

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## AND THE COMMON GOOD

### BACKGROUND & GUIDE



#### Background

Institute *Circulars* are one type of publication from our Motherhouse in Rome. Throughout our history, they have been an administrative document published by a canonical Superior. In some districts, the Brother Visitor publishes circulars while the Superior General and his Council publish similar items for the whole Institute. They serve to make important events known, indicate the situation of the Institute with regard to important topics or to present short biographies of deceased Superiors.

The Circular for this prayer service – Circular 470 – was published by the Superior General and his General Councilors in March of 2015. They wrote:

“[The 45th General Chapter expresses the collaborative efforts of Lasallians to discern the needs, priorities and aspirations of the Institute. Above all, it represents a collective determination to reflect upon its own experiences in 78 countries and provide a solid foundation for a broad agenda that is responsive to a number of today's and tomorrow's global challenges. An agenda that is also worthy of the aspirations of our communities and ministries for a better future. *Circular 470* can serve as a guide for the Institute's agenda.”

This prayer service focuses on the section in the Circular that speaks about “Religious Education for the Common Good.”

#### Guide

- ❖ Choose readers before the meeting. Ask them to read their part and become familiar with it, so that they are able to read it slowly and deliberately.
- ❖ Provide any instructions (For example: “We will read Common Prayer on the back together, and the group reflection will be in groups of 3 people...”)
- ❖ Be sure to observe a pause (1 – 2 minutes) for the Personal Reflection Moment.
- ❖ The Common Prayer Responses may be said together (fairly slowly), or by individuals around the table, taking a small section each.
- ❖ If at all possible, do NOT skip the Group reflection, because that is where the prayer and formation come together. It's the “meat” of the prayer service.
- ❖ Invite people to voice their prayer intentions – allow for silence – and put in the “Let us pray to the Lord...” if the person does not do so themselves.
- ❖ The closing prayer may be said by the leader or by everyone together.
- ❖ **NOTE:** If possible, it will be helpful to have copies Circular 470 printed and available for the Board members, either before the meeting or afterwards.



# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE COMMON GOOD



Leader: Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

[PAUSE]

**Reading:** *(Based on Luke 24: 13-34)*

When a couple of disciples were walking on the road to the town of Emmaus, talking about all the drama that had happened back in Jerusalem, someone came up and walked alongside them, asking them what they had been talking about.

“Don’t you know what’s been happening over the last three days? Are you that blind? A great prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, who we had hoped was the Messiah, was just condemned to death and crucified by the authorities. But more than that, some women we know were at the tomb this morning and they found that his body was missing. They said that they saw some angels who told them that Jesus was alive.”

The man said, “I’m blind? I think that you’re blind! Aren’t you aware of all that the prophets have been telling us for generations, that our Messiah would first have to suffer and then would enter into his glory afterwards?” Then, starting with Moses and in great detail, he proceeded to interpret for them everything in the scriptures about the Messiah.

Before they knew it, they had reached Emmaus and the man started to walk on ahead, but the disciples urged him to stay with them, since it was getting late. He agreed and joined them. When they were having their evening meal together, he took bread, broke it, and gave it to them. Suddenly their eyes were opened, they lost their blindness, and they recognized him as the risen Messiah. And then he vanished from their sight.

The amazed disciples said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us, while he was talking to us on the road?” They quickly returned to Jerusalem to tell the others of what they had learned.

**Personal Reflection Moment:** *How is Jesus walking with you in your life, interpreting your experiences, breaking the bread, and opening your eyes?*

**Reading:** *(From Circular 470)*

The trend toward secularization permeating the spheres of gender, religion, spirituality and education has broken new grounds and introduced global and local realities not considered before. The phenomenon of secularization has effectively critiqued every aspect of life, especially displacing the role of religion in the public sphere in favor of science and reason, and elevating the individual over the community. In the process of secularization, religious education is marginalized from public or academic discourse, privatized spirituality is favored over organized religion, gender equality challenges every major religion, and any norm is relativized. The common good and religious education have lost their privileged place of relevance in both the private and public spheres.

As Lasallians, we are ambassadors and ministers of Christ seeking what is always good and beneficial to realize integral human development and the common good. The 45th General Chapter ... challenges us to live communion radically and prophetically and share the reasons for our fraternity for the sake of a new stage of evangelization marked by the joy of the Gospel. ...

Religious education has a larger social role than simply remaining internally focused on code, creed and cult. It can serve public needs and help to resolve social crises. Religious education can serve as a valuable tool and voice in the public square that is

focused “outward” and responds to the real needs of society and the community at large. It offers dialogue rather than a fight over belief and ideological positions. ...

Religious education and the common good invite us to rethink and renew our focus, especially to poor children and youth. The Church in the same manner invites us “to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully part of society.”

It is in this light, that we need to ask ourselves the same question as Pope Francis: “Are we determined to break new ground that the novelty of God presents to us or to dig in to old structures that have lost the ability to respond?” Like our Founder who was passionate in instructing the young to be good disciples, apostles, and citizens, ... we invite ourselves to pursue with the same zeal the kind of religious education that serves the common good. (*Circular 470, Pp. 9-10*)

**Our Common Prayer Response:** (*From Psalm 86*)

Show me, Lord, your way  
so that I may walk in your truth.  
Guide my heart to fear your name.

I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart  
and glorify your name for ever;  
For your love to me has been great:  
You have saved me from the depths of the grave.

You, God of mercy and compassion,  
slow to anger, O Lord,  
Abounding in love and truth,  
turn and take pity on me.  
O give your strength to your servant.

**Group Reflection** [*Optional but Valuable*]

- ❖ What stands out for you in the short reading above from Circular 470?
- ❖ Where does religious education (direct and indirect) happen in your school, based on the monitoring reports you read or the conversations you have?
- ❖ How might the board support, enhance, or advance the religious educational aspects of the school and its stake holders?

**Intentions**

We pray to the Lord...**Lord, hear our prayer!**

**Closing Prayer:**

Gracious and loving God. Your Son, Jesus Christ, showed us the way to teach others about your loving and saving presence within our daily lives. And we regularly pray and Jesus might live in our hearts forever. Help us to work towards a deeper understanding of his ways, his teachings, his presence in our midst, and his resurrected life within the Church. Encourage us to reach out to those most in need, so that we may find him in his most distressing disguise, and guide our efforts on this board so that he may be better known and followed among those who are entrusted to our care.

It is your work that we do; help us to be worthy of the task. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **AMEN**

St. John Baptist de La Salle ... Pray for us!

Live, Jesus, in our hearts .... Forever!