RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY, AND WILL BE SO EVEN MORE SO IN THE COMING YEARS.**

The cause is, and will continue to be, immigration.

▶ **MIGRATION IS A COMPLEX GLOBAL PHENOMENON THAT DOES NOT FOLLOW PRE-ESTABLISHED PATTERNS⁶.**

There are immigrants in virtually all regions of the world, rich or poor. We cannot now speak only of “South to North” migration. Many of the displaced people in the world come from, and are directed to regions within the confines of their countries, which makes it even more difficult to register information⁷.

6 Where displaced people in the world are housed: 39% in Middle East and North Africa; 29% in sub-Saharan Africa; 14% in Asia and Oceania; 12% in America and 6% in Europe. 53% of the world's refugees come from three countries: Syria, 4.9 million; Afghanistan, 2.7 million; and Somalia, 1.1 million. Countries hosting the largest number of migrants: Turkey, 2.5 million; Pakistan, 1.6 million; Lebanon, 1.1 million; Iran: 979,400; Ethiopia, 736,100; and Jordan, 664,100. UNHCR. June 20, 2016 (<http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>).

7 There are, however, some data. According to *El Pais*, Colombia tops the list with 6.9 million cases, followed by Syria, with 6.6 million, and Iraq, with 4.4 million. (www.elpais.com.co/elpais/colombia/noticias/colombia-pais-con-mayor-numero-desplazados-internos-onu).

▶ **YOUNG ADULTS BORN AFTER 1980 (THE MILLENNIUM GENERATION) ARE THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE NEAR FUTURE.**

Numerically, they have exceeded their parents (“generation X”, born at the beginning of the 1960s) and their grandparents (“Baby boomers”, born between 1946 and 1964). Racially and ethnically they have greater diversity than their ancestors, are better academically prepared; however, this is the age group that is suffering most from lack of work.

▶ **FAMILY STRUCTURE IS CHANGING.**

After decades of decline in the marriage rate, the proportion of adults who have never married is rising. In countries of greater affluence, two-parent households are in decline, while divorces, second marriages and cohabitation are on the rise.

▶ **THE ROLE OF WOMEN AS AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FORCE GLOBALLY HAS GROWN AND WILL CONTINUE TO GROW DRAMATICALLY.**

Globally, mothers are now the sole or main supplier in two of every five households with children⁸.

▶ **THE NUMBER OF ADULTS WHO DO NOT IDENTIFY WITH ANY RELIGION IS GROWING.**

In almost half of the countries, including those traditionally considered Christian or Muslim, “non-members” are now the second largest religious group. Among those of the Millennium generation” one in three now consider themselves unaffiliated to any religion.

▶ **FOR THE YEAR 2050 THE RELIGIOUS MAP OF THE WORLD WILL BE VERY DIFFERENT⁹.**

The continuous migration of populations of Muslim religion to Christian countries will change the current proportions. Although globally Christians will remain the largest religious group, the number of Muslims will almost be the same as Christians.

8 Cf. International Labour Organization. *Labor force, female (% of total labor force)* (www.worldbank.org) and Michelle Lodge. *Female breadwinners: What it means when mum is the provider*. Fortune Magazine. (www.fortune.com).

9 Cf. Raziye Akkoc. *Mapped: What the world's religious landscape will look like in 2050*, The Telegraph, 28th December 2016



3 Towards the creation of sustainable COMMUNITIES

A global consensus pointing towards local and global sustainability is essential to tackle the underlying problems that these demographic trends bring with them. Speaking of “sustainability” we are talking about care, conservation, regeneration and longevity.

So we define a sustainable community as one that is economical, environmentally and socially healthy and resistant; facing challenges not with fragmented approaches but with coordinated solutions, and doing this with a broad perspective that looks well beyond the upcoming budget or electoral cycle¹⁰.

In order to reach a true sustainability we need to think beyond the borders of our immediate surroundings and analyse planet Earth as the *common home* that we must protect. As Lasallians we are called to work to “unite all the human family in the search for a comprehensive and sustainable development, because we know that things can change”¹¹.

10 Cf. Definition of the ISCVT (Institute for Sustainable Communities) in www.iscvt.org.

11 *Laudato Si'* N° 13.



AUSTRALIA
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NEW ZEALAND



CITIZENS OF THE WORLD AND BEYOND ITS BORDERS



1.

The DNA of the citizen of the WORLD

“As never before in history, common destiny calls us to look for a new beginning”¹². From the perspective of the Church, this new beginning requires us to consider the future of the planet as an ethical problem.

We begin by considering that the genetic material of our cells can be traced back to our parents, grandparents and early ancestors. We realize that despite the diversity in the world, it turns out that our DNA have much more in common with other nationalities than we would have ever imagined¹³. We are indeed citizens of the world. Francis reminds us of this by telling us that “being created by the same father, all beings in the universe are united by invisible ties and form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion that moves us to a sacred, loving and humble respect”¹⁴.

As brothers and sisters, not only of all human beings but also of the whole of creation, we can proclaim that a world without borders, open and welcoming, is possible. We can exclaim that in fact “we are made of star-stuff”¹⁵.

12 *Map of the Earth*, The Hague (29 June 2000). Quoted in *Laudato Si’* N° 2017.

13 Concerning the DNA journey, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBU2-qmIYCc>.

14 Cf. *Laudato Si’*, N° 1, 11 and 89.

15 Although the phrase was already known, it was popularized by Carl Sagan in his book *The Cosmic Connection*, 1973. The Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal uses it in his *Cosmic Song*, *Cántiga* 4; 1991. The same idea appears in the book of Judy Cannato, *Field of Compassion*, published in 2010.

2.

Beyond borders we discover THE WILL OF THE FATHER

The step towards recognition of this bond of communion with creation and with “others” is not always easy. Remember the Jesus of the Gospel who in the border region of Tyre and Sidon responded to a foreigner asking his help thus: “It isn’t good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs” (Mk 7: 24-30; Mt 15: 21-28).

This story puzzles us, perhaps because we hold the idea that Jesus is a supernatural man. God, however, doesn’t do anything by halves and when he became man, he truly did so. He took on *all* human ways of acting with *all* their implications. Jesus was a child with all that this implies, he lived subject to the processes of growth and maturation of a person in his context. A man of his time, Jesus could only participate in the ideas of the society in which he lived. As with many of us today, he also grew up in a world full of prejudices.

For Jesus, however, all that was enriched by a presence of God that led him to live otherwise and glimpse other horizons for his life and for the life of all those he encountered. This is one of the specific moments where we see Jesus make the leap beyond cultural borders and place himself in a new and different perspective.

Jesus says from the outset that he has been sent *only* to the lost sheep of Israel. It is the woman who, with her courageous response, stirs Jesus, awakens in him something more profound and makes him realize that God’s

love is for everyone, without exception, and manifest where an open and receptive heart is found.

From that moment, Jesus was able to overcome prejudices of race, culture and religion, and to thereby discover the will of his Father. In his process of human growth Jesus realized the importance of being open to differences and being willing to welcome them. His vision was broadened to recognize that humanity is one, and there is no reason to discriminate against or exclude people: “Woman, your faith is great; may it be done to you as you wish”.

Like many of us, Jesus also believed he did not have any prejudice, until that moment when he was tested. He could rethink his borders; can we?

3.

Know how to be realistic; don't let yourself be carried away by IDEOLOGY¹⁶.

Pope Francis admires, and constantly offers as an example of being Christian, people living on “the border”. His own testimony invites us to move out so as to respond to peoples’ needs.

As Church leader, Francis has taught us to be practical when it comes to helping the needy. He knows that if the goal of achieving

¹⁶ Cf. Jeffrey Krames, *Lead with Humility: 12 Leadership Lessons from Pope Francis* (New York: American Management Association, 2014).

a more open and welcoming church is to be achieved, ideologies must be relativised and breaks made with the more rigid parts of doctrine, those that impede embracing the human, and looking our brother in the eye.

His call urges us to open up different paths in our fields of action, to experiment with new ideas and services, and not be afraid to push ourselves beyond limits that are self-imposed or imposed by society or by the limits of conventions.

4.

In accordance with the tradition of OUR INSTITUTE

Lasallians, by tradition, have gone beyond the borders. This creative impulse comes from our foundation, when John Baptist de La Salle, going beyond the social and religious borders of his time, brought together a heterogeneous group of lay teachers that, in the spirit of partnership was first transformed into community, then into society, and finally into Institute. The Lasallian model was the prototype of all the brotherhoods of education which, in the middle of the 19th century, became the fastest-growing movement in the church. During its more than three centuries of existence, this Institute, which has twice been on the verge of disappearing in France, his country of birth, has spread today to 79 countries where nearly a million students are educated. What are the fundamental principles that have allowed it to continue with such vitality for so long? What can we say about the



successful application of these principles in so many and such varied countries and cultures, allowing it to transcend the pre-set differences of race, gender, language and religion?¹⁷

In general, we could talk about two fundamental principles: the constant preoccupation with the education and empowerment needed to enable the disadvantaged to live with dignity, and the spirit of gratuity and service in the training offered and received in our educational works¹⁸.

The last General Chapters and International Mission Assemblies¹⁹ have provided remarkable shades of innovation in the application of these two principles:

17 Gerard Rummery, FSC. *Creativity: The Hallmark of Lasallian Education*. Lasallian Education Services. Australia. January 26, 2011.

18 *Ibid.* Cf. *Bulletin of the Institute* N° 234, The UNESCO Noma Prize.

19 Report of the 2013 International Assembly. *A family, a mission: Lasallians associated for the educational service of the poor*. Priority areas 1.1.1, 1.3.1, 1.2.1, 2.3.3, and 3.1.1. Rome, May 2013. Circular 469, Documents of the 45th General Chapter: "This work of God is also our work" Proposals 19 and 27. Rome, November 30, 2014; Circular 470, *Towards the year 2021: Living together our joyful mission*. Strategy 2.4. Rome, March 24, 2015.

- ▶ the formation of the International Council for Lasallian Association and the Educational Mission (CIAMEL);
- ▶ the integration of the Lasallian University Network;
- ▶ the promotion of interreligious dialogue initiatives;
- ▶ the coordination of the Lasallian youth movements;
- ▶ the expansion of volunteer programs;
- ▶ the creation of mixed communities that integrate the different Lasallian vocations
- ▶ the inter-congregational impulse to share different charisms in a shared mission;
- ▶ the expansion and articulation of the communication network at all levels;
- ▶ the prioritization of sustainable initiatives for the service of the poor; and,
- ▶ the effective effort for creatively sharing financial resources.

In addition to the many local initiatives launched during this period, it is worth mentioning initiatives of the Institute such as the 100+ Project, launched by the 42nd General Chapter; Solidarity with South Sudan, driven by the 44th, and the *Fratelli project* inspired by the 45th. Creative from the beginning, Lasallians, as well as other religious congregations, continue to be called “initiators”²⁰ in the educational and evangelising task of the Church in today’s world.

20 Pope Francis: *Evangelii Gaudium*. No. 24. Rome 2013.







GOING TO NEW BORDERS REQUIRES DISCERNMENT



Going beyond the borders requires determination and discernment. The Church and the Institute have experienced this since their inception.

1.

The Good News is valid for EVERYONE²¹

The primitive Christian community soon found itself at the crossroads of maintaining those who wanted to preserve the Judaizing stance of Peter, or affirming those who adhered to the open and inclusive attitude of Paul. Regarding the Jewish religion which it had inherited and was living fully, the primitive Christian community had questions about what was valid for all and what was hampering the transmission of the good news of Jesus to all people²².

Their response indicates clearly that, higher than the law, is the spirit of Christ which makes us free to act by love; it doesn't matter whether one is Jew or Greek, circumcised or not. What saves is faith in Jesus Christ, that this spiritual freedom with regard to the Law leads us to spiritual works and a life according to the Spirit. The statement of Peter at the Council of Jerusalem is key: *we believe that both they and we have been saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus*. Mutual concessions on non-essential issues belong to the more pragmatic order.

In the same way, today faced with complex and changing cultural divergence, we must discern what is essential and what is circumstantial. We cannot impose as absolute what is changing, but as the missionaries and catechists that we are, we cannot change what

is the core of our faith, valid for all times and circumstances.

To think in sustainable communities, Lasallians face the tension between supporting, maintaining and caring for what we have; or detaching ourselves, letting go. Going beyond also means leaving something behind. "*The real future is what comes in its proper time and, often, leaves in pieces our predictions and plans*" (Karl Rahner). "As we prepare for the real future, what may be more difficult in our lives is letting go of something beautiful that we ourselves have helped to create; accepting that this should be abandoned, not because it has lost its beauty, but because its time has passed and another new beauty is forming"²³. We Lasallians are called to form this new beauty.

2.

The Lasallian DISCERNMENT process

Like the Founder and the first Brothers who were *deeply moved by the human and spiritual distress of the children of artisans and of the poor*²⁴, we today need to effectively respond to the needs expressed in the metaphor of the "border"²⁵.

21 Cf. Luis Ugalde *Interrogantes de América Latina para la Iglesia*. Latinoamerican Episcopal Conference.

22 See *Acts of the Apostles*: chs. 10, 11 and 15, and *Letter to the Galatians*.

23 Bernard J. Lee, SM, *The Beating of Great Wings: A Worldly Spirituality for Active, Apostolic Communities*. (New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2004), p. 32.

24 *The Rule*, article 1.

25 Circular 469, *Documents of the 45th General Chapter*, Rome, 2014, Proposition 19.



Time table

9.05 - 10.05 Maths - Bro John Peter

10.05 - 10.50 Mrs. Jyothina

11.05 - 12.00 Mrs. Venkatasubramanian

Bro. Brickston.

ISH :-
HS :-
VS :-
ITE

DISCER



This metaphor makes us feel uncomfortable and challenges us. How are we to respond? In Jesus we have the model of one who lets himself be challenged in order to discern. With the fierceness of her faith, the Syrophenician woman challenged the response-ability of Jesus. It depended on the miracle of listening, abandoning prejudices and allowing himself to be transformed by the power of truth.

In the Gospels, this is the only case where we see a Jesus that changes his mind. John Baptist de La Salle likewise let himself be challenged for he, too, needed to discern.

Lasallian discernment broadly follows three steps: becoming aware of personal and local reality; shedding light on that reality by the Word of God through prayer and dialogue with prudent people; and making decisions aware of the personal and community implications. Reflecting on John Baptist de La Salle's vocation, we could say that these steps were: he went "beyond his borders" to meet with Nyel and with the world of the education of the poor; he entered into dialogue with Nicolas Barré and Nicolas Roland with a view to bringing about the establishment of the first schools and the first society of teachers.

After more than three hundred years of Lasallian presence in the world, we are invited today to discern with responsibility and audacity and respond to the challenges of the educational mission in the different contexts, particular cultures, different religions and complex variety of social conditions. Today, more than ever, the Church and the world are calling us to go beyond the borders.

DISCERNMENT

IV.

A LOOK AT THE PRESENT
AND THE **FUTURE**



Personal and community reflection

The Lasallian heritage we have received gives us reason to be proud, but is it enough? As a Lasallian family can we be satisfied with ourselves? It will always be possible to do more, and do better -- not necessarily to leave one's own country to go to another that the Lord will show us (Gn 12:1), although this is always an option.

1. We can begin by getting out of ourselves, out of our securities and prejudices, and going to encounter our brother and sister. *The change that must take place in us is interior; we must be entirely transformed by the light and the fullness of grace and by the possession of the Spirit of God*" (Med. 152.2).

- What process do we need to implement in order to leave behind our own ideologies and stances so as to encounter the ideas of the other?
- What is my decision-making process? What is the urgency, the immediate effect? Do I consider the future implications on people, the environment and the economy of the place?

2. Our educational and religious communities should be a sign and witness that another world is possible. There is nothing more transformative than the witness of a welcoming community.

- How can we learn in community to go beyond (our limits and) borders?
- In our community could we cite some non-essential matters in which we could make mutual concessions? What are our essential, non-negotiable Lasallian values?
- Regarding the vocational question, what steps are we taking to ensure sustainable communities that maintain the vitality and viability of the Lasallian mission?
- What plans and projects do we have for making ours a sustainable community? Where are we cultivating a spirit of discernment in the solution of problems related to the care of the environment?

3.

Finally, let us go beyond the borders along with *those who have been entrusted to us.*

- What training processes and educational experiences can we implement such that the unfamiliar does not cause panic, so that the movement towards the encounter with the humanity of others is the norm and not the exception?
- How are we to teach them to go, like Jesus, to the periphery? How do we allow ourselves to be transformed by the people who are there so as to rethink our mission?
- How are we to integrate ecological training and respect for creation in our educational programs?



To know more about the initiatives which are responding to “LASALLIANS WITHOUT LIMITS” see www.lasalle.org and our social networks. Share your experiences. Send information on your activities to: comunicazione@lasalle.org



LASALLIAN REFLECTION

PREVIOUS ISSUE

2015-2016

1. “A Gospel Adventure”

2016-2017

2. “One Call, Many Voices”

NEXT ISSUE

2018-2019

4. “Our Hearts are Burning Within Us” (Year of Lasallian Vocations)



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