Women in the Lasallian Family: Moving Forward Together as Leaven for Transformation

CIL April 2023

By: Heather Ruple

From the 17-28 of April, 50 Lasallians gathered in Rome for a CIL (*Centro Internazionale Lasalliano) programme*. The group included women, men, Sisters and Brothers from across the Lasallian Family and representing all Regions. With the rich theme of *Women in the Lasallian Family: Moving Forward Together as Leaven for Transformation*, and the metaphor of baking bread, the group had a transformative two-week-long experience.

The historic CIL was built on the momentum of previous gatherings of Lasallian women at local, Regional and International levels. It also answered directives coming from the *Declaration on the Lasallian Mission: Challenges, Convictions, and Hopes*, *The Conversation for the Lasallian Family: Deepening our Identity* and the *Global Compact on Education* regarding the role and voice of women in our Lasallian Family. The programme was held at the Generalate and provided a deep experience of formation, networking, and community building. In order to foster allies and advocates for women and girls in the Lasallian Family each District was invited to send one woman and one Brother or male Partner. The group was also blessed with the participation of the La Salle Sisters, Vietnam and the Hermanas *Guadalupas De La Salle.*

Using the metaphor of bread making, in the first week participants gathered their "ingredients" and "created their dough." They were offered excellent presentations on women in the life of the Founder and the foundation of the Institute; women in the bible and early Church; and an in-depth look at the report of the **Needs Assessment Study of Women in the Lasallian Family** . The first week concluded with retreat day to nourish participants' spirits and reflect on

feminine / feminist Spirituality.

In the second week, participants starting “kneading” their dough. The Secretary of Solidarity and Development facilitated a day presenting the realities, challenges and obstacles facing women and girls in the world today, including access to education, injustice, and lack of inclusion. There was a day spent on women’s leadership development and also a panel of women in leadership from those present at the CIL and several who joined via Zoom from across the world. Panellists shared their experience and lessons learned. Presentations on how to support and accompany women and girls in the Lasallian Family in the areas of spirituality, Lasallian Formation and Association, and Young Lasallians concluded the second week of the programme. Participants also had time to plan individually, by Regions, and to network by language groups to create initiatives and programmes to support women and girls in their own contexts.

Moving prayer experiences, shared meals, and community time all lead participants to feel a deep sense of belonging and commitment to the Mission and Lasallian Family. Going forth each participant will be encouraged to implement their plans, programmes, and initiatives. The CIL programme empowered all participants to move forward as leaven for transformation for all in the Lasallian Family, with a special attention to women and girls.

The CIL was planned in collaboration with the Secretariat of Association and Mission, the Secretariat of Formation, and the Secretariat of Solidarity and Development.


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