



Brothers of
the Christian
Schools

La  Salle

The Leavening Project

Growing together in the Lasallian dream



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Rome

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***“To what shall I compare
the kingdom of God?
It is like the yeast that a
woman took and mixed
with three measures of
wheat flour, until the
whole batch of dough was
leavened”.***

(Lk 13:20-21).

Dear Brothers and members of the Lasallian Family,

When as a General Council we met for the first time in San José Guausa, Bogotá, we began to ask ourselves how we would stimulate the Institute to move forward in the seven years ahead of us. We wondered how we would bring everyone together in a journey that spans almost three hundred and fifty years. As guardians of the inheritance we have received, how would we continue the path already begun again and again with powerful initiatives to deepen our commitment to Association for the educational service of the poor, such as those emerged after the General Chapter of 1966 and later with “One hundred plus”, “Islands of Creativity”, “Beyond the Borders”, the inter-congregational initiatives in the mission of “Fratelli”. How can we now deepen our commitment to what the 46th General Chapter indicates to us with great clarity, strength and prophetism? And at the same time, how can we continue to grow in the many experiences of fraternities, communities, and other vibrant intentional experiences that have known how to interpret the newness of the Gospel to read in faith the signs of the times in the Church of the 21st century, living together the call of Jesus Christ? In those days, and later in Nairobi, we became more engaged with these questions which led us to think about the project that we are presenting to you today. You will not find in these lines a great inspiration, a grand plan or a detailed programme. We invite you to read these pages as a fraternal invitation to start a pilgrimage together.

1 A DREAM

- 1.** The 46th General Chapter suggests that we have a shared dream. It has called us to realise “a Lasallian Family, with diverse vocations; leaven for a more fraternal world, sent to meet God in the poor and to promote justice”. Pope Francis also reminds us that “an evangelising community is involved in word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, is ready to stoop if necessary, and embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others”.
- 2.** Based on the dream defined at the 46th General Chapter, as a response to the challenges of our world and those of the Lasallian Family, it also established seven “Pathways of Transformation” that will help us all to realize our commitments. From the above, it is our inspiration to design a journey for the Lasallian Family to encounter the peripheries, not as a goal, but as a starting point for the transformation of lives. This journey will be the way in which we will invite all members of the Lasallian Family to respond to the calls made by the 46th General Chapter, the III AIMEL, and the Global Compact on Education.
- 3.** The image of the leaven offered to us in the Gospel is very suggestive: something small, hidden, which even has an unpleasant smell, but which is essential to make a great batch of dough rise. It is not a new

symbol, nor are the challenge, the dream or the values that the General Chapter invites us to live, because the key lies in renewing our vocation based on what we are and what we want to be, identifying the best of our history and set in motion a transformative and incarnated movement of what we are called to be. It is here that we are inspired to initiate the Leavening Project, which is the guiding instrument to bring together the Pathways of Transformation, the lines of action of the III AIMEL, and the commitments of the Global Compact on Education in a journey that will go from the local to the global, from the personal to the institutional, and from the diverse to the convergent.

4. In this way, we propose the Leavening Project as the strategy that the General Council wishes to promote in order to identify, listen to and coordinate the movement of the Lasallian Family towards the peripheries. As an inspiration, the Leavening Project embraces and underlines the values proposed by the 46th General Chapter: prophetic audacity, solidarity, interiority, the culture of encounter, and integral ecological commitment. It helps us to return to the Gospel by overcoming self-referentiality, allowing ourselves to be touched by God, who becomes a living presence in the poor; a challenge for all members of the Lasallian Family.
5. When we say Project, we are expressing the determined realisation of the dream that the 46th General Chapter designed, with the dynamics of the Gospel working lovingly in the hearts of God's people, hidden and simply, with our vulnerabilities and poverties. It is not planning; it does not replace

the plans of Regions and Districts, Delegations and Sectors to implement the commitments and the Pathways of Transformation of the 46th General Chapter, the III AIMEL, and the Global Compact on Education. What we propose is a convergent movement that, from small things, can transform us all from within as we make room for the Holy Spirit of God, who is the true Leaven. You will not find here objectives, goals, routes, or a programme. We only want to offer some perspectives of approach, some first orientations, and a formative option. In short, consider this Project as a way of being and walking together in the discovery and encounter with God, especially for those who are on the peripheries.

2 THE LEAVENING PROJECT

A pastoral mode, a question, a metaphor, a place

- 6.** We opted for a pastoral way of journeying together, in a synodal style, welcoming everyone, from all the places and types of ministries and communities that the Lasallian Family has in the five Regions, Districts, Delegations, countries, and Sectors; with all the Brothers; with Lasallians who share the mission; with educators; with other religious who share the charism, with the communities and fraternities that live the Lasallian spirituality; with students, with families. The General Council chose to begin its service of animation by promoting dialogue, and we call this method “Lasallian Conversations”, as a way of including in reflection and discernment all those who wish to join in the movement towards the peripheries, which are certainly not only geographical, or economic, or environmental; but which are, perhaps, closer than what we can think on a daily basis. All of us who animate a part of the Institute’s mission, however small, are invited to question ourselves and to ask ourselves together about the meaning and

value of our global community. All of us who feel part of and responsible for the present and the future of the Institute are invited to be the leaven of a world that lives in justice and peace; the whole Lasallian Family is invited to ask itself and to discern once again about the meaning and the service that our educational institutions offer from the perspective of the peripheries. Together we want to walk this path of service to the people of God whom we accompany.

7. The key and motivating question of the Leavening Project is the same one that God asks Cain: where is your brother (Gen 4:9). It is in Genesis that the Bible uses the word brother for the first time. And in Scripture read from the event of Jesus Christ we discover this question that is repeated again and again in the journey of Jesus, in the face of the wounded man by the side of the road, the Syro-Phoenician woman, the sleeping girl, the widow who gives everything, the tax collector who shares his goods, the young man who comes with great anxiety, the ten lepers, the blind man. And it is in this reading of Jesus that we draw our inspiration so that the question: where is your brother? where is your sister? maybe the question makes us uncomfortable, moves us, unsettles us, and helps us to discern our place in the world, in the world of education, and in the Church. As the Pope told us in the audience that he granted us at the 46th General Chapter on 20 May 2022: The challenge of fraternity and the challenge of commitment to an integral ecology, in the perspective of *Laudato Sí*, are two fundamental educational challenges for present and future humanity. In the same way, consecrated life has at its root a certain dissatisfaction which, lived

evangelically, is certainly the fire of its prophetism. We believe that this concern provides the Lasallian Family with a perspective that can help it in the discernment and search for God in the life of each person, of each fraternity or community, of each Institution, and of each educational project.

8. The commitment to the question:

where is your brother, where is your sister?

and the icon of the

leaven contains the strength and fragility of what is born, of the little sprouts that after years of sowing begin to sprout.

The metaphor of the leaven, also used by Jesus in the Gospel, is a sign of ferment, of a new world; as a means of adhering to the very dream of God: the Kingdom, a dream of a humanity that lives under the sign of fraternity, justice, peace, integral ecology. The leaven works in the mixture with the flour, it needs time, it needs care, it needs conditions; then it will need fire to become bread. Jesus uses the metaphor of yeast to refer to the Kingdom of God that is present, that transforms, that acts by itself, even if we cannot explain how. The leaven also shows us God's pedagogy for reaching the hearts of his sons

and daughters: in service, from below, from within, and from close by.

- 9.** Another important element is the choice of a place from which to ask the difficult questions, and we understand that the 46th General Chapter makes a clear choice and directs us to “make the peripheries our place”. We understand this to be a theological and epistemological place, a place from which to discern: who are we? for whom are we? to whom do we belong? with whom are we? what are we doing? A place to discern anew the educational projects of all our works; a place from which to discern anew our community practices and our customs; a place from which to discern our vocation to follow Jesus on the way of the Gospel; a place from which to discern our organisation and our models of animation and leadership. But at the same time, we hope that for many it will be the real place from which to deeply find meaning in our lives as did St. John Baptist de La Salle and his first companions.

- 10.** We want to invite every Lasallian to embrace the spirit of the Leavening Project as soon as possible without waiting for community or institutional plans, for example, by approaching a homeless person and getting to know them by name; a simple gesture of kindness to a member of the community who may feel marginalised; opening a casual chat with a person in the school who may feel unheard.

- 11.** We would like the Leavening Project to help us to walk in a synodal way; to move forward together, to

include and not exclude, to go out together to meet the discarded, and to go out together with Jesus.

- 12.** We would expect that the project will assist us to connect and integrate the life of the Brothers, the Association for Mission, the formation for mission; and the leadership, animation and governance of our global network. May it help us to connect with others who are different, diverse, from other Regions, and with other experiences.
- 13.** We want the Leavening Project to help us to walk and to go out with our own vulnerability, with our limits, with our own fragilities, with our own poverty.
- 14.** Essentially, we want it to be a project that helps us to transform our interior life, to generate life by committing ourselves radically in our daily lives to the collective construction of a fraternal world that practises justice, peace and care for our common home.

3 SOME GUIDELINES

15. *“Where is your brother?”*

is God’s word to each of us. It expresses God’s question and how we are responsible for the well-being of others. It is a call to care for those around us and those who are far away or on the peripheries. A question that, like the leaven, serves as the ferment to transform reality. In the same way that the Leavening Project will initially be made up of a small group of communities that support the mission, animating educational projects, which, linked together, will serve as leaven among the ministries and communities that the Institute has. Each community and institution may certainly have people or areas that can be considered on the margins and are invited to reach out to them too, without forgetting that there are other peripheries with more urgent needs. We hope that these projects will enlighten the transformation of existing communities and educational projects, as well as inspire the creation of new projects “on the way”. Although we will start with only a small group of works, all the Districts, Delegations, and Sectors are invited to start their own journey, inspired by this Project. Thus, whether a university, a work located in a metropolis or in a periphery, whether formal or informal, without distinction, can begin to prepare

itself to undertake this pilgrimage in a synodal way in the District, the Delegation, or the Sector.

- 16.** We would like the small network with which we will begin to be a spiritual and educational resource provider in addressing social challenges for those on the periphery in light of the dream of the 46th General Chapter. While doing so, we would like to build cross-cutting partnerships and networking within and between Lasallian educational works and identified groups to serve as a “hub” or “enterprise”; to share best ideas and practices; to engage and co-create development solutions (bringing together different actors: NGOs, civil society, private business, government); and to expand service delivery and impact for those on the periphery.

4 A FORMATIVE OPTION

- 17.** The Leavening Project also incorporates a formative and accompaniment journey, called the Parmenia Space, both for the community and for the mission, in which it is included the participation of Brothers and Lay Partners who are already part of or who will be incorporated into a Leaven Project. The first recipients of the formative journey of the Parmenia Space will be the Brothers and/or Lay Partners acting as the animators of the communities and the

directors of the ministries selected to initiate the Leavening Project.

- 18.** In this Parmenia Space, training is provided to the teams that animate the educational projects and the Lasallian communities that are the memory, heart, and guarantee of the mission in the Leavening Project. It involves the accompaniment of the communities and teams by the Centre of the Institute, the Regions, and the Districts, favouring the exchange of experiences, possible collaborations, evaluation, and the written recording of the experience for its resulting systematisation. Some projects enlighten others, in a strategy of “cross-pollination”.
- 19.** The incorporation of Brothers and Lay Partners into a Leavening Project will be preceded by a period of community training, in individual and group work, which prepares them for a commitment of at least three years to a Project. It will be the Brother Superior General, at the end of the first period of formation, who will ask for their service and assign them to a specific project, evaluating the qualities of each person and the needs of each place.
- 20.** The Leavening Projects are ideal candidates for receiving Brothers in their preparation for their perpetual profession, once the projects have been established and those who will accompany them have been trained. They can also be open to all Brothers and Lay Partners who wish to collaborate in this type of project, as well as to those who feel called to live a radical experience of revitalisation of their vocation.

- 21.** The Leavening Project aims to make us all recognise the words of Jesus through the power of encounter: “Go and tell what you have heard and seen: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them” (Mt 11:5). With prophetic audacity, the Institute continues to place itself in the front line of evangelisation, taking on the “smell of sheep” (Evangelii Gaudium, 24) and committing all our life and efforts to the hidden but constant building of the Kingdom of God.

- 22.** Once you receive or have already received the documents concerning the 46th General Chapter and the III AIMEL, we offer the Leavening Project as an organising and guiding principle so that all can better understand the commitments and lines of action to be considered over the next 7 years.

5 A SYNODAL PILGRIMAGE

23. Below we propose a synodal pilgrimage to generate reflective, discernment conversation. It is a suggestion of questions to share, which can be asked throughout the Lasallian Family and in all the networks of the educational ministries.

★ Questions for personal reflection:

- What do I like about the Leavening Project?
- What values or aspirations is the Leavening Project touching in my life program?
- What are the opportunities I can start considering in view of contributing to this Leavening project?
- From my reality, what dreams or outcomes can we achieve with this Leavening Project, which is also part of the District Plan, and of the guidelines of the 46th General Chapter, and those of the III AIMEL?

★ Questions for Lasallian Communities:

- What resonates most in us after reading the text of the Leavening Project?

- What dimension of our community options and practices is the Leavening Project touching?
- What are we doing in line with the Leavening Project? What else can we start doing now? From now on, what can we do differently?
- From where we are, and considering the Pathways of Transformation of the 46th General Chapter, the lines of action of the III AIMEL and the commitments of the Global Compact on Education to which periphery are we invited to go out? How could we do it?
- How does this project inspire us to incarnate the charisma and revitalise Lasallian spirituality in our context?

★ Questions for the leadership teams of educational institutions.

- What would you highlight about the Leavening Project as being innovative for the educational ministry?
- What is the Leavening Project inviting us to reconsider with regard to our practices and our curriculum?
- What things are we doing that are in line with the Leavening Project? What things do we feel invited to re-discern? What can we do now?
- Based on the reality of the ministry that you animate, considering the District, Delegation, or Sector Plan; and the Pathways of Transformation

of the 46th General Chapter, the lines of action of the III AIMEL and the commitments of the Global Compact on Education, what dreams or outcomes can we achieve with this Leavening Project?

- How could we approach the Leavening Project to students, educators, families, graduates, and alumni?

24. Each District, Delegation, and Sector is invited to design questions that will foster the dialogue of reflection and synodal discernment, inspired by the methodology of Appreciative Inquiry. We suggest that you can discuss the Leavening Project with: District, Sector, or Delegation Councils, the Commissions of Association and Educational Mission, the Commissions of Formation, the Economic Councils, the Commissions of Vocation Ministry, and with all those who would like to join the Leavening Project.

25. We invite the entire Lasallian Family to begin this synodal journey by invoking the protection of Our Lady of the Peripheries.

6 OUR LADY OF THE PERIPHERIES

Our Lady of the Christian Schools, Mother of us all, remember especially the people on the peripheries.

You who said “Yes” as a radical acceptance of the Lord’s Will, help us to find the way of radical availability to God in prophetic audacity.

You who were present with the Apostles at the beginning of the Church, support the apostles of today who open themselves to the Holy Spirit to welcome Jesus in their hearts and deliver him to the world.

Our Lady of the Christian Schools, who has always been close to those who live on the social, geographical, existential, and educational peripheries, and to those who suffer exclusion, poverty, and lack of quality education: inspire the Brothers and Lasallians with the same openness and availability.

Grant our young Brothers the radicality to believe, to create and to risk, to go beyond the borders, and to reach out to the peripheries that cry out for justice.

Our Lady, Mother of Hope, nourish our hearts and minds, our words and our commitment to your spirit of believing in God's call and presence despite difficulties, contradictions, and even persecutions.

Mother of Peace, obtain the gift of concord and justice for all nations torn apart by hatred, violence, resentment, and racism.

Our Lady of the Peripheries: help us to encounter Jesus in the suffering face of excluded and marginalised children and young people. Make our Institute more radically committed to social justice and the protection and promotion of children's rights.

May the law of Love that your Son taught us make us transparent witnesses that Jesus lives in our hearts.

Amen.





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