

The Leavening Project

Growing together in the Lasallian dream

One La Salle

LIKE LEAVEN IN THE WORLD

Be the change we want

* ————— **Br. Daniel Felipe Niño López**

Leavening, the project that the General Council has placed in our hands, promises to be a pilgrimage path, inserted in the journey of our Institute. It encapsulates the road map for the next 7 years, not only for the Brothers, but for all Lasallians. With it, we must all consider ourselves to be united in the Institute by means of the mission, animated by faith, and not only instrumentally.

It should be noted that, as a starting point, and given that it is a vital ecclesial note that is also at the heart of our identity, the document cannot leave out the poor and poverty. It is not, however, a heinous obliged mention; on the contrary, the emphasis is on the materiality of this unavoidable and challenging reality which is tangible and which cannot but kowtow and move us to empathy. Thus, the iconic question “where is your brother?” confronts us with an inevitable ethical imperative that can only lead us to action.

However, there is an underlying guiding element that becomes a key to reading: transforming. In the 12 times it appears in different forms, it places us as subjects and objects of transformation; but it is also a role shared with the poor and poverty: they transform us and ask us to transform their reality.

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Lasallian District of Bogotá
Tabatinga Community
Brazil



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Nonetheless, underneath this paramount element, there are a number of new features that cannot be overlooked and which hint at the relevance of the Leavening Project. These are the “operational principles” of transformation:

1. Agency and molecular revolution: Perhaps in contrast to the traditional plans and programmes, which are the result of thoughtful reflections, in several sections we can perceive the urgency of putting into action this transformation, which we know by heart and we carry in our hearts. For this reason, every Lasallian is asked “to embrace the spirit of the Leavening Project as soon as possible without waiting for community or institutional plans” and to start “his or her own journey, inspired by this Project”.

Yet, there is no underlying solipsistic intentionality; it is rather a question of empowering the grassroots. The aim is to enable transformation from the agency of each individual and thus move “from the local to the global, from the personal to the institutional, and from the diverse to the convergent “. Thus, there is an inversion of values from a clear principle, typical of Latin American theology: praxis is the first act. It is an ascending movement: from the molecular to the molar.

2. Cross-pollination: borrowed from botany, this term refers to the creative exchange for the generation or replication of innovative projects. Hence, the Leavening Project seeks to “connect [us] with others who are different, diverse, from other Regions, and with other experiences “, so that they “enlighten the transformation of existing communities and educational projects, as well as inspire the creation of new projects “on the way””. Cross-pollination is proposed to us as the creative strategy of enlightenment and inspiration for innovative creation, which necessarily leads us to overcome increasingly “self-referentiality”.



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3. Inclusion: In addition to stating from the outset the intention to “bring everyone together”, the document insists on this over and over again. “All/every” (in its various forms) appears at least 22 times, referring to Lasallians as a whole. As a true sign of effective fraternity, it is rediscovered the need for the other in the process of development: the Leavening Project calls us “to move forward together, to include and not to exclude”.

It is clear that the name “Leavening” captures all three of these operational principles. Even so, beyond the breakdown of its characteristics, the “identification” that is made is striking: “we make room for the Holy Spirit of God, who is the true Leaven”. The “Cinderella of theology”, as theologian George Johan Sirks called the Holy Spirit, is gaining in importance and prominence. Let us let Him act!

Before concluding, it is worth mentioning one small detail that should not be overlooked: leaven “even has an unpleasant smell”, it gives rise to discomfort. The same applies to cross-pollination, where mosquitoes, however annoying they may be, are also pollinating agents. We must therefore look beyond the discomfort caused by novelty and creativity. As Saint Laura Montoya wrote so well, “It will cause more scandal in the world and more suffering, because the world charges dearly for the new, the unexpected”.

In fact, the Leavening Project comes to unsettle those who resist change and cling to outdated models, positions, practices and structures. Here it is broken the apparent clarity of those patterns previously accepted in the mission: in the face of the winds of change, it is no longer necessary to build shelters but windmills. Still, it makes no sense to spend our time attacking and discrediting the obsolete, but rather to concentrate on building the transformation, on being ourselves the change we want. That is perhaps the greatest lesson of the Leavening Project, the authentic “organising and guiding principle” of the General Council.