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# Right to EDUCATION

A right beyond schooling



Brothers of  
the Christian  
Schools

La  Salle

INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS



# *Right to* **EDUCATION**

**A right beyond schooling**

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**Brothers of  
the Christian  
Schools**

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**General Direction of this edition**

Néstor Anaya, FSC

**Editorial Direction**

Alexánder González, FSC

**Editorial Coordination**

Ilaria Iadeluca

**Editorial Production**

Ilaria Iadeluca, Giulia Giannarini, Fabio Parente,  
Alexánder González, FSC  
Communications and Technology Service, Rome

**Art direction, design and layout**

Giulia Giannarini

**Layout support**

Ingrid Jiménez

**Cover illustration**

Gina Jaramillo

**La**  **Salle**

**Text authors**

Gustavo Ramírez, FSC

Juan A. Ojeda, FSC

Diego Muñoz, FSC  
Joke Maex

Angela Matulli  
Andrea Sicignano  
Raoul Traore, FSC

Armin Luistro, FSC  
Warren Joseph Dollente  
Mark Joseph Tinao  
Jesiree Ann Bibar  
Dr. Bienvenido Eusebio, AFSC

Santiago Amurrio Silva

Nestor Anaya, FSC

**Consultants for text assessment**

María del Rosario Ortiz, José H. Salguero  
Salvador Valle, Nicolas Capelle, FSC  
Claude Reinhard, FSC, Alvaro Rodríguez, FSC  
Carlos Gómez, FSC, José M. Montoya, FSC

**Translators**

Antoine Salinas, FSC  
Agustín Ranchal, FSC

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# Introduction



Some may think that everything has already been said about human rights; that the important Declarations adopted by assemblies of international representation and universal influence are sufficient<sup>1</sup>. For those who think so, the title of this Bulletin<sup>2</sup> may be disappointing: “Right to Education”; it may seem repetitive, or in other words, “business as usual”. However, this topic is particularly relevant in the current circumstances.

***Actually, there is still a lot to be said and, above all, a lot to be done...***

On the one hand, although quite a few countries have signed up to the universal declarations mentioned above, there are still some countries where their observance is still a pending task<sup>3</sup>. Evidence of this is the

wide publicity given to the resistance of a teenage girl to accept that, in her country, the right to education was denied to women. Who has not heard of Malala Yousafzai? This young Pakistani activist who, at the age of 13, denounced the Pakistani Taliban regime, which was against women's rights and, in particular, the right of girls to education<sup>4</sup>.

The acts perpetrated by the Boko Haram group against education are also infamous. Although it is an organisation that openly supports terrorism against the civilian population and uses violent and coercive means in

the pursuit of its political, religious objectives, its actions with the greatest media repercussions have been those against educational centres<sup>5</sup>. These attacks are part of a campaign against Western education. As a result, some have - apparently in the wrong way - interpreted the group's name as “*Western education is sin*”.

However, the effort to ensure the right to education, and to attend school freely and without fear, must extend beyond Pakistan, Nigeria or Afghanistan. In the latter country, the Taliban regime, having retaken control of the country in August 2021, prevents women from accessing educational institutions, despite promises made during negotiations with the United States to respect everyone's right to education<sup>6</sup>.

It is true that the number of children in school has increased worldwide. While these remarkable advances are not insignificant, the *World Development Report 2018*<sup>7</sup> states that learning is not guaranteed and, based on newly available data, calls this reality “learning poverty”. According to the report, in low- and middle-income countries, the rate of children who cannot read and understand a simple story by the age of 10 is very high (53%). Put briefly and simply, coverage and quality of services remain an unbalanced pairing. This imbalance translates into unequal opportunities and becomes an obstacle to achieving other development goals that guarantee a better quality of life for the world's citizens.

In one of his messages, the Pope described the state of education as an “educational catastrophe”. He warned that this catastrophe would be aggravated by the approximately 10 million children who could drop out of school because of the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus. If this happens, it will increase the already alarming education gap. According to the Pope's message<sup>8</sup>, more than 250 million school-age children will be excluded from all educational activities.



Unfortunately, this is not the end of the challenges facing education today. There is one in particular that the pastors of the Catholic Church point out with insistence and concern. It is the discordance of thought and action that can be observed among those responsible for education, with regard to the values, models and lifestyles that they propose. This discordance is not only the result of a social pluralism that should normally be healthy; it is also a sign of ideologization used by various groups to move forward their own agenda. One example is countries governed by political parties that pass laws aimed at suppressing the natural right of parents to choose the education they want for their children. The Church defends this right, as stated in the Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*, approved by the Second Vatican Council Assembly on 28 October 1965 in Rome<sup>9</sup>.

## The Emphasis of the Catholic Church on Human Rights

Throughout history, the pastoral action of the Church has included the promotion of culture and education not only of its own faithful but also of the faithful of other communities of believers. Through the members of Orders, Congregations and Religious Institutes, the Catholic Church has contributed to write glorious pages about the education of peoples on all continents. It is remarkable that its formative action has paid special attention to the populations of the original peoples and to the sons and daughters of immigrants. Even after modern states took over the responsibility of guaranteeing the right to education for their citizens, the Church has not ceased to collaborate, always giving priority to the most disadvantaged sectors of society. Moreover, with a universal perspective, the Church has not ceased to raise its voice, asking public policy makers to respect the right of parents to choose the education they want for their

children. It has also offered guidance and proposals to address educational challenges.

In contemporary history, in addition to the Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*, we find other examples of the Church's interest in guaranteeing the right of every human being to education. First of all, the creation of the Dicastery or Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education whose competence applies, firstly, to institutes and higher schools of ecclesiastical and civil studies and, furthermore, to all schools and institutes of instruction and education of any order or degree intended for the education of lay youth<sup>10</sup>.

Another example is the Church's promotion and support for the establishment of bodies concerned with education. The first of these was the *International Catholic Education Office* (OIEC). The second is the *International Catholic Child Bureau* (BICE for the name in French).

The **OIEC** was founded in Lucerne, Switzerland, on 20 September 1952, on the initiative of the National Directors of Catholic Education of eleven countries. They saw an opportunity to establish collaborative relationships in the field of teaching and education. In 1956, the Holy See approved the statutes of the OIEC and recognised it as an international Catholic organisation. Subsequently, it was also recognised by UNESCO as a member with consultative status, category B, on 25 April 1958.

The activity of the OIEC is guided by 8 purposes, of which I highlight here only the eighth because of its direct relationship with the theme of the Bulletin: *To defend and promote the effective exercise of freedom of education and to foster relations of mutual recognition and association between Catholic education and the countries in which it exists*<sup>11</sup>.

At the end of the Second World War, religious and lay people from 8 countries joined together to work in a network for the protection of children. Thus emerged the *International Catholic Child Bureau* (**BICE**). It was officially

created in 1948 as an NGO under French law (Law of 1901) to promote the rights and dignity of children all over the world.

BICE is a Catholic association now also recognised by the Holy See. It works at the service of all children, without discrimination or proselytising, regardless their origin, culture, nationality or religion.


All of BICE's actions and missions are based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in the drafting of which it participated. Currently, it supports the implementation of the Convention, especially in favour of child victims of violence, children with disabilities, child workers, children dropped out of school, child victims of armed conflict, children in conflict with the law, among others<sup>12</sup>.

A review of the Church's strong emphasis on children and their fundamental rights includes recalling a recent publication: *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Part of the document is the claim to protect the dignity and rights of children:

***“In the family, which is a community of persons, special attention must be devoted to the children by developing a profound esteem for their personal dignity, and a great respect and generous concern for their rights. This is true for every child, but it becomes all the more urgent the smaller the child is and the more it is in need of everything, when it is sick, suffering or handicapped”.***

In the aforementioned document, the Catholic Church also states that:


**“The rights of children must be legally protected within juridical systems. In the first place, it is necessary that the social value of childhood be publicly recognized in all countries: “No country on earth, no political system can think of its own future otherwise than through the image of these new generations”<sup>13</sup>.**



The review cannot end without referring to a recent event: Pope Francis' call for the signing of a *Global Compact on Education*. What moved the Pope to propose this Pact?

The conditions in which large numbers of children are born and grow up are not very positive. Malnutrition, child labour, early militarisation, unaccompanied and unprotected migration, child delinquency, depression and other emotional problems that drive many into voluntary isolation and, in the worst cases, suicide, are among the ailments suffered by a huge section of children. For example, people who live as “modern hermits” because, of their own free will, they lock themselves away and cut off all social contact. They are known as: *Hikikomori* (Japanese term, as the phenomenon emerged among Japanese teenagers)<sup>14</sup>. *Hikikomori* do not go well in these months of solitude due to forced confinement. Getting them out is not easy and even more difficult in the midst of the pandemic. When conditions get better, many will not come out, even if it is allowed. The *hikikomori* phenomenon is bound to become prolonged and chronic.

To this must be added the inequality highlighted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular the schooling opportunities of children living on the periphery. According to World Bank data<sup>15</sup>, the closure of schools,



a consequence of compulsory lockdown, has prevented the majority of the world's students from continuing their education in some form (whether face-to-face, remote or hybrid). Educational institutions or homes on the margins hardly have the technological tools necessary for remote schooling. Or, network access conditions are either non-existent or severely limited in these areas. Consequently, the number of students affected was 1.6 billion at the peak of the pandemic, April 2020, and almost 700 million today.

Concerned by these signs which, read as a whole, constitute evidence of the deficient, “urgent”, even “catastrophic” state of education, Pope Francis has called for the gathering of forces and resources around a *Global Compact on Education*<sup>16</sup>. One of the fundamental axes of the Compact is, precisely, respect for the Right to Education. Fortunately, this initiative has been widely accepted and has given rise to local and international initiatives. We look forward to the time when the Pact will be officially and publicly formalised through the commitment of international organisations, national governments, political entities, leaders of other religious denominations, as well as civil society organisations.

## The Institute's commitment to human rights

While all this was developing, our Institute did not adopt a passive attitude; on the contrary, it played a very active role. For a Lasallian, the defence of the Right to Education starts from the roots.

Let us remember that John Baptist de La Salle defended the right of all to education, without distinction of social class or creed. For defending this cause, he was taken to court and, in most cases, he lost and suffered the corresponding sanctions<sup>17</sup>. But none of this stopped him in his quest to make “human and Christian quality” education available to all, whether or not they could pay for it. In the biography of

Saint John Baptist de La Salle written by Brother Saturnino Gallego<sup>18</sup>, he develops at length the immovable conviction of the Founder about the right of all to education, regardless of their social condition. Moved by this conviction, he refused to limit admission to his schools to those who, in his time, were registered in the parish “catalogues” of the poor.

We also owe it to him that his intuitions were transformed into initiatives to ensure that schools were open at all times to those who had to alternate between supporting their families and studying (flexible admission and even flexible timetables; Sunday schools, etc.). In this way, he made access to education possible, especially for the lower classes.

Faithful to the Founder and his example, the Brothers (there were as yet no lay Lasallians), continued to create various forms and centres to make education available to all and, in this way, to guarantee them the compliance of the right to education. The truth of this undertaking is such that, among the scholars or philosophers of the “Enlightenment”, there were those who complained to the French Revolutionary Assembly that the Brothers (whom they referred to as “those ignoramus”) had educated the people, who, in their eyes, should be kept in ignorance.

***It is known that the educated elites of the Enlightenment viewed the education of the lower classes with a certain reticence. This is why Caradeuc de La Chalotais, Attorney General of the Parliament of Brittany, deplored in an essay of 1763 that the Brothers of the Christian Schools taught reading and writing to these people who should have learned only to draw and to handle the planer (a carpentry tool used to remove***



***irregularities from a wooden surface) and the file (a metal tool covered with roughness used to tear and abrade by friction). And we know that after reading this text, Voltaire himself invited those "ignorant" to come and put on the harness and pull the plough in his domain of Ferney***<sup>19</sup>.

More recent developments demonstrate the Institute's commitment to the right to education. In the last century, our Institute participated in the founding of two bodies whose purpose is to defend children's rights, including of course the right to education. These bodies are OIEC and BICE, and have already been presented earlier in this text. To what has been said then, it should be added that a De La Salle Brother, Br Paulus Adams, Assistant to the Superior General from 1966 to 1976, served as Secretary General of the OIEC for nine years (1983-1992)<sup>20</sup>. At present, the Institute shows its support for the OIEC by hosting its central office at the Generalate in Rome.

With regard to the second of these bodies, BICE, the Institute permanently holds one of the vice-presidencies, having been a founding member. In addition, other bodies belonging to the Institute have strengthened their relationship with this organisation by applying for independent membership, for example the ONLUS *Fondazione De La Salle Solidarietà Internazionale*. In November 2021, this ONLUS and BICE collaborated in the organisation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference dedicated to the Rights of the Child. Due to the pandemic, the conference was virtual, through webinars. The close relationship with BICE was further strengthened when several Lasallian Districts in South America applied for BICE membership. Once recognised as members, these Districts established the BICE Board for their countries: Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

The Brother Visitors of the Latin American Lasallian Region (RELAL) were involved in another event which confirms the Institute's commitment to the advocacy of the right to education. Gathered in Costa Rica for their Annual Conference, they signed a pact committing themselves to promote the defence of this right in their respective Districts and in the Delegation<sup>21</sup>. More recently, the current leadership team of the same Region created a network responsible for promoting training with a rights-based approach. This network is still active.

Districts in other Regions are also involved in initiatives. Unfortunately, it is not possible to list them all here, but the following example is enough. The digital Bulletin LA SALLE DISTRITO ARLEP 21-22, November 2021<sup>22</sup>, published that the jury of the Cadiz Prizes, awarded by the Cadiz Athenaeum, recognised this year (3rd November 2021) the socio-educational work of La Salle “Calor en la Noche” -Warmth at night- awarding it the prize in the category of Human Rights, edition XXI. The socio-educational work deserved this distinction for caring for those most in need in the city and other nearby cities.

Let us move from the level of Regions to the Institute. Among the proposals approved by the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, held in Rome in May 2015, two are directly related to the theme of the Right to Education. In the first of these proposals<sup>23</sup> the Institute “*pledge itself to promote awareness among Lasallians, to act on the challenges that confront children and youth, and to continue to defend their rights consistent with the proposals of the International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE)*”.

The second of these proposals requires “*that Brother Superior and his Council work with the CIAMEL in drafting a Declaration on Lasallian Education' that will reflect on the particular traits of our pedagogical practices in the 21st century*”.<sup>24</sup>



In accordance with this Chapter mandate and following a collaborative process, the Declaration was drafted, approved and disseminated. Of particular importance is the publication of the Declaration because in it, the Institute reaffirms its commitment to human rights and, in particular, the right to education<sup>25</sup>. While this Declaration is addressed first and foremost to the Lasallian Family, it also seeks to establish a dialogue with the world, in particular with organisations dedicated to education following other charisms or traditions. This Declaration is an act of creative fidelity to the Founder and his brilliant intuitions.

## The contributions of this Bulletin

This Bulletin is a means to comply with the first of the above-mentioned proposals (Proposal 14) and adds to a series of previously published Bulletins that also focused on the right to education in order to consolidate and strengthen the defence of children's rights<sup>26</sup>.

Each contribution in this Bulletin enlightens the issue of the right to education from a particular angle. Let us briefly review each of the contributions.

**Chapter 1** raises a fundamental issue: the quality of education. Why start with the issue of quality? Because that theme sets the “tone” for the rest of the document. From the beginning, John Baptist de La Salle was not only concerned to open free schools for all, especially for the poor; there were already such schools. Our Founder's aspiration was that they should be schools that “ran well”, that is to say that they should educate well and achieve results. Today, this concern directs our attention not only to coverage figures but, above all, to the quality of education. Statistics do not monopolise our attention, nor do they reassure us. Our analysis goes beyond numbers and looks at the impact of education on people.

**Chapter 2** is devoted to another typically Lasallian theme: Fraternity. Two factors in particular increase the relevance of this theme. On the one hand, the negative impact on interpersonal relationships resulting from the physical distance required to prevent the pandemic; on the other hand, the fear of the stranger, in particular of migrants escaping the violence caused by the proliferation of national and regional conflicts.

However, for Lasallians the theme is a familiar one and, therefore, we have much to contribute to the re-establishment of the bonds of fraternity between neighbours, even with those who are “different”. From the very beginning, the Lasallian school was a place animated by relationships based on fraternity. This is confirmed by the abundant literature itself, for example, the works of Brothers Alvaro Rodriguez, Leon Lauraire, Nicolas Capelle, André-Pierre Gautier, among others <sup>27</sup>.

It is true that fraternity in schools has become a huge challenge due to the closure of schools because of the lockdown decreed by the authorities to control the spread of the pandemic. Consequently, the teacher-student relationship is now reduced to exchanges through digital platforms or, in other words, to looking at each other on the screen (for those who have access to technology...). Nevertheless, there are creative initiatives to keep this peculiar Lasallian feature alive in schools, universities, foster homes and other educational forms created to respond to new needs.

But we are not alone in the effort to strengthen the Fraternity.

On 4 February 2019, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyib, signed the historic *Abu Dhabi Declaration*, calling for reconciliation and fraternity <sup>28</sup>. In essence, it is an urgent call for an end to wars; it is also a condemnation of terrorism and all forms of violence,

especially that which is justified on religious grounds. The document proposes a culture of dialogue, common cooperation and mutual understanding.

The *Abu Dhabi Declaration* meant a remarkable precedent - and also served as an inspiration - for another call to fraternity that the Pope made to the world in the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*<sup>29</sup>. After reviewing the problems of contemporary societies (liberal political regimes, populism, wars), in this encyclical the Pope defines fraternity as an indispensable factor for coexistence among nations. Consequently, the Pope proposes that all countries form part of a great human family, through human fraternity and solidarity.

Outside the ecclesial and Lasallian domain, we also find other promoters of the Fraternity. Edgar Morin and Jacques Delors are two excellent examples. The former wrote a short essay on the subject entitled *La Fraternité, pourquoi? -Fraternity, why?*<sup>30</sup>. In this short work, the philosopher recognises that humanity needs fraternity more than ever; he therefore points to it as “the path of the human adventure”. For his part, Jacques Delors chaired the UNESCO commission that prepared the report that bears his name<sup>31</sup>. The report proposes structuring education around four fundamental learning processes that will be the pillars of knowledge. One of these pillars is “*learning to live together*”, to participate and cooperate with others in all human activities.

Thanks to this proposal, the issue of school coexistence for peace is taken into account in the goal on education, which is part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>32</sup>.

**Chapter 3** is another important contribution. It deals with the Gospel spirit and how its criteria should animate our formative action. Undoubtedly, this theme also has deep Lasallian roots. For the Founder, the Christian school has meaning in so far as it brings the means of salvation to children and young people and, to this end, proclaims

Jesus Christ. This is what he declares in one of the Meditations for the Time of Retreat (MTR):

***“ For you have been destined to cultivate these young plants by announcing to them the truths of the Gospel and to procure for them the means of salvation appropriate to their development”<sup>33</sup>.***

For its part, the Rule of the Brothers, revised by the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter 2014 and in force, echoes the Founder and states:

***“ The Brothers play a part in ensuring that Lasallian institutions make the means of salvation accessible to everyone. They do so by means of a quality education and, as far as possible, by an explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ, while bearing in mind the cultural context”<sup>34</sup>.***

The theme of **chapter 4** is Integral Human Development, through education. But the theme is approached from a different perspective and based on current social phenomena, for example immigration and the tremendous challenges it creates. Another important aspect of this contribution is the attention to the issue of poverty and its impact on limiting integral human development.

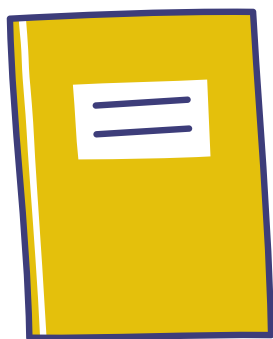
**Chapter 5** is dedicated to “Responsible education in the face of integral ecology”. The reflection is supported by direct action on the ground for the care of the Earth, in various places where the Institute carries out its mission.

This theme is also supported by the outstanding, emphatic and insistent magisterium of Pope Francis, especially through the Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*<sup>35</sup>. This Encyclical has become a global reference for its repercussion and impact on international actions in favour of the environment.

**Chapter 6** is the last chapter of this Bulletin and would certainly make our Founder proud, for it continues the tradition he started: the training of teachers. Numerous initiatives in this field are inspired by the Founder's example and his various attempts to establish Seminaries for rural teachers<sup>36</sup>. This service to education has been strengthened by the development of higher education, in particular academic programmes aimed at preparing educators. The universities of the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU) thus make a great contribution to the mission as a whole, through the training of teachers, religious and lay people, as well as administrators, counsellors, etc.

It is important to clarify that, with this Bulletin, the Institute and the entire Lasallian Family wish to give explicit testimony of their effective support for the Global Compact on Education, proposed by Pope Francis, one of the axes of which is precisely the right of all to education. In fact, this publication also highlights support for other important axes, in particular two which are highly favoured by the Pope's magisterium: fraternity and care for the common home. To both axes the Pope has dedicated the encyclical letters *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli tutti*, which we have reflected on and widely disseminated.

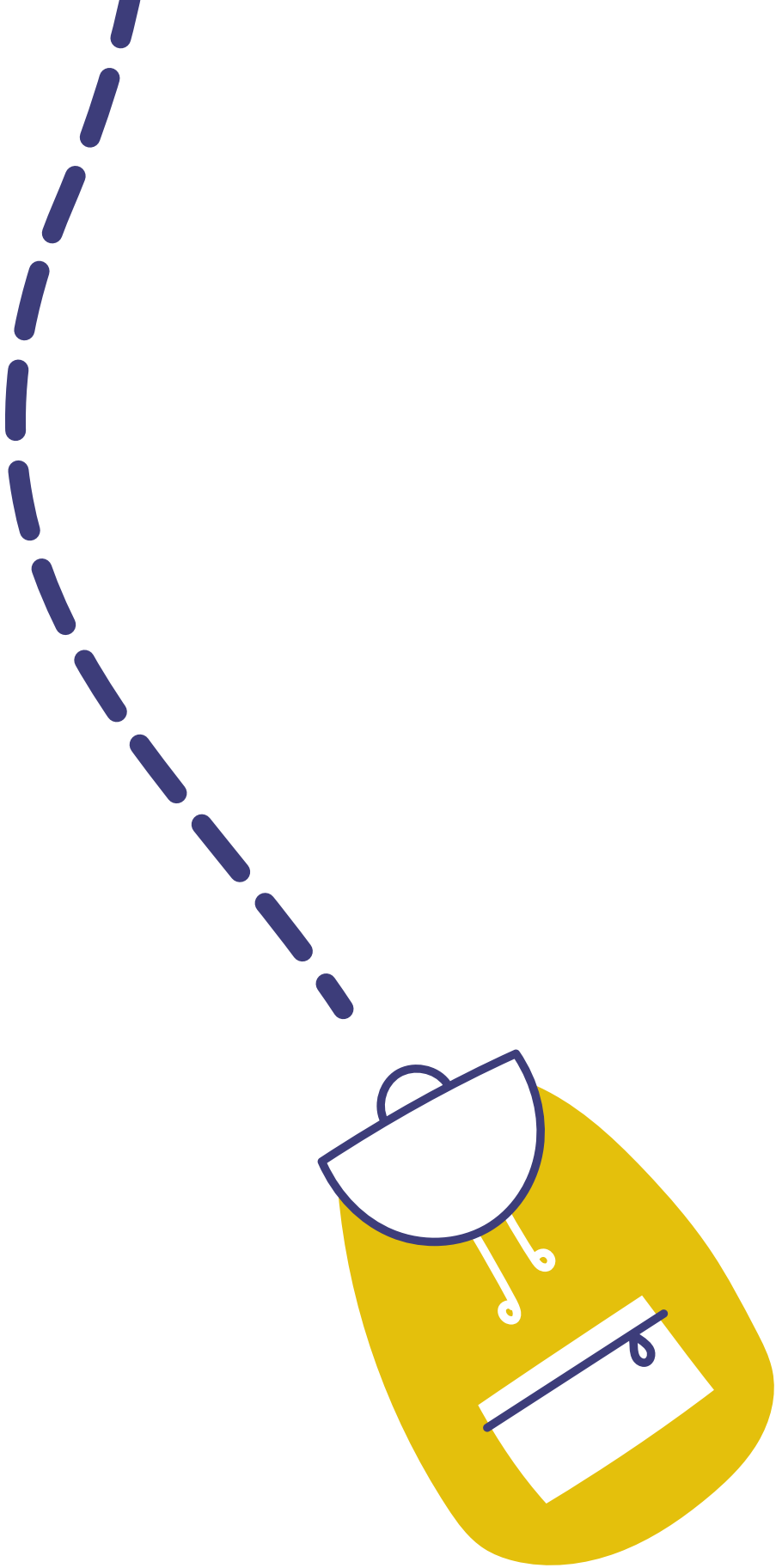
May this new Bulletin serve not only to inform but, above all, to nourish ongoing reflection and to provoke the creativity which we Lasallians have always shown when it comes to finding answers to old and new needs. May God help us to continue to do as the father of the family in the parable who “who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old”<sup>37</sup>.



We hope that the creative and bold decisions of the Lasallians of today and tomorrow will spread the word in the Church and in the world that we are still “doer” of “people learning to read and write”. For, as the Founder affirms, *“knowing how to read and write, they will be capable of everything”*<sup>38</sup>, even to transform the world and make it the true “common home”, which we all care for responsibly.

Warm Lasallian greetings. Yours truly,

**Br. Gustavo Ramírez Barba, FSC**  
*General Councillor*



## Endnotes

- 1** Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This Declaration was adopted by the UN General Assembly, held in Paris, through resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948. Article 26 establishes the Right to Education. Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF). The Convention became law after it was signed and accepted in New York, USA, on 20 November 1989. It consists of fifty-four (54) articles; article 28 recognises the right to education.
- 2** A Bulletin is an official publication of the Institute, usually monographic, i.e., on a specific topic.
- 3** None of the members of the United Nations (then 56; now 193) voted against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. South Africa, Saudi Arabia and the Soviet Union abstained. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, initially signed by 20 countries, is the most widely ratified international instrument in history; 196 countries have become States Parties to the Convention. To date, only the United States has not ratified it.
- 4** She has lived in England since the attack she suffered on 9 October 2012, when she was only 15 years old. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, at the age of 17, making her the youngest person ever to win that Prize in any of its categories.
- 5** Boko Haram is an Islamic fundamentalist terrorist group operating mainly in northern Nigeria. The initial group was founded in 2002 by Islamist preacher Mohamed Yusuf, who was killed by police in 2009. In addition to operating in northern Nigeria, the group began to extend its activities to the Lake Chad area, located on the border between Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon.  
On 14 April 2014, Boko Haram abducted 276 girls from a school in Chibok, Nigeria. Of these, 53 girls were able to escape in the days following the abduction. Two years later, on 14 October, 2016, the UN Secretary-General welcomed the release of 21 girls who had been abducted more than two years ago in Chibok, Nigeria. As 14 April 2019 marked the fifth anniversary of the abduction, 112 of the 276 abducted girls were still unaccounted for.  
On 19 February 2018, Boko Haram abducted 110 students from Dapchi Girls High School in Yobe State. A month later, 105 girls were released. Five of them were killed.  
In December 2020, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the abduction of more than 500 teenagers from a boarding school in Kankara, north-western Nigeria, in an area far from Boko Haram's usual territory. There were 839 students at the boarding school. Some managed to escape. On 15 December Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the attack. On 17 December, Governor Aminu Bello Masari claimed that 344 of the 520 abducted students had been released.



- 6 This was reported in the Times magazine, double issue 17-18, vol. 198. November 8-15, 2021. Studying in secret online, by Vivienne Walt. Page 16.
- 7 World Development Report 2018. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2018>
- 8 Pope's message. 15 10 20.
- 9 GE 1, The Meaning of the Universal Right to an Education. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. Vatican City. 28 October 1965.
- 10 It is true that the creation of this Dicastery dates back to the 16th century (22 January 1588, by Pope Sixtus V); however, it has been evolving in its tasks and even in its name. The latest change was made by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, with the Apostolic Letter, in the form of the motu Proprio Ministrorum Institutio, of 16 January 2013. Further information can be found on the Dicastery's website:
- 11 The OIEC currently has 100 constituent members, 17 associate members, 10 cooperating members, 7 corresponding members and is present in 103 countries. For further information, please consult the following websites:
- <http://www.infoiec.net>  
<http://oiecinternational.com>  
<http://www.laici.va>
- 12 BICE is an international network of 80 organisations in 30 countries around the world committed to defending the dignity and rights of children. To fulfil its mission, BICE has designed five lines of action:
1. Programmes and field projects
  2. Advocacy and training
  3. Research and thinking of childhood
  4. Protection of children in institutions
  5. Public awareness and World Day of the Rights of the Child
- For more information, see the following website: <https://bice.org>

- 13** Compendium of the social doctrine of the church. Paragraph 244. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. 2005.
- 14** “*Hikikomori*” is a Japanese term meaning “to be on the fringe” and is used to refer to those who choose to isolate themselves and withdraw from social life for extended periods of time, often years. Most *hikikomori* maintain contact with the outside world only through computer, television and online video games. However, in extreme cases, *hikikomori* may close themselves off from even this and remain for hours on end without engaging in any social interaction or appreciation at all. Isolation from society usually begins gradually, before the *hikikomori* locks the door to their room. For the most part, they sleep during the day and watch television; they entertain themselves with video games at night. They tend to accumulate rubbish around them, especially from the fast food they eat. They are often sad, lose their friends, become insecure, shy and talk less. They are often bullied at school, which can be the trigger for their isolation. *Hikikomori* isolate themselves for a wide variety of reasons: conflict with society, personal frustration, fear of the judgement of others, complexes, and so on. Japan, where the phenomenon emerged, is the country with the most *hikikomori* in the world; approximately one million. The phenomenon mainly affects young people between 14 and 30 years of age, mostly men (70-90%). There is a very high incidence even in the population over 40 years old. This is because *hikikomori* tends to become chronic very easily and can last a lifetime. If the *hikikomori* eventually return to society of their own free will, they have to face the problem of having lost many of their social skills, as well as years of study, which makes reintegration more difficult. They fear that others will discover their past as *hikikomori*, and are hesitant around people, especially strangers. To find out more, read the book, *Hikikomori*, by Marco Crepaldi, ed: Alpes Italia srl. 11 Feb 2019. Or consult the following websites:
- <https://www.hikikomoriitalia.it/p/chi-sono-gli-hikikomori.html>
- <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hikikomori>
- [https://www.huffingtonpost.it/entry/hikikomori-in-aumento-con-la-pandemia-multi-giovani-non-torneranno-a-scuola\\_it\\_60229572c5b6d78d4449ef4b](https://www.huffingtonpost.it/entry/hikikomori-in-aumento-con-la-pandemia-multi-giovani-non-torneranno-a-scuola_it_60229572c5b6d78d4449ef4b)
- 15** *Realizing the Future of Learning: From Learning Poverty to Learning for Everyone, Everywhere* The World Bank Report. 2 December 2020. Washington, DC. WASHINGTON, DC.
- 16** The Compact was first launched on 12 September 2019. Held back by the onset of the pandemic, the Compact was relaunched again on 15 October 2020. The Pope's messages on these occasions can be found on the following websites:
- <https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/en/global-compact-on-education/>
- <https://www.globalcatholiceducation.org/global-compact-on-education>

- 17** Hours, Bernard. Jean-Baptiste De La Salle. Un mystique en action. Biografie. Éditions Salvator, Paris, 2019. Les Tribulations Parisiennes. La double condamnation. Pages 193-197.
- 18** Gallego, Saturnino. *Vida y pensamiento de San Juan Bautista de La Salle I (biography)*. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1986.
- 19** Jacquet-Francillon, François. *Naissances de l'école du peuple. 1815-1870*. 1995. Éditions de l'Atelier. Page 43.
- Casin, Renée. *Nafrageurs de la foi: du neutralisme à l'apostasie?* Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1968. Pages 83-84
- 20** *Décès des Frères Aubert-Joseph, Hervé Matteau, Leo Kirby and Paulus Adams*. Circulaire 436. Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes. General Council. Rome, Italy. 30 November 1993. Page 34.
- 21** “The Lasallian Regional Pact for Children and Youth. A commitment to education, inclusion and rights”, was signed in San José, Costa Rica, on 12 November 2009, in the presence of the Superior General, Brother Álvaro Rodríguez E. and his Council.
- The titular Visitors of the 12 Districts and the then President of the Delegation (Chile) signed. Among the signatories were also the Auxiliary Vtr. of Antilles-Mexico South and the Visitor appointed for the District of Porto Alegre. As witnesses, Brothers Álvaro Rodríguez, Superior General, Thomas Johnson, Vicar General, and Edgar Nicodem, General Councillor for the Region, signed.
- 22** Read more at: [comunicacionarlep@lasalle.es](mailto:comunicacionarlep@lasalle.es)
- <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgzGIIcmbvHGvDPIjpBtsHJVmxQCL>
- 23** Brothers of the Christian Schools. Circular 469: *Documents of the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter “This work of God is also our work”*. 30 November 2014. Rome, Italy. Chapter 3. Proposition 14. P. 23.
- 24** Ibid. Proposal 17. Page 26
- 25** Brothers of the Christian Schools. *Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission. Challenges, Convictions and Hopes*. Rome, Italy. 2020. In particular chapter 4; sections 4.1 and 4.6. Page 88 ff.

- 26** These are the following Bulletins:  
247 – The Rights of the Child.  
248 – Lasallian Educational innovations  
249 – Educating in justice  
253 – Children and youth at risk. A Lasallian response.

- 27** The following publications can be consulted as examples:

Gauthier, André-Pierre. *À l'École de la Fraternité*. Les Éditions du Cerf. Paris. 2015

Lauraire, Leon. *The challenge of fraternity. Reflection and testimonies*. MEL Bulletin 56. Brothers of the Christian Schools. Secretariat of Association and Mission. Rome. March 2021.

Some of Brother Alvaro Rodriguez Echevarría's pastoral letters can also be consulted and can be found on the Institute's website at: [www.lasalle.org](http://www.lasalle.org)

- 28** *Document on Human Fraternity for world peace and common coexistence*. The full text is available on the official Vatican website ([https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190204\\_documento-fratellanza-umana.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html)).

- 29** After his first two encyclicals, *Lumen fidei* and *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis wrote his third, entitled *Fratelli tutti* (Brothers All).

First announced on 5 September 2020, it was signed on 3 October 2020, the eve of the memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi. For the signing, the Pope travelled to the city of Assisi and, after celebrating Mass at Francis' tomb, signed the letter there. The event had two peculiarities: first, it was the first time a papal encyclical was signed outside Rome; and second, it was without the participation of the faithful, due to restrictions imposed by the health crisis.

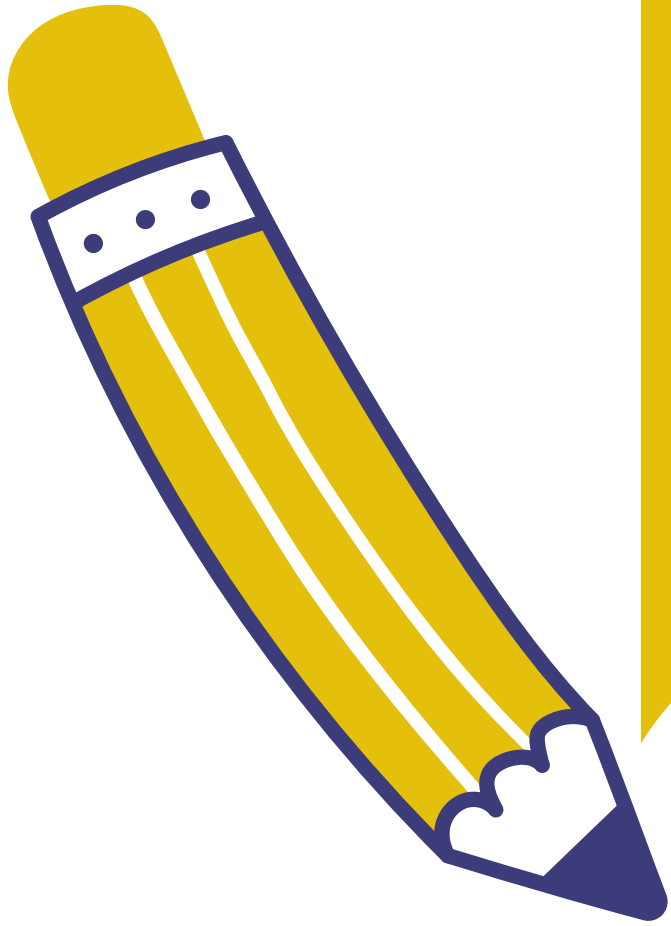
Since the title is inspired by a writing of St. Francis of Assisi ("Brothers all", Admonitions, 6, 1: FF 155), the text of the encyclical was officially published by the Vatican on 4 October 2020, the feast of the saint.

In addition to Francis of Assisi, the Pope says he has found inspiration in philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur and Gabriel Marcel. The Pope also cites numerous non-Catholic spiritual leaders, including Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu and Mahatma Gandhi.

- 30** Morin, Edgar. *La Fraternité, pourquoi?* Actes sud. Nature Collection. 12 June 2019.

- 31** Delors, Jacques. *Learning: The Treasure Within*. Report to UNESCO of the international commission on education for the 21st century. Compendium. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996.

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- 32** On 25 September 2015, world leaders agreed on a set of global goals as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years.
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- 33** MTR 193,3,1
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- 34** Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Rome, 2015. Ch. 2, No. 17.1
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- 35** *Laudato si'* (Praised be to you) is Pope Francis' second encyclical. It was signed on 24 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost, 2015, and presented on 18 June 2015. The encyclical is subtitled: On Care for our Common Home. After warning of the devastating effects of consumerism and irresponsible development, the Pope emphatically calls for rapid and unified global action to combat environmental degradation and climate change.
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- 36** Hours, Bernard. Jean-Baptiste De La Salle. Un mystique en action. Biografie. Éditions Salvator, Paris, 2019. Le séminaire des maîtres. Pages 239 -243.
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- 37** Matthew 13: 52.
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- 38** Conduct of Schools 16, 2, 18 and 21, in Collected Works pp. 680 and 681



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# *Quality education*

**Br. Juan Antonio Ojeda Ortiz, FSC**

*OIEC Project Manager*

*Consultant to the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education*

It is well known that education is not just teaching. We must educate integrally, “head, heart and hands”<sup>1</sup> as Pope Francis tells us repeatedly. Moreover, true education must be of quality. In recent decades, there has been a strong commitment to increase and achieve the highest quality education for all. It is neither worthy nor just to have a good education for some, a mediocre or bad education for others, and for it not to reach everyone.

In recent years, a universal consensus has emerged on the urgency and need to rethink education, to change it in depth in order to better respond to the needs and challenges of people and society today and in the future. Many recognise that education is outdated, that it has remained deeply rooted in the past, that it is “*a fraud... and steal life from young people, putting them in a kind of prison*”<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, Pope Benedict XVI marked the situation as an “*educational emergency*” and Pope Francis, following the deterioration of education due to the current pandemic, described it as an “*educational catastrophe*”<sup>3</sup>. Likewise, various international reports and experts, in different words but with the same meaning, indicate that the “*traditional school has collapsed*”<sup>4</sup>.

The pandemic caused by Covid-19 has also highlighted the importance of education in solving and preventing new pandemics and improving the lives of people and society. It is necessary to promote a new education to generate a new model of person, of local and global citizen, of a more humane, fraternal, supportive and sustainable society. At the same time, the Church has been emphasising the importance of education and of the Catholic school,

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**1** Pope Francis (21 November 2015): Pope Francis' address at the closing of the World Congress of Catholic Education, entitled: “Educating today and tomorrow. A renewing passion”. Vatican City.

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**2** Claudio Naranjo (2017): ¿Educación para el siglo XXI? Congreso Futuro. Chile.

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**3** Pope Francis (15 October 2020). Message relaunching the Global Compact on Education. Vatican.

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**4** Mariano Fernández Enguita (2020). La pandemia ha puesto la escuela ante el espejo. Vicens Vives.



placing it at the forefront of education, in terms of issues such as encounter, dialogue and welcome, which allow us to dream and work together in this new society. This is highlighted by the call for the Global Compact on Education, launched by Pope Francis<sup>5</sup> and supported by UNESCO<sup>6</sup> and many countries, organisations and institutions. The key is to work together, believers and non-believers, from some continents and others...; only in this way will it be possible to achieve a new education that is transformative and generates hope, that is truly valid and of quality for all.

## New understanding and approach to quality education

We have to redefine quality and understand it as an opportunity to change and redirect education. We can say that it is an old word with new meanings.

In previous decades, quality was heavily influenced by the parameters of business and industrial society, which led to the bureaucratisation of the school and diverted it from its being, taking time and energy away from the attention to people and their needs. Results are important, but above them are people, Pope Francis tells us:

***“No to the dictatorship of results, which considers the person as a laboratory object... ignores his or her difficulties, mistakes, fears, dreams, freedom...”<sup>7</sup>.***

**5** Pope Francis (12 September 2019). Message for the launch of the Global Compact on Education. Vatican.

**6** Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO (15 October 2020). Message at the Global Compact on Education Relaunch Meeting: *“UNESCO puts human beings, their empathy and their dignity at the centre, to make education the pillar of the re-foundation of societies... UNESCO is delighted to be with you (Pope Francis), to be part of this compact...”*

**7** Pope Francis (8 June 2019). OIEC World Congress: *“Educatio Si”*, New York.

UNESCO defines quality education as follows:

***“Two principles characterize most attempts to define quality in education: the first identifies learners’ cognitive development as the major explicit objective of all education systems. Accordingly, the success with which systems achieve this is one indicator of their quality. The second emphasizes education’s role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development”<sup>8</sup>.***

We must, therefore, direct education to educate from within<sup>9</sup>, developing the potentialities that each person has within them and completing them with others. Educate not only the cognitive but the whole being, comprehensively (head, heart, hands); that is, educate their emotions, feelings; their mind and intellectual capacity; their personal, community, ecological and spiritual values; their humanity and spirituality; and also, their commitment to transforming their person and context, which children and young people want to face from an early age.

It is important what to educate, but also how and what for. We have to redefine the goals, the methodologies that favour greater protagonism, participation, collaboration and commitment of the learners, such as Design for Change and Service

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**8** UNESCO (2004). Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2005, p. 2

**9** Claudio Naranjo (2017). Future Congress, Chile; Pope Francis (5 February 2015). Closing the Scholas Occurrentes Congress, he tells the children: *“In each one of you there is a chest, a box, and inside there’s a treasure. Your job is to open the chest and pull out the treasure, make it grow, give it to others, and receive the treasure of others”*.

Learning. In line with what Pope Francis has repeatedly told us: *“to educate is to serve and we educate in order to serve”*.

Let us now look at some of the main characteristics that make up quality education and that we must put into practice and evaluate, reducing the gap between what is said or theorised and what is actually done in practice, on a day-to-day basis. These characteristics emerge from the different reports and visions of international experts, and are the result of a broad consensus, backed up by multiple studies and research.

## 1. Having competent, passionate, witnessing and caring teachers

The role of teachers is key to achieving quality education. The McKinsey Report stated: *“The quality of an education system is based on the quality of its teachers”*<sup>10</sup>. Our Founder had this intuition and, from the very beginning, he was committed to an adequate technical and spiritual formation of teachers, to their motivation and vocation, to their tenderness and closeness to their students.

In the Declaration<sup>11</sup> (2020, p. 74) it is stated that

***“De La Salle discovered that teachers had an irreplaceable function, that they should be well educated and professionally competent, prepared for the continuous pursuit of quality, of excellence”.***

<sup>10</sup> Barber and Mourshed (2008). McKinsey Report: “How the world's best performing education systems come out on top”.

<sup>11</sup> De La Salle Brothers (2020). *Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission. Challenges, convictions, hopes*. Rome.

Furthermore, “they should work in association”.

However, today they are required to have more commitment, collaboration and passion. In 2015, Pope Francis indicated that “*education is changing and, therefore, education, and also education systems, are called to change in the sense of communicating lovingly with the children and young people in front of them, and with their concrete realities*”<sup>12</sup>. In other words, teachers who look ahead, competent and up-to-date, who love their students and who respond to their real and contextualised needs and expectations, capable of “touching” and “transforming” the lives of children and young people and the contexts in which they live.

For Pope Francis, educators “do not improvise, they must be competent and consistent”. They are in need of permanent formation. He also suggests the need for retreats and spiritual exercises to strengthen their consistency, which is an effort, but also a gift and a grace<sup>13</sup>. All teachers, Catholic or not, must work on their being, their values, their interior life and their coherence of life, in order to serve better and to bear witness with their actions to the education they promote.

*Evangelii gaudium* (273) indicates that educators must be “teachers with soul”, “deeply determined to be with others and for others... branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing.”. In a brief and clear way, he outlines a whole vocational journey of the teacher's being and doing. They must live their mission with passion and total dedication in order to give life and healing to their students. We see that today, the teaching profession is threatened and with very low social recognition, suffice it to quote in this regard, what UNESCO (2015) tells us, in recognising that “the teaching profession is more necessary and essential than ever... it is the most important

**12** Papa Francisco (2015). Prólogo. En Ojeda y Ramírez (Coords.). 241 Testimonios. Educar hoy y mañana. Una pasión que se renueva. SM-PPC, p. 3

**13** Pope Francis (13 February 2014). Address to the Congregation for Catholic Education.

in the world... the current process of de-professionalisation must be reversed”<sup>14</sup>.

On the other hand, the teaching role has changed throughout history. Briefly, in three short comments, we can show the major changes it has undergone. Thus, in the traditional school, education was centred on the teacher and was teacher-centred; with the new school movement, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the teacher was invited to place himself at the side of the student; today, in the midst of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Pope Francis invites us to put children and young people at the centre of their learning, and even invites adults (teachers, families, etc.) to take a step back, indicating that “we adults can also learn from young people who are at the forefront of nature conservation.”<sup>15</sup>. Teachers are therefore required to trust and be surprised by students and learn from each other, in order to create and transform the world together into a more humane and sustainable place.

In addition, there is a need for educators who are able to go beyond the formal and look after non-formal and informal settings, providing learning for the development and well-being of individuals and communities. The Lasallian school is a full-time school. It attends not only to what is done in the classroom, but also to the non-formal activities that take place in the playgrounds and other facilities, i.e. sporting, cultural, artistic, religious, etc. activities that take place outside school hours. Opening up to and welcoming other children and young people from the town, neighbourhood or city where the school is located. Contributing to creating bonds and forging a more humane and fraternal society.

Thus, the competence and the loving and collaborative passion of the teaching staff are effective indicators of the quality of the education offered by the school.

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**14** UNESCO (2015). Rethinking education: Towards a global common good? Paris, p. 57

**15** Pope Francis (30 November 2019). Address to the young participants in Children’s Global summit

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## 2. Moving towards a full-time, open and committed school on the move

Schools and universities must get out of their comfort zone. They must project themselves into their contexts and cooperate with other social sectors in the transformation and improvement of people and their cities<sup>16</sup>. They must be able to go out into life and bring life into their classrooms, leaving the old paradigm that got them closed them in on themselves, turning their backs on history and their eco-social realities. As stated in the Declaration (2020, p. 91) *“Lasallian enterprise was born on the borders of dehumanization”. We must “fight for an inclusive school”*.

De La Salle was able to generate an open school and respond to the challenges of his time. Today the Church invites us to go to the peripheries and borders that we can find inside and outside our educational centres.

That is why we want a school open to the neighbourhood, with its facilities at the service of the neighbourhood or city, especially the most disadvantaged. Facilitating and harmonising different formal, non-formal and informal educational scenarios. A meeting place, a space where children, young people, adults and the elderly can relate and learn. Moving towards a full-time school, promoting the social environment in which it is located.

Thus, the Declaration (2020, pp. 103-104) states that

***“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”.***

**16** Educational centres able to generate local networks with other educational centres and to promote together Learning Cities (UNESCO) or Educating Cities (International Association of Educating Cities - IAEC) or other networks.

### 3. Shaping the school as a place of relationship and encounter

The Catholic and Lasallian school is at the forefront of the Church if it welcomes Catholics and non-Catholics, enables intercultural and inter-religious encounter and dialogue, favouring greater social justice, making possible the right to education for all, without excluding or discarding anyone.

The school is undoubtedly a place of learning, but it is also a place of relationship, of fraternity, where students learn to relate to themselves, to others, to the environment and to God. In this regard, the Declaration quotes the studies of Brother Léon Lauraire on the Conduct of Schools, and of the six axes he points out, the second one encourages us to *“prepare, and live already in the school, a fraternal society founded on the rejection of all violence, on mutual respect, permanent help and peaceful interpersonal relations”*.

The fourth pillar of the Delors Report (1996): *“learning to live together”* remains fully relevant and necessary to address. Since its publication, more than twenty-five years have passed and not only has this not been achieved, but bullying, violence, discarding and exclusion have increased in many contexts. School has become unfriendly to us. We must provide for a more empathetic and compassionate school. In it, children and young people must develop freely and autonomously, promote flexible and varied groupings, horizontal and vertical, consolidate teamwork. It is important that they move around, meet and experience coexistence; that they show solidarity with each other and help each other, being especially supportive of “the last” and the least, so that everyone moves forward and no one is left behind or discarded.

## 4. Approaching decisively and put into practice the new way of understanding the classroom and the educational centre in the face of the new learning contexts

The quality of education depends on repositioning the school and the classroom in the new learning contexts. School and university are still important, even if some trends try to displace them. Their need and validity are still recognised.

Thus, recently, the International Commission on the Futures of Education (2019), among the nine ideas it puts forward to promote educational improvement, points out in the fifth of them that

***“the school as a physical space is indispensable. Traditional classroom organization must give way to a variety of ways of ‘doing school’ but the school as a separate space-time of collective living, specific and different from other spaces of learning must be preserved”<sup>17</sup>.***

Today the classroom is diversifying and expanding with other learning spaces, whether face-to-face or virtual. There is talk of interactive, self-regulated classrooms; of hyper-classrooms<sup>18</sup> with several areas for interaction, research and experimentation, with the presence of two or more teachers, with the promotion of active, participative and collaborative methodologies, as well as the “*flipped classroom*”; in which autonomy, protagonism, individual and cooperative work of students is simultaneous.

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**17** UNESCO (2020). Education in a post-COVID world: Nine ideas for public action. International Commission on the Futures of Education. Paris, p.6

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**18** Mariano Fernández Enguita (2019). La hiperaula como espacio innovador. Cátedra Fundación MAPFRE Guanarteme de Tecnología y Educación de La Universidad de La Laguna

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The whole space of the school is multi-purpose, it becomes educational and relational, becoming the “third educator”<sup>19</sup>. As stated in the Declaration (2020), it should be a friendly, habitable, aesthetic, orderly, empathetic space in which learners explore, experiment and learn. An open and porous space, enriched by the possibilities offered by the internet and social networks.

## 5. Adapting the curriculum, diversifying and enriching it

We need to pay more attention to the curriculum, diversify it, simplify it and adapt it to the reality and needs of students and their contexts, combining their training as both local and global citizens. A curriculum that gives importance to the various subjects and inverts the subject pyramid. Giving greater significance and value to the subjects at the bottom of the pyramid (the arts, music, physical education and religion), reinforcing the humanities and harmonising mathematics, mother and foreign languages with the other subjects.

Furthermore, UNESCO (2019), warns of an emerging problem:

***“the time is right to undertake a thorough reflection on curricula, especially in opposing the denial of scientific knowledge and actively combating misinformation”<sup>20</sup>.***

We must educate in truth and for truth.

**19** Loris Malaguzzi, Reggio Emilia.

**20** UNESCO (2019). The futures of education. Paris.

On the other hand, it is necessary to promote a comprehensive education<sup>21</sup>. Educating the being, the whole person. The Faure (1972) and Delors (1996) reports have insisted on this. Little progress has been made. In the recent publication that I coordinated at international level, on the Global Compact on Education<sup>22</sup>, in the different chapters in which the opinions of children/young people, adults, Superiors General (both men and women), international educational experts, more than 220, from more than 45 countries, all of them insisted on educating the being, educating in values and virtues, on structuring and systematising more the education of the being, to humanise society, to dignify it and make it more just and equitable, fraternal, supportive and caring for the “common home”.

Educate also, as stated in the Declaration (2020, pp. 96-100) for contemplation, interiority and depth. And for integral ecology, which it indicates should be one of the educational approaches of the new Lasallian educational proposal.

All this leads us to pay more attention to the curriculum, transform it and arrange it for a new and better education.

## 6. Placing the person at the centre of the educational/evangelising process

This is another major challenge and one of the main quality criteria. We are invited to do so from many different instances. It is very easy to say and understand, but putting the person at the centre of the educational proposal is a paradigm shift that we have to face together, progressively and systematically, in and with the entire educational community. Both UNESCO and the Church invite us to focus on people. Thus, Pope Francis (2020) made the following proposal:

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**21** Declaration (2020, p. 104): The Lasallian school has distinguished itself as a project of integral education.

**22** Ojeda, Ceballos y Ramírez (2020). “*Luces para el camino. Pacto Educativo Global. Una educación de, con y para todos. Hacia una sociedad más humana, fraterna y sostenible*”. OIEC-SM-PPC

***“to make human persons in their value and dignity the centre of every educational programme, both formal and informal, in order to foster their distinctiveness, beauty and uniqueness, and their capacity for relationship with others and with the world around them, while at the same time teaching them to reject lifestyles that encourage the spread of the throwaway culture ”<sup>23</sup>.***

It is a priority to train people with a critical spirit<sup>24</sup>, communicative, creative and collaborative; committed to the transformation of their contexts.

## **7. Structuring and systematising passion for the last and the most vulnerable**

It has been a constant concern since our origins, but today we must update and advance in it. Recently, the Pope reminded us of this, on the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of our Founder, he exhorts us to “study and imitate his passion for the least...”<sup>25</sup>. We have these “last ones” both inside and outside our educational works. We must have the best means and the best prepared and motivated professionals to serve them with the highest quality.

The Declaration (2020, pp. 88-90) recognises that

**23** Pope Francis (15 October 2020). Message relaunching the Global Education Pact.

**24** Declaration (2020) pp. 95-97

**25** Pope Francis (16 May 2019). Address at the Audience to Lasallians, Vatican.

***“the great challenge of Lasallian education is to be accessible to the poorest, to defend the rights of children, to welcome migrants... and to contribute to the achievement of a school for all”.***

As Lorenzo Milani (1967) also said in Letters to a Teacher: *“the school is not a hospital for the healthy”*. It is the shared responsibility of all the educational agents of the school or university to pay special attention and care to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, avoiding by all means that no one is rejected or excluded. Let us prepare and train ourselves to welcome and better care for them.

## **8. Continuously innovating to better serve**

Innovation is an exercise in active responsibility and commitment to our educational service. Another of the quality criteria of our educational work focuses on our creativity and innovative capacity to anticipate the new and varied challenges and needs that are emerging at an accelerated pace. We must look resolutely to the future, read the signs of the times with passion and build together the right answers. Let us not be afraid to make mistakes; we also learn from our errors.

Today, true and effective innovation, and for it to serve the new generations and society in general, requires the collaboration of everyone. Therefore, let us give participation, voice and vote to all members of the educational community: students, teachers, families, administrative staff and collaborators. Faced with an uncertain and complex world, we need everyone's assistance, we need to listen to everyone, to count on everyone, in order to find the right response.

## 9. Encouraging collaboration between teachers, families, schools and society as a whole

If we want to give birth to a new education and a new school, we must enter into the paradigm of collaboration. With a prophetic voice, the Second Vatican Council (1965), through *Gravissimum educationis*, invited us to collaborate with families, with other schools and with society:

***“To foster suitable cooperation between Catholic schools, and between these and other schools that collaboration should be developed which the good of all mankind requires... by having exchange of professors for a time and by promoting all else that is conducive to greater assistance” (12).***

What have we made of all this? Nothing or very little. We urgently need to collaborate with each other, with other Catholic and non-Catholic schools, to work more inter-congregationally.

In this line, Pope Francis repeatedly invites us to “dream together” and to “rebuild together”, in a “co-participatory” way, a Global Compact on Education, in order to rethink education and generate a new model of life, of humanity, of society<sup>26</sup>.

In 2014, in his address to priests, religious men and women, seminarians and lay movements, he pointed to them and to all of us that

***“this requires courage to seek out ways of working together and offering mutual help in the areas of catechesis and catholic education, as well as integral human development and charity... the***

***contribution of the ecclesial movements that know how to work in communion... a Church that desires to walk in fraternity and unity ”<sup>27</sup>.***

In the relaunch of the Global Compact on Education, Pope Francis insists that this project cannot be delegated to the responsibility of those in power, *“it would be childish”*, but that we must collaborate with the whole of civil society, institutions and all those involved in education, without excluding anyone, thus advocating a massive and pluralistic collaboration, involving everyone. In his message of 15 October 2020, he said in this regard:

***“To educate is always an act of hope, one that calls for cooperation... This calls for a pluralistic and multifaceted process in which all of us can work to provide meaningful responses, in which diversity and methods are harmonized in the pursuit of the common good. The ability to create harmony: that is what is needed today”.***

Let us spare no effort to grow in collaborative capacity. From the very beginning, as indicated in the Declaration (2020, pp. 75-76), Lasallian teachers have worked in association, which has become their hallmark. This association guarantees teamwork, collective discernment, the potential of the common project, availability and solidarity among its members.

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**27** Pope Francis (21 September 2014). Address in Tirana Cathedral to priests, religious, seminarians and lay movements. Vatican.

## 10. Implementing the new understanding of leadership and school organization

Principals and management teams can have a significant influence on the quality of education in their schools. New leaders are needed, as CELAM pointed out in “Go and teach” (2011)<sup>28</sup>: “people with human and spiritual maturity, with management and pedagogical skills” (45), identified with the image of the “Good Shepherd” (43).

We need humble leaders, aware of their limitations, with a great capacity to listen and dialogue with everyone, who encourage personal development and the commitment of all members of the community, from the perspective that genius is collective<sup>29</sup> and not of snipers.

Likewise, the organisation of the educational centre must be adapted to the requirements of the collaborative paradigm and the new organisational trends, which are more people-centred, moving from a pyramidal to a horizontal organisational structure, which is flexible and decentralised, in which everyone counts and everyone brings value to the project.

In it, everyone is a leader, exercising initiative, responsibility and commitment to the project. As Gary Hamel (2012), an expert on organisations, said: “No one can afford not to involve employees in the work of creating the future.... Engagement may have been optional in the past, but today it is everything”<sup>30</sup>. We must create the conditions for everyone to be the architects and participants in the project. Genius is collective. Let's count on everyone. Association is more valuable and more necessary than in previous eras.

**28** CELAM (2011). Vayan y enseñen. Identidad y misión de la Escuela Católica en el cambio de época a la luz de Aparecida.

**29** Linda Hill (2014): How to manage for collective creativity? TED

**30** Gary Hamel (2012). What matters now

Finally, it is important that schools have sufficient autonomy to respond swiftly and responsibly to the needs of their students and communities, exercising this autonomy in an interdependent and accountable manner.


## **Conclusion**

We really know more than what we are able to put into practice. It is time for action. It is urgent to act. We often talk, we think, we know the way, but we do not act. Let us together progressively consolidate these basic characteristics and we will achieve a higher and better quality of education.









# *Educating for fraternal coexistence*

A reflection from the pandemic context

**Br. Diego A. Muñoz León, FSC**

*Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance - BICE  
Consultant for Research and Development*

***What happens when fraternity is not consciously cultivated, when there is a lack of political will to promote it through education in fraternity, through dialogue and through the recognition of the values of reciprocity and mutual enrichment?***

***Pope Francis, Fratelli tutti, No. 103***

**W**hat does it mean to educate for fraternal coexistence in the context of COVID-19? The school, that daily space of relationships and academic training, has been challenged to face a pandemic, to rethink itself from the fragility of a health situation that has made digital technology the essential resource to ensure the continuation of school work. How can the school learn from the uncertain future that lies ahead?

In this reflection, and starting from the Lasallian tradition, we wish to recover the founding intuitions of a school - born in Christian modernity - whose educational project has continued to develop for three hundred years, not without difficulties, along the lines of a pedagogy of fraternity.

From this pathway, we invite you to reflect on how the rights approach, taking into consideration the challenges of the current pandemic, can collaborate with the school in the creation of new lines of work, in order to reinforce the primary attention to people and the promotion of protective, generative spaces for coexistence of life and relationships.

## Evangelical fraternity as the foundation of the first Lasallian school

In 1679, the young canon John Baptist de La Salle tentatively began to structure a community experience of educational service, motivated by the lack of opportunities that the children of the artisans and the poor in Rheims had to attain a minimum of human and Christian formation.

De La Salle did not start from scratch. On the contrary, he drew on the experience of in-service teachers such as Adrien Nyel; on models of existing parish schools; on his own pastoral experience in Paris and in Rheims. Being a man of profound theological formation, his reference could not be other than the Gospel, his principal source of inspiration and action<sup>1</sup>.

However, a few years of ups and downs and disappointments with his first group of teachers were enough for him to understand that the schools needed people of faith committed full-time, with adequate training and gradual accompaniment, from a community of life and relationships. The composition of the community of teachers was the key that allowed him to consolidate an initial proposal, understanding that those who came to form part of it felt “called” to this type of life<sup>2</sup>. Fraternity thus became part of the DNA of the Lasallian

<sup>1</sup> Hours (2019, p. 487) argues that any attempt to reconstitute the genesis of the Lasallian model remains relative to an *episteme* which situates it in the environment of the seventeenth century, that is, within the search for natural and supernatural order, where schools play an essential role in the construction of the social fabric. The organisation of coexistence, from that perspective, was a matter to be taken into account within the objectives of the school.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, in the *Memoir on the Habit*, John Baptist de La Salle gives the ecclesiastical authority of Paris a brief but clear definition of the origin of the Brothers as early as 1689: “This Community is ordinarily called the Community of the Christian Schools; and at the present time it is established and founded only in Providence. They live in it according to rules, in dependence for everything, with nothing as their own property, and in complete uniformity.” (MH 0,0,2)..

identity<sup>3</sup>. And, therefore, of the educational experience and of Lasallian pedagogical reflection from its beginnings.

## The value of interpersonal relationships in the evolution of schools

The original Lasallian school was progressively consolidated over a period of forty years. The Brothers worked collectively on the production of their school manual, as full-time teachers, drawing on the experience of those who were more experienced in the art of teaching and validating their progress as a community year after year, always under the irreplaceable accompaniment of De La Salle. Thus, they arrived at the production of a manuscript, which they called the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*<sup>4</sup>, which was finally published in 1720 and which, up to 1916, went through 22 editions.

The *Conduct of the Christian Schools* was written from the experience of a community of Brothers who had made fraternity their hallmark of school activity. In running the schools, they had to create a model of relationships and of pedagogical work “as older brothers in Jesus Christ” for the children, to attract them to study, to discipline, to patient and self-sacrificing work, capable of bearing fruit in the medium and long term. Being older brothers to their students gave them the possibility of accompanying them, not by imposing, but by respecting each one in their individuality and ability

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**3** Fraternity as the founding paradigm of the Lasallian experience has been studied by Br. Leon Lauraire in MEL Bulletin 56. Lauraire, Leon (2021). *The Challenge of Fraternity. A reflection and a personal testimony*. Rome: Casa Generalizia. MEL Bulletin 56.

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**4** *The Conduct of Christian Schools* is not the only basic document for approaching the Lasallian pedagogical style; read, above all, from the perspective of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, it offers a clearer idea of what it means to be a teacher, sent by God to work for the salvation of children through the school

to face school difficulties<sup>5</sup>. A demanding love, sustained and nourished by a community of life in faith, outside any clerical hierarchical commitment<sup>6</sup>.

Later, French revolutionary society made the value of fraternity one of its pillars, disregarding its evangelical reference point. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Brothers, experts in schools, were called upon to become part of the French educational system, once the Napoleonic Restoration needed to promote primary schools<sup>7</sup>. It is clear that their initial inspiration was still alive and that their fraternal and lay identity brought them closer to the secular model of a free school open to all. Later, in the midst of the political struggles of the Third French Republic, the Brothers were expelled from the official French school system because of the ideological struggle for the secularisation of education.

In fact, the complexity of the modern world, the advance of western industrial societies and the exponential growth of the school world meant that the school, previously considered a marginal activity, occupied a privileged position in 19<sup>th</sup> century society as a place for the education of children. This same movement led to the emergence of new pedagogies that broadened the horizon of possibilities of a school project of humanisation that was opening up to the challenges of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a project that could never deny its Christian,

**5** De La Salle's Meditation 33, for the Second Sunday of Easter, on how teachers should proceed with their students, is an example of what we might today call an example of differential psychology applied in the school: "In today's Gospel Jesus Christ compares those who have charge of souls to a good shepherd who has great care for the sheep. One quality he must possess, according to our Savior, is to know each one of them individually. This ought also to be one of the main concerns of those who instruct others: to be able to understand their students and to discern the right way to guide them." (MD 33,1).

**6** Pungier and Marcato (1981) speak of the intimacy of the Brother with Jesus Christ, which makes this personal and community experience possible.

**7** The Brothers were called to be part of the French educational system, once the State took over the educational control functions that had been under the power of the Church in pre-revolutionary France.

evangelising origins”<sup>8</sup>, from this school born out of a fraternity, capable of educating the child to make them, timidly, from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, “capable of anything”<sup>9</sup>.

## Towards the advocacy of children's and adolescents' rights

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century heralded the emergence of a technological world that would change the course of history, but political tensions in European countries triggered the First and then the Second World Wars, with devastating effects never seen before. Technology was put at the service of weapons of mass destruction; by the end of 1945, for the Second World War alone, there were fifty million victims, thirty million of them civilians.

The painful experience of war paved the way for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed in 1948, the year in which the Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance (BICE)<sup>10</sup> was founded. A radical and founding pact for a new humanity was needed, as a roadmap for the future; it was necessary to defend the person, with no other condition than respect for their dignity.

In the specific case of children's rights, the timid steps taken since the 19<sup>th</sup> century to regulate children's work, the effort

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**8** Reynié (2021) makes a link between social disappointment and secularisation. It is interesting to note how values are still valid in the proclaimed secular society. In the case in point, fraternity is assumed without its Christian foundation. It is not, therefore, a question of continuing to oppose paradigms, but of seeing how society has continued to articulate its founding values.

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**9** Since the first schools were committed to looking after the children of artisans and the poor in particular, the battle against absenteeism was indispensable. This is why the *Conduct* quotes this sentence: “When parents withdraw their children from school too young or not sufficiently educated to send them to work, they should be told that they would be doing them great harm, and that by making them earn a pittance, they would be losing considerable advantages. To convince them, they must be made to see how important it is for an artisan to know how to read and write, for no matter how little he may have, if he knows how to read and write, he will be able to do everything...” (CE 16,2,21)

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**10** The history of children's rights. At: <https://bice.org/en/historia-de-los-derechos-del-nino/>



undertaken by the League of Nations in 1919 to protect children and, in particular, the work developed by Janusz Korczak in 1924 in the *Geneva Declaration* on the Rights of the Child, bore fruit when, in 1924, seventy-eight States signed the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, which opened the way to the subsequent Convention on the Rights of the Child - in which BICE played an important role - adopted in 1989 by one hundred and ninety-six Member States of the United Nations General Assembly.

Why is the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* important? It is a nationally and internationally binding treaty, which brings together all the political, social, civil, economic and cultural rights that apply to persons under the age of eighteen, generically called “children”. States that have ratified the Convention have undertaken to implement it and to be monitored by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

If we go back to the evolution of pedagogical thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we cannot deny the similarity between the consideration of the child as a full person and subject of rights and the child-centred education promoted by the New School movement from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which only reinforced what the Christian - Lasallian - school had already proclaimed from its beginnings: “the school was made for the child and not the child for the school”.<sup>11</sup>

Pope Francis has recently launched the outlines of a new Global Compact on Education. This initiative, read from the invitations of the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, invites to articulate efforts to make possible social friendship and fraternity among peoples. “That every human being possesses an inalienable dignity is a truth that corresponds to human nature apart from all cultural change” (*Fratelli tutti*, No. 213). Christian pedagogical reflection is called to make this invitation its own and to put it into practice in the reality of its schools. But from what context?

<sup>11</sup> One of the principles of Lasallian pedagogy expressed at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1900: “L'école est pour l'enfant et non l'enfant pour l'école”, Circulaire 96, 1900, p. 13.

## Lessons from COVID-19

Immersed in the reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, since 2020, humanity has experienced a global event of as yet unsuspected long-term consequences. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the simultaneous closure of more than 80% of schools worldwide, a situation unprecedented in history, which is still affecting the resumption of classes in many countries<sup>12</sup>. The vulnerability of the global education system has become evident, as has the unequal access to technology as a key educational resource to overcome the barriers imposed by the health crisis.

Children, adolescents and young people of school age lost their daily relationship spaces and domestic violence grew exponentially<sup>13</sup>; educators at all levels had to adapt, in general, to the use of a technology that had remained distant from their possibilities and that began to challenge them, even in totally unfavourable conditions.

What lessons is this global experience teaching us about the education relationship?

- ★ Children and adolescents - being subjects of rights - were made invisible at the time of the closure of the schools, without an opinion or a voice of their own.
- ★ Educators, beyond their technological competence in distance learning, have demonstrated through their work - even in inadequate and even chaotic conditions - that no device can replace the human relationship, which educates and protects.

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**12** According to UNICEF figures, by March 2021, some 168 million children worldwide will suffer school closures due to the pandemic. Information available at: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/schools-more-168-million-children-globally-have-been-completely-closed>.

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**13** The pandemic has generated another pandemic in the shadows; it is about making visible the sexual or physical violence that one in three women in the world are suffering, mostly from their intimate partner, or from their caregiver in the case of girls and adolescents. Information available from UN Women: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>.

- ★ During the closure of schools, the school community disappeared as a place for relationships. This gap could not be replaced by the digital network, no matter how much emphasis was placed on the idea of an open and technologically accessible school.

## The challenges of a pedagogy of fraternity today

To propose a pedagogy of fraternity in the context of the post-pandemic COVID-19 implies taking on new starting points, beyond the founding experience of the Lasallian school:

- ★ We need to rescue the value of human relationships, of coexistence based on unrestricted respect for the person, from an explicit ethical horizon; to this end, the exercise of rights would help to generate an inclusive and demanding social dialogue, promoting the development of structures for participation, discussion and action in the search for the common good.
- ★ We need to “learn from the future”, that is, to carry out a reflection that assumes the fragility of the present moment and that projects from there possible scenarios for reflection and action. This would imply the reformulation of a flexible curriculum, capable of generating critical reflection from action projects applied to the local reality; accepting error as part of learning and being able to generate new questions, beyond the knowledge acquired and the systematisation of the past.
- ★ We need to deepen and encourage global projects, tending to develop bonds of fraternity among our peoples; all of this in order to contribute to the exercise of participation - to the civic exercise of politics - from the contribution of academia in the understanding of processes and their projection into the future.

From these starting points, we understand that the school should promote:

- ★ Educators capable of assuming a fraternal authority - respectful and demanding at the same time - towards children and adolescents; that is, constituting themselves as ethical references, points of support and dialogue.
- ★ The recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights, as people capable of assuming responsibility for their actions, in accordance with their evolutionary development, accompanied by adults who are committed to generating spaces for their participation and action.
- ★ The exercise of respectful and harmonious interpersonal relations, based on the exercise of good treatment, explicitly sought, as a fundamental basis for fraternal coexistence among all members of the educational community.
- ★ The generation of safe and trustworthy spaces for coexistence, conveniently monitored and accompanied by educators, families and the local community itself.
- ★ The search for a positive authority - neither violent nor imposing - based on criteria and norms embraced by all members of the community, always respecting the rights of all; seeking, above all, the “best interests of the child”.
- ★ Raising awareness of the roots of violence, inequality between men and women, poverty and injustice in society, without losing sight of the critical reflection on situations of all kinds that affect school coexistence itself.
- ★ The appropriate use of digital technology in the development of flexible school didactics, relevant to the present time, playful and promoting creative thinking and open to the

development of new skills, more appropriate to the demands of the fourth industrial revolution<sup>14</sup>.

- ★ Finally, the revaluation of Christianity's own resources, which may be capable of accompanying this adventure of humanisation, in dialogue with the challenges, strengths and uncertainties of the 21st century, in a style of integral education<sup>15</sup>

Two key suggestions:

- ★ The school is called upon to make its *policy for the protection of children and adolescents* explicit, with the aim of offering an ethical, legal and practical framework for the formation of adults, the accompaniment of children and adolescents and the promotion of a type of interpersonal relations in accordance with the demands of pedagogical fraternity.
- ★ The school is called upon to renew and adapt its *rules of coexistence through* a participatory process that allows children, adolescents and adults to be protagonists of the educational community, as subjects of rights, for the exercise of the common good.

## Experiences in education for fraternal coexistence

We firmly believe that education for fraternal coexistence is possible and relevant in the context in which we live. From the relationship that educates we can offer answers to current educational needs.

**14** The fourth industrial revolution is not defined by a set of emerging technologies per se, but by the transition to new systems, built on the infrastructure of the digital revolution. This implies new ways of generating knowledge and applying it to provide innovative responses in as yet undefined scenarios of the future. cf. *Qué es la cuarta revolución industrial y por qué debería preocuparnos*, Valeria Perasso, BBC Mundo, 12 octubre 2016. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-37631834>.

**15** Integral education, proposed by François Moog (2020), highlights the relevance of the Catholic school at the present time and underlines the role of Pope Francis in proposing a more fraternal educational pact

### A) In Latin America:

Working together with the Lasallian Latin American Region (RELAL), BICE has promoted the programme “La Salle construyendo futuro” (*“La Salle Building the Future”*), as a proposal to promote, safeguard and restore the rights of children and adolescents in schools.

This programme has developed symbolic vaccination strategies against mistreatment in schools; in addition, through posters it has promoted the dissemination of the rights of children and adolescents, training directors, teachers, parents and older students to generate a climate conducive to the defence of rights.

### B) In África

In some African countries, BICE has promoted the “Resilience Tutors” programme, i.e. the training of educators committed to generating processes of accompaniment for children, adolescents and young people living in vulnerable situations.

Specifically, within the “Childhood without bars” programme, BICE has promoted the accompaniment of children and adolescents deprived of their freedom, whose future is becoming increasingly uncertain in prisons. Generating resilience has become an act of fraternal love towards those who, in the midst of their poverty, can rebuild their personal life project, giving a new meaning to their experience.

### C) In Eastern Europe

To prevent violence, BICE has promoted the “Grain of Sand” programme in Eastern European countries, offering spaces for dialogue and reflection with groups of teenagers through short films presenting situations where the characters' freedom and capacity for discernment are in danger.

These scenes allow for an educational dialogue between adolescents and adults and create a fraternal network of support and accompaniment that extends to the local society.

## An invitation to creativity and participation

We do not know for sure what will happen in education in the coming years. But what we do agree on is that things will not be the same as before. Schools will have to be reconsidered as spaces for creativity and participation, capable of imagining new scenarios for action, always pondering the centrality of the individual, respect for his or her rights, in an atmosphere of fraternal and protective coexistence.

The quality of relationships will determine a significant change in the image of the school of the future. It is not only a question of good treatment, but also of profound respect for the human dignity of each individual, and this has to do with the exercise of non-discrimination and participation, fundamental axes for the primordial consideration of the “best interests of the child”.

De La Salle and the first Brothers probably never imagined the extent of their modest contribution in the city of Rheims. Their key, fraternity, remains a pedagogical inspiration and a challenge for more than ninety thousand Lasallian educators in the world.

At this moment, when we are just resuming the school dynamic after the pandemic, we are convinced that fraternity remains a demanding experience that forces us to step out of our comfort zone as educators, to take risks and take on new challenges. And, on this path, children's rights remain an unmistakable beacon of light for the respect of the dignity of all human beings.

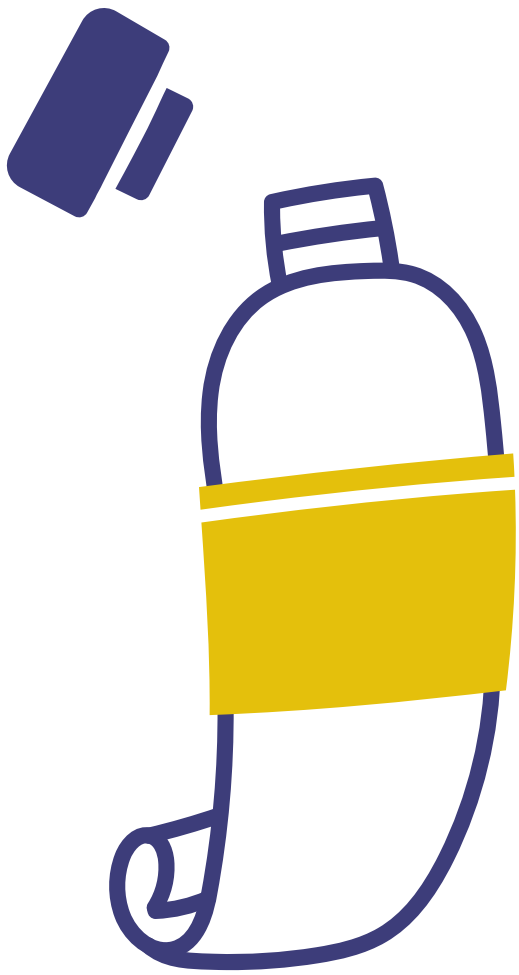
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- UNICEF: Schools for more than 168 million children around the world have been closed for almost a full year due to COVID-19.  
Available at : <https://www.unicef.org/es/comunicados-prensa/escuelas-168-millones-ninos-llevan-casi-ano-entero-cerradas-debido-covid19>



03



# *Education as an act of hope*

Schools for tomorrow based on  
evangelical coordinates

**Joke Maex**

*Professional Advisor in Lasallian Identity  
VLP Delegation of Belgium-North*

**2**020 will go down in history as the year when the COVID-19 pandemic confronted the world with the untenability of the situation it had found itself in. The reactions in the different parts of the world were diverse: from denial, over disbelief and conspiracy theories, to a call for reflection, rediscovery of possibilities and some sparks of solidarity.

With this article, we want to contribute to the challenging search for a new reality beyond the current malaise. The parable of the Good Samaritan offers a framework from which we can look, from the Gospel perspective, at the epoch in which we find ourselves. It challenges us to make choices for the future of Lasallian education, but also for the future of the upcoming generation of young people as protagonists of a new world - yet to be designed.

## A new horizon

The pandemic has severely disrupted our educational traditions. Traditional points of recognition (e.g. classroom teaching) have been shuttered away to create a new environment (e.g. online education). Educators entered an open, undefined space with less orientation points. Looking back, it reminded me of Mark 16: 1-8:

***“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint Him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another: ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.*”**



***As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But He said to them: ‘Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has been raised; He is not here. Look, there is the place they laid Him. But go, tell***

***his disciples and Peter that He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.’ So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid”.***

The pandemic placed a huge stone in front of the gate of our schools – almost literally. There was no way back to what was before, but the story didn’t end. The “stone rolled away” in the Gospel reminds us of the paradox between Jesus’ death and the empty tomb from where the women were directed elsewhere: ‘He has been raised... he is going ahead of you.’ The ‘relocated’ stone frustrates every logical order, it disrupts the narrative. But it also points us in a different direction and offers unexpected perspectives. COVID has disrupted our educational narrative and exposed some critical issues, but also confirmed



This picture of the ‘stone rolled away’ from the Chapel of Disclosure was taken by the photographer Geert Goiris as part of the project ‘2020’. In a combination of pictures and a manifest the book intends to draw the attention upon the spiritual or religious transitions many are experiencing today. You can order the book via this [link: https://www.vlp-scholennetwerk.be/nl/Prikbord/Activiteiten/Algemeen/Photo-Book-Chapel-of-Disclosure/](https://www.vlp-scholennetwerk.be/nl/Prikbord/Activiteiten/Algemeen/Photo-Book-Chapel-of-Disclosure/)

the importance of school for young people today and special attention to the most vulnerable in our society.

The ‘stone rolled away’ is the cornerstone in the reconstruction of the Jesus narrative from the perspective of faith. With the return to Galilee, the story begins anew on the other side of the tomb. The true life of the Risen Lord is apparent primarily in those believers who come together to remember Him, those who feel themselves connected to Him. Here we find the power of this new life, the new morning surrounded by new people in a distressed world.

In the “Global Compact on Education” Pope Francis invites us all to a continuous reflection and dialogue on the required educational process to develop a new society based on universal solidarity and inclusion. The challenges we are facing are part of the anthropological transition we’re in. We should take this transition into account reflecting upon the educational processes we feel needed to answer the call of the youngsters in need in a distressed world.

## **A new system of coordinates**

Stunned and distraught by what has happened to us, we feel like we have lost our way. We are looking for landmarks. Perhaps we need a new map<sup>1</sup>.

Since ancient times, man has relied on systems to orientate himself at sea or in a desert - places with few landmarks. To do this, he relied on instruments which helped him to determine his location and plot the course towards his destination. The very nature of the navigation system is to determine one's course, taking into account coordinates which define the space in which one moves.

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**1** DeThomasis, FSC, L., & Blixt, FSC, R. (2021). *Creating a New Lasallian Map. Building New Paths to Transform Lives*. Linemark Inc., Maryland, U.S.A.

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In our modern society we use GPS (Global Positioning System) coordinates to assist us in reaching the location we want to reach. This modern navigation system uses satellites, a receiver and algorithms to synchronize location, velocity and time data for air, sea and land travel (geotab.com). Today's GPS also allows us to choose which route we take: the shortest, the fastest, the most sustainable, etc. and reorientates itself when unexpected obstacles appear along the way.

The metaphor of GPS coordinates seems fascinating when we want to determine our 'course' in a world characterised by disorientation. Perhaps the system of coordinates can help us in finding alternative directions within the original organisation of contemporary society, realizing that a new era calls for a different system of coordinates.

The new coordinates are important to find the appropriate place from which the young generations can integrate into this world in transformation, characterised by highly advanced digitalisation. In a society where distance seems to be more important than proximity, it takes creativity to stay close to young people and to ensure that no one gets lost in the grey zone. The living (young) person, the source of the original experience of the life that reveals itself, is at the same time our guide and our travelling companion. We adults accompany them, listen attentively to what they tell us and place it in perspective within our rich centuries-old tradition. This brings us to one of the coordinates that determines our path today, our lasallian heritage.

## Our lasallian heritage

Our lasallian heritage is rooted in the foundational insights of the educational work started by Saint Jean-Baptiste De La Salle and his fellow schoolmasters, a work which continued and evolved throughout more than three centuries. De La Salle was influenced by the 17<sup>th</sup>-century advent of Modernity. This is evident in his innovative school concept. In addition to its institutional-Christian identity, it focused on the labour market

and vocational skills. His orientation in the seventeenth-century modernity was influenced by a radical “conversion”, based on a succession of personal discernments.

On the basis of the personal experiences with his schoolmasters and his personal beliefs, De La Salle developed two footings for his educational model. Christian education primarily endeavours to foster the experience of and initiation into the Gospel, due to the promise of redemption. Secondly and in addition to the first footing, education of the children of artisans and of the poor should be gratuitous. In his school, these children learn reading and writing in French and learn to calculate using basic mathematical principles. This allows them to find work in the new type of commercial society that emerged in the 17th century French towns and cities. Learning courtesy and civility turned them into responsible citizens, in line with the Gospel. Schoolmasters taught children and young people to live a good life (cfr: Rule 1705 [3]). In the educational model of De La Salle literacy and professional education were the allies of eternal salvation.

The lasallian story continues! Unstoppable developments and the “progressive insight” associated with them, reveal facets of this story. The ever-changing society challenges the project to keep on evolving. It is characteristic of our tradition to anchor all educational and formation projects in the unexpected encounter with the Christ, in the love of our neighbour. Not as an ideology, not as a doctrine, not as a sloganesque simplification, but based on a personal appeal, awakened to discover unsuspected horizons in every person. It requires vigilance to allow this special perspective to ripen and to recall it when confronted with everything that living people experience and undergo. Just like the Gospel, the lasallian story is historical, evolving, expanding and deepening to the beat of the human adventure and to what influences and shapes societies across the world.

The lasallian, evangelical coordinates can be associated with people who testify to an inexplicable incisive experience of faith as life, leading to describing the God of life. They provide





The drawings are part of a project of a Flemish secondary school. For their observational drawing course, the pupils of 6 Publicity Graphics at Coloma Plus were given the task to make a diary page of their digs in these COVID times.

an interpretative framework to read the coordinates of our current society.

In his video message on the occasion of the meeting organised by the congregation for catholic education “Global Compact on Education. Together to look beyond” Pope Francis indicated

***“The pandemic has led us to realize that what is really in crisis is our way of understanding reality and of relating to one another”.***  
(Global Compact on Education. Together to look beyond, 2020)

The new coordinates are important to find the appropriate place from which the young generations can integrate into the new world-in-becoming. This immediately raises the question: what dynamic social tension is required to facilitate the “innovative” contribution of Christian-inspired education? What kind of orientations can help us to this end in the context of contemporary society dominated by a neoliberal lifestyle? How can the “Global Compact on Education” shed a light on new perspectives? Perhaps we can find an elephant path showing us a new and unexpected road.

## On the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho

***A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him,***

*and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'*

This ancient story about interpersonal relationships puts us on the right track. Its starting point is similar to our contemporary throw-away culture. As soon as the man is of no further value to the robbers, he is thrown away, at the side of the road. Passers-by react in different ways depending on their involvement – the involvement with themselves and their social status versus involvement with the injured man. The different reactions find their origin in the different relationships one is prepared embark upon. Is one prepared to open up and be touched by the other or not? After all, the story shows us how

***“the existence of each and every individual is deeply tied to that of others: life is not simply time that passes; life is a time for interactions”.***  
*(Fratelli tutti, 66).*



However, the parable is also about our intimate relationship.

***“If we extend our gaze to the history of our own lives and that of the entire world, all of us are, or have been, like each of the characters in the***

***parable. All of us have in ourselves something of the wounded man, something of the robber, something of the passers-by, and something of the Good Samaritan”.***

*(Fratelli tutti, 69)*

The parable, in its various characters, challenges us to reflect on our relationship with our fellow men, but also with God. Paradoxically, the parable seems to indicate that the (unbelieving) Samaritan's actions truly reflect God's love for man. The priest and the Levite (unintentionally) become allies of the robbers in their choice of religious purity. The story lays the foundation of Christian faith in the dignity of every human being, beyond social roles or ethnic belonging. Faith, and the humanism it inspires, urges us today to make human dignity the guiding principle for our speech and actions in our contemporary society.

Finally, this parable tells us something about responsibility. Roger Burggraeve<sup>2</sup> (2015) distinguishes between responsibility in the first and the second person. Responsibility in the first

<sup>2</sup> Roger Burggraeve is a Belgian theologian specialized in the French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas.

person is related to meeting one's personal expectations. The different characters each had their own plan that day. However, their plans are thwarted by events - something happened to them, a suffering other entered their existence uninvited. Responsibility and mercy begin with a crisis: the other person is bothering me, my plan does not work any longer. This is followed by the choice not to approach the other person with indifference, but to do justice. Mercy begins where one allows oneself to be touched by the suffering of another. Here, responsibility emerges in the second person, aroused by the way the other enters my life. Through his appearance as a suffering other, he appeals to me, becomes my vocation. Educational vocation touches upon this responsibility in the second person. As a teacher or educator, you are touched by the appeal of your pupil (colleague or parent) whom you did not choose. The right to education includes the unconditional right to human dignity.

The story of the Catholic Church in Western Europe shows remarkable similarities to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Church is excluded from the public space. People spin around it or quietly leave the traditional religious space, disillusioned because they do not find what they expected. Others find God through encounters – the God confessed in Christ is to be met in concrete human situations and only there.

***“The value of our educational practices will be measured not simply by the results of standardised tests, but by the ability to affect the heart of society and to help give birth to a new culture. A different world is possible and we are called to learn how to build it”.***  
***(Pope Francis)***

## Human dignity in Christian education today

***“Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world”***

*(Hannah Arendt, 1969, p. 196)*

Teaching always takes place in an interplay between pupil, teacher and the world. One's view of the world and man's place in it are crucial to the choices one makes in education. A view of what was/is colours our view of what is to come. In this sense, education gives young people a memory that reminds them of what was and encourages them to create a different, better world. Education renews man and the new man renews the world. The ultimate goal of education is therefore to make the world a better place to learn and live in. This intergenerational process - called teaching - develops man and the world based on a dynamic in which they mutually reinforce and improve one another.

This vision of education is founded in hope, hope against better judgment, which is grounded in the conviction that human education is neither predictable nor engineerable. In this it differs fundamentally from the contemporary idea of

the malleability of life, which drives man's neo-liberal desires. Teachers who teach from this fundamental hope create room for the unexpected. In this way, they stimulate hope in pupils - especially those who are labelled 'hopeless'. Hope is grounded in trust in the dignity of the human being and the goodness of the world.

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This vision of education, rooted in faith in man and the world, starts from a radically different relationship between education and the world than the currently

predominant one. Today, education is too often seen as the cure for everything that goes wrong in the world. The school is at the service of the progress in society. To this end, it trains young people by providing them with skills that they can later use in their professional careers. This is how education today has ended up in a meritocratic logic, in which not only pupils but also teachers are in danger of succumbing to the pressure. A different approach to education is emerging, in which the school is situated between the family and social life - a place for practicing, a place where trying things

out is allowed to take place. This vision is in line with the traditional interpretation of school as σχολή time which is not overloaded with social expectations. Here we give the young generation time to meet the world, explore themselves in relation to it and dream about the future. The prevailing value pattern here is not meritocracy but benevolentia. The core question is: what kind of society does the school need to move beyond meritocratic dominance?

## Challenges of the Lasallian educational mission

For sure the pandemic has brought us to new experiences of being human and humane. We rediscovered the fragility but at the same time the resilience of human beings. Youngsters combining school and work to support their families. Teachers who bike from door to door to supply the pupils with the necessary materials, but also to see how they are doing. Children who have the courage to tell what it is like to grow up in poverty. But equally, (young) people lose all hope because of disillusion and depression. The pandemic has painfully exposed the pain points of our society. But at the same time, it has also triggered a movement in search of new horizons.

Education requires us to enter into a sincere and genuine dialogue with pupils on their experiences. The school consequently becomes a place of practice where children and young people can allow themselves to be touched by profoundly human experiences and together look for a language to express their deepest emotions. After all, building tomorrow's society means providing a language which makes us grow as human beings, in relation to each other and to the world. This presupposes dialogue: a dialogue about what happens to us, a dialogue about what concerns and unites us, but also about what keeps us going and what we dream of. This dialogue should involve everyone from the educational community, independent of their role, religion, social status, etc. Schools should become places where the culture of encounter (Fratelli tutti 215-220) is promoted.

One of the greatest challenges in Western European society is a contemporary interpretation of Christian identity. The young generation is becoming more and more alienated from the traditional Christian image of God and frame of reference, but at the same time feels very involved in social issues which are in line with the Christian view of life. The great challenge lies in developing a contemporary language that makes the humane basis of the Christian tradition accessible. Coordinates to realise this are memory and discernment. An intergenerational dialogue bringing together memory of the past and discernment of the present to open up a utopian horizon for the future<sup>3</sup>. It will shed a different light on human dignity in the context of secularization, (religious) diversity, sustainability and the ideology of malleability of life.

In conclusion we dare to say that Christian education will be inadequate unless we go looking, through an intergenerational and inclusive dialogue, for a new language to talk about and reflect upon human dignity, the sanctity of life, the integrity of creation and service to the world.

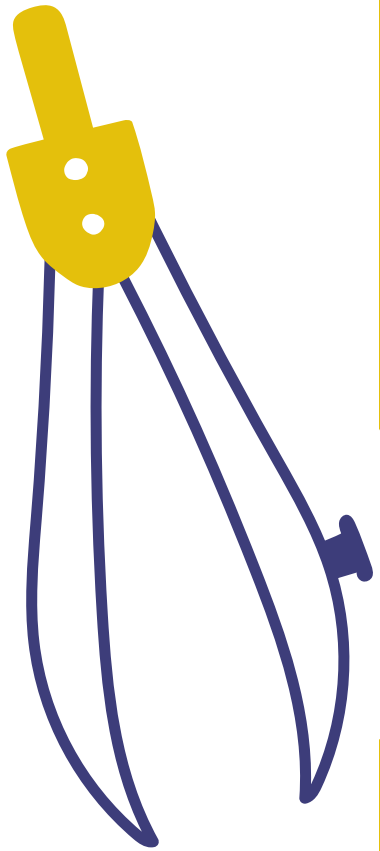
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04



# *Education at the service of integral human development*

**Angela Matulli, Andrea Sicignano,  
Br. Raoul Traore, FSC**

*Members of the Institute's Secretariats for Solidarity  
and Development and Association and Mission*

## Introduction

**I**n the framework of the commemoration of the tercentenary of the death of our Founder St. John Baptist de La Salle, some activities were carried out for this celebration, including a workshop that led to reflection on “creative fidelity”. As a result of this dialogue, consensus led to the conclusion that it is essential to be rooted in “*fidelity*” to the founding origins but, at the same time, it is indispensable to be “*creative*” in order to respond to the needs of our time and to build the future. The metaphor which translates this double movement well is that of “roots and wings”: roots deeply buried in the rich history of the origins of the Lasallian movement up to the present day; wings, to bring about the necessary renewal and change, being our response in line with the realities of today, characterised by complex crises in different areas.

These educational responses to personal or social, economic or cultural, material or spiritual needs contribute, in themselves, to integral human development, whether in its personal or social dimension. This is why we understand education at the service of integral human development as the *action of providing the person with the necessary care for the full and complete unfolding and development of his or her capacities and potential, without any restriction or limitation, that is to say, of all the existential dimensions of his or her being: physical, intellectual, psychological-emotional, moral and spiritual*. In this way, the ultimate objective of all educational action is the full realisation of the human being so that he/she may contribute likewise to the fulfilment of the members of the community in which he/she lives.

To affirm that education is at the service of integral human development necessarily implies considering poverty, its causes and the development of the needy or violated<sup>1</sup>. It seems

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**1** The concept of violated, rather than vulnerable, is used to emphasise that the condition of vulnerability has underlying causes of social injustice, and is a condition from which a person or community can emerge if the root causes are tackled.

essential to contact people working in this field in different parts of the world and to offer a synthesis of their experiences and contributions. In this sense, what follows is a text written by several hands, which reviews experiences and reflections from different Lasallian Districts.

On the other hand, we would like to take as a reference and backdrop the *“Motu Proprio”* of Pope Francis in which he points out some objectives of integral human development such as the experience of:

***“[...] the inestimable goods of justice, peace, and the care of creation [...]”<sup>2</sup>.***

In this way, we want to offer an approach based on the Lasallian experience, which will consider Lasallian education as a function of the development of persons and societies. The first part will be related to the nature of integral human development in and for the Lasallian educational service. The second part will focus on the social perspective based on the objectives proposed by the Pope's Motu Proprio: peace, social justice and ecology, adding the area of health. In addition, it was considered essential to show how volunteering can support and reinforce the mission in each of these objectives.

The final reflections and proposals also arise from the awareness of the new challenges experienced in these years of pandemic and from the reading of the current situation, both in the Lasallian communities<sup>3</sup>, and outside them, worldwide.<sup>4</sup>

**2** APOSTOLIC LETTER IN THE FORM OF “MOTU PROPRIO” OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF FRANCIS instituting the Dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development. [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu-proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio\\_20160817\\_humanam-progressionem.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu-proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio_20160817_humanam-progressionem.html)

**3** <https://www.lasalle.org/encuesta-internacional-covid-en-linea>

**4** <https://www.unicef.org/reports/unicef-75-preventing-a-lost-decade>

## PART ONE

# Integral human development in the Lasallian educational mission. A call.

A few months ago, in the midst of the pandemic provoked by COVID-19, an important document came to light for Lasallians which is a great reference, either because it is a response to the 45th General Chapter, or because of its content, its synthesis or the direction it points us in. This document, entitled “Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission. Challenges, Convictions and Hopes”<sup>5</sup>, clearly describes the meaning of integral 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”***

***(Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020, p. 78).***

**5** Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020. Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission. Challenges, convictions and hopes. [https://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/La\\_Declaracio%CC%8In\\_ENG\\_26\\_10\\_2020\\_web-1.pdf](https://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/La_Declaracio%CC%8In_ENG_26_10_2020_web-1.pdf)

In this perspective, we easily distinguish the characteristics that every Lasallian is called to offer from their ministry.

## **Characteristics of an education that promotes integral human development**

Lasallian education is understood as openness to the transcendent, to oneself, to others, to one's own ecosystem, that is to say, it consists in educating in the dignity of the human being. This means becoming aware of one's own uniqueness and human dignity. It also contributes to the socio-professional integration of young people by developing their social and professional skills, *hard-skills*.

Thus, the mission of Lasallian education is to form to live well, to know how to live as a person to the full. These characteristics aim at refining morality and the capacity for critical thinking. To moral formation for the construction of responsible citizenship. It also educates for fraternity, that is to say, to instil in students the skills necessary to relate to their peers, in the sense of dialogue, coexistence, teamwork and negotiation, *soft skills*.

## **Qualities of an education that favour integral human development.**

Achieving integral human development requires an education that is respectful of dignity and diversity, that cultivates good relations between the members of the educational community, that is creative and innovative in responding to the needs of children and young people and the most vulnerable groups, i.e. quality education.

It is common for the practice of assessing the quality of education to focus on school examination results. But the quality of education goes far beyond academic results.

There can be no quality holistic education without a safe environment. So, what are some qualities of quality education in the Lasallian context that are conducive to integral human development?

Quality education could have the following qualities:

- ★ To have an educational project which defines the type of person to be formed, the methods and techniques to be promoted, as well as the resources to be used in order to achieve the expected results. The Conduct of Schools is a beautiful illustration of the Lasallian educational project. The educational project must be the fruit of a consensus (together and by association), realistic and consistent with the objectives set.
- ★ The educational community, which includes all those involved in the educational service, who are qualified, competent and motivated people, whatever their religious, social or economic background. What is important is that they acquire the Lasallian spirit and share its values, that the educational community works to build fraternal environments, aimed at creating communities of reference.
- ★ Educational and extracurricular activities that include teaching, work in workshops, physical, artistic and cultural activity, service to those most in need, through solidarity and volunteering, as well as those that allow for spiritual development.
- ★ Adequate educational infrastructure and equipment (classrooms, libraries, computer rooms, sports facilities, canteens, hostels, etc.) are an important component of the quality of the Lasallian educational service and are appropriate to the particular context.
- ★ Support programmes for those most in need. Considering that many children and young people risk social and educational



exclusion if they do not receive financial support, this type of assistance should also be considered. It is desirable that scholarship programmes focus on those students most in need, with special attention to those who show interest in participating in mission and social development projects.

## Some strategies that enhance integral human development

Educational strategies, or rather good practices aimed at an education that is particularly attentive to the multidimensional vulnerabilities resulting from the current crises and oriented towards integral human development, are carried out within a constant interconnection between school, society and culture. It is about having an idea, a vision of how these three elements can help community learning and can strengthen the technical, ethical and political skills of children and young people.

*Of course, as Pope Francis rightly says, quoting an African proverb, “it takes a whole village to educate a child”<sup>6</sup>, this remains true in the world of the “global village” but it is important that this “triangle” (school-society-culture) is increasingly understood in all its dimensions.*

The first element strongly shared by all the experiences taken into consideration is the synergy between schools and families, in order to avoid “parallel educational systems” with divergent objectives. For example, St Michael's schools<sup>7</sup> and many other Lasallian ministries establish meaningful relationships with parents, guardians and carers, as some Lasallians testify:

**6** Pope Francis (12 September 2019), message of the Holy Father Francis for the launch of the Global Compact on Education: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190912\\_videomessaggio-patto-educativo.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190912_videomessaggio-patto-educativo.html)

**7** Programme promoted in RELAN.

***“We touch the hearts and teach the minds not only of young people, but also of their families and, by extension, their communities”.***  
*(Heather Ruple)*

***“..the educational experience we have in Mozambique became necessary and relevant when we identified and included in our pedagogical plans/actions all children and their families, especially those of different religions and cultural backgrounds”***  
*(Sebastiao López)*

Another key element is the formation of the educational community, a crucial element for the students to achieve the objectives of an integral human development attentive to poverty. The Lasallian ministries we have approached share the need for synergy between the teachers and the children involved in the educational process. For example, the *Humanizarte* programme<sup>8</sup> favours the development of the pedagogical training of teachers and promotes actions with a high relational and reflective component on the human condition.

It is no coincidence that De La Salle and the first teachers called each other “brothers”. This should be a clear cultural marker for Lasallians today: the importance of relationships within the educational community is critical to the success of students as informed and qualified citizens, promoters of change (regardless of age), as well as qualified adults in their own fields of study and work.

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**8** Humanizarte is a political, ethical and citizenship training programme for peace. It is a commitment to peacebuilding. (2017). <https://repositorio.ucp.edu.co/bitstream/10785/4597/1/DDEPSC10.pdf>

Integral human development can only take place in an affective environment inhabited by authentic relationships full of humanism.

In this light, education at the service of integral human development is the objective of the educational service of the poor, which translates into quality education. This quality education is the result of reflection, planning and implementation of “together and by association”. It is an educational project that is regularly updated to better respond to the real challenges of today and the future.

When the project becomes incarnated in the person that gets educated, becomes an “educated person” who develops a positive relationship with the social environment and the natural environment when:

- ★ Recognising community/societal issues and concerns through direct experience.
- ★ Processing the experience with in-depth analysis and reflection.
- ★ Acting committedly on the basis of strategies and solutions that can lead to social transformation.

All of these are characteristics that we have identified in many educational centres and are based on the spirit of faith, zeal for service and communion in mission.

But what should quality education focus on in the Lasallian context? In addition to knowledge and core competences, quality education must integrate the themes of justice, peace, ecology, fraternity, solidarity, citizenship, alternative economies, etc. Quality education must make it possible to respond to the hopes and aspirations of young people and, therefore, of peoples.

The Lasallian Family has always been creative and innovative in the range of solutions it provides to young people, especially the most vulnerable. The service to the most vulnerable

is favoured by the Lasallian network of solidarity and development: NGOs, associations, foundations, volunteers, those who contribute to ensuring that the institutions in the most fragile areas have the conditions for quality education, where quality is shown in the *impact that each student and teacher has on their society (De Vera), being also an ethical and political principle, rather than a technical and instrumental one, which guides the human-Christian work of education. Quality is measured by the development of skills and the construction of the conditions for their exercise by the people involved*” (Humanizarte, 2017).

In several Lasallian schools we find a beautiful expression which sums up the above vision: “*enter to learn, leave to serve*”, which does not exclude investing in new educational technologies, supporting, educating and training teachers, both technically and emotionally.

To close this section, we would like to refer to the *Identity Criteria for the Vitality of Lasallian Educational Ministries*<sup>9</sup> as an excellent tool to stimulate and encourage in schools a process of evaluation and reflection that favours institutional development with a focus on continuous improvement. In this way, it allows for a self-critical approach to the pedagogical process, in a context of collegiality.

## PART TWO

In this part we offer an overview of the contribution of Lasallian education to integral human development. The areas highlighted in the Motu Proprio of Pope Francis will guide us as they point to knowing how to recognise the roots of social injustice, using the knowledge acquired to protect human dignity and the environment, promoting human and spiritual values from an early age, using creativity to give precise and effective responses to

<sup>9</sup> Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020. Identity Criteria for the Vitality of Lasallian Educational Ministries. [https://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ENG\\_lasallian\\_criteria\\_web.pdf](https://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ENG_lasallian_criteria_web.pdf)

problems, living concrete experiences of service and gratuity that can help to build one's own free and non-idealised thinking<sup>10</sup> thus promoting the transformation of society.

## Paths to promote education for integral human development

In the midst of huge crises such as ecological, migratory, health, economic, security and even educational crises, 4 axes allow us to stay on track in our educational efforts.

Thanks to hundreds of educators and thousands of students who, aware of their contribution to society, they manage to be light, inspiration and hope for others. Here are just a few examples.

### 1. Peacebuilding:

- ★ The students of the **Lasallian University of Bethlehem<sup>11</sup>**, gather on the university campus even after they have finished their studies because, to quote the words they shared with Brother Peter Bray, “it is the only place of peace in their lives”. Thus, the university is not only a quality educational opportunity for young Palestinians of different religions who would not have access to tertiary education, but also a promoter of dialogue and peace-building dynamics.
- ★ With a similar purpose, **La Salle School in Rumbek, South Sudan<sup>12</sup>**, welcomes young people from different cultural groups in the country, from families who, outside the school, might kill each other over clan disputes. The school, opened a few years ago, teaches that peaceful coexistence is possible, that violence

<sup>10</sup> Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020. Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission. Challenges, convictions and hopes [https://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/La\\_Declaracio%CC%81n\\_ENG\\_26\\_10\\_2020\\_web-1.pdf](https://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/La_Declaracio%CC%81n_ENG_26_10_2020_web-1.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bethlehem.edu/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://es.lasallefoundation.org/>

can be replaced by mutual recognition and respect, as well as collaboration, in order to build together a better future for the world's youngest country, leaving behind decades of conflict.

### 2. Sowing social justice:

In the global Lasallian mosaic, we could share multiple initiatives that at the local level have an impact on the fight against social injustice, but here are some that we consider relevant given the current historical context:

- ★ The **KADA UNO** action<sup>13</sup>, promoted by La Salle in the Philippines during the COVID-19 crisis, was a comprehensive response to the conditions imposed by the pandemic. Thanks to the commitment of dozens of volunteers (both male and female), La Salle was able to provide support and shelter to more than 400 homeless people in 8 different areas of the city of Manila, as well as produce and distribute protective equipment, food and safe spaces to health personnel working tirelessly in hospitals in 6 provinces of the country. Thus, during the period of confinement, when everyone was seeking self-protection, schools opened their doors to those in need; De La Salle volunteers noticed the needs of the marginalised, unprotected, and responded on the front line.
- ★ The comprehensive response that **Bolivia Digna**<sup>14</sup> and its volunteers are coordinating in Arocagüa is a path of co-responsibility with the local community towards sustainable development. The educational experience considers several aspects: educational action for children, boys and girls; training for families in positive education, healthy diet and care for the environment; the creation of a community garden; a kitchen and a dining room to improve the nutrition of children and adolescents; and the production of compost that will be marketed to help families become self-sufficient.

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**13** Experience of Kada Uno: <https://kadauno.delasalle.ph/>

**14** <https://www.facebook.com/740692479360514/posts/4393920894037636/>

### 3. Promotion of integral ecology:

- ★ In Portugal, thanks to European funds from the Erasmus+ programme, **SOPRO**<sup>15</sup>, has rehabilitated an abandoned plot of land near its headquarters. The initiative involves many local and international volunteers, from the youngest to the oldest, who contribute their knowledge to the planning of the crops and, thanks to this intergenerational encounter and the objective of taking care of “our common home”, the future community land is being planned where urban gardens and activities that encourage the participation of the local community will be created.

### 4. Comprehensive health care:

- ★ In Peru, within the framework of a project for the prevention of domestic violence and child abuse coordinated by the **Tarpusunchis Association**<sup>16</sup>, work continued during the months of closure caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme “*Contención Emocional Solidaria*” (Supportive Emotional Containment) has approached families in educational communities located in vulnerable contexts, whose mental health has been affected by the loss of a family member, the economic crisis, among other effects of the health emergency. So far, 40 volunteers, graduates and students in their final year of Psychology, donate their time to listen and provide socio-emotional accompaniment to nearly 200 children and their families, using *WhatsApp* and mobile phones as resources. They have been able to provide emotional care, in order to mitigate the psychological effects of the adverse situations they have suffered. Emotional containment makes it possible to reduce the damage left by the pandemic and to rebuild family and social life with hope.

**15** SOPRO's experience in Portugal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ioi7YHBomJI&t=4s>

**16** <https://ongtarpusunchis.wixsite.com/tarpusunchis>

- ★ In Lebanon, the **Fratelli Project**<sup>17</sup>, faced with the progressive deterioration of the psychophysical health conditions of the children and young people who participate in its activities, has implemented a series of actions aimed at providing them with care and support. These include cyclical basic health check-ups for all children, psychomotor and speech therapy programmes for specific cases reported by the educators. These are in addition to the permanent actions aimed at the integral development of the person, such as nutritional support, the psychosocial support programme and the training of the team of educators as resilience mentors (training in collaboration with BICE, the Francesco Realmonte Association and RiRes of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan).
- ★ Another good practice has been adopted for decades in the La Salle schools in the Democratic Republic of Congo which, acting in contexts where access to medicine, basic health care and laboratory analyses is very limited, have opened **CLASS**, or Centres Lasalliens de Santé Scolaire (Lasallian School Health Centres), to make up for this deficiency as far as possible and guarantee the community's right to health. The CLASS are at the service of students, teachers and their families

These are just a few examples chosen from among the many experiences that the Lasallian mission carries out at different levels and in different regions of the planet.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UdLP1aHoWM>



## Two observations

### a. The essential contribution of volunteering

It is essential to highlight the leading role of young volunteers, whether at local, national or international level, which is critical to achieving the objectives of integral human development. It is true that these actions are part of their training, but their generous and joyful service is also undeniable.

Aware of this key role, since September 2018, the Centre of the Institute has created an area - within the Secretariat of Solidarity and Development - to support, develop (when requested) and coordinate international volunteering.

From the experience of this office, it is clear that volunteering is, on the one hand, an important support for all the projects of the Institute and, on the other hand, a significant step in the human growth of young people, teachers, collaborators and brothers.

Lasallian volunteering is a point of connection between peace, ecology, social justice and health. Acting together towards the same goal is the basis of community life, so the presence of volunteers in communities is always a source of growth, renewal and development.

### b. Collaboration

Moving towards such ambitious goals is not easy. In fact, Pope Francis in his call to join the Global Compact on Education<sup>18</sup> points out that the only way to solve certain crises and to move towards peace, social justice, integral ecology or integral health care is to create alliances and work together in the same direction. De Vera states that students must also contribute to the resolution of these huge crises by learning to work in harmony with others in order to reach agreements and collaborate in solving problems.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/en/>

## **Conclusions**

Yesterday as now, we Lasallians are called to contribute to integral human development by means of a quality education that promotes in persons and in societies a development that tends towards peace, that seeks social justice, that favours integral ecology and that cares for the health of persons in an integral way.

To this end, it is important to share good practices, best strategies, even the lessons learned from our mistakes, in order to seek inspiration and new ideas that will allow us to move faster towards this horizon.

It is clear, after and during a global pandemic, that the dream cannot be just to “recover” the situation before the pandemic. The longing to return to an ill-defined “normality” is worrying, since what is perceived as “normal” consists of what was a situation of injustice, absence of peace, ecological and health crises. We believe, therefore, that the Lasallian educational mission, through the service of integral human development, has a responsibility to share with young people in the construction of a “new normality”, one that is more just, healthier, in peace and in harmony with nature.

The aim of integral human education is to “transform lives” and for this it is necessary to “build new paths”.

## List of contributors

Name and surname	Institution/programme	Country
Keane Palatino	Young Lasallians Coordinator	International
Fritzie Ian DeVera	CIAMEL / De La Salle University Manila	International and Philippines
Heather Ruple Gilson	Co-Secretary for the Association	International
Enrico Muller	MEL La Salle Italy / Cooperative Occhiaperti Scampia	Italy
Lorena González Meléndez y Carlos Valerio Echeverria	Humanizarte Project, Universidad La Salle Bogotá	Colombia
Antone Oloo	Inter-congregational Steering Committee on Child Protection	Kenya
John Wolf	San Miguel School of Providence	USA
Emanuele Selleri	ASCS Scalabrini	Italy
Sebastião Lopes Pereira	AMEL	Mozambique

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05



# *Responsible Education for Integral Ecology*

**Br. Armin Luistro, FSC, *Coordinator.***

**Warren Joseph Dollente, Mark Joseph Tinao,  
Desiree Ann Bibar, Bienvenido Eusebio, AFSC**

## Laudato si'

***“If we approach nature and the environment without...openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously”***

***(Laudato si', 2015, section 11)***

**I**n his second encyclical, *Laudato si': On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis laments over environmental degradation and climate change, critiquing the current trend of consumerism and individualism that birthed them. *Laudato si'* discusses these issues and their repercussions on the poor and the marginalized, heavily emphasizing the interconnectedness of life and all its constituents. It aims to unveil the heart of ecological collapse, promote ecological sustainability, and encourage community involvement and participatory action (Algo, 2020). The encyclical serves as an important tool for motivating Catholics and those of other religious faiths. They are encouraged to thoughtfully recognize the patterns of ecological issues and, more importantly, to take part in its call to uplift the poor and care for the ecosystem.



## Integral Ecology

With their scope and magnitude, the ecological issues that we face cannot simply be remedied with a single solution. It requires a careful analysis of social interaction, including how individuals relate to themselves and others. The Pope then introduces integral ecology, which denotes all parts of life as interconnected. It provides the notion that the existing ecological crisis is not simply a series of problems to be solved but rather a symptom of something more complex and profound. Through *integral ecology*, we peer through political, social, economic, and environmental lenses to help us understand the current mechanisms of our world today. Pope Francis also extends the idea to the spiritual and the *transcendental*, stating in the letter that, “...an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human,” (Laudato si', 2015, section 11). Through integral ecology, we acquire a more comprehensive understanding of ecological concerns, allowing us to produce holistic solutions that address its heart.

## Educational Challenges

According to Pope Francis, the inability to unlearn extreme consumerism and affluence poses an *educational challenge* to humanity (Laudato si', 2015, section 209). This rings true, especially in a consumer--capitalist society wherein educational institutions have little to do with actual education. According to a study by Trainer (2012), radical education theorists have elaborated that currently, *schools* and *universities* prioritize instilling consumerist and individualistic behavior among students. These include the following: (1) train students with the skills necessary to serve as cogs of an industrial machine, fully subservient to hierarchy and authority; (2) cultivate an environment that breeds competition, coercing individuals to focus only on personal welfare and self-interest, detaching themselves from concern for community or the public good, which ultimately enables the ultra-rich to thrive;

(3) produce enthusiastic consumers who spend their salaries on products through various calculated marketing strategies– a strategy that stems from Western business models imposed on Developing Countries;(4) produce masses of politically passive, compliant, uncritical citizens, largely by devoting a very small percentage of the standard 15+ years of 'education' to serious examination of their society's fundamental flaws and social injustices. Students are then likened to inmates, conditioned to work within broken systems. They are provided with an incredulous amount of work in the quest for credentials, under the guise of 'productivity' and 'self-investment', promising a better future. This is an inexcusable form of inefficient learning, often at the expense of student mental health, constituting great neglect of human rights.

Although several individuals have benefited from the current educational system, it fails to cultivate a thoughtful, critical, responsible, caring, and educated citizenry en masse. On the dimensions that matter, graduates from intensively authoritarian educational systems are ignorant, uncaring, and detached (Trainer, 2012). These are some of the very educational challenges Laudato si' aims to address.

## Educational Conversion

***“Environmental education has broadened its goals. Whereas in the beginning it was mainly centered on scientific information, consciousness-raising and the prevention of environmental risks, it tends now to include a critique of the “myths” of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mindset (individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, the unregulated market). It seeks also to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and***

***other living creatures, and with God... Yet this education, aimed at creating an 'ecological citizenship', is at times limited to providing information, and fails to instill good habits. The existence of laws and regulations is insufficient in the long run to curb bad conduct, even when effective means of enforcement are present. If the laws are to bring about significant, long-lasting effects, the majority of the members of society must be adequately motivated to accept them, and personally transformed to respond.”***  
*(Laudato si', 2015, sections 210-211).*

Applying the concept of integral ecology, and in light of current educational challenges, Pope Francis stresses the need for new, more profound, and holistic education around ecological issues. This begins with rebuilding the worldviews and personal meanings. *Laudato si'*'s 6<sup>th</sup> Chapter: *Ecological Education and Spirituality*, explores these concepts through *ecological education*. Ecological education translates to exploring environmental issues, engaging in problem-solving, and taking action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental concerns, thus equipping themselves with skills to make informed and responsible decisions. According to the Pope, one can achieve these through the following: “responsible simplicity of life, grateful contemplation of God's world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment” (*Laudato si'*, 2015, section 214). Ecological education goes beyond teaching students about the environment. Rather, it is about creating habits and systems that reflect the patterns and principles of ecology at its core.

Ecological education can take place in various settings: at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis, and elsewhere. *Laudato si'* encourages educational systems to go beyond the classroom and formal learning settings, exposing students to real-life phenomena and increasing their capacity to use their ecological knowledge and skills. Pope Francis states,

***“There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle... Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity”.***

*(Laudato si', 2015, section 211).*

## **The Lasallian Institute for the Environment (LIFE)**

Many educational institutions have integrated *Laudato si'* in their curriculum in the Philippines, promoting integral ecology, especially in higher education. The first Philippine District Synod in 1999, led by Br. Armin Luistro FSC, initially conceptualized the response to the call of stewardship for the environment. A ten-point Lasallian Ministry Action Plan was formulated and adopted. The seventh point raised the need to address environmental concerns and create an institute to champion these ideas, which eventually led to the creation of the Lasallian Institute for the Environment (LIFE).

While it predates Pope Francis's encyclical letter about the environment, LIFE has steadily built a multi-stakeholders/ multi-disciplinary approach to environmental conservation, integrating technology, social transformation, and education. Its projects were based on the guidance of the Brothers in

its early days, from planting one million trees, creating a Lasallian earth day for students, and establishing manuals for green schools.

LIFE's teaching pedagogy promotes transformative learning for students and all its stakeholders—faculty, administrators, alumni, and even external partner communities and institutions. Throughout its projects, we see that it anchors all its missions through the principle of learning by doing. It promotes holistic ecological education, enabling Lasallian—and beyond—to form a more intimate relationship and understanding of God's creation.

Today, LIFE serves under De La Salle Philippines as the central channel for all environmental and sustainability-related activities of all Lasallian schools and Brothers in the Philippines. It embodies the very concepts of Laudato si's integral ecology, dutifully carried out by the Lasallian community. With this said, LIFE offers a valuable case study, illustrating challenges and successes in applying Integral Ecology for Lasallian institutions around the world.

## Challenges and Opportunities

With more than two decades of creating green programs and projects for the Lasallian community in the Philippines, LIFE has encountered several challenges. As it improves and integrates its methods, similar obstacles often come about. The following are the common challenges faced by LIFE and the solutions it has developed over the years:

**Business and negotiation:** Potential partner organizations conceivably expect a favorable return. In some cases, it becomes painfully evident that their needs are at the expense of the environment and local communities. LIFE has taken precautions to maintain its integrity in continually aligning its projects to Lasallian principles. In addition, this concern is addressed with a grassroots participatory approach. This

translates to having beneficiaries' and partners' needs duly assessed by the government or any credible organization. Third-party grass-root evaluators can give fair assessments of the needs of LIFE's partners and stakeholders while fully providing for the needs of beneficiaries. This has proven to be especially helpful when working with local communities and organizations.

**Resource mobilization:** While human and financial resources are key factors in conserving the environment, and it remains a continued need in sustainability and preservation efforts. Fortunately, as more and more people and organizations realize that environmental concerns are a universal concern, help, and aid are much more easily attainable compared to 20 years ago. LIFE has also combined environmental education with its projects through volunteerism and crowdsourcing, both within and outside the Lasallian community. Volunteers can learn firsthand about conservation efforts while making LIFE projects sustainable.

**Conflicts:** LIFE has faced resistance and even deterrence in making decisions, raising funds, and executing plans due to politics. However, by conducting multiple public and stakeholders consultations and one-on-one interviews, LIFE was able to move forward in implementing its programs and projects. In addition to this, allowing alumni volunteers and organizations to become stakeholders has extended the decision-making area. By building an extensive network, LIFE could conduct more projects, some of which were beyond its initial comfort zone.

## Program Framework

Applying the concepts of integral ecology into more tangible projects has proven to be a far greater challenge than teaching and educating. Integral ecology must transcend the message from spiritual to the physical world of our partners, students, schools, and communities. LIFE could only take small steps in this pursuit during its early conception. But with the guidance of the Brothers and by partnering with the 17 La Salle Schools in the country, LIFE has been able to use these small initiatives as a foundation for its larger projects today. With this said, LIFE has identified ten (10) individual programs that were tailor-fit according to the schools' needs and complement existing environmental projects and activities of the schools:



### (1) Watershed Management

Clean and potable water supplies in certain parts of the Philippines are frequently scarce and, as a consequence, supplies are frequently shut down to preserve capacity. LIFE coordinates and initiates activities with communities, academic institutions, and even civil societies to address the underlying issues of water scarcity. This is done by preserving water sources and watershed managements such as the Upper Marikina Watershed, La Mesa Ecopark and Dam, and Laguna Lake. To date, LIFE has been most involved in developing the Upper Marikina Watershed Forest Restoration Project in hopes of improving the flooding system in Metro Manila and other parts of Rizal, especially during typhoon season.

It is now a good avenue for educators to promote the preservation of watersheds among students through simple site visits and exposure. Watersheds help conserve water, to which the lack thereof can detrimentally affect the quality of life of both present and future generations. Encouraging students to take part in this activity will benefit them greatly and allow them to witness firsthand their part in the ecosystem and their role in its preservation.



## (2) One Million Trees and Beyond (OMTB)

Climate change, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and poverty are ecologically and dynamically intertwined conditions. Being one of the mega-diverse countries in the world, the Philippines is faced with much ecological crisis with the destruction of its many ecological systems. Filipinos then experience the full brunt of the effects of these conditions.

Guided by the Brothers, LIFE formulated the One Million Trees and Beyond Project in 2006, intending to mobilize the 16 Basic Education and Tertiary Lasallian schools nationwide to formulate a more proactive response to deforestation. The project was set to plant more than one million trees by 2011 — the centennial of Lasallian presence in the Philippine.

The project involved the Philippine Lasallian Family in sustainable reforestation and greening efforts. LIFE also partnered and coordinated with various local communities to achieve this endeavor. The contributions of the One Million Trees and Beyond Project were able to mitigate global warming using a sustainable approach (Pareja et al., 2009). In 2015, this project reached 1.4 million trees and continued to promote biodiversity conservation by exploring new and prospective sites, especially for native Philippine trees.



## (3) Lasallian Ecocamp

The Lasallian Ecocamp started in 2004 and has trained over a thousand youth leaders and young Lasallians. LIFE oversees this three-day camp which serves to empower the youth. However, this is not a typical camping activity. Apart from learning about the environment from LIFE, participants are expected to discuss and plan environmental actions and policies, which they are to implement in their respective schools. The venue also enables them to commune with nature—these eco-camps are set within De La Salle Schools or community partners—while building networks with students from other schools.





#### (4) Project Carbon Neutral

Project Carbon Neutral was launched in August 2010 and continues to this day. The project aims to measure and balance the carbon emission of the De La Salle Philippines network of schools to achieve carbon neutrality.

A carbon calculator was developed by LIFE with the help of our very own De La Salle scientists, educators, and engineers. The calculator continues to measure carbon emissions, especially of transportation, of the schools. Through these measurements, schools can estimate the amount of carbon they can sequester through tree planting—an effective way to sequester carbon. For example, a micro-study was conducted by LIFE within its umbrella unit, the De La Salle Philippines (DLSP). During the first quarter of 2020, DLSP, including LIFE, emitted approximately 4,931.32 kg of carbon dioxide in transportation alone using its carbon calculator. And to sequester this, DLSP plans to conduct a plant nurturing and planting activity of about 11,000 seedlings for the carbon drawdown. This is just an example that many of our schools can now do to neutralize their carbon emissions on transportation.



#### (5) Lasallian Earth Day

The Lasallian Earth Day, dubbed as LED, is a monthly event to raise awareness about the environment. Held every first Friday of the month, the event serves as a template where the schools can create formal and experiential educational activities for their students and faculty. The event aims to remind students and teachers to turn off or minimize lights and appliances for at least one hour to lower electricity consumption, carpool or use public transportation to reduce fuel consumption, and use reusable packaging to reduce waste production. This project also complements Project Carbon Neutral, further helping reduce each of the schools' carbon footprint.



## (6) La Salle Botanical Gardens

The La Salle Botanical Gardens (LSBG) is an ongoing project set to prioritize the conservation of native tree and plant species. The LSBG is situated in a 24-hectare land outside Manila, in Porac, Pampanga. This is an initiative of various groups, both within and outside the Lasallian network, working together to pursue the same ideal of ecological conservation.

It envisions alleviating the ecological degradation in the country by conserving at least 75% of threatened flora in the Philippines. Apart from conserving local flora, the LSBG will also serve as a venue for education and research. It will emulate LIFE's teaching pedagogy and Laudato si's concept of integral ecology, where students and visitors can see, experience, and apply themselves with biodiversity and environmental stewardship. Soon, teachers can bring their students to learn firsthand how a plant grows, how it can be preserved for future use, and how it interacts with other entities living within the garden. The LSBG also serves as a center for botanical research and experimentation.

The LSBG will provide an ideal location for conservation, raising awareness, and furthering development in caring for the environment. It will be the ideal outdoor classroom, where nature itself is the teacher.



## (7) Green Leaders Conference

The Green Leaders Conference is an annual event that gathers student environmental leaders from the network of Lasallian schools in the Philippines. The conference enables them to learn, share ideas, and synergize student action for their respective schools' environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation priorities. The participants are tasked with creating a community engagement activity and a project proposal for at least one specific environmental priority based on their areas.

To date, participants have developed projects that involve mitigating and intervening activities. The projects include environmental education, mangrove tree planting, coastal cleanup, beach forest nursery establishment, coral reef protection, propagation, and ground-truthing of previous planting sites of the One Million Trees and Beyond for observation and validation of data in the sites.



### **(8) Leadership for Environmental Action and Formation**

The Leadership for Environmental Action and Formation (LEAF) is an online learning program focused on environmental management and sustainability in the context of the academe. In support of the Project Carbon Neutrality and the current program of La Salle Botanical Garden, the LEAF program aims to establish an online learning platform that will serve as a tool for (1) promoting and advocating environmental management and sustainability; and (2) capacitating members of the Lasallian community and other environmental volunteers and advocates on various environmental-related courses.

The target learners consist of members of the Lasallian community and other environmental volunteers and advocates outside of the institution who qualify. These learners will undergo the LEAF training using a curriculum with LIFE and a third-party platform created. Learners will be assessed to match them with the appropriate curriculum. At the end of the online learning program, an online community of learners was established to promote environmental management and sustainability. The learners are expected to mentor the succeeding batches which will take the course.

### **(9) La Salle Safe Schools**

The Philippines is prone to calamities. From typhoons to earthquakes, planning and preparing for these events has become critical, especially with the onset of climate change. LIFE has forged partnerships with experts and advocates of resiliency and disaster risk management to allow the network of schools to plan their disaster preparedness, adaptation, and mitigation.

The program addresses the following areas in safety: safe learning facilities, school disaster management, risk reduction, and resilience education. Protocols derived from the program can be used to review school policies, procedures on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, and the development of re-entry plans for the respective schools.

The program hopes to extend its reach not just in schools but also in their homes and communities. Two major activities have been done under this project: The La Salle Safe Schools Conference in 2015 and the Chemical Management: Handling Toxic and Waste Management Training in 2021. These two activities have now been channeled to other over-shoot activities.



### **(10) Web-based Carbon Calculator Development for Transportation**

Developed by De La Salle Schools scientists and engineers, who also serve as LIFE champions and volunteers, this web-based carbon calculator can estimate a school's carbon emission based on transportation. Using this calculator, the school or unit of the school can provide carbon drawdown activities for carbon sequestration. It guides the community on how many plants or trees need to be planted or re-planted to meet the carbon neutrality targets of the school or organization.

# Facilities and Environmental Program Management



The previous ten programs initially fell under the Green Schools and Communities project. In 2014, the Lasallian Modern Conduct of Schools was released, which became the institutional framework that provides the standard practice for Lasallian schools. St. John Baptist de La Salle inspired the Conduct of Schools. LIFE followed suit by reconfiguring and consolidating its programs—without compromising the previously implemented projects—under the Facilities and Environmental Management (FEPM) Program.

The use of FEPM has helped the various schools and institutions in the network speak one language regarding environment and sustainability. The FEPM is a comprehensive approach to managing the physical setup and facilities of the campuses attuned to the environment and sustainability. FEPM serves as a trail to every green champion that LIFE has. The reconfigured ten sub-programs behind the FEPM assist schools by building a foundation for their respective environmental plans and roadmaps.

FACILITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK						
DLSP					LGP	
LIFE					VMG	
FACILITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS MANAGEMENT					PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS	
REGULATORY COMPLIANCE	CARBON NEUTRALITY	OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH	DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & MANAGEMENT	CURRICULUM INTEGRATION	EXTRA/CO-CURRICULUM INTEGRATION	SELF-ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
BIODIVERSITY	GREEN PROCUREMENT	GREEN BUILDING	DATA MANAGEMENT	WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT		POLICIES & IMPLEMENTATION
SCHOOLS						

The framework above follows the ten ways on how schools can adapt to the local and international standards and even trends in managing campuses.

- ★ Regulatory Compliance
- ★ Carbon Neutrality
- ★ Occupational Safety and Health
- ★ Disaster Risk and Reduction Management
- ★ Environmental Education
- ★ Biodiversity
- ★ Green Procurement
- ★ Green Building
- ★ Data Management
- ★ Water Resources Management

## Partnerships

To strengthen LIFE's efforts in ecological sustainability and development and empower Lasallians as “service-driven citizens,” the institution has also partnered with like-minded organizations. Here are a few of LIFE's major partners:

### **(1) Global Catholic Climate Movement–Pilipinas Partnership**

The Global Catholic Climate Movement–Pilipinas Partnership is a grassroots movement of Catholics committed to living out the message of *Laudato si'*. As a Catholic institution and as a response to Pope Francis' encyclical, LIFE partners with Catholic churches to promote the messages of *Laudato si'* among the youth and local communities. Both young and experienced individuals in the Church are working side-by-side to spread environmental education, integral ecology, and sustainable development through the learning brought by the leaders of the Church.

## **(2) Green Convergence**

The Green Convergence for Safe Food, Healthy Environment, and Sustainable Economy is a nationwide and multilateral organization in the Philippines. It is an organization that is diplomatic and liberated in lobbying environmental principles and ideals to the government or any concerned institution. Through their partnership, the organization connected LIFE with environmental groups, non-governmental organizations, climate activists, other schools, and concerned individuals about the current environmental and biodiversity issues. The coalition is working for a development paradigm that addresses the need for social and economic upliftment while preserving life-supporting water, air, and land for generations to come.

## **(3) Partnership for Clean Air**

LIFE is also part of the Partnership for Clean Air (PCA), the largest local network that pushes for the betterment of air quality in the Philippines. It is a multi-sectoral alliance of individuals, public and private sector organizations, and government agencies that lobbies policies and creates movements towards promoting sustainable transport for clean air. The PCA was launched in June 2001 and incorporated as a non-stock, non-profit corporation in November 2003.

## **(4) Foundation for the Philippine Environment.**

The Foundation for the Philippine Environment (FPE) is one of the leading organizations in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development towards healthy ecosystems and resilient communities in the Philippines. LIFE collaborates with FPE partners and capacities for the environment to promote responsive policies and actions for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

## The Laudato si' Challenge to the Lasallian School

Laudato si' calls for the continued efforts of individuals and communities to recognize the existing ecological crises through the lens of integral ecology. It challenges the current trends of consumerism and individualism, encouraging people to work towards a shared sense of community, ecological sustainability, and uplifting the poor and the marginalized. Since its publication, the encyclical has awakened educational institutions, organizations, and individuals to act in this pursuit.

LIFE has embodied the many principles that the Laudato si' teaches, even before its publication. Although teaching concepts of environmental preservation is necessary, it recognizes that empathy must be incorporated in its pedagogy to attain a real change in both the environment and the individual's heart. This is the impact that LIFE hopes to achieve. The Lasallian community measures the impacts made on the people and the environment—not by the number of trees planted nor by the calculated carbons, but by the number of lives transformed.

Using LIFE as a case study, we see the challenges and strengths of implementing integral ecology in tangible projects and programs. We see its steadily growing impact on the world in the same light. While single solutions cannot solve environmental problems, they can serve as foundations for complex solutions. And while the concept of Integral Ecology might seem daunting—the need to learn and educate on so many intertwined topics—it also offers a comprehensive solution to the environmental crises we face today. As stated in Pope Francis' letter,



***“Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature”. (Laudato si’, 2015, section 139).***



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2006



***An education  
that trains its  
educators***

**Santiago Amurrio Silva**

*Secretary of Education Mission. Sector of Chile*

## Presentation

**I**n these times, and as noted in the Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020), complex realities affect all cultures and countries, dramatically impacting the social situation and driving entire populations into poverty and exclusion. In the midst of these difficult moments that society is going through, intensified by the health crisis that we are experiencing today, Pope Francis reinforces the call for a Global Compact on Education, in order to face the confusion, uncertainty and discouragement generated by the multiple crises present in the world, including armed conflicts. Our Lasallian communities cannot but heed this call, since, as expressed in the Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission, we are committed to the defence of life, care for the environment, access to quality education, welcoming migrants, the defence and protection of the rights of children, the responsibility to act in the face of the scandalous inequality that reigns in the world, among others.

We follow Pope Francis when he argues, in the context of the Global Compact on Education, that education is one of the most effective ways of humanising the world and history, and that it is above all a matter of love and responsibility that is passed on over time from generation to generation.

The Lasallian proposal, animated by faith, hope and ardent zeal, transcends the temptation of self-referentiality and commits itself to the causes of humanity and the permanent calls of the Church which summons men and women of good will to the building of a more just, fraternal, equitable and supportive society. In this framework, and in accordance with the huge challenges posed by the current state of humanity, it is worth considering educators as protagonists of this proposal. As Pope Francis points out, they are an essential part of making education the natural antidote to individualistic culture, promoting the faculties of thought and imagination, listening, a critical view of a dehumanising culture, dialogue and mutual understanding. Therefore, there is a need for

educators who have adopted that potential and who have the tools to support the development of the children and young people entrusted to their care.

Paying attention to the role of educators is not something new, as the Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission points out, if anything distinguishes the Lasallian approach from its origins, it is the dignity of the teacher, the importance assigned to their role in the educational process and the recognition of their capacity to impact the formation of the character of children and young people. To address the issues and challenges of today's world, the Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission makes the following educational proposals: to advance education in dialogue with emerging paradigms (complexity, mediation, collaborative learning); to focus education on the student (pedagogy of accompaniment and learning) and to envision the irreplaceable role of the teacher and their educating power (dignification and educating capacity). This third element is the key component of this article, since its objective is to deepen in the needs and opportunities for formation that Lasallian educators have in the context in which we live and in the ethical mandate of being guarantors of the right to education of boys, girls and young people. Educators are expected to contribute to and promote an educational relationship that generates life, builds the character, promotes meaningful learning, promotes a fraternity that develops the values of the Gospel, and enhances the personal vocation of each boy, girl and young person that they educate, as manifested in the document.

Based on these convictions, this text presents some significant elements in order to understand education as a right and, from there, to signify the role of educators, the needs and opportunities for teacher formation and the possibilities that open up from the Lasallian perspective and heritage, from a tradition and an educational approach that allow us to contribute to the rise of a new culture, of this different, possible world, to which Pope Francis is calling us. A world which requires that we learn to build it, getting ourselves involved both on an individual and a community level.

# 1. The right to education in today's world

People, who are born free and equal in dignity and rights, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, require a series of conditions that allow us to fulfil ourselves and live in that dignity, conditions that must be guaranteed by the respective States throughout the world. This is, generally, the concept of human rights. We know that education is a right, and a very particular one, since it is also the basis for the exercise of other rights, since it fosters personal fulfilment, the reduction of social and economic inequalities and promotes equality and respect, necessary conditions for the building of more just, democratic and peaceful societies.

Unfortunately, as UNESCO (2018) points out, although education is considered a right for all people, this is not a fact: in the world, more than 100 million children and adolescents do not have the opportunity to attend an educational centre and 1 in 4 of them live in a war zone. In Latin America and the Caribbean, according to UNESCO, 2.5 million boys and girls are out of school and at least 33 million people lack basic educational skills, 55% of whom are women. The effects of the pandemic will deepen this difficult reality.

For this reason, it is very important that States make sustained efforts to guarantee the right to education, taking into account items such as: having enough functional educational centres to meet the needs of the entire population (availability); culturally adapting curricula and adjusting them to changes in society (acceptability and adaptability), as well as ensuring that access to education is not prohibited under any circumstances (accessibility).

States must therefore remove all barriers that may prevent people from exercising and enjoying their right to education, uprooting discrimination and exclusion based on any condition (ethnicity, sex, gender identity or sexual orientation, nationality, socio-economic status, etc.). Guaranteeing the



right to education is a task of States; however, it requires the collaboration of different actors in society, both individuals as bearers of this right, as well as pedagogical leaders who administer and deliver education, thus contributing to the elimination of barriers that prevent the enjoyment of education for all. Education must be inclusive, equitable and of good quality and promote meaningful lifelong learning opportunities, states the United Nations General Assembly in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2018). Only such an education will make it possible to put an end to poverty, fight inequality and injustice and tackle climate change, concerns which also belong to Lasallians.

These challenging goals require the action of countries, on a general level, from the role of their respective States, but they also require the action of educators, directors and other formators of formators, given that the challenges of current education require a different teaching profile with greater competencies and capacities.

Edgar Morin (2015), one of the thinkers who has promoted paradigm shifts in education since he published his work *Los 7 Saberes del Futuro (The 7 Knowledges of the Future)* in 1999, has stated that it is necessary, on the one hand, to learn to learn, which means separating and uniting, analysing and summarising; to consider objects not as concluded things, but as systems that communicate with each other and with their environment; to learn to overcome the cause-effect reading in order to learn mutual causality and to learn to take advantage of the challenge of complexity present in all areas of knowledge and action, as well as the way of thinking suitable to respond to this challenge.

Are educators prepared to develop this knowledge in today's world? Are they ready to make education an acceptable and adaptable process which enables children and young people to participate fully in life? What clues do the Lasallian vision and mission give us in order to train educators as agents of the right to education in a world of high complexity and growing challenges? These are questions that deserve reflection.

## 2. Challenges for educators in today's world

Teacher training, states Imbernón (2019), takes place in a rapidly changing society, with a rapid level of development and also with an accelerated advance of knowledge. A society that has changed a lot in just a few years, and that will change even more with the effects of the pandemic, makes it necessary to carry out various re-conceptualisations of how teachers act in educational contexts and put into practice the capacity of professional knowledge to teach. In professional knowledge, it will be necessary to develop new work capacities that were not so necessary before, which will allow for the exercise of certain skills in the field of teaching strategies, planning, diagnosis, conflict resolution, values education, assessment, etc.; which will allow for the continuous modification of educational tasks, in an attempt to adapt to the diversity of students and the various contexts. All of this without forgetting that the educational profession is an activity that contemplates a set of ethical and moral positionings, whose aim is equal opportunities and the democratic education of citizens, and therefore, a great social responsibility.

In the same line, Philippe Perrenoud (2010), a great theorist of teaching work and competences, points out that teachers cannot be trained without making ideological choices:

***“Depending on the model of society and of the human being that are advocated, the purposes assigned to the school will not be the same and, consequently, the role of teachers will not be defined in the same way. (...) We cannot so easily dissociate the purposes of the education system from the competences required of teachers. The figure of the teacher is not privileged in the same***

***way depending on whether we want a school that develops autonomy or conformism, openness to the world or nationalism, tolerance or disdain for other cultures, a taste for intellectual risk or a demand for certainty, a spirit of enquiry or dogmatism, a sense of cooperation or competition, solidarity or individualism”.***

*(Perrenoud, 2010. P 45)*

Lasallian education, according to the Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission and Identity Criteria for Vitality for the Lasallian Educational Ministries (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020), has a social and community dimension that cannot be renounced because it is rooted in the Gospel, in the promotion of the dignity of people, in solidarity among all human beings and in the integral, sustainable development. It opts for humanisation and social justice as its inspiration, so that the educational result is fundamental and neutrality is not possible. Thus, the Lasallian school, which promotes the Kingdom of God, cannot withdraw from a vital role: to form citizens capable of exercising their rights, fulfilling their duties, defending what is public, strengthening the social fabric, participating in democratic processes, taking an interest in politics, with an integrity manifested consistently in their daily actions in honesty, solidarity, transparency and responsibility. Based on these convictions, the Lasallian vision coincides with some of the assumptions of Perrenoud (2010), since he points out that education should be oriented towards a change in the power relations that allow us to develop the seven key learnings that the school has the mission to teach, according to Morin (2015). These seven skills learnings are:

1. The blindness of knowledge: error and illusion,
2. The principles of relevant knowledge,
3. Teaching the human condition,
4. Teaching earthly identity,
5. Dealing with uncertainties,
6. Teaching understanding,
7. The ethics of humankind.

To achieve this, Perrenoud (2010) points out that teachers have to face some contradictions that are part of today's world, namely: the tensions between global citizenship and local identity, economic globalisation and political enclosure, freedoms and inequalities, technology and humanism, rationality and fanaticism, individualism and mass culture, the democratic and the totalitarian. Paying attention to these tensions and to the 7 learnings outlined by Morin (2015), Perrenoud (2010) indicates that the figure of the educator must be shaped around a teacher who is a credible person, an intercultural mediator, an animator of the educational community, a guarantor of the law, an organiser of a democratic life, a cultural conductor and an intellectual. These elements, the author indicates, from the paradigm of the construction of knowledge and competences, would account for a teacher embodying these features:

- ★ organiser of a constructivist pedagogy,
- ★ guarantor of the meaning of knowledge,
- ★ creator of learning situations,
- ★ manager of the diversity,
- ★ facilitator of processes and pathways for transformation.

In order to approach the profile outlined by Perrenoud (2010), it is necessary to delve into a reflective practice and critical involvement, which allows the educator to commit themselves to the purposes and programmes of the school, the democratisation of school culture and the management of the

education system. In this way, these elements may well account for a teacher's work aimed at advancing the right to education, but they are certainly not elements that occur spontaneously; they must be fostered through the training of educators.

### 3. The training of educators

The training of educators is a key element when it comes to analysing any changes and challenges faced by education systems worldwide. It is one of the elements necessary to recover the prestige and quality of the teaching profession, as affirmed by numerous voices in the educational world and a recent publication by the Inter-American Development Bank (Elacqua et al., 2018). Teacher training, they point out, is very heterogeneous in Latin America, and depending on the region's educational problems, a series of reforms are being implemented to improve the training of future teachers: increasing the entry selection; improving the quality of initial teacher training programmes by regulating content and/or results; establishing accreditation systems or financing improvement projects (Elacqua et al., 2018, p.132).

Another strand of educational research on teacher training comes from the contributions of Linda Darling-Hammond (2020), who has been working on these issues for a long time and has developed interesting perspectives on how to make initial and in-service teacher education policies more effective.


Darling - Hammond (2020), points out that for teaching to become an expert profession, it is necessary to advance in an ethic of care, in collaborative knowledge for effectiveness and in the definition and raising of standards of teaching practice. In this way, it will be possible to enrich this knowledge and foster collaborative work for a teaching practice that responds to the needs of students and turns schools into learning communities.

The conceptualisation of a basic knowledge for teaching, Darling - Hammond (2020) points out, must necessarily

articulate teaching, curriculum and the characteristics of students. In this way, it is possible to generate a teacher training oriented towards deep learning, what entails:

- ★ practical work and courses to develop an inquiry-oriented perspective and student-centred practices.
- ★ planned teaching practices that can be applied to the reality of teaching work.
- ★ a curriculum centred on student learning and enabling students to function in different social and cultural contexts.
- ★ modelling strategies aimed at deep learning.
- ★ opportunities for future teachers to do curriculum design and work that focuses on interdisciplinary enquiry, as well as creating learning communities that address both socio-emotional and academic issues.
- ★ extensive internships, including mentoring.
- ★ links with schools developing best practices and professional development of the teacher.

The author emphasises the need to generate opportunities for practical work, for clinical practice, pointing out that as in medicine and other professions, teachers should have opportunities to participate in experiences that allow them to apply research and theory to reality. Beyond going directly and solely into a classroom and learning from trial and error, Darling-Hammond (2020) points out, what is required is participation in experiences where there is explicit modelling of good practice, opportunities to learn under expert supervision, instances of gradually taking responsibility for teaching and learning processes, and opportunities to link theory and practice.



The elements outlined by the author coincide with some of the recommendations made for initial teacher training by various voices linked to the subject, and there is a certain consensus regarding the importance of developing early and sustained practices in the training process. Various comparative research studies have addressed the issue of teacher training, such as the Empowered Educators series (National Center on Education and Economy, 2016), which studies teacher training in five high-performing education systems in the world: Australia, Canada, Finland, Shanghai and Singapore, describing some elements that are specific to these countries and others that are common to all these contexts. Among the common elements there is a strong pedagogical training in the speciality, connection to a common curriculum to address the diversity of students, as well as mentored and directed clinical experiences.

These countries invest heavily in ensuring that every teacher develops the knowledge and skills they will need from the very beginning of their profession. This investment is made by focusing on specialised centres that prepare future teachers to achieve high standards, training a few teachers rather than a large number who will eventually leave the profession a few years after having starting their work. These teacher training institutions are constantly redesigning their programmes and the practical experiences they develop, starting this practical work in the first year as part of strong mentoring programmes. Mentoring by expert teachers is essential, notably in Singapore, where all new teachers participate in a formal two-year mentoring programme, which is promoted by the Ministry of Education and includes pre-service and in-service stages, with specific activities for each of these stages. In Australia, there are also mentoring processes, with protected times for teachers to have these instances of collaboration and collaborative work.

Beyond the specific characteristics of these countries, the lessons learned from these experiences reinforce the idea of critical reflection on one's own practice and the creation of learning communities. These are the elements that make it possible to link initial and in-service training, a central

component for improving the work of teachers, regardless of the context in which they work and the school in which they have been trained, since the complexities of today's world and the approach to the ethical mandates to which these complexities call us, reaffirm the need for educators in constant training and learning.

In this perspective, we Lasallians seek to promote formative paths that prioritise, over time, the professional development of teachers, fostering learning communities that take into account:

- ★ a spirituality that invites us to encounter God in the person of boys, girls, young people and colleagues, that witnesses to Jesus Christ mainly by the manifestation of the merciful face of God;
- ★ a process of accompanying teachers to strengthen their human and professional capacities for the mission;
- ★ interdisciplinary work, discovering the richness of different disciplines and ways of approaching knowledge;
- ★ a pedagogical relationship that is fraternal, respectful, creative and conducive to the growth of people in freedom and community building;
- ★ networking between different Lasallian institutions to encourage the sharing of successful educational practices;
- ★ pedagogical and didactic mediations based on the acceptance of the differences and potentialities of each person;
- ★ practical work that allows for enquiry and dialogue between theory and practice;
- ★ the orientation or guidance of teachers with more experience in Lasallian educational practice, who can carry out mentoring processes for teachers who are starting out on their institutional journey;



- ★ the possibility of creating meaningful environments and generating vital responses to the men and women of our times;
- ★ collaborative work between teaching peers in order to learn from each other;
- ★ an educational proposal incarnated in the diverse cultural, economic and social realities; and
- ★ commitment to building a just, equitable and democratic society in the context of integral and sustainable human development.

In the same way, among the experiences for teachers, it should be fostered the training in contemplation, interiority and profundity, with the aim of reinforcing critical reflection on the teacher's own practice, seeking the intellectual and spiritual development necessary to carry out their role as educators. In other words, to train the approach, the capacity for analysis, the possibility of critical thinking, of searching doubt, of taking the time to digest the information in contemplation and reflection, to use it in order to understand the world and its relationships, and to be able to develop improvements by renewing educational practices.

If this continuous formative process that takes place within Lasallian institutions will help teachers to: rediscover or redefine their vocation as educators, improve or innovate their educational practice, complete their awareness and options that provide answers to questions about the meaning of life, learn to work collaboratively with their peers, promote the values of the Gospel, strengthen their professional and human skills, develop teaching strategies that promote the quality of student learning, deepen dialogue with emerging educational paradigms, among others.

### **In-service training**

Professional development, states Cristopher Day (in Avalos, 2007), consists of the totality of natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities intentionally directed for the benefit of individuals, groups or schools that contribute to the quality of classroom education. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching, and by which they acquire and critically develop the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence that are an essential part of a professional style of thinking, planning and acting with boys, girls, young people and colleagues at every stage of their teaching lives.

From these premises, Beatrice Ávalos (2007) analyses various areas of in-service teacher training, identifying two poles between which strategies for teacher professionalisation move, a continuum of activities ranging from the behaviourist extreme of training to the self-empowering extreme of critical reflection. Both extremes, the author points out, involve possibilities and needs that are distinct, but not exclusive, and which may well give rise to systems of in-service training that meet the expectations and needs of the present times. Reviewing various studies on teacher training in different contexts and countries, Avalos (2007) distinguishes the following factors for an effective teacher professional development programme:

- ★ Duration and consistency of programmes.
- ★ Emphasis on knowledge and skills, through active learning.
- ★ Collaborative learning and collective participation.
- ★ Importance of teacher accompaniment and attention to the school context.

It is important that the aforementioned elements are considered when designing Lasallian formative paths based

on an education that trains its educators, allowing them to develop tools to be participants in a new global pact for education that aims to make the right to education a reality rather than just a wish, in a changing and challenging context.

## 4. The opportunities for lasallian education to train its educators

The Lasallian school, according to the Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020), has excelled as a project of comprehensive education implemented through pedagogies based on the intense educational relationship between teacher and student, as well as on the strength of the fraternal community and the group as a mediator of learning. This is where the main opportunities lie to advance in educational systems that can train their educators in a pedagogy of fraternity and in a universal humanism of solidarity that allows for dialogue between science and humanism, within the framework of Gospel values.

Lasallian education has defined certain Identity Criteria for the Vitality of Educational Ministries (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2020); where reference is made to an educational community that considers: fraternal interpersonal relationships, formation of faith and service groups, living association and vocational educators. In this way, we aspire to a type of Lasallian educator who will develop his work in the best possible way, being a co-operator in the proclamation of the Gospel and sharing with and getting to know his students.

These criteria must be the foundation so that Lasallian institutions, taking advantage of our historical heritage and the richness that comes from interculturality and presence in different latitudes, can build paths of in-service training that enable educators to advance in their professional development, to feel part of a learning community. It is a call and a valuable opportunity to be part of this Global Compact on Education that is being developed.

## 5. Final reflection

Taking into account the elements set out in this text and as a final reflection, five key ideas are presented aiming at strengthening the professional training of Lasallian educators as an opportunity to vitalise the educational mission in this changing and challenging reality. These main ideas are: collaborative work in the teacher training process, the teacher as the subject of their own training, the accompaniment of teachers in the training processes, learning communities and the spaces or training experiences that stimulate professional development.

### 1. Collaborative work in the teacher training process

The elements set out in the document, as well as the Lasallian experience itself, show that it is difficult to find a profession open to the social environment that works in isolation and even less so, that is formed in isolation. Sharing doubts, best practices, tensions, successes, failures, among others, are important elements in the formation of Lasallian educators and in their professional development.

In this context it is crucial to state that a Lasallian teacher training that stimulates collaborative work will promote: the development of autonomous processes in the teaching work understood as a shared autonomy and not as a mere sum of individualities, the importance of attitudinal and emotional development in the group, community self-esteem in the face of the problems that appear in teaching and the creation of new organisational structures that favour student learning, invigorating the Lasallian educational mission.

In the Lasallian world we can highlight a series of strategies and experiences to promote ongoing formation in educational contexts: the promotion of collaborative groups, formation communities, project groups, groups for the exchange of

ideas or experiences, autonomous teams for research into educational practice, to name but a few.

## **2. The teacher as the subject of their own training**

There is no longer a certain stage in which the teacher is trained and another in which the teacher is in educational practice. I believe that the call, in the formation of the Lasallian educator, is to develop a reflective and inquiring attitude which allows one to look critically at one's own practice with the aim of improving it. Gone are the days when a person who was supposed to have more knowledge was supposed to indoctrinate a teacher with less experience and knowledge. It is understood that change occurs when teachers assume to be the subject of their own training and not a mere recipient of what someone else can give them.

Today, the health situation has challenged and encouraged teachers around the world to: implement self-training processes to adequately respond to the emergency, develop digital competencies to propose new ways of teaching, encourage the creation of virtual peer learning communities, and create educational resources including new modalities. This experience shows that teachers can re-read their professional practice by being the protagonists of their own development and therefore of their training.

## **3. The accompaniment of teachers in training processes**

In the Lasallian world, an opportunity for human and professional development is given by the accompaniment of teachers, which facilitates metacognitive work and allows them to know, analyse and reflect on the mechanisms, personal and community practices of professional teacher learning. In this process, Lasallian educational leaders assume a fundamental role, especially in the most vulnerable

educational communities, since this accompaniment work must be carried out in a contextualised way, providing the corresponding support, support structures, catalytic elements and mediators for improvement.

#### **4. Learning communities**

Teacher learning is a task that is carried out by observing the practices of others, exchanging experiences and reflecting together. This makes a learning community. Training linked to educational practice is a fundamental component of teacher practice, but for it to have the required learning and identity-strengthening effect, it is not enough to develop formal and more conventional instances, such as courses or further training. New trends indicate that progress must be made in establishing other forms that allow teachers to learn from each other's experience in order to put it at the service of others. Mentoring, coaching, class study and project development systems, among others, are tools that contribute to strengthening the teaching profession through continuous training.

From this perspective, Lasallian educational communities are called to continue the development of formative itineraries that stimulate community learning experiences where everyone contributes to the learning of each person in a reflective, innovative and fraternal environment.

#### **5. Training spaces or experiences that stimulate professional development**

I am certain that teacher training and Lasallian professional development could be further enhanced if three elements that come into play in the training process are strongly articulated: human, social and decision-making capital.

Human capital refers to expert knowledge of the profession, social capital refers to interactions and their influence on human capital, and decisional capital refers to the making of judgements that link theory and practice.

In order for these three points to work together, it is necessary to create institutional conditions and professional environments that allow teachers to participate fully in school life, depending on the role they play. That is to say, in order to generate improvements in teacher professional development policies linked to training, it is necessary to implement some actions that, at the institutional level, mobilise teaching teams to take an interest in training spaces. It is also necessary to become actively involved in pedagogical reflections and self-critical vision that stimulate innovations to improve the quality of student learning. Some elements that can help to construct formative spaces or experiences that take into account the three elements mentioned above are: promoting the exchange of experiences between teachers, making progress in the themes that constitute the Lasallian identity, generating permanent and sufficient pedagogical reflection, encouraging the exchange of practices and stimulating internships, among others.

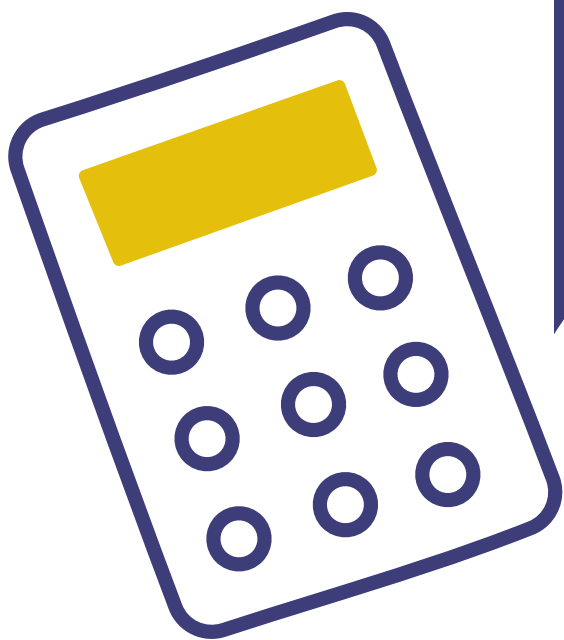
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07



# *In conclusion*

**Br. Nestor Anaya Marín, FSC**

*Institute's Secretary of Educational Mission*

## In conclusion

Over the last 20 years the Institute has published, in its collection “Bulletin of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools”, a series of reflections and experiences aimed at strengthening the realisation of the Lasallian Educational Mission. In the articles of its 14 issues prior to the current Bulletin, we identify various calls to bring to life the dream of John Baptist de La Salle: to provide a human and Christian education to all children and young people which will enable them to live with dignity and with a deep sense of life.

In particular, the collection points out that education is a right for all children (Bulletin 247), that we must strive to make it a reality, even in difficult contexts (Bulletin 253) and that it is desirable to extend this right up to higher education studies (Bulletin 252). To achieve this end, it is necessary to strengthen our sense of Association (Bulletin 250), to accompany each other in our personal journeys (Bulletin 254) and to update our pedagogical and catechetical methodologies (Bulletin 248) in order to be meaningful for the children and young people in our ministries. With these supports and this vision, the Institute also invites all to join in educating for justice and solidarity, as shown in Bulletin 249, “Educating in Justice” and Regional Bulletins 255, 257, 258, 259 and 260.

As we have reflected, in order to move towards of this ideal (education for all, which promotes a life of dignity and transcendent meaning), it is not enough for children and young people to be enrolled in school and to attend primary and secondary school. It is necessary to offer, intentionally, an education that:

1. Be ambitious, as pointed out by L. Lauraire (MEL Bulletin 56, p17). That is to say, it should not be satisfied with the minimum elements; it should promote as much as possible the integral development of individuals and the integral development of society.

2. Aim for quality education, as J. A. Ojeda points out in the article that initiates this Bulletin.
3. Have a community of called and professional educators committed to each other and committed to the good of their students.
4. Build positive and intense interpersonal relationships, which are a factor of humanisation and evangelisation, as J. Maex well suggests in his article on “Education as an act of hope”. In fact, this is how John Baptist de La Salle envisioned it when he placed the educational community as the most powerful entity that educates and evangelises.

An education with such characteristics creates an atmosphere conducive to acquire values and virtues such as service or charity, which favour the development of a sense of life that is reflected in the treatment to others, in the way to relate to nature and to everything that surrounds us. Moreover, this system of values also fosters a special sensitivity towards those who have fewer opportunities for development, allows them to live fraternity and promotes a virtuous model of life.

This type of education is more urgent when we reflect on the impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on students (isolation, affected mental health, school drop-out etc.), as pointed out by Van Grieken in his research “Some implications of the COVID-19 pandemic” and when we think of Pope Francis' reasons for calling for the renewal of the Education Pact among all actors in society. As he says:

***“our future cannot be one of division, of impoverishment of the faculties of thought and imagination, of listening, dialogue and mutual understanding...”<sup>1</sup>,***

that is why educating in justice, in fraternity and in learning to live together becomes an essential priority for humankind and their future.

In essence, an education in the style of John Baptist de La Salle and of the first Brothers stimulates communities of educators who give an example of fraternal communion to the new generations and promote personal and community self-development. Their human quality enhances in the students an openness to transcendence and solidarity, creating a virtuous cycle where fraternity is the virtue which integrates, enlivens and fosters the fullness of life.

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**1** (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-10/pope-francis-global-compact-education-video-message-relaunch.html>)



