Vietnam Lasallian Formation Program: A journey on leadership, pedagogy and association with Brothers and Partners in the Vietnam District



Over the course of five months, members of the District Council of Vietnam collaborated closely with an ad-hoc team of educators from De La Salle University to design distinct leadership and formation programs tailored for the Brothers and Lasallian Partners in Vietnam. This collaborative effort involved regular correspondence and both virtual and in-person meetings. The planning process was comprehensive. It began with gathering profiles and expectations of potential participants, followed by the selection and preparation of materials for translation into Vietnamese and Khmer. The team also aligned on overarching goals and meticulously crafted the structure and content of the programs.

The development team – comprising Ms. Fritzie Ian de Vera, Br. Hans Moran, Dr. Voltaire Mistades, and Dr. Christine Joy Ballada – worked in close consultation with Br. Joseph Le Van Phuong, Visitor of the District, and the members of the District Council of Vietnam. Together, they defined the shared objectives of the programs that include deepening the understanding and application of Lasallian leadership, pedagogy, and association for mission. Participants were also encouraged to reflect on their vocational journey and explore ways to embody their commitment to the Lasallian Educational Mission. Additionally, the programs aimed to empower participants to develop a personal or communal action plan that integrates leadership, pedagogical, and collaborative strategies rooted in Lasallian values and ideals, and collaborate with fellow Lasallians to

create and implement contextualized formation programs for their specific ministries.

Twenty-four Brothers gathered for the four-day formation program designed especially for La Salle Brothers – an experience enriched by the full participation of the District Council. The first day set the tone with a deep and stirring reflection on Lasallian leadership through the lens of the Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission. Discussions quickly moved beyond theory, diving into the heart of real-life challenges facing Brothers in Vietnam today. One moment in particular stood out. As the group grappled with what it truly means to lead as a Lasallian, two powerful questions surfaced: **"Do we ignore someone in our own community?". "Do we make excuses not to care for someone?".** These questions struck a chord – and opened the door to a deeper spiritual inquiry: **How do we recognize God's fingerprints in those we struggle to like?** Thus, what began as a session on leadership quickly transformed into a collective soul-searching – a reminder that leading as a Lasallian is not just about service or strategy, but about love, humility, and seeing the sacred in everyone. The session ended with the Brothers identifying key priorities they wanted to look into – formation and empowerment of lay people, accompanying struggling students and environmental sustainability.

Day two of the Brothers' formation journey turned the spotlight on **Lasallian pedagogy**. Building on the momentum of the first day, participants were invited to reflect on their own understanding and experience of the core elements of Lasallian educational practice. This reflection seamlessly led into a dynamic workshop exploring current teaching approaches in Vietnam. The Brothers shared insights, highlighted challenges, and voiced their hopes for the future of Lasallian education in their contexts. The discussion took on new energy as the group engaged with contemporary learning theories – many of which reaffirmed what St. John Baptist de La Salle had championed centuries ago: that the **learner must be at the heart of the educational process**. While today we call this "learner-centeredness", for Lasallians, it's a time-honored conviction that continues to shape both vision and practice.

On the third day, the focus turned inward once more – this time to the **deep roots of association**. Building on the spirit of reflection from the previous days, the Brothers were invited to contemplate what it truly means to live out their **vow of association** in today's world. The reflections stirred honest questions

about **leadership**, **co-responsibility**, and the sacred bonds that unite those who share the Lasallian Mission. The Brothers were challenged not only to assess their own leadership but also to recognize and honor the voices and contributions of others – especially Lasallian women – who, though vowed in different ways, walk the same path of mission and commitment. Then came a creative and heartfelt activity: participants were asked to identify ten meaningful ways to nurture association in their communities. With inspiration and imagination flowing, they moved from reflection to expression – crafting their vision of the District in 10 years, visual dreams of the kind of Lasallian association and shared mission they longed to see. The results were powerful: images that captured hopes, relationships, and a deep desire to build a future rooted in unity and love.



The final day of the Brothers' program invited them to grapple with a deeply personal and transformative question: **"Who is my brother?".** This wasn't merely a theological reflection – it was a challenge to look at partnership with fresh eyes, to confront the reality of empowerment, and to embrace the shared mission in all its complexity, especially in a country where the state keeps a close watch on those engaged in education. The Brothers were asked to go beyond reflection and identify **concrete, actionable steps** to strengthen partnership and animate the mission more boldly. Using post-it notes as vessels of intention, the group engaged in lively discussions and finally reached consensus on **key priorities** that would shape their path forward. In a moving final Mass, these commitments were lifted up in prayer, symbolically and spiritually sealing the work they had begun together. Br. Ricky Laguda FSC, General Councilor for PARC, and Br. Armin Luistro FSC both offered heartfelt messages of encouragement. Br. Armin especially underscored the vital role of working hand in hand with Lasallian Partners in Vietnam – calling it a true expression of **synodality**. With deep conviction, he affirmed his belief that the District of Vietnam, with its world-renowned **resilience and dedication**, is more than capable of living out this shared journey of faith and mission.

The three-day formation program for 21 Lasallian Partners with 3 Brothers from

the District leadership team began on **July 8** – and it opened with bold, soul-stirring questions – **"What keeps me in the mission?". "Where do I find hope?". "Where do we stand as facilitators of learning?".** These questions, posed to educators and school leaders from four different Lasallian schools, immediately set a reflective and heartfelt tone. As participants shared their truths, their stories became threads in a powerful tapestry of vocation, resilience, and purpose. From this rich exchange emerged the theme of **creative fidelity** – a reminder that there are countless ways to serve, to teach, to lead. Fidelity to the Lasallian mission does not mean repetition; it means **reimagining our response** to the needs of today's learners while staying rooted in our founding spirit. In the afternoon, energy turned into action. Participants dove into a hands-on workshop, identifying specific and meaningful ways to **nurture and strengthen Lasallian culture** in their schools and communities. The room buzzed with determination, passion, and a shared sense that what they do – and how they do it – can truly transform lives.

The second day of the formation brought the Lasallian Partners on a profound journey, exploring two vital dimensions of their vocation: **Lasallian spirituality** and **Lasallian pedagogy**. Recognizing the secular context of Vietnamese society, the day began with a deeply personal reflection. Participants were asked to recall a moment when they felt truly connected to something – or someone – greater than themselves. The sharing was rich and moving, opening the door to a deeper question: **"What does spirituality mean to you?".**

This question invited the group to articulate the **core beliefs and values** that anchor their inner lives. Their reflections naturally flowed into a discussion on the themes of Lasallian spirituality, drawing from the *Meditations of St. John Baptist de La Salle*. The group then encountered the **four-fold invitation to the Lasallian educator**. Facilitators guided participants to reflect: **"How is this invitation unfolding in your life as a Lasallian educator?".** This question was meant as a turning point, drawing a powerful connection between Lasallian spirituality and educational practice. It was no longer just about what they taught, but **how and why** they taught.



The afternoon continued this rich reflection by asking a deceptively simple question: **"What makes a good Lasallian educator?"** Participants drew from their own experience, writing on note cards the qualities and practices they believed defined truly effective teachers. These insights laid the foundation for revisiting the essential elements of **Lasallian pedagogy** – its focus on **learner-centeredness**, the **power of human relationships**, its aim to **prepare students for life**, its **preferential option for the poor**, and the call to **foster interiority**. To close the day, the facilitators introduced two contemporary educational approaches – **learner-centered education** and **outcomes-based**

education – linking the enduring values of the Lasallian tradition with evolving global practices.
It was a day of insight, integration, and renewed conviction: to teach as Lasallians is to form both hearts and minds, grounded in spirit and propelled by purpose.

The final day of the Partners' formation was a powerful culmination – rich in meaning and deeply personal. The theme of association, which had been central to the Brothers' formation, now took center stage for the Partners. Though many participants had only been part of the Lasallian mission for less than a decade, they were invited to look back and reflect: **"How did I first become part of this mission?".**

What followed was a beautiful outpouring of stories – honest, heartfelt, and uniquely personal. Each story was captured in a poster and displayed in a **Gallery Walk**, allowing everyone to see, honor, and celebrate the many paths that led them to this shared vocation. The room was filled with quiet reflection, smiles of recognition, and a renewed sense of belonging. These stories laid the perfect foundation for a deeper conversation on **co-responsibility, associatio**n, and the evolving and essential **role of women in the Lasallian Family**. Facilitators guided the discussion with sensitivity and passion, helping participants see themselves not just as employees, but as mission partners – co-builders of a legacy rooted in faith and service.

To close the day – and the entire program – each participant was asked to identify **three concrete commitments** to promote association in their school communities. The commitments they shared revolved around making more efforts in understanding the learner inside and outside the classroom, creating spaces for deepening spirituality and engaging both students and Partners in more service activities. These were crafted into simple action plans and shared in plenary, drawing affirming feedback and thoughtful insights from fellow participants, facilitators, and members of the District Council who had been quietly observing throughout the formation. The program ended with a meaningful **closing ritual**, where their personal commitments were symbolically offered – turning intention into promise, and shared hope into action.



Taken together, the formation programs for the Brothers and Partners of the District of Vietnam stand as a moving testament to the **spirit of synodality** that the Lasallian Family strives to live each day – walking together, listening deeply, and discerning faithfully.

This journey was made possible by the unwavering support of **De La Salle University**, the steadfast commitment of the **District of Vietnam's leadership**, the **passion and dedication** of the facilitators and resource persons, and the wholehearted engagement of the **Brothers and Partners** who gave themselves fully to the experience.

More than just a series of sessions, this formation was a **living expression of communion** – of hearts united in mission, of voices lifted in shared purpose. It revealed something truly inspiring: that the **Lasallian Mission in Vietnam is not only alive** – **it is vibrant, growing**, and **filled with hope** for the future.

To strengthen its global commitment to formation and professional development, the General Council has re-established the ICJM Consortium Office. This renewed Office serves as a hub to design, coordinate, and support continuing formation programs for Brothers and Lasallian Partners across the Institute. The ICJM

Consortium helped in launching the recent formation initiative in Vietnam, and stands ready to assist any Sector or District seeking short- or medium-term formation and development programs. By drawing on the expertise of academics from our network of Consortium universities, we are able to offer tailored and mission-aligned support. If your District or Sector is looking to collaborate, don't hesitate to reach out to us at icjm@lasalle.org – we're here to help.

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