



Our Lasallian Heritage

Lasallian Mission – Shared in Common

Sharing the Lasallian mission has become an ever-greater reality in Lasallian schools. Significant changes have been seen in the ratio of Brothers to lay faculties, the educational expectations of students and parents, the apostolic commitments of the Brothers, the governance structures of Lasallian institutions, and the participation of lay colleagues in Lasallian mission forums at international and District levels. These changes have led to a greater awareness of the need to discover, articulate, preserve, and enhance a certain "Lasallian character" in existing schools, along with a greater drive to become more deliberate in accomplishing the Lasallian mission — "to give a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor".

Such an interest is shown on many fronts. Programs that specifically address Lasallian identity and Lasallian character are increasingly popular – the Buttimer Program of Lasallian Studies, the John Johnston Institute, District Workshops for Schools, Faculty Orientation Programs & Retreats, and so on. Studies show a shift of religious order involvement in respect to schools from "ownership and control" towards "inspiration and vision." More and more private schools are actively pursuing an affiliation with some religious educational tradition and heritage that will orient, focus, and shape their educational identity. Even our daily school language has seen such an increase in the use of the words "Lasallian" and "shared mission" that many are finding their use more frustrating than helpful, rightly insisting that we should know what they mean before we use them too quickly.

Brothers and lay educators in Lasallian schools are co-responsible for a common mission. The Lasallian mission of human and Christian education is by its very nature today a shared mission. It is a mission of the Church, something that comes through the Holy Spirit and is actualized through the very being of the Church, a Church that consists of laity, religious, priests, and bishops. When we speak of "shared mission" we do not speak of a mission that the Brothers "had" and now "share"; we speak of a mission that the Church "has" and "shares" among all of her members, a mission that the Lasallian heritage has lived out, still lives out, and continues to live out with a particular nuance, a characteristic flavor, a specific character.



De La Salle perceived the mission of education as a mission of the Church and a mission of the teachers.

In promoting the common mission of human and Christian education of the young, especially the poor, we would do well to avoid three dangers: 1) *The temptation to have as our ideal "what it was like with the Brothers"*. Romanticizing the past doesn't do justice to the past and avoids taking the present seriously; 2) *Assuming that it will all happen automatically*. Without persistent, focused attention, the reality of being engaged in a common mission will default to the point of dissipating in the midst of other concerns; 3) *Becoming too focused on words instead of the mission*. Using the words "Lasallian" and "shared mission" is not as important as authentically living out the reality of our vast educational heritage and doing so with conscious attention to its importance in the world, in the Church, in our community, and in this particular place and time.

Reflection Questions

- 1) What do I see as *my* mission in the Church? And if I don't know, how would I find out?
- 2) How can this Lasallian educational community live into the reality of a common mission by the questions I ask, the points I ponder, the decisions I make?

“By combining Christian formation and good quality teaching, and doing so in a brotherly manner, they rendered an important and much-needed service to the Church and society.

Today, the Brothers pursue the Lasallian mission in partnership with men and women who recognize the relevance of the Lasallian charism. They carry out their mission as witness, a service, and a communion.

The Institute’s primary concern is the educational needs of those whose dignity and basic rights are not recognized. By its mission, it seeks to make it possible for them to live with dignity as sons and daughters of God. The Institute establishes, renews, and diversifies its works according to the needs of the Reign of God.”

– Rule, Article 13



“The Brothers joyfully share the same mission together with their Partners who recognize and live the Lasallian charism. Together, they ensure the vitality of this charism by creating or developing organizational, formation and research structures, in which each one can deepen their understanding of their own vocation and of the Lasallian mission.”

– Rule, Article 19

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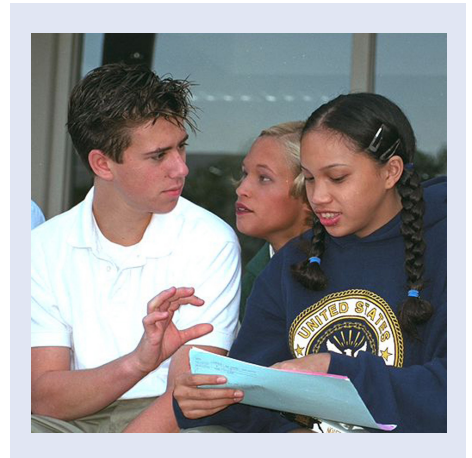


“An understanding of this new reality demands a change of mentality quite as much among lay people as among the Brothers so that *shared mission* can be accepted as a gift of God which commits all engaged in it to develop it for the good of the common mission, the Christian education of the poor.”

– *The Lasallian Mission of Human Christian Education*, Sect. 3.12

“We Brothers have to acknowledge that there is no educational service that is reserved to us. It is clear, therefore, that the nature of our identity and specific mission in the Church is not to be found in the particular services that we render.”

– Br. John Johnston, FSC



De La Salle

You must, then, look upon this work entrusted to you by pastors, by fathers and mothers, as one of the most important and most necessary services in the church. For you lay the foundation for the building of the church.

(Meditation 199.1)

Consider that you are working in your ministry for the building of the church through your teaching of the children whom God has entrusted to your care. These children are becoming a part of the structure whose foundation was laid by the holy apostles. For this reason you must fulfill your ministry as the apostles fulfilled theirs.... You are successors to the apostles in their task of catechizing and teaching the poor.

(Meditation 200.1)

Reflect on what Saint Paul says, that God has established in the church apostles, prophets, and teachers, and you will be convinced that He has also established you in your ministry. The same saint gives you another expression of this when he says that there are different gifts, different ministries, and that to each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good, that is, the good of the church.

(Meditation 201.1)

You must also show the church what love you have for her and give her proof of your zeal, since it is for the church (which is the body of Christ) that you work. You have become her ministers through the commission God gave you to preach His word to these children.

(Meditation 201.2)