



**Brothers of  
the Christian  
Schools**

# DECLARATION

**ON THE  
LASALLIAN  
EDUCATIONAL  
MISSION**

**CHALLENGES, CONVICTIONS AND HOPES**

La  Salle

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

# **DECLARATION ON THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION**

**CHALLENGES, CONVICTIONS  
AND HOPES**

GENERALATE – ROMA

2020

## **Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission Challenges, Convictions and Hopes**

Brothers of the Christian Schools

Generalate - Rome

First edition

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April 2020



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***Thanks to:***

*All Lasallians who sent notes, who participated in the seminars and conferences, and who offered reflections to prepare this document.*

*In particular, we appreciate the valuable contributions of:*

*Administrative teams*

*Reflection teams*

*District mission leaders*

*District mission councils*

*Regional mission councils*

*IALU researchers and members.*

*The Service of Lasallian Research and Resources, led at the time by Diego Muñoz.*

*The Secretariat for Formation, led at the time by Jesús Rubio.*

*The Secretariat for Solidarity and Development, led by Amilcare Boccuccia and assisted by Angela Matulli.*



# CONTENT

**PRESENTATION | 7**

**INTRODUCTION | 9**

**PRELUDE | 13**

## **PART ONE**

### **OUR LIVING LASALLIAN HERITAGE | 15**

- 1.1 The human foundation of fraternity. | 18
- 1.2 De La Salle's foundational insights. | 20
- 1.3 *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*: a community educational project. | 22
- 1.4 Evolution and enrichment of the Lasallian educational tradition. | 24
- 1.5 The Institute grows outside of France. | 31
- 1.6 Fidelity and innovation. | 32
- 1.7 The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration (1967). | 36
- 1.8 The growth of Lasallian institutions of higher education. | 37
- 1.9 Toward Shared Mission and New Realities. | 39

## **PART TWO**

### **PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION | 43**

- 2.1 Brothers of the Christian Schools. | 45
- 2.2 Lasallian Partners, New Agents in the Mission. | 47
  - 2.2.1 Women in the Lasallian Educational Mission. | 51
  - 2.2.2 Contribution of members of other faith backgrounds to the Lasallian Educational Mission. | 52
  - 2.2.3 Lasallian benefactors. | 54
  - 2.2.4 Young people and Lasallian volunteers. | 55
  - 2.2.5 Lasallian former students. | 56
- 2.3 Organized groups of Lasallians. | 57
  - 2.3.1 Lasallian ecclesial groups. | 57
  - 2.3.2 Other Lasallian organizations. | 57

## **PART THREE**

### **INSPIRING AND ENDURING FUNDAMENTALS OF THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL HERITAGE | 61**

- 3.1 Jesus Christ: Reference, Inspiration, Support and Life. | 63
- 3.2 The core of the Lasallian Educational Mission: Community. | 65
- 3.3 The spirit that animates the Lasallian Educational Community. | 66
  - 3.3.1 *Faith*. | 67
  - 3.3.2 *Fraternity*. | 68
  - 3.3.3 *Ardent zeal*. | 69
- 3.4 Lasallian Association. | 70
- 3.5 Features of the Lasallian educational tradition. | 71
  - 3.5.1 The pedagogy of fraternity. | 71
  - 3.5.2 To Educate *in and for* Life. | 76

## **Part Four**

### **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE CHALLENGES OF THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION | 83**

- 4.1 Together and by Association for the Educational Service of the Poor. | 88
- 4.2 Human Solidarity. | 90
- 4.3 Citizenship and Political Life. | 93
- 4.4 Critical Thinking and Interiority. | 96
- 4.5 Integral Ecology. | 99
- 4.6 International Network. | 101
- 4.7 Beyond the School. | 103
- 4.8 Educational proposals to Pursue and Transform. | 104
  - 4.8.1 In dialogue with emerging paradigms. | 105
  - 4.8.2 From the perspective of learning rather than that of teaching. | 107
  - 4.8.3 The teacher: irreplaceable role and educational authority. | 108

### **CONCLUSION: OUR DECLARATION | 115**

### **GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS | 123**

### **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS | 132**

April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020

*Dear Brothers and Lasallians,*

The delegates of the Second International Assembly for the Lasallian Educational Mission (AIMEL 2013) expressed the desire to deepen our understanding of the nature, purpose, and spirit of Lasallian education. They correctly pointed out that we are attracted to this mission and yet the reason for this attraction isn't easy to define or explain. In the course of the assembly they observed there are multiple aspects to this educational work and that they have an integral relationship that isn't always clear; and, they saw a need to clearly articulate the convictions that could provide coherence for methods, strategies, and relationships.

This discernment led them to propose the drafting of a Declaration on Lasallian Education which would respond to these needs in order to help Lasallian educators strengthen their identity and provide a guide for responding to today's significant challenges, while remaining in dialogue with social and pedagogical realities.

At the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter the delegates strongly affirmed the AIMEL 2013 proposal and passed Proposition 17 calling upon Brother Superior and the Council to work with the International Council for Lasallian Association and the Educational Mission (CIAMEL) in drafting a Declaration on Lasallian Education. Over the past four years, CIAMEL in particular has worked diligently with a Writing Commission to conduct research, consult, and reflect on the Declaration. They looked back to the origins of the Institute and the source of the charism that gave life to this beautiful educational work. Additionally, they looked to the future horizons that nourish our hope and impel each of us to a



shared commitment. In this dynamic movement between the origins and the horizon the Declaration invites each Lasallian to integrate these convictions and hopes into his/her own educational work.

Of course, no document can fully express our identity or encompass our vitality. Given that the fundamental starting point for our Lasallian educational spirituality is its incarnational quality, it would be true to say that each of us embodies and give expression to that identity and vitality. What this Declaration can do is give us a central reference point for our educational work so that it is life-giving and creative for the young people and young adults God has entrusted to our care.

It is my ardent hope that the Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission will help us intensify our vocation and to enflame our passion to build educational communities with the young at the center. Let us use this Declaration as a source for enhancing our unity and animating our solidarity for those God sends us.

Sincerely in Saint La Salle,

Brother Robert Schieler, FSC  
*Brother Superior*

# INTRODUCTION

In response to Proposition 17 of the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, the following Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission is presented. Its intention is to motivate and guide our educational work toward the future in response to the needs and challenges of today's world. It seeks to offer proposals full of hope and to highlight certain convictions derived from our rich history in order to facilitate the development and continuity of our Educational Communities.

To achieve this objective, present reality has been kept in mind as the starting point, our rich history as an Institute has been recognized and a desired future imagined. We rely on research and dialogue to recognize who we are, what we do and how we do it. The International Council for Association and the Lasallian Educational Mission (CIAMEL) has desired to propose a profound, inspiring and prophetic text that invites commitment and that looks forward to the future in hope.

This new document is not an update of *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration of 1967*, which will be considered further on in Part One. This Declaration has a different purpose, that of serving as a starting point for an ongoing reflection on the Educational Mission that unites Lasallians worldwide.

For this purpose, CIAMEL proposed to use a vocabulary that will be inclusive of all cultures, open to all religions, and have a message for all the people who participate in the Mission. It opted for a process of communal construction that takes as its starting point the understanding and appreciation of our historical heritage, reflects on Shared Mission in the face of different realities, and considers the

participants who pursue the Educational Mission. It builds on the inspiring and enduring fundamentals of our educational tradition, the educational challenges we have in the present and those yet to come.

Based on the structure proposed in the table of contents, the first part of the text presents essential elements of our historical heritage, characterized by giving a pertinent response to local challenges and by a profound educational, collaborative and associative evolution based on fraternity and the foundational insights of De La Salle. The aforementioned will be grounded in *The Conduct of the Schools'* understanding of the School as a community project that allowed it to grow and develop in different parts of the world and will be maintained as its foundational thrust.

Along this historical trajectory, the lay vocation was consolidated in *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration* (1967), which invigorated the Institute by rediscovering, in light of Vatican Council II, the person of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and his spirituality. On the other hand, it also brought about a broader and more open vision of the Educational Mission in dialogue with the world, attentive to the signs of the times.

In the second part of the text, we present the tremendous importance and value of the partners as individuals in addition to their association for the Educational Mission. The De La Salle Brothers, the women, the believers of other faiths, the benefactors, the Lasallian youth and volunteers, the alumni and organizations that share the Lasallian charism, all of them contributing valuable elements to the Mission.

Knowing the richness and the transcendence of our heritage and its participants, in the third part we deal with the inspiring and enduring fundamentals of the Lasallian educational tradition. These are the

person of Jesus Christ as reference, inspiration, support and life of Lasallian Association; the community as core of the Lasallian Mission, the spirit of faith, fraternity and ardent zeal; Lasallian Association; and the features of our educational tradition that could be synthesized in educating *in and for* life and in the pedagogy of fraternity. This recognized in human, affective and courteous relationships, the source of personal growth and the viability of the educational process, demanding, caring, and inclusive in its services, emphasizing the formation of educators. Regarding the features of Lasallian Education, the social dimension of education is recognized in any of its contexts, that it be comprehensive and integrating, Christian, student-centered, linked to life, effective and efficient.

This identity and character, integrates and renews our convictions, allows collective discernment, the stability of the common project, the availability and solidarity of its members, the warmth of fellowship, as well as openness to the universal. From the Founder's time until today it is our Educational Mission and its associative dynamism of Community that our work has been forged for the good of individuals and societies.

From these inspiring and enduring foundations of the Lasallian educational tradition, one looks to the future, recognizing the challenges and hopeful proposals. The challenges call us to serve the poor together and by association, promote solidarity in our communities; educate for citizenship, critical thinking and interiority; educate with a network, even beyond the school. Maintaining clarity about the type of society and person we are looking for, as well as the role of the educator and the school, we list some educational proposals to advance and transform: dialogue with emerging paradigms; student-centered teaching; and the teacher's dignity, pointing out the educator's irreplaceable and important role.

In the face of present and future challenges, the final part of the document presents twelve points that synthesize our position, our convictions, proposals and hopes vis-à-vis the challenges identified, which with historical evolution, will continue to change, and with them, our way of responding in the mission.

This declaration is an exercise that concretizes our position regarding the educational mission. In no way does it imply a prescriptive or limiting intention, but rather one that is open, guiding and inspiring. Along with *Lasallian Identity and Vitality Criteria*, *Lasallian Formation for Mission: the Pilgrim's Handbook* and the next publication on *The Identity of the Lasallian Family*, this declaration invites us to face the future with complete confidence in Jesus of Nazareth, who summons us; the inherent goodness of people; and in education, a privileged means of humanizing.

# PRELUDE

When we hear the word "Declaration," we think of important historical declarations such as the American *Declaration of Independence*, the *Declaration of the Rights of the Man* of the French Revolution and UNESCO's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

In 1966-1967, after the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church, the Brothers of the Christian Schools held an international meeting [Chapter] with delegates elected by the Brothers from over 80 countries. These delegates represented about 17,000 professed members. They felt secure in the almost 3,000 younger members who were being formed for the future. A significant number of notes had been sent to the Chapter suggesting that the Brothers, if they so wished, might be ordained priests and still remain members of the Institute. As an expression of the Institute's will and their deepest awareness of its historical nature and mission, the Brothers considered it appropriate to formulate a declaration entitled *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*. This document not only reaffirmed the non-priestly lay character of the fraternity, but also recognized that the Institute needed to develop "a return to the poor." The extensive documentation of Circular Letters for the period 1966-1981 shows the seriousness with which this "return to the poor" was taken.

The Institute's experience throughout the world had already led the authors of the 1967 Declaration to recognize a continuous expansion of their works thanks to a growing number of educators, non-Institute members, who were inclined to support these works as educators. The text of this new Declaration welcomes all who collaborate together in the Lasallian mission "*to provide a human and Christian education.*"

This new Declaration, therefore, manifests the coherent pedagogical principles that have constituted the Lasallian educational heritage since its beginning. Tracing the history of about 350 years shows moments of strength, of temporal suppression and resurgence, of geographical expansion and development from beyond the country of origin.

The future of the Lasallian educational mission, in continuity with its historical past, seems to suggest that its future will continue through the work of all those who choose to partner to continue the educational movement launched by John Baptist de La Salle and generations of Brothers.

Therefore, we, Lasallians, in response to the resolution of the Institute's General Chapter of 2014 to prepare a Declaration on the Educational Mission recognize ourselves as heirs of John Baptist de La Salle and all who have followed in his footsteps since the first two schools in 1679. In the same way, we believe that we share in the title of Lasallian educator whenever:

- a. we act in the spirit of association.
- b. we respond to the needs of those we serve.
- c. we share our being with others.
- d. we help others to live their lives with full human dignity.
- e. we love and serve with special attention those less fortunate, inspired by our faith.

This is the reason why we are committed to following this path outlined for the good of young children and youth.

PART ONE

# OUR LIVING LASALLIAN HERITAGE

“

*“God, who directs all things with wisdom and gentleness and who does not force our wills, wishing to have me to take care of the schools, led me imperceptibly and over a long period of time from one commitment to another in a way I did not at all foresee in the beginning.”*

(Memoir on the Beginnings)





**A**s a response to the petition of the 1993 General Chapter, the General Council of the Institute published the document *The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission*. The introduction reads:

*Dear Fellow Lasallians, Welcome to this introduction to your Lasallian Heritage, the Living Tradition, which links you to the first school of John Baptist de La Salle in Rheims in 1679 and so, today, with all those persons throughout the world whose educational mission is inspired by the same vision (The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission, 1997, Introduction)*

The expression "Lasallian heritage" refers to the foundational insights of the educational work begun by the priest John Baptist de La Salle and by the first generation of men who gathered around him, to establish the group that in history is known as the Brothers of the Christian Schools. This educational movement, founded in France some 350 years ago, is led today by peoples from very different countries and cultures.

Ever alive, the Lasallian heritage also refers to an historical journey, to God's incarnation among us: to the events, responses and development of Lasallian education throughout the more than three centuries that have elapsed since the first schools of Rheims in 1679.

★ The expression “Lasallian heritage” refers to the foundational intuitions of De La Salle and the first generation of Brothers, and also to the development of Lasallian education over the three centuries and more of its existence

As these principles, the foundational insights and historical itinerary, constitute the Lasallian educational heritage, those who assume them can legitimately be considered heirs.

In these more than three centuries, the Brothers in France have been on the verge of extinction on two occasions; but today they educate in almost 80 countries. What are the foundational insights that have allowed this fraternity to continue its mission with such vitality for so long? What can be said about the successes that they have had in so many different nations and cultures, in so many countries of today's world that have allowed them to transcend differences and divisions as basic as race, gender, language and religion?

### **1.1 The human foundation of fraternity.**

Let us remember that when they were founded the De La Salle Brothers chose not to call themselves *masters* but *brothers* in community (Rule 1.1) and *older Brothers to the young people confided to their care* (Mt 23:8). This double understanding of fraternity establishes both an identity and a mission.

Responding to the needs of poor boys *"through the Christian school is the unifying theme, the leit motiv, which can be traced through the 300 or more years since the first schools of the Institute in Rheims"* (*The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission*, 1997, 1.12).

John Baptist de La Salle had already warned early on, from the first meeting with the teachers employed by Adrian Nyel, *"that the growing schools did not produce the fruit that was expected of them, because there was no uniform order; each teacher followed his own inclination..."* (*Cahiers lasalliens* 6, 1966: 39). That is why, to respond to the needs of the boys, the school demanded teamwork, or better yet in De La Salle's words to educate *together and by association*.



In order to respond to the needs of children, De La Salle quickly realised that schools would require action done together and in association

The practical elements to implement this vision, based on close relationship with the students, were:

- a. The understanding of the Brothers as Brothers among themselves and as older Brothers to the young people confided to their care.
- b. A school that was gratuitous, free, and open to all.
- c. Teaching in the mother tongue and not in Latin as was the common practice.
- d. The importance given to integral teacher training, which in addition to providing it to his own teachers, De La Salle provided on three occasions as a service to other teachers who were not members of his Community.

## **1.2 De La Salle's foundational insights.**

De La Salle's work was not initially something he chose to do, but rather something that arose from a succession of personal discernments. He explains it like this in an important biographical statement:

*“God, who directs all things with wisdom and gentleness and who does not force our wills, wishing to have me to take care of the schools, led me imperceptibly and over a long period of time from one commitment to another in a way I did not at all foresee in the beginning.”* (Memoir on the Beginnings)<sup>1</sup>

De La Salle, as a French priest of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, can be seen as seeking to balance two insights that mark the Lasallian School:

First, children and young people deserve to know a good God who created everything, in addition to recognizing their dignity as Christians in the practice of their religion (*Meditations for the Time of Retreat* 193.1).

Secondly, these *children of the artisans and the poor* needed a gratuitous education that would allow them to find work in the new type of commercial society that was developing in 17<sup>th</sup> century French towns and cities. For De La Salle and his Brothers it meant not only teaching how to read in French, according to the *Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle*, but also teaching how to write it, a privilege that at that time was reserved, by payment, to the writing masters. De La Salle also saw

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<sup>1</sup> This Memoir on the Beginnings is not included in the French edition of the Complete Works, perhaps because it was known only through De La Salle's early biographers. This quote can be found in the first volume of Canon Blain's *Life of John Baptist de La Salle*, p. 189.

that learning to calculate using basic mathematical operations and training students in courtesy and civility were necessary learning to make them responsible citizens.

De La Salle and the first Brothers stressed the vital importance of education for children and young people. This was described in the Rule: *"and it is for this reason that the Brothers conduct schools, that having the children under their guidance from morning until evening, these teachers may be able to teach them to live a good life..."* (Rule, 1705 [3]).

In the same sense, the Brothers established various strategies so that parents could not take the children out of school to put them to work: *"it is necessary to make them [the parents] see how important it is...that the child that can read and write will be capable of anything"* (*The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, page 161).

The opinion that suggests that the Brothers ran schools only to teach the students religion is limited. In this regard, worthy of mention is Meditation 92.3 for December 31 where De La Salle asks the Brothers *"have you been exact during this year to follow the order of the lessons..."*

Everything that was done at school was important, and time had to be used profitably because it was known that the majority of students would attend for only one or two years.



Foundational Intuitions of De La Salle: Children deserve to know about a God who is good, to have their dignity recognised and to be educated for life

Most of the nearly seven hours a day of teaching were devoted to secular subjects or learning skills necessary to progress, while only a half hour was devoted to the formal teaching of the religious catechism.

### 1.3 *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*: a community educational project.

After 25 years of reflection and practice, De La Salle brought together the veteran and most accomplished teachers during the summer to exchange and share their respective experiences in the schools. Based on this experience, De La Salle drafted what we know as the *Manuscript of the Conduct of Christian Schools of 1706*, which he sent to all the communities. Although its compliance was required (Rule of 1705, Chapter 7, point 3), it was not unchangeable, as it was a community

★ The Conduct of Christian Schools reflects the experience of the teachers and is the fruit of work done in association.

educational project. "I really would like that you come up with a method," he wrote a Brother (LP edition, Letter 83). In 1717,

when it was being revised, he invited the Brothers to send comments, corrections and suggestions. In the Preface to the printed edition of 1720, it is rightly affirmed that: "*Nothing has been added that has not been thoroughly deliberated and well tested, nothing of which the advantages and disadvantages have not been weighed and, as far as possible, of which the good or bad consequences have not been foreseen.*" Thus was born *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*.

Thanks to this reflection and to that work achieved in association, the text of *The Conduct*, as shown in successive editions, was modified over the course of 200 years, in order to better respond to the needs of young people who were immersed in an ever-changing society. That is the reason why today, respecting the world's cultural and educational diversity, the essential orientations of the Lasallian project, contained in *The Conduct*, serve as a reference for Lasallian establishments in 80

countries. This *Conduct*, considered a classic in Western education, has been widely used and adapted by different religious congregations in the formation of boys and girls inside and outside of France.

*The Conduct of the Christian Schools* reflects the practical experience of teachers, and therefore is not a theoretical document on education. The

desire of *The Conduct*, frequently expressed by De La Salle in his letters to the Brothers, was for the school to run well, because thanks to good organization, they could fulfill the purposes of helping students solve their difficulties and carry out their future projects.

★ The text of *The Conduct of Christian Schools* has been modified several times over 200 years, in order better to respond to the needs of children and young people who are immersed in a changing society.

In the fourth volume of his monumental study on *The Conduct* (Cahiers lasalliens 67, 2014: 20-21), Brother Léon Lauraire indicates that these aims became six educational axes:

- a. The pursuit of the social and economic improvement of the pupils.
- b. Preparation for, and the living experience already at school, of a fraternal society based on a rejection of all violence, on mutual respect, on constant mutual help and on peaceful personal relations.
- c. The building of a more evangelical, living and dynamic Church.
- d. The formation of free and independent individuals who can find suitable employment in society and their place in the Church.
- e. A strong and high-quality student-teacher relationship.
- f. A persistent and concerted approach to teaching, based on teamwork.



## 1.4 Evolution and enrichment of the Lasallian educational tradition.

In 1725, a few years after the death of John Baptist de La Salle, the Church formally approved the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools by publishing an official document, called a Papal Bull, entitled *In Apostolicae Dignitatis Solio*.

By this act, the Church recognized the Institute's standing within its structure, but also and more importantly, the value of the educational mission as a particular contribution to the Church's global mission.

God's revelation takes place in history, which is why the evolution of French society and the educational and pedagogical advances of the 17<sup>th</sup> century show us to what extent the changes in the formulations and living conditions deeply transformed Lasallian educational establishments. These social and pedagogical developments will be more evident in the development of schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

★ Through the Bull "*In Apostolicae Dignitatis Solio*", the Church recognised the Institute and the value of its educational mission as a contribution to the global mission of the Church.

Some of these situations, which significantly transformed our schools were: the decrease in infant mortality thanks to the arrival of trained mid-wives; the new vision of childhood, produced at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which no longer saw the child as a miniature adult but as a child; the emergence of high quality pedagogical works by renowned people such as Charles Rollin or Rousseau; the criticisms, and even attacks by Philosophes such as La Chatolais, Voltaire and Diderot, who did not look favorably on the education of *working class children*; and the persecution of religious Congregations by French revolutionaries.

The energetic defense of the Institute presented by Brother Agathon, during the French Revolution, to the National Assembly in 1791 is a manifesto of the identity of Lasallian schools and an affirmation of the work carried out by them during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

*"Their schools are completely gratuitous; they never receive anything, either from the parents or the pupils. It should not go unnoticed as well*



Developments in society and in educational theory and practice profoundly changed Lasallian educational establishments throughout the XVIII, XIX and XX centuries.

*that they offer a quite notable present to the Nation each year by forming more than one hundred teachers for the instruction of the poor youth of the different cities to which they are sent. It is certainly not for the Brothers of the Christian Schools to make known to the Nation the importance of children of the ordinary people being able to acquire religion, customs and some openness of spirit, of becoming accustomed from an early age to obedience, to rules of behavior, to being kept busy, according to their age and their position. Such things, by keeping idleness and the possibility of learning vicious habits at a distance, dispose them more easily to the different professions that they need to take up. In the lowest class of people, the majority of fathers and mothers lack the time and talent that are needed for their children's education. It is obviously useful for artisans and tradesmen to know their religion, and to be able to read, write and calculate..."*

*(The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission 1997, 1.14)*

Fifteen years earlier, in 1777, the General Chapter of the Brothers asked to modify *The Conduct* in the chapter dealing with punishments: "*this section will be removed which deals*

*with the punishment with canes and whips. The Chapter feels it necessary to forbid their use by the Brothers, given the impropriety and disadvantages of this kind of punishment.*" (Cahiers lasalliens 67, 2014:70). Almost 100 years later, France's public authority took an analogous measure for the entire school system.

★ Brother Agathon led a movement which flourished in the Lasallian schools of the XVIII century. It aimed at establishing a balance in teacher-pupil relations, marked by realism, prudence and tenderness.

These changes made to *The Conduct* are a reflection of a broader movement that flourished in 18<sup>th</sup> century Lasallian schools and which Brother Agathon led as Superior General. Their main characteristic was a renewed interest in the figure of the Founder and for the educator's task. This latter point especially concerned the relationship the educator should have with the students entrusted to his care.

Brother Agathon sent letters, wrote circulars to all the Brothers and wrote a small work: "*Explanation of the Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher.*" In this work, he invites the Brothers to seek a good balance in teacher-student relationships, and a fair medium between firmness and gentleness; then he stressed that the educational relationship that De La Salle wanted was characterized by realism, prudence and even-temperedness.

When Brother Agathon refers to wisdom, prudence, meekness, charity and especially tenderness as essential virtues of the teacher, he seems to imply that we are at the core of Lasallian education.

In 1792, the Institute, together with other religious Congregations, was suppressed. The Brothers had to abandon the schools, hide or go abroad, and invariably try to survive. Only a small group of Brothers continued to exist officially in the Papal States and in Rome.

★ In 1792, the Institute was suppressed in France and the Brothers had to leave the schools. In 1808, they were permitted by a new decree to work under the control of the Imperial University.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Brothers re-grouped again in Lyon, Rheims, Toulouse and Paris. After regrouping, they sought legal recognition to resume their work in schools. In 1808, they obtained a decree that allowed them work under the control of the Imperial University.

After ten years of Revolution and successive failures of national education plans, the Brothers joined in the work of the reconstruction of the school system in France, with a new scenario: dependence on the political system. Brother Léon Lauraire lists some of the new works that the Brothers created to respond to the needs of 19<sup>th</sup> century children and youth.

“Orphanages, teaching in prisons, schools for the deaf and dumb, courses for young apprentices and workers, teacher-training colleges, religious support groups for school-leavers, the Saint Francis Xavier Society, youth clubs, agricultural courses, centers for illiterate soldiers, modern secondary

school education, the Saint Benedict Joseph Labré Association.”  
(*Cahiers lasalliens* 69, 2014:23)

To give a better idea of the enormous expansion of Lasallian educational works and of the formidable creativity shown by the Brothers in responding to the wide diversity of educational needs, a few brushstrokes that also show the evolution of educational works of that time are enough (*The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission*, 1997, 1:21).

- a. With Guizot's educational reforms in 1833, the Brothers took over a large number of public primary schools. After receiving adequate training, they also were responsible for three hearing-support schools.
- b. The Brothers opened evening schools for adults between 1830 and 1848, admitting 48,500 workers as students. In Paris, the students went to school to receive a basic education, while the Brothers and employers trained them for jobs. The second school of this type, opened on the Rue Francs-Bourgeois, was the first school of a completely commercial nature.

★ The tremendous creativity shown by the Brothers in response to wide diversity of educational needs transformed the Lasallian schools of the XIX century, and triggered a hundred years of extraordinary growth in France and in 35 other countries.

Away from Paris, in Lyon, the Brothers opened evening schools for adults in 1834 and, again, in 1846. The particular nature of these schools is that they continued with bases already established in the primary schools in order to prepare for entry

into the workforce. The program of these professional schools focused on business subjects such as mathematics, double-entry accounting and the study of foreign languages. This model became typical of schools that were opened in Belgium, Holland, Germany (Handelschule), Egypt and in some cities of the Turkish Ottoman Empire.

- c. With state support, more than 200 Brothers were incorporated into correctional work in institutions for criminals (based on the Saint Yon model) and in teaching courses in prisons from 1840 to 1882.
- d. The Lower Seine Normal School, opened in Rouen in 1829, fulfilled De La Salle's lifelong commitment to ensure teacher training. It was the first of what was to become, to this day, one of the most characteristic works of the Brothers worldwide.
- e. The Institute reestablished boarding schools, where the Brothers contributed notably, generally in response to local needs, to the development of technical schools, agricultural schools, schools of architecture. The teaching of agriculture, first begun in Beauvais in the 1840s, has continued in several Lasallian schools of France to this day, with the original school now forming part of the Catholic University of Paris.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ministers Duruy and Simon visited the agricultural sections of the Brothers' schools at Passy and Beauvais and commented: "We hope, Gentlemen, that you will not be disturbed if we follow in your footsteps" Institute Bulletin Number 13, January 1925, p. 305.

The Brothers continued opening supplemental courses and upper primary schools, and conducted special classes for the children of customs agents, for cabin boys and a school for naval personnel. The schools of Vaugirard and Issy-les-Moulineaux, in 1862, taught 1,540 children and young people to be wood and bronze carvers, manufacturers of musical instruments, opticians, jewelers, shawl designers, wood gilders, saddlers, sculptors and carpenters.

- f. Increasingly, the Brothers became responsible for composing and publishing textbooks for primary and secondary schools, as well as for the adult evening professional courses – texts, for example, for the French government railroad workers. This service became one of the best-known aspects of Lasallian schools.

It is remarkable that, in response to particular needs that arose outside of the school context, all of these responses were offered in school. As societies developed and governments gradually assumed control of education, the realities of the context transformed Lasallian schools very strongly.

★ The expansion of the Institute meant that the Brothers came into contact with pupils from various faiths and religious beliefs and lived as a minority among Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Confucionists.

*"The restoration of the Lasallian mission in France initiated a century of extraordinary growth in the land of its origin, and saw its expansion beyond France into 35 different countries of the world and the development of a missionary policy far beyond anything that de*

*La Salle and the first generation of Brothers could ever have envisaged. The 160 Brothers in France and in Italy in 1810 were to become some 14,631 Brothers by the end of the century that culminated in the solemn canonization of its Founder." (The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission, 1997, 1.20)*

## **1.5 The Institute grows outside of France.**

In the introduction to Volume 8 of the *Histoire General de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, [General History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools], D. Georges Rigault writes:

*"The disciples of the saintly educator, already present in Italy, Belgium, Canada and the isle of Bourbon before the generalate of Brother Philippe (1838-1874), now spread to central Europe, England, the United States, Republic of Ecuador, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Madagascar, India and Indochina during the glorious 'era' that ended with the death of the internationally leader known (i.e., Brother Philippe). This peaceful conquest of the globe was going to be stabilized, organized and even extended further during the generalates of Brothers Irlide and Joseph. After 1904, it would allow Brother Gabriel-Marie, their successor, to open paths for the missionary apostolates to a good number of French Brothers, victims of a persecuting legislation."*

During the lengthy generalate of Brother Philippe, there were 1,002 new foundations, of which more than a quarter were established outside of France.



The Institute's expansion into the Balkans, Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean brought the Brothers for the first time into daily contact with Jewish and Muslim students. The schools of Egypt, Palestine, Penang, Singapore, India, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong were schools where Christians were a minority among Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian students.

## **1.6 Fidelity and innovation.**

The development of public education in France, and more generally throughout the western world during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, inevitably called into question some of the founding principles developed in Lasallian schools, especially because more and more foundations were being made outside of France. Four of these challenges were:

- a. The Institute's opposition after 1817 to so-called *mutual teaching*,** adapted from the Lancaster-Bell methodology and used in some parts of England. In this method, a single teacher transmitted his teaching to monitors who in turn transmitted it to a maximum of ten students. The Brothers opposed the introduction of this method in the Lasallian schools in France. They wanted to maintain the primacy of the personal relationship between the older Brothers with their younger brothers, the students.
- b. The principle of absolute gratuity,** as established in the founding period, became ever more difficult to maintain in the primary schools in the small cities of France, especially after unfavorable laws were enacted against religious Congregations between 1878 and 1889. The Brothers, who had fought for fifty years against

school remuneration and in favor of maintaining free education, had to receive school fees from parents so that their educational establishments could continue.

**c. The historical prohibition of teaching Latin** gradually became a source of conflict, especially, but not only in the Anglo-Saxon world, as education in Italy and central Europe also required learning Latin. In the United States of America, where there was some opposition to Catholic schools, the bishops helped the Brothers so that they founded secondary schools and, later, universities from which several generations of clergy would come. Since it was not possible to enroll in a university without knowing Latin, the U.S. bishops insisted that Latin be included in the course



**Four challenges for Lasallian schools during the XIX century:**

- \* The Institute's opposition to the adoption of the Lancaster Method.
- \* The impossibility of providing absolute gratuity.
- \* The prohibition of the teaching of Latin.
- \* The antireligious movement at the end of the XIX century and the start of the XX century.

of studies of the Brothers' educational establishments. Objectively speaking, the difficulty of the General Council to understand itself as an international entity came close to causing schism, a situation not resolved until the granting of a papal rescript in 1923.

**d. The anticlerical and antireligious movement** developed strongly throughout the 19th century. It hit the Catholic Church for favoring the monarchy and the Empire of Napoleon III rather

than supporting the growing labor movement. All this, despite the national celebration in France on the occasion of John Baptist de La Salle's canonization in 1900, still resulted in Lasallian schools gaining prominence.

The arrival of the 20<sup>th</sup> century presented Lasallians with a new reality with great challenges. It also meant that the Institute flourished in places that were impossible to imagine in the Founder's lifetime.

This century's Lasallian history until the 39<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (1966-1967) is etched in the context of: the 1904 "*secularization laws*" in France; World War I (1914-1918); the worldwide economic depression of the late 1920s and mid 1930s; the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939); World War II (1939-1945); the beginnings of the Cold War; the Korean and Vietnamese conflicts; and the impact of Vatican Council II on the Institute.

The Institute's educational mission, now fully international, was transformed by the following momentous movements:

- a. The immediate and long-term impact of the 1904 secularization laws for France, and the consequent extension of the Institute as an international movement.
- b. The growing dedication to the analysis and in-depth study of the life, times and work of John Baptist de La Salle, and the publication of critical studies in this regard. This fact strengthened the Institute's historical, spiritual and educational heritage by providing high quality material for the formation programs of Brothers and partners.

- c. The revision and updating of the Common Rules of the Brothers, according to the spirit of Vatican Council II; and later between 1987 and 2013, the efforts, finally accomplished, that the Church officially recognizes the historical importance of the 1694 Vow of Association.
- d. *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*, which affirmed the Brother's lay identity, in the spirit of Vatican Council II; and the beginnings of the formal recognition of the role of lay partners in the Lasallian educational mission.
- e. The decrease, after the 1970s, in the number of new Brothers in the Institute.
- f. The election of Brother Charles Henry Buttimer of the United States of America, which marked the passage of Institute leadership from its traditional French origin to an increasingly international representation.
- ★ The Lasallian Mission was changed in the XX century as a result of significant events such as:
- \* The secularisation laws in France.
  - \* The two world wars.
  - \* The deeper study of the work of De La Salle.
  - \* The Second Vatican Council.
  - \* The revision of the Rule.
  - \* The diminution in the number of Brothers.
  - \* The recognition of the role of non-Brothers in the Lasallian Mission.
  - \* The understanding of Institute as a fully international phenomenon.

## 1.7 *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration (1967).*

As mentioned above, the *Declaration* of 1967 was an affirmation of the lay, not priestly, identity of the Brothers. This was reaffirmed by the General Chapter of 1966-1967.

This declaration of identity was influenced by *Perfectae Caritatis*, Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, drawn up in 1965 by Vatican Council II. The decree asked all religious Congregations

★ The Declaration of 1967 affirmed the lay identity of the Brother, the importance of lay people in Lasallian education and the Mission of the Institute: the human and Christian education of the poor.

to return to their founding inspirations and to adapt them to the signs of the times. For the Brothers, among many other elements of grace and reflection, it was a reminder that they had been founded for the "*human and Christian education of the poor.*"

This very important call of Vatican Council II was made concrete in the Institute as the "service of the poor through education." Chapter 6 of the Declaration provided a lengthy consideration in this regard and concluded with the importance of assuming the challenge posed to the Institute in the clear recognition of the necessity "to return to the poor" (Declaration, 1967, 34.4)

Both the 1967 Rule and the Declaration make a slight reference and in similar terms to the function of "lay teachers." The Rule stated that the Brothers "*...cooperate closely with the lay teachers and others*


*responsible for the education of young people, joining their labors with all those who promote the cause of justice and unity among all peoples"* (Common Rules 9, k).

*The Declaration offered a broader vision when it stated, "The school will be molded into community only through a faculty rich in the diversity and the unity of its members. For this reason, the Brothers work closely with lay teachers, who make a unique contribution through their knowledge of the world of family life and of civic affairs. Lay teachers should be completely involved with the whole life of the school..."* (Declaration, 1967, 46.3).

Both documents, therefore, draw attention to what can now be clearly recognized, such as the growing involvement of the laity in the Lasallian charism and Association for the Lasallian educational mission.

## **1.8 Growth of Lasallian institutions of higher education.**

Although in some way tertiary education was present from the Institute's beginnings, specifically with the training of teachers, it formally was to begin during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States of America and in France. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the creation and consolidation of universities and institutions of higher education

 Lasallian Institutions of Higher Education emerged in the middle of the XIX century in France and in the United States. Linked together in IALU, they endeavour to contribute to the construction of a world that is more just and shows greater solidarity.

increased. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the creation and promotion of the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU) has focused the Institute's recognition of the value of tertiary education.

The most recent Superior Generals and General Chapters have highlighted the importance of this educational level among the services that the Institute provides to society. Among other reasons, this is the case because:

- a. It allows young people educated in Lasallian centers or other centers, to access tertiary formation with continuity to the kind of formation offered our other students: and it offers families the opportunity to consolidate and complete their Lasallian formation.
- b. It contributes to social mobility, through a system of scholarships that serves young people in various situations of need.
- c. It contributes to social transformation, the construction of a more just world and the reduction of poverty, through the training of professional people with a sense of social responsibility, but also through research and the extension of culture and services that directly affect their social context.
- d. It offers possibilities for collaboration with other Lasallian educational institutions, such as centers for training and updating of teachers, educational research and innovation, dissemination of culture, among others.
- e. It offers possibilities for research and sharing of knowledge in matters of institutional interests.

## **1.9 Toward shared mission and new realities.**

The Lasallian educational mission, initiated and developed for a long time by generations of Brothers, has been expanded and enriched, more and more, by the gifts contributed by all those who have associated themselves with the Brothers in the mission. In recent years, the most notable change in the Lasallian Family has been the increased number of Lasallian women. The gifts brought by so many people, in so many places, have enriched the Lasallian movement through the diversity of identities and vocations.



# OUR LIVING

## XVII Century

### God in history.

- ★ France in the reign of Louis XIV
- ★ Gallicanism
- ★ The neglect of children and young people

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**Lasallian Communities are created, terminated and transformed, in order to respond better to the needs of children and young people who are immersed in a changing society.**

- ★ Foundation of the Institute
- ★ The Conduct of Christian Schools
- ★ Knowledge of a good God who wants all to have life
- ★ The Church recognises the Lasallian Mission as part of the global Mission of the Church

# LASALLIAN HERITAGE

## XVIII Century

- ★ The lowering of infant mortality
- ★ A new view of childhood
- ★ The appearance of writings on pedagogy of major importance
- ★ The French Revolution

## XIX Century

- ★ Reconstruction of the system of education in France.
- ★ The development of state education throughout the world
- ★ Great diversity in the social, cultural religious and educational situations in the countries where Lasallian schools were opened

## XX Century

- ★ The laws of secularisation in France.
- ★ The First World War.
- ★ The Financial Depression of the 1920's.
- ★ The Spanish Civil War.
- ★ The Second World War.
- ★ The Cold War.
- ★ The Second Vatican Council.

- ★ Attack on schools for educating sons of the popular classes
- ★ Developments in teacher-pupil relations characterised by realism, prudence and tenderness
- ★ The suppression of the Institute in France

- ★ The rebirth of the Institute under the control of the Imperial University
- ★ The extraordinary growth and diversity of establishments
- ★ Lasallian higher education is born and becomes diversified
- ★ International expansion into 35 countries
- ★ Christians were a minority in many countries with Lasallian presence

- ★ Deeper study of the work of De La Salle
- ★ Renewal promoted by Vatican II
- ★ The extraordinary growth and diversification of establishments in more than 80 countries
- ★ Understanding the Institute as a wholly international movement
- ★ Shared Mission and Lasallian Association



PART TWO

# PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION

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*“You carry out a work that requires you to touch hearts, but this you cannot do except by the Spirit of God. Pray to him to give you today the same grace that he gave the holy Apostles; and ask him that after filling you with his Holy Spirit to sanctify yourselves, he will also communicate himself to you in order to procure the salvation of others.”*  
(Meditation 43.3)



## **2.1 Brothers of the Christian Schools.**

**W**e recognize the immense value of what John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers, under God's loving guidance, achieved in beginning the foundation of one of the most beautiful fruits of the Church's life: the creation of an Institute, committed totally and exclusively to the Christian education of children and youth. Very soon, this Institute became known as the *Brothers of the Christian Schools*. Then, like today, such brilliant work would not have been possible without the sustained passion that came from a community that lives to carry out this mission.

Inspired and attracted by the initial charism of the first Brothers, thousands of young people and adults throughout history, in many countries and cultures, have continued the mission of a human and Christian education. To do this, they have consecrated their lives to this mission by dedicating the best of themselves in order to spread it. In this way, they have fully lived out their personal vocation strengthened within a community, always at the service of society and the Church.

For almost three centuries, talking about the Institute was synonymous with talking about the Brothers. Today, in many places, Lasallian works are still known as Brothers' works.

Due to concrete historical circumstances, in some cases, and on their own initiative in other cases, the Brothers expanded their work in many countries and cultures. This international presence has always been reread and celebrated, in Christian language, as one more grace of the Spirit to announce the Good News of the Gospel to all people. However, the emphasis on the "present" has favored the awareness of all Lasallians about the human needs of the people with whom they come in contact.

The commitment to spread the Gospel in a form adapted to the present, adhering to the model of Church presented by Vatican Council II, and attention to the signs of the times motivated the Brothers, in recent decades, to share the Lasallian charism with those lay people closest to them, whose presence in

works was already significant. The quick understanding of the shared mission, a treasure that overflowed from the Brothers' commu-

nity, made it possible for both laity and Brothers, encouraged by mutual trust, to embark on a common adventure, to respond better to the mission that we definitely understand as all of ours.

★ For almost three hundred years, to talk of the Institute was synonymous with talking of the Brothers.

The same zeal, the same passion, the same love of the origins, continues today to inspire many young people and adults who find the Lasallian mission attractive, as it is currently much richer, more pluralistic and participatory. This attraction leads many of them to dedicate their lives to a mission whose origin and purpose is the integral

education of the poor. These young people and adults encounter in fraternal life and in the shared mission, both lived in community, a treasure thanks to which they succeed in fulfilling their deepest aspirations.

★ Today, this same charisma inspires many young people and adults to devote their lives to the holistic education of the poor.

## 2.2 Lasallian Partners: New Agents in the Mission.

Since its beginning, Lasallian pedagogy has always had a very distinctive and singular character because it placed fraternal relationships at the center of its activity; the Brothers among themselves and in their common life. The Brothers with respect to their students in carrying out daily activities and the students among themselves in their daily lives together make visible the Gospel ideal: *you are all brothers*. This environment was the natural ecosystem of Lasallian fraternal growth. The seed of a fraternity lived simply, learned by osmosis and continually contrasted with the message of Jesus Christ, has been one of the prophetic values created by Lasallian activity in favor of the Church and of society.

As mentioned in the first part of this Declaration, from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new participant appeared on the scene: *the Lasallian partner*, male or female. This presence has had a notable and constant growth until today. Proof of this is that, in four decades, it represents more than 95% of those engaged as agents in mission. This growth constituted a kind of Copernican revolution, fast, unpredictable and complex to manage.



How could these agents maintain and/or strengthen the style of fraternal relationships by living the same commitment, doing the same work, establishing fraternal relationships, but living different lifestyles? How would relationships be in a new educational community in which the presence of the Brothers was less visible? Could these lay teachers show dynamism and assume roles previously exercised by the Brothers for more than 300 years?

From the Catholic perspective, Vatican Council II has been one of God's greater gifts to the modern world, in particular by promoting the solidarity of the entire Church with the joys, hopes and fears of all peoples. Theological reflection, social doctrine, understanding of the world, history and, more specifically, the Church, developed by the Council, have opened the way and offered creative answers to fundamental questions being asked by human beings today. The new understanding of the Church as the people of God, the defense of the dignity and equality of all human beings without distinction, the recovery of the importance of baptismal consecration, to list but a few of the relevant fruits from the Council, have been key in the evolution of the Lasallian educational community.

★ The new understanding of the Church as the People of God, the defense of the dignity and equality of all human beings and the reassertion of the importance of baptismal consecration have all played a determining role, among other things, in the development of the Lasallian Educational Community.

In this community enriched by the Council's contributions, Brothers and laity feel called and gathered by God, each one with his/her personal vocation to respond to society's needs. Association for the Lasallian mission is lived today in different places, in response to the specific call of people of different

lifestyles, cultural traditions and even religions. That call is received and lived as the ministry that, in De La Salle's words, consists in being "*ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ*," something that Lasallians have exercised since the origins.

In increasing numbers, the laity consider themselves bearers of John Baptist de La Salle's legacy and they proudly affirm it. Motivated by their commitment, together with the Brothers they declare themselves *the heart, memory and guarantor* of the shared mission.

Thanks to its associative strength, the Lasallian mission today brings together tens of thousands of people who, with a diversity of functions and gifts, walk alongside people of practically all ages to help them achieve human fulfillment. In addition to these educators, there are also tens of thousands of people who work in administration and other services and who do so with the same faith and zeal. All who participate in Lasallian works are ready to offer their best, animated by the spirit of co-responsibility and subsidiarity contained in the traditional Lasallian expression *together and by association*. This principle constitutes the main strength of Lasallian communities.



Brothers and lay Lasallians see themselves as being called together and united by God, each in their own individual vocation, to respond to the needs of society.

The Institute views this communion as an extraordinary grace.

More and more of the laity accept participating in the Institute's structures and are helping to define Lasallian identity in a broader way. The Institute considers this communion as an extraordinary grace. Never before has the mission involved people of so many nationalities, cultures, traditions and religions as is happening today.

The 41<sup>st</sup> General Chapter of 1986 recognized this important growth of lay participation in the mission by defining it as a shared mission, to highlight the close collaboration of Brothers and laity. It is important to note also that the term accepted in those years by the delegates of the main linguistic groups to refer to the laity was that of "partners."

★ Within a few years, the recognition of the role of lay Lasallians led to changes in Lasallian vocabulary:

- \* Collaborators
- \* Shared Mission
- \* Associates

For its part, the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter of 2000 recognized the figure of the Associate. An Associate is a person who, in addition to sharing the mission, hears the call to deepen the spirituality and the community dimension of the charism, thus developing his/her own vocation. Associates follow a dynamic life journey that includes experiences such as service to the poor, a life of faith, belonging to a community and universal openness. In addition, they pursue a high level of Lasallian formation and commit themselves for a certain time. Some Associates choose to make a formal commitment, while others choose to live out their de facto commitment.

It is also important to highlight among these new agents the complementary and valuable presence of priests, men and women religious from other non-Lasallian Institutes and Congregations, and other con-

secrated persons, who contribute the diversity of their charisms. This collaboration is in itself an important message for children and young people and an important factor in their own formation.

### **2.2.1 Women in the Lasallian educational mission.**

The women of the Lasallian Family have become a fundamental part of all of this and of the mission throughout the world. Today, their function is essential in all areas: teaching, administration and research. In addition, they constitute more than half of Lasallian partners worldwide.

As in many other spheres of society, the contribution of women has brought great richness and enormous possibilities in the implementation of the Lasallian Educational Mission.

It is a reality that, from a perspective of fraternity and justice, they provide a fundamental reflection within the interior of our Community on themes of equality, equity, parity and inclusion, such that the integration of men and women to the Lasallian Educational Mission is, regardless of gender, full and is defined by their personal qualities, including the professional, vocational and spiritual.

In the international arena, the mobilization of women to denounce situations that hinder fairness and respect for their fundamental rights becomes increasingly evident, as they demand the necessary conditions to guarantee their full human development. It cannot be ignored that it is necessary to redefine the way people live together, the

★ An associate is someone who, besides sharing in the Mission, feels called to a deeper spirituality with a charism that has a community dimension as the way to develop his or her personal vocation.

★ The contribution made by women has added great richness and potential to the realisation of the Lasallian Educational Mission. It is necessary to take deliberate steps to empower the presence, the voice, the action and the representation of women in all areas of the Institute.

ways in which we collaborate and connect in all areas of our social life considering the gender issue: work, family, academic, culture.

This redefinition is not alien to the educational field, and therefore must be part of the agenda for dialogue in order to enhance the associative dynamism of the Lasallian Educational Mission.

Therefore, it is necessary to promote intentionally, from a spirit of fraternal communion and apostolic zeal, the presence, voice, action and representation of women in all areas of the Institute, especially in the areas of leadership and decision-making.

### **2.2.2 Contributions of members of other faith backgrounds to the Lasallian Educational Mission.**

Being Lasallian is, above all, a way of living, of being the bearer of values of one's religion, which are enriched when they are shared. Therefore, being Lasallian does depend on belonging to a particular culture or a religious creed. This conviction has made possible the existence and relevance of Lasallians who profess religions other than Catholicism or even those partners who do not subscribe to any religious faith or define themselves as indifferent. Thanks to these non-Catholics, the Lasallian world is universal and fraternal. We have to thank the initiatives of various Superior Generals for having firmly declared that there are Lasallians who are members of other religions, including non-believers. The Shared Mission document clearly states:

*All educators who work in Lasallian schools and foundations, therefore, are invited to share the common principles and particular emphases, which are essential to the Lasallian heritage. To the extent that they can bring their individual particular gifts to Lasallian education, they can legitimately feel themselves sharers of the overall educational mission carried out by their particular institution.*

★ All Lasallians should feel that they are bringing elements from their own distinctive religious traditions as Protestant Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Confucionists or Shintoists, and contributing to the religious understanding and spiritual traditions which are essential to Lasallian education.

*They should also feel that they bring distinctive elements of their own religious traditions as Protestant Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Confucianists or Shintoists to the religious understandings and spiritual tradition, which are essential to Lasallian education. In a very important sense, they should see themselves as enlarging and enriching the Lasallian Heritage's traditional sense of responding to needs by bringing and sharing their own particular gifts with their students. In this important exchange of gifts, the Lasallian school can help to further the important principles of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.*

*(The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission, 1997, 3.26).*

For his part Pope Francis, after his visit to the Gulf States, in February 2019, published jointly with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, the *Document of Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*. In the introduction, they remind us that “*faith leads the believer to see in the other a brother or sister who must be supported and loved.*”

Moreover, they continue:

*It is a document that invites all persons who have faith in God and faith in human fraternity to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of that great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters.*

*(Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, 2019, Introduction).*

### **2.2.3 Benefactors.**

The Lasallian heritage shows that, in the Institute’s beginnings, the foundations of schools responded, above all, to the invitations of the ecclesiastical authorities, such as bishops and parish priests. More and more, however, schools supported by laypersons recognized as *benefactors* appeared. From the beginnings of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present, each Region of the Institute’s history records the support of numerous benefactors who have made possible the establishment and development of the Lasallian work.

★ Since the start of the XVIII century and up until today, the story of every region of the Institute has been marked by the support of countless benefactors, who have made it possible to establish and develop Lasallian works.

## **2.2.4 Young people and Lasallian volunteers.**

The ability of young people to encounter the most vulnerable people in society is widely recognized. Coupled with this capacity, their availability for mobility, their networking, and their connections augur a promising future. Lasallian volunteers deserve special mention. They commit themselves to the mission for the short and medium term, near and far from their place of origin, both in urban and rural areas.

Every year, youth and adult volunteers carry out service projects on the five continents, for example: construction of houses, language teaching, educational and health work, among other activities. Recently, and in some places, not a few young people have experienced for a time the different aspects of the Brothers' community life.

★ It is well known that young people have a great capacity for making contact with those people in our society who are the most vulnerable.

In the last two decades, the International Council of Young Lasallians has been consolidated. This body, backed by the Institute's central government, coordinates numerous projects and activities worldwide. Its activities are inspired by the three fundamental Lasallian values: faith, service and community. Furthermore, its activity is always respectful of the cultural and religious diversity of those they are serving because it is interpreted as the Spirit's manifestation that gives life, strengthens fraternal relationships, and touches hearts.



### **2.2.5 Lasallian former students.**

At the end of their schooling, many young people show their interest in belonging to a network that continues to accompany them for the remainder of their lives. This, not only to perpetuate memories but, above all, to continue their formation and strengthen their professional connections. At the same time, many seek to belong to other global networks with the capacity to establish extraordinary connections. Some do this through the World Union of Lasallian Former Students (UMAEL).

Graduates appreciate the impact Lasallian methods and principles have had on their personal development. The large number of alumni associations bears witness that their school experience has created a

★ The associations of former students are evidence that school experience has forged close links with the Lasallian charism. Former students are participating actively in the development of the Mission.

link and closeness with the Lasallian charism. Former students do not simply cling to nostalgic memories, but actively participate in the development of the mission starting at their school of origin. Their ideas and experiences enrich the Lasallian cultural heritage. Former

students are a useful and appropriate criterion for determining the extent to which Lasallian education is an instrument of personal salvation and a service to society.

## **2.3 Organized groups of Lasallians.**

### **2.3.1 Lasallian ecclesial groups.**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Lasallian charism has attracted groups of followers who wanted to create educational institutions with their own legal personality, to respond to local and / or national needs. At the birth of these groups, the decisive influence of some De La Salle Brothers was always present. Thus, other institutions share the purpose of the Institute and contribute significantly to the spread of Lasallian pedagogy. A statement on how to educate in the Lasallian style would not be complete without taking into account the richness of these works.

★ The spirituality and charism of Jean-Baptiste de La Salle have inspired the founding of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, of the Guadalupana De La Salle Sisters, of the De La Salle Sisters, and the Signum Fidei Fraternity.

The spirituality and charism of John Baptist de La Salle inspired the founding of a Secular Institute called: the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate. Later, two female Orders of consecrated life were also founded: the Guadalupana De La Salle Sisters and the La Salle Sisters. More recently, the Signum Fidei fraternity was also founded.

### **2.3.2 Other Lasallian organizations.**

The call to attend to the last, the least and the lost has effectively moved the Lasallian world to seek solutions of enormous creativity and solidarity. One way has been to turn to external civil society organization and establish our own. These types of civil organizations have become privileged agents to channel energy from the Lasallian net-

★ Organisations in civil society, benefactors, families, friends, associations, firms and other agents are contributing to the fulfilment of the Lasallian Mission.

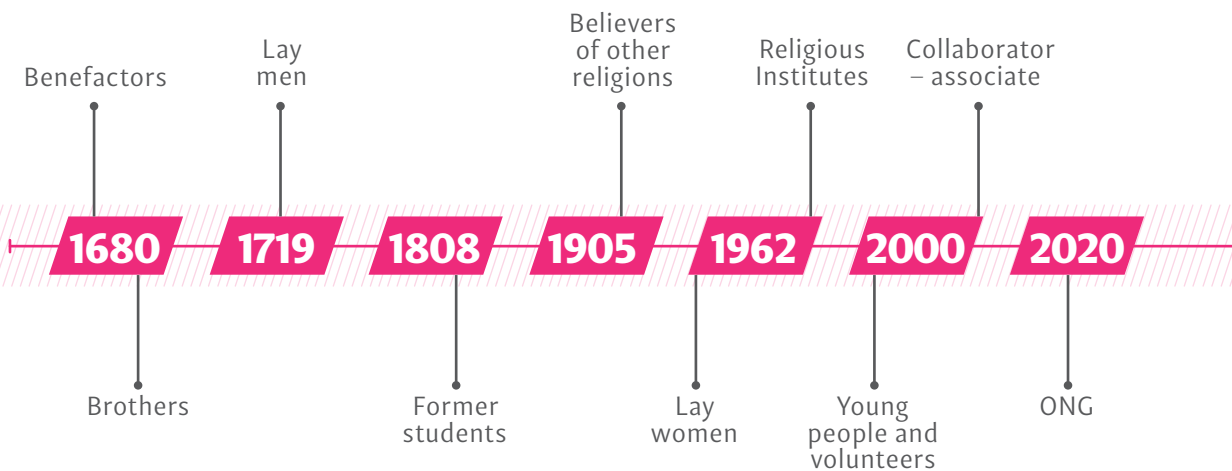
its values and methods. Aware of Lasallian education's potential to promote personal transformation, benefactors help the educational processes of Lasallian institutions. At the same time, families, friends, associations, companies and other agents want to contribute to the projects of Lasallian institutions. In this way, they promote equal opportunities for children and young people.

work to less favored areas and the promotion of global initiatives.

The conviction of the relevant character of the principles of Lasallian education makes more people and groups associate with

# LASALLIANS

How they join together on the road





PART THREE

# INSPIRING AND ENDURING FUNDAMENTALS OF THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL HERITAGE

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*“De La Salle’s ascetical and educational thought did not focus so much on “how to educate” as on “how to be” in order to educate, in other words, on how to interiorize the educator’s vocation and method.”*

Saint John Paul II. Audience on the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Institute in Italy, May 18, 2002.



### **3.1 Jesus Christ: Reference, Inspiration, Support and Life.**

**J**ohn Baptist de La Salle conceived of the Brother as God's minister, a witness of Jesus Christ in the world of education, who participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church. This thinking, still in force today, poses serious demands on those who choose to consecrate their lives entirely to this mission. Among these demands are a radicalness in following Jesus Christ, a total availability to go out to new borders, a commitment to make God's merciful love transparent, and to be reliable witnesses. For these, one must be capable of touching hearts and transforming lives, especially in the world of the poor. Only in this way, those who dedicate themselves to this mission will have the authority to be the heart, memory and guarantor of the history started by De La Salle.

In the same way, associated Lasallian educators who live their faith in the Church must take on their vocation as a ministry that manifests the joy of the Gospel and the saving power of Christian education.



Lasallians of other faiths engaged in the mission are also called to make visible the fundamental values of this spiritual tradition, such as faith, fraternity, ardent zeal, and the coherence of life in order to open minds and to touch hearts.

★ As Lasallians, we are all called to be witnesses to Jesus Christ in the world of education.

Jesus Christ's message is the source from which comes all the principles of the process of Lasallian education. His message centered on love and forgiveness is the irresistible force that touches hearts and transforms history. Jesus preaches the truth, teaches us how to love one another, how to always forgive and how to show the merciful face of God who welcomes, heals, and restores. His witness points out that the most vulnerable, excluded and simple are God's favorites. His simple, questioning and detached life has taught us that the greatest treasure is the value of life, the most important commandment is love, the best commitment is solidarity, and the greatest grace is generous service.

Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and forever, is the source of faith for those of us who profess to be Christian. It is, without a doubt, the first source of the Lasallian educational legacy. However, the values

★ The message of Jesus is the source for Lasallian education: it includes love, forgiveness, truth, mercy, a preference for those who are excluded, the value of life, solidarity and generosity.

that come from the Gospel have a universal dimension which creates a Christian humanism. This humanistic inspiration is the force that allows the Lasallian educational enterprise to also summon and inspire men and women of different religious traditions or

who, without being believers, discover in Jesus Christ the inspiration for a life that is strengthened by human values which build solidarity, fraternity, respect for difference, ethical values that strengthen the social fabric and peaceful coexistence in responsible and committed citizens.


### 3.2 The core of the Lasallian Educational Mission: Community.

The cornerstone that sustains the construction of this mission has been and always will be *community*. It was undoubtedly one of the great intuitions of the Founder and of the first Brothers. Several other projects similar to that of John Baptist de La Salle failed because they were not community based. The community educates, strengthens its members, cares for the weak and nurtures their spirit. It is the best guarantee to respond to the greatest imaginable challenges. To be Lasallian, by definition, is *to belong to a community* and to commit oneself within that same community to a common task.

★ Being Lasallian involves, by definition, belonging to a community and a commitment to a shared task within that community.

Community and mission are two sides of the same coin. Community is for the mission, and mission creates community. You cannot have one without the other. Lasallian documentation has asserted it from its beginnings; and thanks to this conviction, the impact of shared mission has been so spectacular. It is sufficient to look at what is happening around us now in order to quietly grasp the transforming power of community.

### 3.3 The spirit that animates the Lasallian Educational Community.

 Lasallian education draws inspiration from a spirituality sustained by faith, fraternity and a burning zeal.

That which is specifically Lasallian has to do with a style, a methodology and a tradition that is made explicit in a rich, constructive and personalized educational relationship. This educational

relationship is inspired by a spirituality that is based on *faith, fraternity and ardent zeal*. These three values are significant and relevant for today's world.

In De La Salle's classic triad, faith consists in "looking at nothing but with the eyes of faith, doing nothing but with an eye toward God, and attributing everything to God." This triad has been reread today as contemplation, discernment and abandonment, respectively.

Contemplation leads us to silence, observation and the capacity to look with new eyes; these are paths conducive to spirituality and elements of a necessary education for interiority.<sup>3</sup> In a world riddled with noise, it is important to highlight the value of contemplation as the way to look at the essential, which depends on a look from the soul that transcends the senses.

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<sup>3</sup>In the Lasallian world, there are very significant experiences in this regard, such as the HARA Program in Spain and Portugal.

Discernment denotes a journey that starts from the question about truth, by the critical judgment of facts, events, the enormous information that fills, distracts, and constantly involves reflection, contrast, mental consideration, looking with the heart.

Abandonment, as De La Salle expressed it, consists in putting life, projects, and dreams in God's hands, like "the sailor who goes to sea without sails or oars." It is the attitude of one who expects everything from God. It is the source of the deeply evangelical virtue of hope.

This attitude of contemplating history and finding within it the seeds of peace, goodness, and the signs of the times, is the attitude that for the Lasallian educator constitutes a conviction that boys, girls, youth and adults are always a possibility and a project, they have abilities and dreams, and they are treasures that are built in the midst of an educational relationship that enriches, respects, dreams, transforms the present, builds the future and unfolds opportunities.

### **3.3.1 Faith.**

Faith not only refers to a relationship with God who acts as a "teacher," but it also generates a characteristic and distinctive educational

★ Faith is active. Discover God in the vicissitudes of history and encounter Jesus on the margins and among the excluded.

relationship. Today, the spirit of faith demands personal and community dynamics, consistent with educational meditation to create confidence in oneself, in the other, in humanity and to develop awareness of


the continued presence of God, who we contemplate in educational action.

This is how we understand “faith as the foundation of a hope that translates into commitment.”<sup>4</sup> Our Lasallian faith is an active, committed faith. It invites us to “come out” of the quiet of our communities and the comfort zones of our missions. It is also a faith that seeks, a faith that risks, a faith that commits itself, a faith that discovers God within the vicissitudes of history and finds Jesus Christ on the fringes and in the face of the excluded and irrelevant.

Lasallians of other faiths, or those without religious beliefs, encounter poor children, youth and adults who lack support to live with human dignity, and express their common humanity by reaching out to them to provide various types of support to improve their situation.

### **3.3.2 Fraternity.**

Today the word fraternity acquires essential connotations in an individualistic and crowded world. Lasallian education, although it has emphasized the communal dimension, has not

 Lasallian fraternity should also manifest itself for those who think differently and in our vision of Church-Community.

been without a certain narcissism. In some cases, there has been an insistence on personal triumph, on the personal life project, on competencies that emphasize competitiveness rather than solidarity. Proceeding in this vein, the ideal of modernity has been adopted, which makes men/women the owner, master of the world and lord of all.

On the other hand, fraternity manifests itself when we share our table and story, not only in a closed circle with those who believe and think like us, but especially with those who think differently. Sharing

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<sup>4</sup> Sauvage and Campos, *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*.

with those who have other religious options or none at all, with those who contradict and question us, and with those with whom, despite everything, we also share common dreams. It is in dissent that the paths to innovation are more easily found than in environments laden with self-referencing and mutual praise. Responding to Pope Francis' call to go beyond borders also requires dialogue with those who think differently.

Lasallian fraternity must also express itself in our vision of Church-Community and, consequently, translate into the life of the educational community. Fortunately, in Catholic circles a conception of a synodal and servant Church emerges strongly, which breaks, by its very axis, the paradigm of ecclesial power entrenched in some sectors of the hierarchy. An Institute that was born lay, whose consecrated members are faithful laymen, and which has an impressive presence of lay associates and partners, how could the Church be understood otherwise if not in this synodal perspective? All of us, brothers and sisters, are people who discern, not simply persons who obey.

### **3.3.3 Ardent zeal.**

As expressed in the Brothers' Rule, zeal translates into passion, commitment and joy in being part of a mission that consists of "touching hearts," pointing out horizons, inspiring

★ The passion for education ought to be our distinctive mark.

dreams and participating in educational processes that open doors to opportunities, contributes to the construction of equity and strengthens the democratization of societies. Joy, availability and commitment to the common project must be characteristics of Lasallian zeal, and if it is ardent, fire and passion must be our distinctive traits.

### 3.4 Lasallian association.

For more than 300 years, “together and by association” has been our particular style, a fundamental aspect of our charism. In recent decades, we have witnessed that this mission has become a shared mission with other Lasallians from different states of life, and including others of different beliefs.

*In a multicultural and pluri-religious world, we Brothers of the Christian Schools are reflecting on the need to assure the vitality of our educational mission, which cannot be understood unless it is seen as shared with the seventy thousand educators the world over. The conviction to work “together and by association” continues to gain new meaning... We are also aware of journeying alongside teachers from other religious creeds who have found in De La Salle a new source of identity and the conviction to carry out their educational mission in today’s world through a respectful interreligious dialogue between faith and culture. Hence, the proposition from the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter to draft a Declaration on Lasallian Education, as an expression of a ministerial journey that is open to the future, through its ability to critique itself based on the demands of the Gospel. (Cahiers lasalliens 67, 2014, Preface, pp. 3-4)*

Today, Brothers and other Lasallians discover in Association the deep meaning of Lasallian community. On the one hand, the Brothers have recovered the Vow of Association, first among themselves, as the backbone to reread their Rule of Life.

On the other hand, all Lasallians feel called not only to share work, but also spirituality and community relationships. As in the Founder's time, we are invited to respond in association to the challenges posed by the Lasallian mission. Association is, then, the basis of our commitment as well as the expression of our sense of belonging.

Association is, therefore, a vocational journey that invites us to form vibrant and intentional communities of faith, made up of Brothers and Partners. We find in them both the space and time to share our faith, our experience and the meaning of

★ Association is a vocational journey which invites us to form communities in which we share faith and respond to the needs of today.

our life. There are a variety of ways of thinking and organizing these communities; but we are convinced that it is a call from God, through the signs of the times, to be creative and to better respond to today's needs. To do this, we need to adapt and enhance our Lasallian formation, learn to discern together and accompany one another.

### **3.5 Features of the Lasallian educational tradition.**

#### **3.5.1 The pedagogy of fraternity.**

The centrality of community becomes a reality in the pedagogy of fraternity that has developed with the following characteristics:

- a. An affectionate fraternity.** Human relationships are a central element of the Lasallian school. All the participants in school life are involved: students, teachers, parents, and indirectly, social and political institutions. For De La Salle, there is also another essential agent in the educational relationship: God. Everything



indicates that De La Salle understood well that personal growth and that, consequently, the educational process depends essentially on human relationships. No wonder then that De La Salle asks teachers to win the hearts of children. The Brothers' Rule insists on using words of love and tenderness, especially for children who need it most.

**b. A courteous fraternity.** De La Salle grew up in a family atmosphere characterized by civility and courtesy; he experienced its benefits and its personal and social advantages; likewise, he understood its usefulness for life. The publication of his *Rules of Decorum and Civility* is a manifestation of the importance he attributed to these qualities of social coexistence. They were one of the bases of his anthropology.

Civility is a necessary condition for living in society, and it is the human foundation of fraternity. There is an evident coherence between education for civility and the desire to propose a fraternal pedagogy. When civility disappears, the social fabric suffers. For De La Salle and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Brothers, educating the children "of the artisans and the poor" in civility was giving them an increased opportunity for being part of society and professional advancement, which is still valid even today.

★ A pedagogy of fraternity has developed, and it is characterised by being affectionate, courteous, ambitious, and in universal solidarity.

**c. An ambitious fraternity.** This ambition was based on the confidence of the potential of the students. For this reason, De La Salle and the first Brothers offered more demanding courses and higher learning experiences. For example:

- In reading, it was not enough to learn to read in order to study the catechism. It was also necessary to read ordinary print characters and all types of manuscripts intelligently.
- In writing, it was not enough to acquire ordinary writing, but also to acquire round hand script and cursive calligraphy. You had to know the rules of spelling and writing.
- In arithmetic, in addition to exercising the four elementary operations, it was necessary to be able to solve problems, beginning with concrete life situations, since this made it possible to get a job as an administrative accountant.

In short, the Lasallian school had a very high level of demand, in order to increase opportunities for student advancement. That requirement was and is applicable, in the first place, to the teachers themselves.

At the source of this ambition was the desire to offer students what was useful for their professional future and for their being an integral part of the society in which they lived. This explains the Institute's global evolution vis-à-vis increasing qualification levels. This is how the secondary schools, and later the technical schools and institutions of higher learning appeared.

**d. A fraternity in solidarity.** Guided by the Gospel and by his sense of fraternity, De La Salle was not satisfied with schools that segregated rather than united. Referring, as he often does to Saint Paul, he wanted like Paul "to announce the Gospel to all." He did not want the poor to feel rejected. On the contrary, he wanted them to feel accepted and integrated into society. In other words, he wanted equal opportunities and ways of socio-economic advancement for them.

This fraternity in solidarity progressively expanded as the Institute developed. It was not limited to children who regularly attended school, but it was extended to other young people who had educational or pastoral needs and who otherwise would not have been able to continue their training. Suffice it to remember, as mentioned in the first part of this document, that De La Salle started many other concrete works, like the Sunday schools to attend to young workers and work with challenging youth; and during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the range of educational services became more prolific as the Institute expanded worldwide.

These initiatives demonstrate that Lasallian fraternity is universal because through education it strives to reintegrate young persons with difficulties in the school, in the Church, and in society. Every action of integration contributes to human fraternity.

**e. A universal fraternity.** The vision of John Baptist de La Salle encompassed all dioceses of France and beyond. It included influencing many religious Congregations of women who were dedicated to girls' education. There was no doubt that the vision of De La Salle drove him to establish the Institute in Rome, the center of the Church. It bore witness to its Catholic nature, so essential for the Institute.

Likewise, De La Salle discovered that teachers had an irreplaceable function, but needed to prepare for it. He needed teachers who were well educated and professionally competent, prepared for the continuous pursuit of quality, of excellence. He constantly reminded the Brothers "that the school should run well." To that end, he rapidly organized the training of teachers, a concern that extended

throughout the Institute's history. The acquiring of knowledge and the development of competencies are a duty of justice toward the students and not a simple need for personal fame.

Furthermore, we have always believed in teachers who work in association. As a Founder, De La Salle realized this from the start. It was the most fruitful of his educational insights. Association became the Institute's fundamental characteristic, and today it is that for the Lasallian world. Years of experience, difficulties, reflection and prayer were necessary to arrive at a clear awareness of the spirit and of the work in association.

Associative dynamism has deep roots in our history. The positive impact of association did not stop at the time of the Founder. It is surprising to see how the strength of association has enabled the Institute to overcome difficulties, and to offer alternative, temporary or lasting solutions to the challenges it has faced.

★ Starting from the reality of the situation and the particular needs of the children and young people, the Lasallian school prepares students to be Christians, citizens and professionals.

For some decades, we have become more aware of the central role of association in the functioning, dynamism and future of the network of Lasallian centers. Surely, this depends on the fact that, from its origin, association guaranteed:

- cohesion of educational teams,
- quality of collective discernment,
- stability in a common project,

- availability and solidarity among its members,
- warmth of coexistence, and
- possibilities of openness to the universal.

### **3.5.2 To Educate *in* and *for* Life.**

The three centuries that separate us from Saint John Baptist de La Salle have been fertile. Proof of this is the continuity of his educational and spiritual legacy and the affirmation in diverse contexts of his initial intuitions. The tradition continues to live because it constantly evolves, updates itself, and proposes paths, horizons and opportunities. It is capable of entering into dialogue with pedagogical and didactic currents that frequently arise.

Lasallian education is closely linked to life because it starts from life experiences and because it prepares for successful placement in society, especially in the workplace. From the realities of the context and the particular needs of children and young people, the school prepares the Christian, the citizen and the professional. Lasallian education is practical, with well-defined sequences, constant observation, and ongoing evaluation of the processes.

**a. The social dimension of education.** Lasallian education has an inalienable social dimension because it has its roots in the Gospel and "the promotion of human dignity, solidarity with human beings and integral and sustainable development." When opting for humanization and social justice as inspiration, the educational result is essential. Neutrality is not possible.

De La Salle, from the beginning, created options for "the children of the artisans and the poor." In our current reality, there are many new poverties and educational urgencies, but it is not very difficult to find populations that have been privileged in our mission. In

fact, the educational service of the poor gives "specificity to the Institute." It is not about excluding other human groups. In fact, we are present in various social, political and economic settings. Forty years ago, the Institute pointed out that the educational service of the poor is inseparable from the promotion of justice. Not only the poor have been condemned to a life that denies the condition of dignity, but also the excluded and those considered irrelevant.

Globalization, which was so exciting at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the opening of economies, the circulation of knowledge and capital, "the global village," today shows facets that reveal that the dream gave way to disappointment. The examples are numerous: new walls segregate nations, doors have been closed to immigrants, xenophobia is exacerbated everywhere, entire peoples are entrenched in their fears of the "different." Groups close in on themselves and radicalize in favor of violence and racism. In short, we are witnessing the loss of the sense that history is one, interconnected and common, and that the fate of humanity is in danger.

**b. Comprehensive and inclusive education.** Lasallian education is comprehensive because it addresses the person's totality, their habits, care for the body, emotions and affections, good manners, intellectual development, formation of values, ethical and aesthetic dimension, professional preparation, the spiritual dimension expressed in interiority and in the knowledge of God. It is inclusive because it unites theory and practice, gives unity and meaning, and prepares the citizen; that is to say that it "teaches us to live well."

**c. Christian education.** The Lasallian school has a Christian origin.

This statement raises questions that are important to analyze as it defines the meaning of evangelization, catechesis, the study of religious traditions, communication of common values, presentation or preaching of Jesus Christ, the mystery of the Church.

Issues recently resolved a few decades ago, such as the role of religious in social life, the relationship of the human being with transcendence, salvation, the spiritual search beyond the religious, are today complex, or at least treated differently.

The understanding of the role of the Catholic Church in a pluralistic world and the role of believers within

★ Education in life and for life is social, holistic, inclusive, Christian, pupil-centred, effective and efficient.

the Church are important issues that determine evangelizing and catechetical processes themselves.

These issues cannot be lost sight of as a very important number of Lasallians, students and teachers, belong to other Christian denominations, to different faiths and religious traditions, or they live a very personal spirituality without affiliations. There is no doubt that this richness also poses important challenges for Lasallians in the field of ecumenism, religious freedom, and multi-culturalism.

**d. Student centered education.** One of the essential foundations of

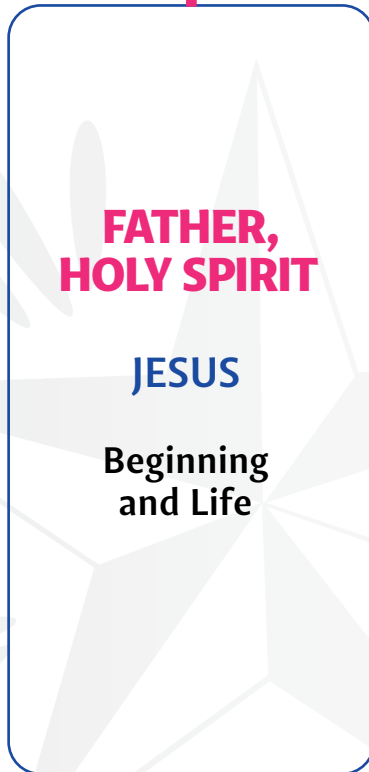
Lasallian pedagogy is the knowledge that the teacher must have of each and every one of the students. Why is this knowledge so important? Because it is a condition for the adequate pedagogy of each student, that is, the putting into practice of two-dimensional knowing/doing. Knowing each one "distinctly" – their peculiarities, their learning rhythm, their personalities, etc., is a condition for proceeding with differentiated, adapted and personalized

attention. Thus, certain essential principles that are acquired by pedagogical progress are understood: demand, flexibility, logical follow-up, complexity.

**e. Effective and efficient education.** "That the school runs well" is not a simple desire, and even less is it a simple and empty inspiration; it is the result of concerted work in all educational relationships. The work of creating, innovating or transforming and, in all cases, of planning, organizing, executing and evaluating. All of which implies educational, corrective and purposeful provisions.



# CONTEXT



THE CALL  
to a

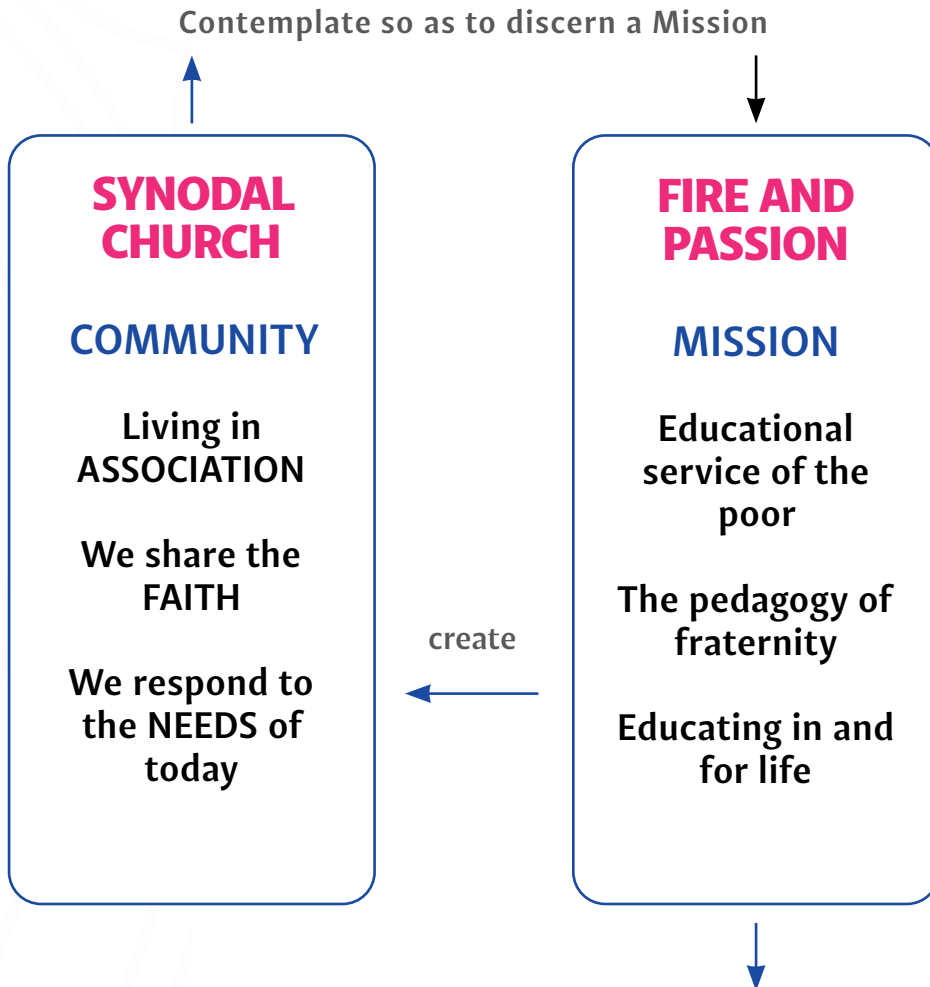


CONTEMPLATE  
and place oneself  
in the presence



ABANDONING  
one's life

# AND SOCIETY



Jesus calls us to a community for the Mission. Jesus calls us for a Mission which creates community. Starting with the reality of the context and particular needs of children and young people, the Lasallian school discovers its Mission and prepares people for citizenship and professional life.



PART FOUR

# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE. CHALLENGES OF THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION

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*Dear spiritual children of John Baptist de La Salle, I exhort you to study and imitate his passion for the least and the discarded. In the furrow of his apostolic testimony, may you be protagonists of a "culture of resurrection," especially in those existential contexts where the culture of death is prevalent. Never tire of going in search of those who find themselves in modern-day "sepulchres" of dismay, degradation, distress and poverty, in order to offer hope of new life.*  
Pope Francis, Audience on the Tercentenary of the Eternal Easter of John Baptist de La Salle.



**T**he dizzying social processes that the world is experiencing have a direct and indirect impact on educational plans. For example, migration is changing the profile of societies; technological disruptions have transformed our way of living and relating. Predatory consumerism has changed the natural landscape and threatens our survival; political dynamics have fractured democracy and freedom; biotechnology has altered the concept of life and death. The breakdown of mega stories has shaken religions and ethical systems; and the arrival of the fourth stage of the industrial revolution, or better yet the first stage of the digital age, has shown the inability of the nation-state to govern it. Thus, what is constant is change and uncertainty is its characteristic.

We have to live through the turmoil of the present as heirs of a three-hundred-year old tradition that unites us and that also calls us to rethink the nature and value of education for new generations. Only

in this way will we respond to the challenge of offering an education that is relevant for today's children and youth. However, it is clear that a tradition is dead if we fail to update and reread it by taking into account the new realities and challenges of each place where it is found. It would be anachronistic simply to transfer the methods and processes of the origins of our tradition to today without adapting them to the current context.

In addition, a reflection is necessary that allows us to illuminate present action, according to the fundamental values and the original insights. In this way, Lasallian education continues its evolution, motivating community discernment and educational creativity. This constant growth allows organs such as the International, Regional, and District Assemblies, even the Mission Councils, to find their origin and strengthen themselves within association. Excitement results from doing this, not as intellectual discourse, but as opportunities to create, risk, decide and act.



Experiencing the turbulences of today as heirs of De La Salle requires us constantly to have fresh thinking about education. Only then will we provide a relevant education for children and young people of today.

Although present realities are complex and even overwhelming, they are always occasions to rethink the incalculable value of education and its social impact. Our heritage is a source of hope and a constant invitation to reflect and to act. Our perspective that God's revelation takes place in history and is the source that inspires commitments, gives us the lenses and the reasons to look with joy, serenity and hope at the challenges that always become possibilities and promises.

The realities of this world urge us to take proactive and not reactive positions that put us at the forefront of educational innovation. These contexts are characterized, among other things, by the disappearance of boundaries between the sciences and the relative autonomy of physics, biology and digital technologies that have favored the emergence of bioinformatics, biotechnology and info-technology. These new combinations of science and technology challenge all the ethical, religious, philosophical, anthropological, social and historical models and positions that, in their way, force a permanent reflection on the educational act.

Education has also played a political role throughout history, just as education and knowledge are attributed a tremendous power.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, there are issues of deep significance that Lasallian education must address and understand well. For example, the educational process in the society of knowledge, the training for citizenship, the construction of equity within the framework of social justice, the strengthening of democracy, and the education of critical, reflective, free and autonomous people. At the same time, formal education has also become a generator of knowledge and an arbiter in a profuse, diffuse and confusing sea of information.

Thus, education has a profound social impact that we cannot disregard. On the contrary, we must have a clear understanding of its intentions, approaches and emphasis. Today as never before has it been more im-

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<sup>5</sup> Knowledge is power. Bacon (*ispa scientia potestas est*) and Hobbes with the incursion of the scientific method have raised it. Paulo Freire, among others, has also posited that the educational process has a very social and political dimension.



portant to be clear about the type of society and person we want to help build, as well as the role of the educator and the school in today's contexts.

#### **4.1 Together and by Association for the Educational Service of the Poor.**

★ The modern commitment to schools for all is a goal still to be reached. The big challenge for Lasallian education is to be accessible to the poorest.

Current times show different faces of poverty and marginalization that challenge Lasallian association. In many places in the world, the contemporary promise of school for all is still a dream. Many children have poor or no education at all due to poverty, wars, migratory

processes, social marginalization, epidemics, impossibility of access to new technologies, internal conflicts, racial or gender segregation, adolescent pregnancy, child labor and many other forms of exclusion. Poverty hits especially hard in deep rural areas of developing countries and the belts of misery on the outskirts of cities. In this context, the defense of the rights of the child makes great sense.

In recent decades, most of the countries – even the poorest – have significantly increased the availability of schooling, but without ensuring quality in the process. In this way, they have turned education into the biggest factor of exclusion. In other words, the tension between coverage and quality, between schooling and learning persists. Poor education for the poor deprives them of access to the opportunities that their birth, surname or their social condition have denied them,

thus perpetuating their marginalization and the conditions of misery in which many of them already live. Quality education is an engine of social mobility because it strengthens democracy, significantly reduces poverty and generates inclusion and equality.

***Pathways forward / recommendations:***

The existence of innovative educational responses that are happening in many parts of the Lasallian world and that are real responses to the problems of poverty are impressive. However, educational commitment to the poor is insufficient if it is not intimately linked to the cause of social justice and equity (Circular 412, 1980, 9). Misery and marginalization are products of political and economic systems that manufacture poverty, because they privilege the few, concentrate wealth, promote corruption and forget the essence of politics as a builder of the common good. The educational service of the poor is, in essence, a service to the cause of justice that, in turn, promotes equitable, inclusive societies respectful of the dignity of people and attentive to the full satisfaction of their needs.

In this context, the great challenge of Lasallian education is, precisely, to be accessible to the poorest. Other challenges include forming citizens who are critical and aware of reality, who are committed in their research projects to the service of causes that overcome marginalization and misery, who propose solutions to the problems of hunger, and who delve into the understanding of social and political processes. In short, Lasallian education is called to create educational plans that allow for the expansion of quality education and articulate higher educational processes with basic ones, in order to align the improvement of educational systems as an integrating continuum.

Solving the great problems of the education of the poor and the service of justice are not exclusive to Lasallians. Our association is not only among ourselves but also among numerous ecclesial, confessional, civil, non-governmental and state organizations, with which we have a common cause in favor of humanity. Overcoming sectarianism and the herd instinct is necessary to be part of the forces that, united, can achieve much for justice and equity. The protagonists of such a divisive stance are enemies of solidarity and grounded in self-centeredness that corrode the strength of the Gospel and hinder overcoming humanity's great problems.

#### **4.2 Human Solidarity.**

Already looming in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were those realities that would become realities at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The dizzying advance in science not only changed power structures, but also the means of production and personal, family, social and labor relations.

Reality, therefore, is influencing the very viability of the school as such and, equally, all of its organizational and curricular processes, educational interactions, ongoing teacher training, evaluation and the sociology that inspires it. In short, lived reality impacts real and explicit educational projects, not only ideological ones, as beautiful as they are unattainable, which fail to point out relevant horizons for new situations.

***Pathways forward / recommendations:***

Undeniable, therefore, is the need to be clear that one of the intentions of our educational project is to provide dialogue between science and humanism. In the course of this dialogue, science questions the ethics and the spiritual dimensions of persons and, at the same time, they upset and question scientific knowledge. The university is the privileged place for this task. This does not prevent, in both basic and secondary education, the appreciation of humanistic knowledge and the type of knowledge that sustains it, as well as the characteristic beauty, logic and scientific method. Bertrand Russell expresses this magnificently: "*In education as in other human affairs, there is only one way to progress; and it is the following: science exercised by love. Without science, love is powerless; without love, science is destructive*" (Bertrand Russell, 1926: 153).

These themes are very sensitive for the Lasallian educator, since they should not be avoided or converted into dogmatic proposals. Dialogue between faith, ethics and reason is always the stage where the Christian proposal can be enriched in dialogue with current contexts. This is neither a

"practical relativism" nor a "doctrinal relativism," as defined by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* and in *Laudato Si*. On the contrary, dialogue requires the acceptance of natural law referents and revealed truth as well as putting the realities in context without, therefore, giving "priority to circumstantial conveniences."



The Lasallian project was born in marginal areas of dehumanisation. Our educational undertaking has favoured the cultivation and preservation of all that is human.

True to our tradition, the Lasallian enterprise was born on the borders of dehumanization. De La Salle and the first Brothers, "moved" by the fate of the poor, created the Christian school to provide opportunities for inclusion, access to knowledge and to the arts and crafts for those who were marginalized from education. This inclusive school opened the doors of the rigid social divisions prevalent at that time. This Lasallian Christian presence, as our historical documents abundantly show, was never intended to convert or to proselytize.

Being the humanistic Lasallian education tradition, our formative commitment has favored the care and preservation of what is profoundly human. A question that is constantly enriched, that opens the way, that questions its conditions, possibilities and forms of expression, and the communication of the values and virtues that, in the end, are the very dynamics of education. As Pope Francis beautifully expressed it, "speaking of roots, of values, we can speak of truth, of goodness, of creativity...One cannot educate without appreciating beauty, without drawing beauty from the heart...I would dare to say that an education is not successful if it does not know how to create poets. The path to beauty is a challenge that must be addressed."<sup>6</sup>

Ethical formation is essential in our proposal. Traditionally, we have embraced the guiding principles of Christian thinking about ethics. However, the understanding of Christian ethics in the secularized context is beyond a dogmatic or an autistic interpretation of values. Rather the constant effective deployment of its options, that is, in the updating of its relevance that, as never before, is heterogeneous and at times hostile.

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<sup>6</sup> Address of the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the seminar "Education: A Global Compact." Feb. 7, 2020.

Today, inclusion is not enough. Not even social justice and equality can be circumscribed to the reality of a single country or set geographical area. The planet's fate requires an option for universal solidarity and humanism. Here we have to strengthen the pedagogy of fraternity – the great treasure and essential component of our project – because it constitutes an essential characteristic of our three hundred year old heritage and tradition. Fraternity, without a doubt, is expressed in solidarity, as a consequential value; but it also makes us feel like brothers and sisters who walk together in search of meaning and who are committed to the great causes of humanity.

Likewise, fraternity humanizes education, because it helps to inter-relate different generations, globalizes hope, and creates awareness of responsibility for the care of people, nature, planetary life and sustainable development. Fraternity that is realized in civil and political love; it arrests moral degradation; it commits to the common good, and it isolates itself from any harmful culture.

### **4.3 Citizenship and Political Life.**

The democratic system is one of the great conquests of humanity. Many attempts over the course of centuries ranging from tribal and slave societies go through imperial and monarchical absolutisms, dictatorships of all types, up to one-party regimes, and allow us to think that the most civilized political model is democracy. Although it is also imperfect and able to be perfected, even questioned, it is the best way humanity has found to preserve freedom, seek justice, and manage social life.

Although it is true that the advent of democracy has not represented in all cases the desired development and the equity that cannot be postponed, the answer to the limitations of democracy is not to deny its potential but to commit ourselves to its strengthening. We have learned painful lessons about it, and they pose serious challenges for our educational processes. Participation and political control – common to democracy – have been quite frequently forgotten in our formation and action. We are satisfied with the election of candidates, but we do not concern ourselves about monitoring and challenging the elected and holding them accountable.

***Pathways forward / recommendations:***

The fragility of organizations and the deficient formation of citizens who are aware of their political responsibilities have favored the spread of apparently uncontrollable corruption and the existence of citizens indifferent to political problems. These problems carry within them the germ of the destruction of institutions and the decline of democracy. We are aware of the existence of uncritical educational projects that, in an unveiled way, favor models that are contrary to communion, social justice, defense of life, and genuine Gospel values and the values of other very important religious traditions.

We could speak of pedagogies for the formation of essential values for humanism; for example, the approach to social realities of the social and existential peripheries. This approach is a generator of questions that form integral frameworks, provoke ethical behaviors, and articulate knowledge on the reality, social responsibility and the future of humanity itself.

In any case, it is by training for citizenship, through educational mediations, that we build knowledge supportive of an ethic of care embodied in responsibility and solidarity. The school has a fundamental role. It must itself create an environment conducive to respect and order, through the establishment of clear norms, policies for conflict management, environments that foster solidarity, and situations that allow foreseeing, evaluating and anticipating the impact and the social responsibility generated by personal and collective decisions. Furthermore, formation for integral ecology and care for aesthetics will enable spaces to educate and facilitate learning.

Thus, the school cannot renounce its crucial role in the formation of citizens capable of exercising their rights, fulfilling their duties, defending the public, strengthening the social fabric, participating in democratic processes, inserting themselves in politics and policy-making, growing in ethics and the aesthetic dimension. These citizens must possess a civic ethics that manifests itself consistently in their daily actions, by honesty, solidarity, transparency, accountability and compassionate understanding.



Our school cannot renounce its role in the formation of citizens capable of exercising their rights, fulfilling their duties, defending public good, strengthening the social fabric, participating in the democratic processes, being concerned about policies and politics.



#### **4.4 Critical Thinking and Interiority.**

New technologies have great educational potential. They make it possible to have large amounts of information at hand, navigate an immeasurable ocean of knowledge, access millions of documents, know in real time what is being discovered and the topics on which scientists are working. Thanks to all this, we can interact with people to discuss and exchange ideas and experiences. In short, its possibilities exceed the imaginable. Certainly, these possibilities also carry dangers. We know, for example, how many problems indiscriminate communication has caused with people who stalk, corrupt, destroy, attract, steal and use, protected by the anonymity cyber networks provide.

Superficiality and a poor interior life are causes for concern because they facilitate the sovereignty of the "post-truth." Their influence has made objective facts matter less to public opinion than emotions and personal beliefs.

Thus, this realm of "post-truth" replaces truth with frequently repeated lies that exacerbate feelings, gives rise to positions that separate what one feels and thinks from what is said. In addition, it institutionalizes the lie based on this secret morbidity that, at its core, uncritically accepts political decisions based on fallacies, even if reality proclaims something different. An aggravating feature of all this is that this "fluid" world begins to be governed by people who openly lie in a convincing way. They deny what is undeniable (global warming, the evolution of life, minority rights, inclusion and respect for women), promise what is unattainable and awaken the anarchist, racist, homophobic, narcissist that too frequently resides in some hearts.

***Pathways forward / recommendations:***

We face the urgent need to educate for contemplation, interiority and depth. In short, today more than ever it is important to form people's criteria, help them develop their capacity for analysis and critical thinking, turn their doubts into a search engine. Essential learning consists of knowing how to digest, through contemplation, reflection and silence, the abundant information ingested, using it to understand the world and its relationships, by communicating with others by expressing one's own thoughts reasonably and calmly. Education must be patient and unrushed. These qualities can be expressed through the metaphors "mental rumination" and "simmering."

★ Today more than ever, it is important to train people's judgment, to help them develop their capacity for analysis and for critical thinking, promoting the spiritual dimension and interiority of young people.

It is, therefore, urgent to promote pedagogies that encourage reading and provoke a discussion that develops an exchange of views and generates personal positions with informed opinions and clear and precise conceptualization. This type of reading is indispensable when faced with the impressive fragmentation that results from reading on the web. *Hyperlinks* suggest jumping from one idea to another idea, from one author to the next, until one is flooded with information that forms a complete and different idea about a topic. Reading books in their entirety, with a corresponding analysis and group discussion, are means that favor depth,

meta-analysis, dialogue with the author, as well as understanding other perspectives. All of these are necessary conditions for deepening thought and overcoming the superficiality imposed by fragmentation.

The world of social networks can favor levity and the loss of interiority to emptiness. Lasallian education feels called to offer means that favor reflection and awareness, as well as options that provide answers to questions about the meaning of life, the world and history.

On the other hand, the Lasallian educator, inflamed with apostolic zeal, feels challenged to promote the spiritual dimension and the interiority of young people. To this end, the educator designs methodologies, creates alliances and motivates young people to increase this human dimension that is capable of brightening their being. The exaggerated and uncritical use of technological means of communication, the desire for immediacy, for ephemeral relationships and complacency prevent young people from fully knowing each other and developing to the fullest. Those virtues that are cultivated and flower from within the person need a space for their consideration and flowering.

The spiritual crisis manifests itself fundamentally in the loss of the meaning of life and in religiosities inconsistent with the defense of what is profoundly human and without real expressions of mercy and responsibility in relationships with others. This reality should lead us to work hard so that social networks create human networks. The loneliness full of noises, the adolescent's life with bubbles of virtual worlds, absolute dependencies and loss of freedom in the world of new technologies are undermining interpersonal relationships and the deep communication of being and meaning. The Lasallian ethic is relational.

It is, therefore, an expression of the most genuine Gospel values and of all the most venerable religious traditions. These values include loving one's neighbor as oneself, forgiving, accompanying, and expressing in mercy the presence of God who is love.

#### **4.5 Integral Ecology.**

In contexts that favor consumerism, materialism, and the reductionist understanding of effectiveness, among others, young people find it difficult to answer existential questions, even to ask them, and therefore, often do not find an answer that satisfies their thirst, their reason for being. The human heart is the bearer of seeds of goodness and generosity, together with the ability to commit oneself to what is right, just, beautiful, deeply human. This is the starting point for understanding integral ecology.

#### ***Pathways forward / recommendations:***

The possibilities of Lasallian education are enormous for the creation and strengthening of educational proposals for "ecological citizenship" (Laudato Si, 211).

'Laudato Si' [LS] proposes an education that considers and gives importance to the realities of a degraded, disrespected, overexploited and little cared for "common home." Thus, it is worth remembering that "Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature" (LS, 215).

Integral ecology is, pedagogically, one of the best generators of educational approaches that could be characteristic of the new Lasallian educational proposal. This, in turn, would favor curricula based on the search for meaning, and problem-based learning. This type of learning would make it possible to construct knowledge, learn phenomena that touch the mind and also affectivity and emotions, and understand the possible interrelation of the natural, social and human sciences, as well as their consequent ethical impacts. Likewise, we could speak of de-

★ Pedagogically speaking, holistic ecology is one of the best sources for educational focal points which could characterise the new Lasallian educational project.


mocracy and the human condition as realities generating the study of history, of political, cultural and religious traditions, of power and the indeterminate decisions that lie scattered in governments or for a nation-state that does not yet seem ready to respond to the problems of global governance and stability.

The curriculum, the contents, the defense of biodiversity and human life, daily practices, knowledge of geographical spaces, contemplation of the landscape, models that sustain the economy of educational institutions, purchasing and consumer decisions, and others, are examples of means that Lasallian education puts at the service of the development of an awareness of the role we all play in protecting the environment. These same means help the sense of intrinsic responsibility associated with all social and personal decisions, and remind us that any action, however small it may seem, can have devastating or constrictive effects on our common home. Certainly, this ecological theme runs through the entire educational project, its relationships, its proposals, its quality criteria, its intentionality and its actual practice.

In short, Lasallian educational processes form human beings to live alternative lifestyles to the logics of domination, of excessive and predatory consumption, and of disrespect for life, ambition and destructive selfishness. These styles will provide cultural transformations that generate other social logic; "a new beginning," as Pope Francis says.

#### **4.6 International Network.**

The complex realities that affect all cultures and countries dramatically affect the social situation, and they push entire populations into poverty and exclusion. Our internationality demands positions and commitments shared by Lasallians in defense of life, care for the environment, access to quality education, the welcoming of migrants, the defense and protection of the rights of children, the responsibility, among others, to act against the scandalous inequity that rules the world.

 We are part of an international Institute which is present in all continents and in diverse cultures, and this gives us enormous possibilities because of the plurality of educational provision, the breadth of outlooks, the realisation of joint projects, the optimisation of human talent and the infrastructures available.

***Pathways forward / recommendations:***

Lasallian education cannot be oblivious to the impressive evolution that school institutions have experienced in recent decades. To begin with, it is always necessary to win the trust of society by offering quality educational proposals, which reaffirm its ability to inspire values and attitudes for current contexts, which teach learning, opening doors to spaces and pointing out pathways to happiness.

We are part of an international organization, present on all the continents and in diverse cultures, which offers us enormous possibilities. Our educational networks will be able to strengthen the possibilities derived from its universality thanks to the plurality of educational proposals, the expansion of their aims, the realization of common projects and the optimization of human talent and infrastructures. A proposal with these characteristics will be very significant for the world. Our networks must be an expression of quality, values, and commitment to social justice. Our networks must be generators of hope and an expression of solidarity.

Our commitment to what is deeply human and to an education that is coherent with reality, forces us to overcome the temptation to create or maintain successful schools and universities in fractured or unfeasible societies due to the practical ignorance of human rights or unbearable inequality; or else schools and universities will fail due to their inability to update themselves and respond to societies that are transforming and worlds that are evolving. The Lasallian proposal, fueled by faith, hope, and ardent zeal, transcends the temptation of self-preferentiality and commits itself to the causes of humanity and the permanent calls of the Church summons the world and men and women of good will.

## 4.7 Beyond the School.

Education should be understood as a synonym for school. The validity of this statement is confirmed by the unusual growth of *online* education and *home schooling*, of the relativization of "university degrees," which are being replaced by certificates in work competencies, or assumed by corporate universities.

★ Education should not be viewed as synonymous with school. Our Mission has found other pathways to follow through informal education, pastoral action, evangelisation in other forums and by virtual presence in the media outside the school setting.

Recent approaches to the same higher education are not far from assuming that the traditional university institution could have its years numbered. In fact, the loss of face-to-face students in many of our institutions is constant. Furthermore, the rigidity of the traditional university proposal is thought to generate great concerns, among others, about the sustainability of institutions, the demand for high-quality research, the development of infrastructures. Meanwhile there are proposals for virtual education, for for-profit university networks, state offerings and on-site work education, all this to the detriment of humanistic and classical education.

### ***Pathways forward / recommendations:***

Undoubtedly, Lasallian educational action has privileged the formal institution, be they primary and secondary schools or universities. However, in places where it is not possible or convenient to establish these institutions, our mission has found other channels, for example, non-formal, informal education, pastoral action, evangelization in



other public/civic settings, and recently a presence in virtual media and unschooled settings. Realities often bypass the imagination. Our reflection on transmitting values by means of new virtual forms of fraternal educational relationships is still in its infancy.

The speed with which these changes, as with those mentioned above, occur should impel us to develop models of Lasallian inspiration which have a significant presence with these new realities. Possibly, we do not have to be in all contemporary educational creations; but neither can we ignore them.

#### **4.8 Educational proposals to pursue and transform.**

The last decades have been prolific in educational advancement. Among the most important to be noted are the progress of cognitive psychology, computer science, communication technologies, neuroscience, advances in genetics, philosophical reflection, critical perspectives of social systems, and new paradigms that pose different conceptions of discipline itself and of scientific methodology. All of these have influenced education as never before, and, consequently, have influenced pedagogies and instructional strategies. New educational paradigms emerge, and, without a doubt, inspire, question and challenge, consciously or unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly, Lasallian educational processes.

The Lasallian school has distinguished itself for being a comprehensive education project (Saturnino Gallego, Volume II, 1986: 45), implemented through pedagogies based on the intense educational relationship between teacher and student, as well as the strength of the fraternal

community and the group as a mediator of learning as expressed earlier in this document. The present times are different. Although many of the original inspirations of basic education – literacy, arithmetic, language learning, professional skills and a reason to live – retain their inspiring power. Consequently, they can be reread in current contexts without entering into unsustainable historicisms, such as wanting to find the roots of new paradigms in the pedagogies, updated in the following centuries, of the 18<sup>th</sup> century school. The cognitive revolutions and developments in science and technology of the past few decades were simply unimaginable then.

★ The rereading of the fundamental values of our tradition and the study of the historical, social, ethical and political implications will make the education we provide more relevant, provided they are approached as complex problems and in terms of a pedagogy for the mediation of conflicts and dissention and by cooperative learning.

It is fitting that we become aware of the new dynamics that affect contemporary educational processes.

#### **4.8.1 In dialogue with emerging paradigms.**

The decades at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the years since the beginning of the present century have been fertile on all knowledge fronts. The turbulent decades of the 60s and 70s allowed the creation of alternative educational projects

and the liberating and critical pedagogical positions that even today continue to show their strength. For example, the novel expression of popular education. However, today the range is greater and conducive

to fertile dialogues between centuries-old educational traditions, such as ours, and theoretical proposals that support current educational projects.


Today, new paradigms that impact education are also appearing forcefully. The emerging paradigm of complexity implies a break with the determinism and positivism of science, the fragmentation of knowledge, the linearity of thought, and the emergence of unsuspected problems and threats. At the same time, this paradigm presumes different approaches, such as inter-discipline and trans-discipline, for the approach to knowledge and the solution of problems, systemic thoughts, hologrammatics, auto-organizational theory, that is, a new epistemology that poses enormous challenges to education and the school.

To continue insisting on a compartmentalized school for the approach to the acquisition of knowledge is simply impossible. Thus, for us Lasallians, honest dialogue is necessary to enrich the knowledge so essential for these times with our educational heritage. The rereading of the founding values of our tradition and the study of its historical, social, ethical and political implications would make our educational proposals more relevant. If they were approached from the perspective of complex problems, pedagogies for the mediation of conflicts and dissent, and cooperative learning would be favored.

★ Today, establishing the conditions for learning and support in the development of judgment and character are seen as more important than information itself.

#### **4.8.2 From the perspective of learning rather than from the perspective of teaching.**

The school and the teacher are no longer the dispensers of knowledge. It is impossible to do so in a world in which computer resources make available to all people the knowledge accumulated in the most diverse areas. Obviously, in the same world, knowledge, truth, falsehood, lies, and all sorts of approaches that demand criteria for discernment and character to seek the truth coexist.

 The traditional Lasallian values find new possibilities for their up-to-date implementation in the pedagogy of accompaniment.

Thus, a fundamental change in the functions of the school and the teacher is proposed. Today, more than the information itself, it is important to generate the conditions for learning and to ensure the accompaniment that forms the criteria and the character. The need then arises for pedagogies that can form the criteria and the consequent character of the teacher. This function consists in the educational mediation between the subject who learns and the object to be known, between the absolutism of the criteria of truth attributed to the teacher and the autonomy of those who are learning to discern their own criteria.

Critical reading, a return to the classics, permanent dialogue, purposeful debate, discussion that fosters the understanding of different positions or opinions on various topics, the exploration of different theoretical or political approaches, the study of religious traditions, and the approach to cultures are examples of educational mediations essential today in the Lasallian educational project.

The values of the Lasallian tradition find the possibility of being updated in the pedagogy of accompaniment. This pedagogy reaffirms the possibility of each one, the ability to find one's own journey and the necessary freedom to walk with responsible autonomy. If the pedagogy of fraternity makes us brothers and sisters among all, it also makes the educator the older brother and sister of the students. It is a relationship that privileges "going with," and "next to (*alongside*)" in autonomy and ongoing care. It is the power of the educational relationship of our Lasallian heritage.

★ If there is anything that has distinguished Lasallian education right from its origins, it is the dignity accorded to the teachers, the importance assigned to their role in the educational process and the recognition of their ability to influence character development in children and young people.

#### 4.8.3 The teacher: irreplaceable role and educational authority.

If there is anything that distinguishes the Lasallian proposal, since its origin, it is the dignity of the teacher, the importance assigned to his/her role in the educational process and the recognition of his/her ability to impact the character formation of the children and young people assigned to their care. Currently functions, methodologies, and paradigms have changed. However, the presence of an upright, generous, creative, and respectful teacher continues to be the primary

element for the success of the Lasallian educational process.

Integrity, example, depth, vision, respect, tenderness, ardent zeal, faith and hope will always be the virtues that will characterize the upright teacher's ability to mediate. The practice of these virtues points out pathways, encourages dreams, shows horizons, accompanies toward the achievement of autonomy, challenges, and generates mediating scenarios. The result of all these actions is the growth and personal development of the student, the empowerment of their personal capacities and solidarity with common projects.

Not in vain did Saint John Baptist de La Salle conceive of the teacher as an older brother / sister, guardian angel, minister of Jesus Christ, role model, reflection of transcendence and depth, and inspirer of opportunities and projects. The rich educational achievement that this vision creates generates life, forms character, enables learning, builds fraternity, and enhances the personal vocation of each child and young person it educates.

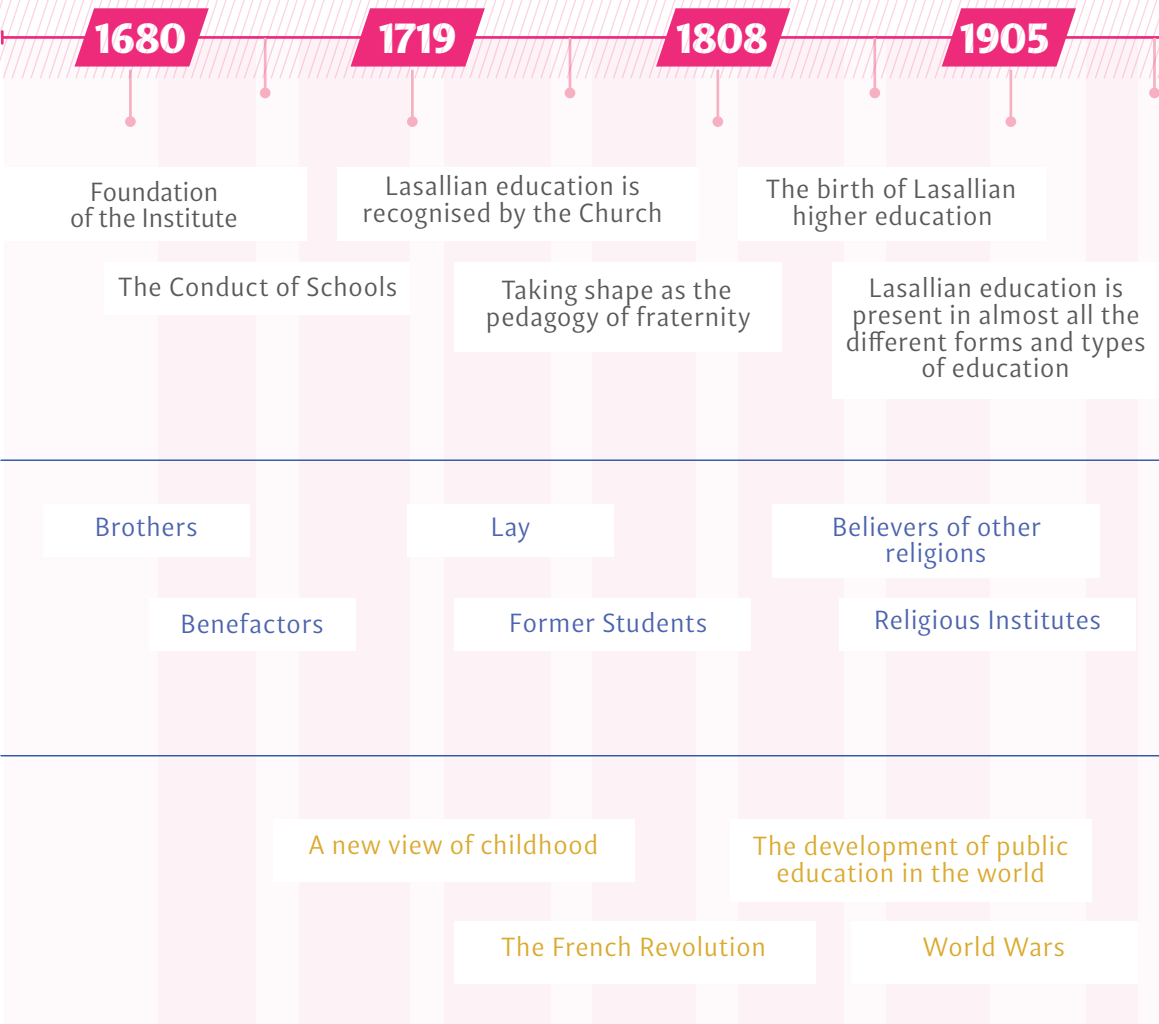
<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<b>PATHWAYS</b>
<b>The educational service of the poor</b>	
<p>Because of their poverty, many children and young people receive a bad education or none at all.</p>	<p>The big challenges for the Lasalian school is to be accessible to the poorest.</p> <p>Committed to the cause of social justice, equity and the defense of the rights of children.</p>
<b>Human solidarity</b>	
<p>Scientific advances have changed the structures of power, the means of production and our personal, family, social and workplace relationships. New frontiers of dehumanisation.</p>	<p>Dialogue between science and humanity. The future of the planet calls for universal human solidarity.</p> <p>The pedagogy of fraternity.</p>
<b>Citizenship and political life</b>	
<p>Fragility of institutions, citizens who are indifferent to political problems, corruption and the destruction of democracy.</p>	<p>Formation for citizenship.</p>
<b>Critical thinking and interiority</b>	
<p>The educational potential of modern technologies and their inherent dangers.</p> <p>Superficiality and the lack of interior life, which facilitate poverty. A world in flux.</p>	<p>Educating for contemplation, the spiritual dimension, interiority and depth.</p> <p>Forming citizens who are critical and aware of reality.</p>

CHALLENGES	PATHWAYS
<b>Holistic ecology</b>	
Styles of life that favour predatory consumption, lack of respect for life, diminishment affectivity and the logic of domination.	Holistic ecology could be a characteristic of a new Lasallian educational provision. Protection of the environment.
<b>International network</b>	
Our international status calls for positions and commitments to be shared among Lasallians.	New educational networks strengthen the possibilities resulting from our universality.
<b>Beyond formal schools</b>	
The unaccustomed growth in virtual education, home-based schooling, combined with a diminution in the numbers of students and the rigidity of traditional education.	Our Mission can find pathways in non-formal education, pastoral action, evangelisation, a presence in virtual media and among children deprived of school.
<b>Educational Provision</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In dialogue with the emerging paradigms (complexity, mediation, cooperative learning)</li> <li>• Education centred in the pupil (a pedagogy of accompaniment and learning)</li> <li>• The irreplaceable role of the teacher and his/her power as an educator (dignity and capacity to educate)</li> </ul>	

The following outline is a way to visualize the relationships between the different elements indicated. Likewise, it is offered for personal reflection and for a better understanding, knowing that there may be other forms or presentations and syntheses.



# LASALLIANS



# FROM COMMITMENT TO COMMITMENT

## Challenges, convictions and hope:

In the reality of constant change in human society, thousands of educational communities and establishments are continually discovering the Mission which God entrusts to them, and they associate with one another in order to bring human and Christian education to poor children, young people and adults, so that they can learn to live with justice and fraternity.

Justice, peace,  
fraternity

1962

Lasallian education adapts itself to many countries and cultures

2000

Lasallian education is renewed by the study of the Holy Founder and of the Second Vaticano Council

2020

Lasallian education is enriched by a wider Association

Women

Collaborators

Associate

Young Lasallians

Volunteers

ONG

Vatican II

New challenges for the educational Mission

Technological Revolution



# CONCLUSION: OUR DECLARATION

Around 1694, when writing the "Memoir on the Beginnings," John Baptist de La Salle understood how the plan of God was carried out through him and in the Institute that he founded together with his Brothers. He expressed it himself in these words:

*God, who directs all things with wisdom and gentleness and who does not force our wills, wishing to have me take care of the schools, led me imperceptibly and over a long period of time from one commitment to another in a way I did not at all foresee in the beginning.*

(Memoir on the Beginnings).



In the same way, God so leads me today. Lasallians know that the story that began more than 340 years ago continues to amaze us today as the expression of God's plan. With wisdom and kindness, God has guided the Institute to find, in every century and according to different circumstances and places, the means, the people, the committed groups and associates to continue this mission of a human and Christian education for children, young people, and adults, especially the poor. In this way, the adventure that began with a small group of teachers became, first, a community of Brothers and, over the years, an enormous group of committed Lasallians. These men and women, belonging to many different cultures, languages and traditions, dedicate their lives to advance horizons, touch hearts and inspire minds through an education that enables them to generate opportunities that promote the transformation of lives, persons and societies.

The life of Lasallian educational groups is nourished by a passion for the education of the poor, those who suffer, those who await our offer of solidarity and invite us once again to take a risk and to be creative. Rather than cling to the past, we prefer to build the future. We choose life and hope. We reaffirm our faith in the goodness of human beings and in our passion for humanity.

The contemporary age is marked by an extensive weakening in credibility of institutions that carry out a mission requiring creative proposals. Despite this, the present moment is a time of hope and creativity. Societies and individuals are seemingly finding ways to overcome the many problems of an age marked both by inequality and injustice, as well as by means of making new inspirations flourish, of creating new commitments, and of facilitating a new spring. The power of hope once again launches

the commitment of Lasallians to the human and Christian education of children, young people, and adults in whom we find the face of God and the best expression of what is deeply human.

In this way forward and strengthened by our convictions and traditions, we make a few proposals for the present and the future. We accept the past with gratitude, embrace the present with joy and look to the future full of hope, animated by the deep faith that this pathway we are following is the work of God; and so:

## **WE DECLARE THAT**

- 1** **We firmly believe that children and young people are a call to hope and commitment.** Our educational institutions and projects focus on people and promote their integral development. To this end, they create healthy, safe and respectful environments, defend the rights of children, young people and adolescents, and create situations where duties and rights are defended, respected and promoted.
- 2** **We believe that in the faces of the impoverished and vulnerable we find God's saving power.** Our tradition is rooted in the preferential service for the poor, the excluded, those considered irrelevant, that is to say those children and young people for whom their vulnerable condition is an obstacle to the building up of their dreams for the future and to their having a dignified and happy



life. Today our commitment is to identify the new forms of poverty - which are always to be found at the frontiers of dehumanization, in a lack of opportunities and in marginalization - and to serve those who suffer from these poverties.

**3**

**We believe in the inspiring and mediating power of the educator.**

The teacher is fundamentally a witness who accompanies and inspires because his/her example inspires, challenges, accompanies and orients. The teacher is the fundamental mediator of educational processes because they create the pedagogical relationship that favors the integral growth of the children and young people with whom they share life and mission. Their presence illumines, points out horizons, generates environments for learning, promotes autonomy, suggests paths and transmits principles. In this way, they contribute to the formation of free, autonomous and responsible people.

**4**

**We believe that the educational community is a core component in the building up of the person and the transmission of values.**

Fraternity and the sense of community are the greatest and the best contribution of Lasallian pedagogy to educational processes. This fraternity promotes the harmonious growth of people, helps to find meaning in life, makes it possible to create bonds of affection and solidarity, communicates security and respects differences. In addition, it helps to build common dreams and transformative commitments.

- 5** **We believe that our Lasallian association is a gift from God to the world and an extraordinary means to continue the legacy received from our living three-hundred-year heritage.** Our association is also expressed in networks of educational communities that allow themselves to be impressed by the realities of the learners. Brothers and laypeople committed to the educational mission are the present expression of God's plans. Therefore, we respond *together and by association* to the needs of children and the youth of the world.
- 6** **We believe that education makes possible the search for and transmission of the truth.** We have a positive view of the ability of young people to be passionate about this. All of our institutions share this optimism, which is consistently nourished by the fundamental conviction that inquiry, through the different disciplines, discovers different but complementary knowledge, and points to the knowledge of a transcendent truth that eludes us and, at the same time, draws us irresistibly.
- 7** **We believe that education is a fundamental, powerful and productive resource for the care of the Earth and the defense of the habitat where life can flourish and sustain itself.** Our educational proposal has to be a real engine of commitment to an integral ecology that challenges with alternative par-





adigms, predatory consumerism, technocratic tyranny, lifestyles inconsistent with human and integral development. We know that we cooperate in this type of advancement if we ensure that all advancement is socially participatory, culturally appropriate, technically fair, ecologically sound, economically equitable, politically impactful, ethically responsible and spiritually meaningful.

8

**We believe in the transforming capacity of education.**

Education is the most important intervention in the formation of the human being insofar as it allows the communication of values, the acquisition of knowledge, the building up of human networks, the expression of dreams and the emanation of a new paradigm about the human being, society, life and our relationship with nature. Education builds equity to the extent that it generates opportunities for personal, community and social development, while dignifying people and transforming societies.

9

**We believe that Lasallian education is an expression of Christian humanism.**

Our educational proposal is an expression of humanism because its objective is integral formation. Consistently, in this proposal, intellectual development, the development of faith, the understanding of science, and the living out of values, are not understood as isolated dimensions, but as dimen-

sions that involve and feed each other. Therefore, the objective of Lasallian education is to form people of mature and robust faith, with clear ethical criteria, who exercise leadership through service and who are committed to working for the common good and the building up of more just and peace-promoting societies.

**10**

**We believe in the evangelizing power of the school.**

The Lasallian educational proposal is nourished by the most genuine values of the Gospel, such as respect for people, love of neighbor, mercy and compassion, freedom and responsibility, justice and equity, care for life and nature. We also believe that the presence of God's love in every man and woman reveals the sacredness of life and peace as the greatest good of our living together.

**11**

**We believe that today's realities demand taking risks and being creative.**

The school must always be updated, capable of remaking itself and responding to the needs of children and youth. For this same reason, new educational projects must be brought into being, and others must surely die. Our peoples urge us to look to rural areas, indigenous groups, migrants, poverty belts of megalopolises, and frontiers of dehumanization to respond creatively to their specific and pressing needs.



12

**We believe that another world is possible, and that education is a fundamental force for building it.** Our educational perspective aims to build societies where peace, equity, social justice, civic participation, the raising up of common dreams, and respect for freedom and difference are possible. We visibly demonstrate our commitment to the building up of a more democratic and just society, as well as our option for an integral and sustainable human development that benefits everyone. To educate for peace is to educate for justice and solidarity.

With our eyes fixed on God, our faith in the goodness of the human being and our commitment to children and young people, we advance toward the demanding and exciting horizons of this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The conviction that a better world is possible moves us, the passion for humanity brings us together, and hope encourages us along the way.

*Indivisa  
Manent*

# **GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS**

## **AIMEL**

### **International Assembly for the Lasallian Educational Mission**

International gathering of Brothers, Partners and Associates to reflect, evaluate and decide on matters concerned with the Lasallian educational mission. The Assembly is committed to responding to the present realities based on the Lasallian charism. Participation of all the Districts is carried out by means of delegates, of which two thirds are not Brothers.

## **Association**

Association is the process for the communion of those who, from their vocation, share Lasallian mission, the charism, and spirituality. The term has been used frequently in the Lasallian tradition and is related to the expression "together and by association." It has its origin in the commitment made by John Baptist de La Salle and 12 Brothers on June 6, 1694. Through the vows of association, obedience and stability, they pledged to maintain the educational mission. This historical act is the foundation of the association of the Brothers of the Institute throughout its history.

Currently, association now refers to the new forms of commitment on behalf of the Lasallian educational mission, the result of the participation of new agents who are involved in it.

### **Associates**

"We recognize as being associated with Lasallian mission all intentional groups and all persons who respond to an interior call by an educational commitment which has Lasallian characteristics, and which has been authenticated by a competent authority" (Circular 447, p. 6).

"[Association] can be expressed in diverse ways:

- For the Brothers, the vow that forms part of their religious profession.
- Some lay Lasallians will choose to express it publically after a process and according to the customs of their District.
- Other lay Lasallians will live it out implicitly through their commitment in the Lasallian mission" (Circular 461, p. 7, 4.10).

### **Benefactors**

Refers to people who, selflessly, perform well or support others in achieving their projects. The benefactor offers resources and supports to carry out the educational work. Since the Institute's origins, the Brothers of the Christian Schools have counted on the generosity and good will of people who have provided support for the achievement of the educational mission.

### **The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today:**

#### **A Declaration**

The profound renewal of the Catholic Church, begun by Vatican Council II, invited religious Institutes and Congregations to "return to the sources" that gave them origin to update (*aggiornamento*) in light of the world's new reality. In 1967, as a result of a process of consultation and deep reflection throughout the Institute, the Declaration was issued. The Brothers, in this document, claimed as foundational the person and spirituality of John Baptist de La Salle (the source), rediscovered their identity in response to the needs of the Church and the world. The Declaration was highly relevant for the renewal of the Institute.

### **Brother Superior General**

"The Brother Superior General is elected by the General Chapter and he exercises his authority over the whole Institute, in accordance with the norms of Canon Law and Institute legislation. His mandate runs until the following General Chapter (seven-year term). He can be re-elected" (Rule, 126).

### **Brothers of the Christian Schools**

Members of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. "Each Brother takes upon himself the responsibility for integrating within his own person these constitutive dimensions of his vocation: consecration to God as a lay religious, the apostolic ministry of education, especially among the poor and community life" (Rule, 12). "The Brothers express their consecration" by the "vow of association for the service of the poor through education, stability in the Institute, obedience, chastity and poverty" (Rule, 25). The Brothers are also known as "De La Salle Christian Brothers" or "De La Salle Brothers" in different parts of the world.

### **Canonization**

The Catholic Church's process by means of which the life of a person is investigated to identify their virtue and recognize their sanctity. It also refers to the liturgical celebration in which the Church declares a person a Saint and includes their name in the liturgical calendar of the saints.

### **Catholic Church (Roman)**

Ecclesial community of faithful baptized followers of Jesus Christ and his message. The Catholic Church recognizes in the Roman Pontiff (Pope) the Vicar of Christ on Earth. As for hierarchical structure, its headquarters are located in Vatican City.

## **CIAMEL**

### **International Council for Lasallian Association and the Educational Mission**

"The International Council for Lasallian Association and the Educational Mission (CIAMEL) is a deliberative and collaborative body of Brothers and Partners representing the worldwide Institute. It is established for the animation and direction of all existing and future educational programs that embody the Lasallian mission"

(CIAMEL Statutes, 1)

## **Declaration**

Public and formal pronouncement made by a community or a social group to express their convictions and positions on a certain matter.

## **General Chapter**

The Assembly of the Brothers of the Christian Brothers and the highest authority of the Institute that meets ordinarily every seven years.

"Responsible for the whole Body of the Institute, the Chapter is qualified to undertake in its name a periodic evaluation of the life of the Institute, to provide for its continuing adaptation and renewal, and to set out the main guidelines for future action. In addition, the Chapter elects the Brother Superior General and the Brother General Councilors" (Rule, 112).

## **General Council**

"The mission of the Brother General Councilors is to assist the Brother Superior General in the government and the animation of the Institute. They share with him and under his authority all the tasks of the government of the Institute" (Rule, 127).

"The General Chapter fixes the number of General Councilors," depending on the Institute's needs, "which must not be lower than six" (Rule, 120).

### **Gratuity**

The expression refers to what is gratuitous or free. For the Brothers, this term expresses the condition of openness that Lasallians works have to grant educational service to those who require it, regardless of their economic, political, religious, cultural or social characteristics.

### **Guadalupana De La Salle Sisters**

Religious Institute of pontifical right founded in Mexico in 1946 by Brother Juan Fromental. They share in the charism of John Baptist de La Salle with the Brothers. The Institute was approved by Pope Paul VI and recognized by the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter (2000) as associated with the Institute for the Lasallian educational mission. This Institute is under the care of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of Mexico and Latin America (<https://www.hgs.org.mx>).

### **Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools**

"The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, approved by the [Papal] Bull *'In apostolicae dignitatis solio'* of Pope Benedict XIII, is an Institute of pontifical right, composed exclusively of lay religious" (Rule, 4). The Brothers, founded by John Baptist de La Salle, dedicate themselves to the integral education and formation of children and young people, preferably of those most in need. "The members of this Institute live in community and call themselves Brothers" (Rule, 5).

### **IALU**

#### **International Association of La Salle Universities**

The network of Lasallian institutions of higher education in the world. This network actively supports the promotion of the educational vision and charism of John Baptist de La Salle, facilitating opportunities for collaboration, research, exchange and development among its member institutions.



### **Laity (Layperson)**

"The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and in world" (Lumen Gentium, 31)

### **La Salle Sisters**

Religious Institute of diocesan right, founded in Vietnam in 1966 by Brother Bernard Le-Van-Tam. The Institute was approved in 2002 and shares in the charism of John Baptist de La Salle. They were recognized by the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter as associated with the Institute for the Lasallian educational mission. (<https://www.thelasallesisters.org>)

### **Lasallian Charism**

"The Lasallian charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit given to the Church in view of human and Christian education" (Rule 19). The grace or gift is granted in the person of John Baptist de La Salle and embodied in the Lasallian community (Lasallian Essays 3, p. 37).

### **Lasallian Educational Mission**

"The purpose of this Institute is to provide a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor, according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to it. Christian schools, which need to be constantly renewed, are the preferred sphere of activity for the Brothers. The Institute is open also to other forms of teaching and education, suited to the needs of time and place" (Rule, 3).

### **Lasallian Family**

"The expression Lasallian Family designates all those who participate in the Lasallian educational enterprise, especially those who are moving toward a sharing in the spirit and the mission of St. John Baptist de La Salle" (Circular 435, p. 49). "All who participate in the Lasallian educational enterprise belong to the Family" (Circular 461, p. 54, 5.14).

### **Papal Rescript**

Official document of a Pope in which he expresses his response to a petition or a consultation.

### **Partner**

A person who, not being a Brother, participates in the Lasallian mission in many different ways. Its distinctive feature is participating in the mission. The 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter refers to Partners as those people who "share our mission in its multiple educational, catechetical, apostolic and professional aspects, and make it possible for the mission to be accomplished" (Circular 447, p. 4).

### **Perpetually Professed Members**

Refers to the Brothers of the Christian Schools who have professed final vows.

### **Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools**

The document that contains the Constitutions and Statutes that regulate the life of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. "The Rule manifests the charism of the Institute and defines the meaning of the Brothers' life in today's context. It shows them how to live out the Gospel as the Founder did" (Rule, 158).

The current Rule went into effect on September 8, 2015.

## **Secular**

This word comes from the Latin *saecularis*, which derives from *saeculum* whose meaning is: what is related to the world, to the century, to what is finite. The secular (*saeculum*) refers to the distinction between what is of the century, earthy, or finite from what is not. In this sense, what has to do with God (infinite) is separated from what is not (finite, of the century). By derivation, the expression secular is still used, in some sectors of the Institute, to refer to the person who does not belong to the ecclesiastical or the religious state.

## **Secularization Laws**

Laws enacted in France in 1904, during the government of Émile Combes, which prevented Religious Congregations from dedicating themselves to education. This law caused the closure of thousands of schools and the departure many Brothers of the Christian Schools from this country. The following year, in 1905, the French government approved the Law on the Separation of the Church and State.

## **Self-referential**

This expression refers to the action of analyzing, evaluating and judging a situation or reality exclusively from one's own experiences, that is, from the reference itself, without considering other contexts. The world is believed or thought to function in accord with one's own reference.

## **Shared Mission**

"Today, the Brothers pursue the Lasallian mission in partnership with men and women who recognize the relevance of the Lasallian charism" (Rule 13).

### **Signum Fidei**

Latin expression that means "sign of faith." Official emblem of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It also refers to a group of lay educators committed to living the Lasallian charism and spirituality. The "Signum Fidei" Fraternity was recognized as "associated" with the Institute by the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter (Circular 447, p.5).

### **UMAEL**

#### **World Union of Lasallian Former Students**

This international network integrates confederations and associations of graduates of Lasallian schools and universities. Its objectives are: 1) to defend and promote freedom of education, 2) to collaborate and support Catholic institutions so that they can carry out their mission and purposes without obstacles, and 3) to work so that education is available to as many young people as possible.

*(<https://www.lasallian.info/umael>)*

### **Vatican Council II**

A Council is a meeting or congress of the bishops and other members of the Catholic Church, or a part of it, to deliberate and decide, in common, matters of interest to the Church. The Ecumenical Council is convened and chaired by the Roman Pontiff (Pope), and its decisions apply to the entire Catholic Church. Vatican Council II, convened by Pope John XXIII, began in 1962 and concluded in 1965. The decisions of Vatican Council II were expressed in 16 documents, considered, for their relevance, a source of inspiration and renewal for the Catholic Church, This Ecumenical Council was closed by Pope Paul VI.

# **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

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    To the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Faithful.  
    On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World.  
Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* [Praise be to you] On Care for Our  
Common Home.













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