

CIAMEL - The International Council  
for Lasallian Association and  
the Educational Mission

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A CONVERSATION FOR THE  
**LASALLIAN**  
**FAMILY:**  
DEEPENING OUR  
IDENTITY

La  Salle

CIAMEL  
The International Council for Lasallian Association and the Educational Mission

# **A Conversation for the Lasallian Family: Deepening our Identity**

Generalate - Roma  
2020

# CIAMEL

The International Council for Lasallian Association and the Educational Mission (CIAMEL) is a deliberative and collaborative body of Brothers and Partners representing the worldwide Institute. It is established for the animation and direction of all existing and future educational programs that embody the Lasallian mission. CIAMEL's work reflects the ambition of supporting every student confided to our care, especially the poor and the most vulnerable.



Brothers of  
the Christian  
Schools



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# Introduction



*“New wineskins for new wines”*  
Luke 5:33-39



Dear Lasallians:

This letter is an invitation to all members of the Lasallian Family –women and men who recognize the seal of Lasallian identity on their lives and are committed to our Lasallian Educational Mission.

The Lasallian Family formally began its journey in 1966 when the 39<sup>th</sup> General Chapter introduced for the first time the term *Lasallian Family*. The Brother capitulants recognized a new reality, a new way of doing things, a new relationship, and new signs of the times that were emerging in the Lasallian mission all over the world. They also heard the language of a Pilgrim People on a journey and saw a new way of understanding the Church as the People of God along with the development of the ecclesiology of communion that was emanating from the Second Vatican Council. An attentive reading of Lasallian Essays #4, *Bases for the Present Day Model for the Lasallian Family* can help provide context for this development. In 1989, the General Council published the first Letter to the Lasallian Family.

The journey continues and offers us the possibility to engage with new realities that move us to reflect and conceptualize, to envision and renew formation. These realities include:

- The Church’s development on “charismatic family;” that is persons, institutions and groups of persons united by the same foundational charism, in our case, that of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.
- The invitation from successive General Chapters and International Mission Assemblies to further articulate Lasallian identity and the sense of belonging to the Lasallian Educational Mission.
- The development of Association for the educational service of the poor.

Other significant developments that have impacted this journey are:

- The adoption of effective structures such as District, Region, Local Mission Councils in many parts of the world.
- The creation of the International Council of Association and the Lasallian Educational Mission (CIAMEL).
- The force of the movement of Young Lasallians and Lasallian Volunteers.
- The growing recognition of women, from the founding story to today, and their increasingly relevant and critical role in the Lasallian Family.
- The greater awareness of the meaning of multicultural and pluri-religious societies in the context of the Lasallian Family.



- The creation of the “Lasallian community,” with different forms of expression, along with “communities of Brothers.”
- The creation of mixed communities and inter-congregational communities.
- The foundation of various Lasallian-inspired Religious Institutes of Sisters.
- New inter-congregational commitments that are bringing creativity and vitality to our Lasallian Family.

These developments have made it possible to produce resources that provide a clearer understanding of the Lasallian Family. A personal and shared re-reading of the following Lasallian documents will help make a connection with the historical development of the Lasallian Family:

- *The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission (1997)*
- *Lasallian Association: The Story Continues. MEL Bulletin 2 (2003)*
- *Bases for a Current Model of Lasallian Family. Lasallian Essays 4. (2008)*
- *Circular 461 Associated for the Lasallian Mission, an Act of HOPE (2010)*
- *Bulletin 254: Stories of Hope...Associated for our Lasallian Mission (2013)*

Yet, what are the “new wineskins” of the Lasallian Family? How can Lasallian identity grow in order to respond to the challenges in our life and mission as a Lasallian Family today and in the future?

The Union of Superiors General and the International Union of Superiors General are promoting encounters and shared reflection among “charismatic families.” A good part of this reflection is put forward by committed lay people together with the Religious involved in their leadership teams. Conscious that “communion and the encounter between different charisms and vocations is a way of hope<sup>1</sup>,” charismatic families are developing a mutually enriching program.

The International Council for Lasallian Association and Educational Mission (CIAMEL), offers this current, simple and inspiring reflection in order to start a conversation regarding what is fundamental to the Lasallian charismatic family. This document can serve as an instrument to reflect on the challenges of today, always with an eye to the future.

The goals of this reflection are:

- To offer an inclusive and open working document, not a final word, to be used in discerning at the local, district, Regional and Institute levels what a viable model of the Lasallian Family might look like.

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<sup>1</sup> Apostolic letter of Pope Francis to all consecrated people, 2014. Paragraph 2, 3.

- To stir up new interest in belonging to the Lasallian Family.
- To generate more communion which encourages greater participation in mission animation and decision making that impacts the entire Lasallian Family.
- To encourage a continuous reflection on the following fundamental questions, and which correspond to the chapters that follow:
  - Who are Lasallians?
  - What is the meaning of our life?
  - What is our Lasallian Educational Mission today?
  - What formation do we need today?
  - How do we experience belonging in the Lasallian Family?
  - How do we need to organize ourselves in spirit of creative fidelity?

In short, this conversation is about savoring the new wine brought by Jesus. It is a wine that tastes of welcome, of inclusion, of openness, of shared formation, of mission in communion, of a shared spirituality; a wine that is the fruit of patient cultivation, a well-chosen vintage. It is a wine of lavish preparation and storage, such that it needs new fitting and truly appropriate wineskins.

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The entire Lasallian Family is invited to reflect and dialogue together in order to renew the “wineskins” with creative fidelity and to leave behind structures that are no longer useful so as to seek ways to be attuned to the real needs of today and tomorrow. In order to honour Lasallians of all faith traditions or faith choices an effort has been made to be inclusive in language and description. You will find at the end of each chapter questions for personal and shared reflection. The hope is they will support and encourage important conversation and dialogue for all in the Lasallian Family.

“*You need the fullness of the Spirit of God*”  
*Meditation 43: 2.2*



1

# Who are Lasallians?

“

*“In fact, we are co-workers in God’s service,  
and you are God’s field of cultivation,  
you are God’s building”*

*1 Corinthians 3:9*

Lasallian charism is a gift received from the Holy Spirit, through the Founder and the first Brothers. It allows people to discover, value and respond as co-workers in the service of the Reign of God to the human and Christian educational needs of children, young people and adults of each historical moment, especially those most in need.

The charism is participative and open and is to be shared because it generates a special spiritual bond among many people from different faith traditions. It is one more charismatic family making the journey towards God as one People.

The Lasallian Family includes different ways of living the Lasallian vocation:

- a. Institutes of Consecrated Life: the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Guadalupana de La Salle Sisters, the De La Salle Sisters, the Lasallian Servants of Jesus.
- b. Associates and various configurations of lay fraternities (of Brothers and lay people) associated by a public commitment: Signum Fidei Fraternities, Lasallian Educational Fraternities, and Communities of Associates.
- c. Persons who integrate personal commitment, spirituality and other fundamental features of Association, with some form of recognition, but without public commitment.
- d. Organizations recognized by the Institute or District, or by the Lasallian Family: the World Union of Lasallian Former Students (UMAEL), the Young Lasallians movement, the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU), the St. Benildus Club, Lasallian Mother's Club, etc.
- e. Other persons committed to the Lasallian Educational Mission: educators, parents, catechists, volunteers, sports and recreation animators, administration and service personnel, student.
- f. Other groups including Benefactors and Affiliates to the FSC Institute.

The three hundred and forty years of Lasallian history have been possible, in part, because Lasallians feel we are the heart and memory of this charism, which is God's work. It continues to be enriched when:

- ways of looking at the world and spirituality with the eyes of faith are shared
- people engage with the inter-relationship between faith, culture and life based on the demands of the contemporary world.
- there is human promotion and the integral formation of children, young people and adults, especially those most in need.
- Lasallians live in communion. Communities are constituted, “together and by association,” responding in a charismatic way to the challenges facing the educational mission.
- communities become the place where faith and the experience of God is shared, where there is communal reading of the signs of the times, attentive listening to the many voices encountered and discernment of concrete responses to these challenges.
- fraternal, close, and supportive relationships build a sense of belonging.
- there is responsibility to the educational needs of our world and to the struggle for human rights and justice, peace and integrity of creation.

## From this perspective:

**A Lasallian** is any person who experiences belonging in the Lasallian Family through an affective or institutional relationship, and who contributes, in one way or another, by responding to the needs of children, youth and adults, especially those on the margins of society.

The Lasallian Family is open to collaboration with those other institutions which work towards the building of a better, more humane world, and who cooperate with all people of goodwill from various faith traditions with a cross-cultural perspective of encounter, dialogue and peace.

“

*“Thank God who has had the goodness to employ you”*

*Meditation 194: 1.2*

**Do you consider yourself a Lasallian? Why?  
Who are Lasallians in your District?  
How are Lasallians organized in your reality?**

2

# What is the meaning of our life?

Lasallian Spirituality

“

*“Ask, and you will receive.  
Seek, and you will find.  
Knock, and the door will be opened to you.”*

*Matthew 7:7*



All human beings seek to find meaning in life. This “sense of the profound” is not only linked to the religious aspects of life or one’s understanding of what is often called the divine, but also to the values that each person considers important and upon which one grounds one’s lifestyle and key life choices.

All who share in the Lasallian mission, from various faith traditions and life options, feel **called to deepen and share the meaning of their existence**: What is it that sustains one from within? What enables one to overcome the difficulties of life? What inspires one to go beyond what one does?

Shared humanity calls everyone to nurture not only our incarnate, mortal self towards its fullest human potential, but also the transcendent and immortal dimension, or that which is of the Spirit in each person. All are called to seek to deepen the currents of spirituality that can make one even more human, whether within particular faith traditions or elsewhere.

Lasallians recognize that source of spirit deep within all members of the Lasallian Family and recognize that it is this spirituality that nourishes the sense of educational and vocational mission.

Lasallians continuously discover that living the educational mission meaningfully opens up ways to spirituality and awareness of the

very Presence of God found in different faith traditions. One Lasallian author called this “endowing our life with a **mystical realism**.<sup>2</sup>” Belonging to the Lasallian Family means experiencing the Absolute on a daily basis, in meeting others, in our ordinary tasks, especially when we discover the needs and talents of children and young people as well as our own.

The Lasallian involved in the work, project, or mission is called to be nourished in interiority and enriched in spirit, called to Transcendence and to sanctity in the tradition of faith and zeal for the educational mission to the children and young people begun by the Founder and the first Brothers. Lasallians are all called to nourish and share this view of interiority-spirituality, to perceive the mystery of the Divine indwelling in the midst of educational service. The educational centers become places of an Encounter with Transcendence, known in many of faith traditions as **God’s presence**.

For Christians, the meaning of life is rooted in discipleship with Jesus Christ. The source of meaning is developed in the Gospel. It is from John Baptist de La Salle is encounter with the Gospel of Jesus Christ that Lasallian spirituality developed; it is a **spirituality of mediation**.<sup>3</sup> Everyone involved in the life of the school or center is called to be “an instrument in the Work of God,<sup>4</sup>” a “guardian angel,<sup>5</sup>” a “good shepherd,<sup>6</sup>” and “minister and ambassador<sup>7</sup>” of God’s salvation. Each is called to mediate God’s

<sup>2</sup> Michael Sauvage. Cahiers Lasalliens, n° 55. Pg 131.

<sup>3</sup> Botana, Antonio. Thematic Vocabulary of Lasallian Association. Lasallian Essays 3, Pg. 65

<sup>4</sup> MD 59, 3, 2

<sup>5</sup> MR 197

<sup>6</sup> MR 196, 1, 2

<sup>7</sup> MR 195,2, 1





love in the world which inspires Christians to look for concrete and effective responses to the needs of the poor specifically their educational needs. It is through prayer that God is able to enrich the community with gifts needed for mission.

It is involvement and commitment to the Lasallian mission, particularly through the educational accompaniment of young people living in poverty, that motivates people from other faith traditions, brings out their very best and helps clarify what it means to be truly human, which includes the transcendent spiritual dimension.

Christians feel especially called to look at reality with the eyes of faith: to discover the presence of God<sup>8</sup> in everyone and in life's events; to see with God's compassionate perspective; to believe in the potential of each person to grow in God's image and likeness. To see with the eyes of faith is to be guided by the Spirit - reading the signs of the times - taking responsible care for Creation, discerning the message of the Gospel.

For others, spirituality is to see in the unfolding historical and ecological context; the call to both human development and to self-actualization and self-transcendence. This call may even be perceived to be an invitation to respond to Transcendence itself. Specific, transformative action on behalf of young people,

especially those living in poverty, in the field of education relates to the **Spirit of Faith**<sup>9</sup> that is rooted in Christian discipleship and the Lasallian tradition but is also sacred in other faith traditions.

From the origins of the Institute, this Spirit of Faith has been united with the **spirit of Zeal**<sup>10</sup>, that is, with commitment and self-giving. The Founder insisted on "making no distinction between one's own affairs and the business of one's own salvation and perfection."<sup>11</sup> As Pope Francis reminds the Church: "Evangelizers with Spirit means evangelizers who pray and work. From the point of view of evangelization, mystical perspectives without a strong social and missionary commitment, or social or pastoral discourses and praxis without a spirituality that transforms the heart, are useless."<sup>12</sup> An incarnated Christian spirituality always leads to commitments on behalf of children and young people most in need.

Lasallian spirituality is oriented towards community.<sup>13</sup> It is lived in the spirit of faith and zeal together in communion for mission, or better said, in "association" for the educational service of the poor. Lasallian spirituality today cannot be lived or understood without reference to "together and by association."

Lasallian spirituality is lived today in a variety of vocations: Religious Life or Lasallian partner. Lasallian Partners discover a spirituality with lay originality, from Christian and other faith

<sup>8</sup> RC 2, 7

<sup>9</sup> RC 2, 2

<sup>10</sup> RC 2, 9

<sup>11</sup> RP 3, 0, 3

<sup>12</sup> EG 262

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Chapter 7. GREEN, Michael. Now with enthusiasm. Charism, God's Mission and Catholic Schools Today. Ed: BBI - The Australian Institute of Theological Education Mission and Education series. Vaughan Publishing. Mulgrave (Melbourne) 2018. Pages 171 to 186.

traditions, and not simply as an adaptation of the spirituality of the traditional understanding of Religious Life.<sup>14</sup> There is a mutual sharing and enrichment of one another's spirituality in the Lasallian community, especially in the areas of interiority and transcendence.

These **principles** of Lasallian spirituality derive from the present context. It is equally important to share some common practices that nurture and strengthen this **spiritual heritage**.

Since the Lasallian Family has grown to include members from different faith traditions, **spiritual practices** can remain faithful to their origin while at the same time creatively adapt in order to be fruitful and enriching for everyone.

- a. **Remember the Holy presence of God... the transcendent:** When Lasallians start the day, or an activity; when they leave home, and arrive at school, they can make the practice of remembering that they are and live in the presence of God or of Transcendence. For the Founder it was very important to pause for a moment, to focus attention, to recognize that everything is inhabited by God's presence, and that this presence becomes more transparent among the poor.<sup>15</sup>
- b. **Personal meditation:** Regular practice of silence and stillness. Because of the mission, times reserved for meditation are essential. One can choose the most suitable duration or form. It is a practice that Lasallians of different traditions can share with one another. The Founder wrote a method of interior prayer and meditation,<sup>16</sup> more than 300 years ago. The Lasallians of today take up the Founder's inspiration, and meditation and prayer remain an important daily activity to nourish spirituality.
- c. **Reading of Sacred Texts:** Inspired texts and reflections from different faith traditions nourish the faithful in inestimable ways. Christians turn to the Word of God in their meditation and keep it in their hearts for the day. The Founder required that the Brothers carry in their pockets a small copy of the New Testament<sup>17</sup>. Christian Lasallians place the message of Jesus at the center of their lives. "Live, Jesus, in our hearts, forever" is a reminder to continue following Christ.
- d. **Sharing faith in community:** Through the singing of hymns and recitation of familiar prayers, the creation of new prayers, the sharing of doubts and hopes, praying for the students and for the many faith communities, such as the Church, a spirit of fellowship is created. The Founder established the exercise of prayer in community for the first Brothers<sup>18</sup>. Today, Lasallians share the life of faith, establishing moments and times in community to nourish meaning.

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<sup>14</sup> Bases for a present-day model of the Lasallian Family. Lasallian Essays n° 4. Pg. 14

<sup>15</sup> "Recognize Jesus beneath the poor rags of the children whom you have to instruct; ..."  
MDF 96.3

<sup>16</sup> EMO. Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer.

<sup>17</sup> CT 11, 1, 3

<sup>18</sup> RC 4, 1



- e. **Personal program:** Lasallians need to take care of their spiritual journey, to have a responsible attitude towards life, and to maintain an active option for the poor. Each one is invited to construct meaning for their life, to be aware of shortcomings, to cultivate one's talents, to open oneself to the newness of the Spirit, and not to let oneself be carried away by sloth and routine. The Founder wrote his own personal program in the "Rules I have imposed on myself".
- f. **Personal accompaniment:** Lasallians look to engage with people who can broaden their perspective; ask for help in difficult situations; have someone with whom they entrust doubts; seek the advice of others in the face of important decisions; and challenge their attitudes. The Founder had different companions in his life, Father Nicolas Barré, Father Nicolas Roland, Sister Louise, as well as the Brothers themselves. He accompanied the Brothers. Lasallians are invited to take care of their spiritual health through the practice of accompaniment. In addition, young people and adults will look to them for a word of meaning for their lives, advice, and accompaniment. And one cannot give what has not been experienced, lived or practiced.
- g. **Formation:** A minimum formation is needed in: Sacred Texts such as the Bible; in the various fields of theology; philosophy and anthropology; awareness of the present challenges facing humanity within a culture of dialogue. The spirit is also nourished by science and history; one cannot be a naive believer. Continuous personal and professional development is essential. The Founder established times for formation and retreat, he saw the need to gather the Brothers, in order to offer them reflection, to allow them to work together writing documents that would help their work. As Lasallians, knowledge and praxis are enriched with formation programs, spiritual reading, and specialized courses, to name a few.

- h. Times of retreat:** Special time should be reserved for retreats, for solitude and a more intense deepening of spirituality. The Founder acquired the house at Vaugirard to bring the Brothers together to offer them time for a spiritual retreat and formation. He realized that too much work can lead to vocation burnout. Lasallians use these special spiritual times to rest and refocus.

Lasallians need a 21st century spirituality –faithful to our principles, but creative as well; one that is well thought out and grounded in various contexts, but also practiced. Spirituality nourishes commitment to the Lasallian mission, and the sense of “together and by association.”

“

*“You must do the same thing for the children entrusted to your care. It is your duty to go up to God every day in prayer to learn from him all that you must teach the children and then to come down to them by accommodating them at their level in order to instruct them about what God has communicated for them to you in your prayer.”*

MR 198: 1. 3

**What is the meaning of your life?  
How do you attend to your spirituality?  
How does your District support Lasallians in their spirituality?  
What are the needs regarding spirituality in your reality?  
How are Lasallians of all faith traditions supported on their spiritual journeys?**

3

# What is our educational mission today?

Touching Hearts and Teaching Minds.

“

*“Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”*

*Matthew 18:4-5*



The Institute's purpose, which is "to provide a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor, according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to it"<sup>19</sup> now extends to the Lasallian Family. What began in the streets of Rheims, France, in 1680 has now expanded into a global network currently present in 80 countries around the world, and serving over one million children, youth and adults. The global reach of the Lasallian Educational Mission includes orphanages for newborns and Universities awarding Ph.D.'s; agricultural projects and advanced technical studies; schools and centers located in both isolated rural areas and some of the biggest cities in the world.

For many years, it was the sole responsibility of the De La Salle Brothers to serve as the "heart, memory and guarantors of the Lasallian charism"<sup>20</sup>. Through the continuing response to needs and the ongoing movement of the Holy Spirit, Lasallian Partners have become equal stewards sharing responsibility for the heritage and mission of the Patron Saint of "all educators of youth," John Baptist de La Salle. Lasallian Partners and Brothers together read the signs of the times and respond creatively in their service to the mission. The shift from Brothers' schools to Lasallian schools<sup>21</sup> and the implementation of structures such as Mission Assemblies that include "voice and vote"<sup>22</sup> for Lasallian Partners are concrete examples of Shared Mission and co-responsibility.

Created in the image and likeness of God, Lasallians are all called to grow into the fullness of their humanity, and to act with inclusive love for all people as well as for creation. In the language of the Christian tradition, God has a mission that includes the flourishing of all humankind. De La Salle described this understanding of mission as the salvation of the children entrusted to the care of the schools. Lasallians, Brothers and Partners, answer the call to serve God's mission and meet humanity's needs through the educational and evangelizing service of young people, with special concern for those living in poverty, the least loved, the fragile, and those who are pushed to the margins. This Lasallian response to God's mission stems from De La Salle's own conversion as he was "deeply moved by the human and spiritual distress 'of the children of artisans and of the poor.'<sup>23</sup>"

From a Gospel perspective, mission is the experience of being called and sent by God to be and to announce the Good News of God's love. The Lasallian Family is an instrument of that mission. The initiative is from God who gathers and sends a community to cooperate in achieving the mission to communicate God's love for all people and creation. The Lasallian invitation to mission is open and inclusive. For those from other faith traditions and philosophies of life, this mission is a call to a higher form of self-transcendence; to live for others in peace and harmony, and to be respectful of all creation.

<sup>19</sup> Rule, 2015 (3)

<sup>20</sup> Rule, 2015. (157)

<sup>21</sup> Johnston, J. (1989), *Letter to the Lasallian Family*

<sup>22</sup> Report of the International Assembly 2006 - Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission (Orientation 8), p.39

<sup>23</sup> Rule, 2015. (1.1)



For the Lasallian Family, the foundation and history of the mission is rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus as shared in the Gospel and in the encounter the Founder had with Jesus in the disturbing reality of the children living in poverty on the streets of Reims. Mission is an invitation into a community of co-workers with Jesus to announce to young people the Good News that they are loved, gifted, and created so as to have a full and abundant life (John 10:10). For some members of the Lasallian Family, the Founder's project of caring for the young and the poor through education becomes their response in order to foster their own potential and self-transcendence called for in various faith traditions and philosophical frameworks. De La Salle realized that no individual can accomplish the mission alone. It is possible "together and by association," through an educational and faith-filled community.

The work begun by De La Salle and the first Brothers has expanded all over the world. By reflecting on the signs of the times and discerning many cultural and religious contexts, the mission embraces all people by inviting them into dynamic and transformative educational communities. Community in the Lasallian Family is based on relationships that are called to be less hierarchical and more collaborative.

The Lasallian Family aims to be prophetic in its preparation of those entrusted to its care, aiming to inspire and challenge them to live their faith more deeply and to be agents of social change at all

levels of society. Inspired by the Founder, Lasallians meet young people and students where they are and act as Good Shepherds journeying with those entrusted to their care as they realize their God-given gifts and potential so as to put them at the service of God's mission and towards their own wholeness.

Students, whatever their age, know they are loved and cared for in the Lasallian Educational Mission and in turn they are invited to recognize that they are a vital part of the Lasallian Family. They are both the recipients of the mission and the protagonists of it. Many young people in the Lasallian Family find an expression of this belonging in the Young Lasallians movement<sup>24</sup>.

The Lasallian Family remains committed to making Lasallian education accessible for all regardless of faith, or social and economic status.

Well aware of both the diversity and unity of contemporary forms and expressions of the Lasallian mission, the Identity Criteria for the Vitality of the Lasallian Education Mission<sup>25</sup> has been developed to provide consistency and clarity of vision among the globally diverse educational systems. This resource identifies typical characteristics of the Lasallian mission. These are divided into the following six criteria: responding to real needs, operating through educational communities, accompanying students in their development, being energized by the Lasallian tradition,

<sup>24</sup> Young Lasallians - Adolescents and young adults involved in the Lasallian Educational Mission. This includes young teachers, Brothers, administrators, volunteers, as well as current and former students within the age range of 16 to 35 (Report of 3rd International Symposium of Young Lasallians, 2013)

<sup>25</sup> Identity Criteria for the Vitality of the Lasallian Education Mission; Rome. 2020



promoting the culture of quality education, and implementing a strategic management process. This instrument will help the Lasallian Family build its mission identity and ensure excellence in the ministries. This document is another manifestation of the tradition of ongoing reflection, sharing of best practices, dialogue and collaboration which are hallmarks of a long history.

The Lasallian mission is possible when focused on teaching minds and touching hearts. It is practical and relational. It is about leading young people to wholeness and full humanity - the salvation spoken of in Christian scripture. This requires a constant commitment to innovation and excellence. In seeking better means to be authentic, prophetic, and effective, Lasallians are called to go beyond the borders and the frontiers, whether literal or figurative, to where young people need them the most. This is a process of ongoing re-foundation, requiring solid commitment to Lasallian formation, creative fidelity to the mission and communal discernment.

“

*“Consider your job as one of the most important and excellent in the Church”*

*MF 155, 1, 2*

**Who is responsible for the Lasallian mission in your reality?**

**What role will the Lasallian Family have in the future of the Lasallian mission?**

**How does the Lasallian Family collaborate to fulfill the mission in your reality?**

4

# What formation do we need today?

“

*“A sower went out to sow. And when he sowed, some of the seed fell... into good soil, and it grew and gave a good harvest: it gave thirty grains for seed, others gave sixty grains and others a hundred.”*

*Mark 4; 3. 8*



Being Lasallian is a process, a path, a journey. Each Lasallian can narrate that journey through the concrete events of their life and with a project or mission. Although each person's journey is unique, shared human experience has shown that certain archetypal journeys are common to many people. These shared journeys can be understood as pilgrimages, which are proposed by cultures and societies. Each pilgrim undertakes a personal journey while also joining others on a similar path toward a common destination. What gives a pilgrimage lasting significance are the vantage points along the route that invite the pilgrim to stop, contemplate and be transformed by what is seen and experienced. These pauses are opportunities for integration and growth: threshold experiences that precede the next steps.

In the Christian tradition, the formative pilgrimage is, therefore, a gift of God that is realized in each personal life, a dialogue between God and the person, and also in an institutional plan that the Lasallian Family proposes. Lasallians of different faith traditions and philosophical frameworks may find parallel calls to an interior journey towards self-transcendence and fullest humanity.

The proposal for formation is for all Lasallians. It is not reduced to isolated experiences but consists in the development of integrated opportunities that permeate all levels and dimensions of formation thus creating a formative culture best developed at the local level.

Formation impacts the past, present and future of each Lasallian. Quality transformative formation experiences favor the re-reading of the past in such a way that each person interprets his or her own story in dialogue with the great Lasallian story. This favors the analysis of the present in order to understand and live the charism in the daily circumstances of one's own context. Effective formative planning and programming assist in the creation of a vision of the future, allowing the Lasallian Family to share a common project at the global and local levels.

Lasallian formation for mission is therefore transformative. It promotes Association for mission as it responds to local and global needs. It starts with the person, is integrative and takes place in community. The elements that flavor that formation as specifically Lasallian are the particular spirituality and the founding charismatic event which serves as the source of inspiration and ongoing discernment.

Lasallian formation for mission is in itself a declaration that mission is central. It determines the content and process of formation. To speak of Lasallian mission is to speak of God's mission, the promotion of an integral human flourishing of all individuals which Jesus called the Reign of God. And for those of other traditions and frameworks, this promotion of fullest humanity in all may be the process of deepest humanization every person undergoes.





Lasallian formation is oriented to supporting each person's integral development in order to allow them to participate in this mission or project with the spirit of faith and zeal.

While it is canonically necessary for Brothers to have specific formation as prescribed by their Rule, both Brothers and Lasallians engage in a shared, comprehensive and unified vision of formation. Formation is for all members of the Lasallian Family and happens best when all are formed together. Brothers and Lasallian Partners share 'together and by association' in the Lasallian contribution to the mission as companions.

Lasallian formation for mission is a lifelong, developmental and integrative process. It incorporates the human, Lasallian, and where appropriate, the Christian dimensions of life experience. Quality mission formation encourages greater attentiveness and discernment in order to empower people to become more fully and joyfully who God created them to be.

Lasallian Formation for Mission: The Pilgrim's Handbook (2019)<sup>26</sup> is a guiding tool for those responsible for formation. The document identifies common thresholds and domains in the human formative experience. Crossing thresholds implies transition towards deeper levels of belonging to and responsibility for mission.

Five thresholds are considered: Induction (from outside to inside), Belonging (from me to us), Commitment (from career to calling), Co-responsibility (from followers to leaders), and Wisdom (from positional power to charismatic witness). The five domains, on the other hand, name the particular areas of competence needed to negotiate the challenges inherent in living out a Lasallian vocation and participating in a Lasallian ministry.

Lasallian formation for mission takes place in the context of community. Each person's experience of the pilgrimage is unique, requiring individual accompaniment and formation. Lasallian formation is based on mutual learning and accompaniment. In this way the Lasallian community is "the context, the recipient, and the agent<sup>27</sup>" of formation and can be referred to as a formative community.

Formation always goes hand in hand with accompaniment because it makes the formation experience personal and relational. To accompany and be accompanied by others at various times is a fundamental part of the pilgrimage. The willingness to walk with another is most important, especially as a compassionate presence. Accompaniment can be planned, but it often occurs through conversation in informal settings. Formal ministries of accompaniment require training and the development of the necessary skills.

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<sup>26</sup> Lasallian Formation for Mission: The Pilgrim's Handbook: Rome. 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Rule, 2015. (81)

As a result of formation, Lasallians are able to discern a vocation and a call to be the best person they can be. On the human level, they discover the interior call to be involved in community and mission according to the charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle, and so to transcend the self and go towards the other. Christian Lasallians recognize the call of the Holy Spirit to live out their baptismal consecration in an intentional and Church community for mission, according to the charism of the Founder. Lasallians of other traditions may hear the interior call towards fuller humanity and transcendence itself.

The shared formation of Lasallians opens up perspectives and broadens horizons for understanding what it means to say “we Lasallians.” Just as Lasallian identity expands, so does one’s identity as a Christian and a human being when diversity is present across the Lasallian Family through international, intercultural, inter-congregational and inter-religious experiences.

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*“You who have to prepare the hearts of others for the coming of Jesus Christ must first prepare your own so that they may be filled with zeal”*

*MD 2,2,2*

**What formation is happening in your District?**

**What formation do we need today?**

**What significant moments of formation have you had and what role did they on your journey?**

5

# How do we experience belonging in the Lasallian Family?

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*“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*

*Matthew 18, 20*

For most Lasallians, the sense of belonging to the Lasallian Family begins with contact with the mission or a specific project. In educational activities, in schools, in pastoral ministry, the value of the Lasallian charism is discovered. The call to be close to the “children of the artisans and the poor”<sup>28</sup> is felt.

Participation in Lasallian formation enables people to learn about the origin of this charismatic family and to enliven its heritage. Lasallians who are Christian believe they are part of the history of salvation with the rest of the Church, sharing the mission of making the Reign of God grow. Together with Lasallians of other faith traditions and frameworks, working in association, they construct a more human world through the work of education of young people, especially with those who are living in poverty.

“From one commitment into another” Lasallians realize that it is not only shared work, but also spirituality. Lasallians feel the need to share life within experiences of community. It was also like this in the beginnings. The Founder succeeded in creating a community, a community of Brothers, to support the educational

project for the poor. Today, Brothers and Partners, “together and by association” are invited to be a community, to ensure and continue the Lasallian mission.

The signs of the times invite the creation of new intentional communities, where every Lasallian (not only the Brothers) who feels this call can be accompanied in their vocational journey.

Today, the vocation to the religious life and the lay vocation enrich one another, and generate more vitality in the Lasallian mission. This new understanding of “together and by association” is an opportunity, first for lay Lasallians to deepen their commitment, and second for Brothers to deepen the prophetic dimension of their consecrated life and “go to the frontiers.” The Lasallian community becomes a sign, beyond its capacity and competence, which for Christians refers to the saving presence of God in its midst. For those of other faiths, the community is a living witness of the dream for all peoples to live in peace and harmony.

Being part of the Lasallian Family entails a journey, with multiple ways of belonging. From the initial

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<sup>28</sup> RC 1.

involvement in work-mission, then by a sharing of Lasallian interiority and spirituality, to the creation of intentional communities<sup>29</sup>, up to the commitment of Association. This journey of belonging is developed in the “five characteristics of Association: Mission, Universal Openness, Vocation, Life of Faith, Community Experience.”<sup>30</sup> Each Lasallian is invited to develop and follow these criteria with personal freedom, following his or her own vocational call, from his or her religious standpoint, to go wherever they are led by the spirit.

The most important things are not books or labels, but the people who, through their spirituality, take on a mind, a purpose, and an identity. But every group needs in some way to make manifest what it lives. In the days of the origins, through the Heroic Vow and the vows made with the 12 principal Brothers, the Founder wanted to be consistent with that firstborn community. Within the structure of religious life, the Brothers and Sisters manifest their vocational journey through the profession of vows. Similarly, the Lasallian Partners can make their call more manifest through various expressions, and nurture their vocational commitment.

By way of example, the following diagram outlines a possible journey of a Lasallian, always bearing in mind that rather than establishing hierarchies, this journey is facilitating a deepening of Lasallian Association for mission.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Arbuckle, Gerald. *Intentional Faith Communities in catholic education, challenge and response*. St Pauls Publications. Strathfield, Australia, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> 43th General Chapter. Pg 4. Also in Circular 461, 4.20.

<sup>31</sup> CF Lasallian



### Journey towards commitment to Mission

- I receive and enjoy a broad Lasallian formation<sup>31</sup>.
- I value and esteem the Lasallian heritage.
- I experience and learn about Lasallian spirituality.
- I live the mission through a strong Lasallian identity.
- I elaborate my Personal Program<sup>32</sup>.

**Gesture of:** Assuming the Lasallian values of Faith, Fraternity and Service in my Personal Program.

### Journey in Community

- I participate in a Lasallian community.
- I practice community accompaniment and discernment.
- My community has a community project: It is an intentional community.
- I periodically share the mission and spirituality in my community (as well as my Personal Program).

**Gesture of:** Being a member of a Lasallian community.

Formation for mission. The pilgrim's handbook. Rome 2019

<sup>32</sup> See chapter 2 of this document.

### Journey of Discovery

- I feel professionally fulfilled. The Lasallian mission attracts me.
- I want to commit myself more to the educational mission of those living in poverty.

**Gesture of:** Being welcomed into the Lasallian Family: first Lasallian formation.

### Journey of Vocational Commitment

- I make the vocational choice to be an Associate/ Committed Lasallian Partner, Sister, or Brother.
- My commitment can be non-formal or formal (public commitment).
- My commitment is discerned, accompanied and recognized by the Lasallian community (according to the protocol that the District establishes).
- I experience Association and participate in a Lasallian community.
- I have a Personal Program.
- My commitment makes me available for the Lasallian mission to those living in poverty.

**Gesture of:** Vocational commitment as Associate/ Committed Lasallian Partner, Sister, or Brother.

Convinced that the future of the Lasallian mission, which is the human and Christian education of young people ‘far from salvation,’ is already being built on the fundamental features of Lasallian Association. Lasallians will have to be able to welcome, accompany and recognize those who travel this personal and communal journey while offering the tools so that no one is left without formation in his or her vocation within the Lasallian Family. It is necessary to create structures of participation and leadership among all Lasallians, among the different groups and communities that already exist and may yet

emerge, beginning at the local level, then at the country or District level, arriving at the international level. It is a matter of promoting communication and vitality by respecting the autonomy of each group or community in the Lasallian Family.

Finally, communication with other charismatic families and groups within the Church must be established in order to recognize each other, to take advantage of synergies and to collaborate, all in the one ecclesial mission.

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*“The virtue that ought to stand out most in community is charity and union of hearts. Because we ought not to be here except to bring one another to God, we must especially strive to be united in God, to have but one and the same heart, and to have one and the same mind. What ought to inspire us most to achieve this, as Saint John says, is that those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.”*

*MD 113,2,1*

**What is your journey of association?  
What is the journey of Association in your District?  
Who supports this journey?  
What are the structures for Association in your reality?**

6

# How do we need to organize ourselves in spirit of creative fidelity?

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*“See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”*

*Isaiah 43:19*





The Lasallian mission, charism and vocation have developed in ways that John Baptist de La Salle would never have imagined. How does an organization, forged in a specific time and place in history, grow into the international network it is today? What has kept the vision and story of De La Salle relevant to the educational landscape over the last three centuries? The answer lies in the Lasallian Family's creative fidelity. Faithful to the origins and foundation as ministers of Christ's Gospel message, Lasallians have responded creatively to the urgings of the Holy Spirit. The movement of the Spirit in the contemporary world has expanded the Lasallian Family beyond traditional boundaries. Our educational engagement with plurireligious, multicultural societies all over the world is leading to a richer inclusion and diversity.

Throughout history, in moments of crisis and at crossroads, Lasallians have relied on foundational values. This spirit of continuous re-foundation, of seeing the current context and responding creatively and boldly to its calls, continues to transform the Lasallian Family and charism.

The Lasallian Family has the model from the past to compel and inspire responses to the needs of today. Without this willingness to grow, to go beyond that which is comfortable and known, the development and growth of the Lasallian Family would have stopped centuries ago. But, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the willingness to collaboratively vision and dream for

the future, the Lasallian Family continues to expand as new needs rise to the surface.

The trust in Divine Providence at the foundation compelled De La Salle and the early Brothers to vow "together and by association" to commit themselves fully to the educational service of the children of the poor and working class. Trust in God's Providence shared with human freedom and responsibility continually invites Brothers and Partners to commit themselves to this same mission and project of education. The mission has grown, adapted, welcomed women and girls, embraced students and educators of all faiths and ethnicities and included those most vulnerable and those at the margins. It is this diversity, dialogue, and enrichment that makes the Lasallian Family more open and able to accomplish the Lasallian mission.

The establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools was an act of hope and trust that gave De La Salle and the early Brothers the vision to further develop new educational methods for their time, to form a community to sustain and nourish their vocation through prayer and fraternity, to develop a network of schools that would span the globe within three centuries. It is the spirit of collaboration, community, faith and innovation that has helped the Lasallian Family to share in the Mission of Jesus and the universal awareness today of the desirability of the fullest humanization and development of all, especially the young, those living in poverty, and the marginalized. These are all lessons that guide the Lasallian Family today and into the future.

The Lasallian Family, at all levels, must be willing to ask itself important questions for the present and future.

- What organizational structures and systems need to be in place to respond to the diversity of the Lasallian Family?
- How can the Lasallian Family remain functional and relevant in light of the global decrease of Brothers in active ministry?
- What new forms of community and support need to be created to sustain the vocation of all in the Lasallian Family?
- How do we foster structures of stability and community for the mission in the future?
- How do we recognize and honor the explicit and implicit commitment of Lasallians on a journey?
- As women make up the majority of Lasallian Partners, how can the Lasallian Family ensure that their voice, contribution and skills are utilized in structures at every level?



*“Be faithful in doing whatever God wills of you”*

*MD 6,3,2*

- **What new forms must the Christian mission of evangelization take, in relation to the commitment to be inclusive and united, together and by association, in a contemporary, plurireligious and multicultural milieu? Or, to put it another way: How can the Lasallian Family be inclusive and honor the multireligious and diverse reality while maintaining fidelity to the mission of evangelization?**
- **How will Lasallian spirituality continue to be authentic and relevant for those who call themselves Lasallian?**

In all its ministries, the Lasallian Family aims to be faithful to the example of the protagonists and events in the founding story by continually being called to live this story anew, responsive to those entrusted to its care and leading them to salvation.

La  Salle