

Inclusive Community

The Five Core Principles



"Union in a community is a precious gem... If we lose this, we lose everything. Preserve it with care, therefore, if you want your community to survive." (Med 91.2)

What Does This Phrase Mean?

We are all very familiar with different kinds of communities, from family to friends to people in the stores we frequent. They are all "members" of some kind of community group in our lives. And we also have intuitive knowledge of how each community or group operates, the do's and don'ts, the kinds of conversation, the ability to be relaxed, the expectations you have of them and that they have of you. We know much more than we may articulate.

To speak of an "inclusive community" does not mean that all those things are no longer important or no longer make a difference. It just means that the borders are intentionally porous, the hospitality is intentionally broader, and the willingness to go beyond levels of comfort with others is deliberately more acute.

When "inclusive" is added to a community identity, such things become the rule and not the exception. We use the word to tell others that, like the Gospel, all are invited to enter into our space, because God is in the stranger as well as in the friend. "Inclusive" shapes the community's borders to be more like God's own.

Why should I care?

The one thing that appears to be consistently highlighted in Lasallian places is the sense of community that dwells within its walls and people.

From the very beginning, De La Salle held community up as a "precious gem" to be preserved at all cost, and one thing that the Brothers shared freely with those sharing in their ministries was their own community life and spirit.

Clearly, it is one dimension of Lasallian ministry that lies near the heart of what it means to truly educate one another.



Implications of Inclusive Community

1. A Catholic Community

The word catholic comes from the combination of two Greek terms – *kata* (including, every) and *holos* (whole – different elements working together). Ignatius of Antioch, first using the term around 170 AD, meant *inclusion*, gathering everyone into the whole, or in today's terms, "All are welcome."

2. Jesus Would Approve

The New Testament makes very clear that Jesus modeled an inclusive outreach. The stranger, the sinner, the imprisoned, the sick, the outcast—all of them were not only welcomed but also sought out, healed, held up, and embraced. He was criticized and persecuted because he did not follow the social restrictions of the time, and his followers were certainly an eclectic bunch.

3. Everyone Finds a Place

When a community is inclusive, it ceases to be overly loud about that fact. It is simply the way the community exists and knows itself to be. One characteristic of such a community is that every person who is a member

feels as if they are a genuine member. Their identity as a person and their identity as part of the community permeate one another. One shapes the other.

4. Hospitality Is a Big Deal

Inclusivity in practice seeps out through hospitality to others, whether they be visitors, friends, acquaintances, or rock stars. All are equally welcomed, treated with an attention and respect that is a lived blessing. Others may even comment about it to those within the community. But those in the community see it as simply what they do and as part of who they are.

5. A Locus of Relationships

De La Salle came to know that a genuine community is the most effective means of empowering education, and the quality of the relationships in community gave shape to the relationships in the school's daily life. That beehive locus of relationships within a school community deserved attention and constant vigilance. Rich and poor, upper and lower classes all sat on the same bench, and so it would remain.

How Many Relationships Are There in My Community?

The number of possible relationships in any group is determined by the formula

$$[N \times (N-1)/2]$$

where *N* is the number of people in the group.

Example: For a community of 536 individuals, the number of possible relationships is $[536 \times (536-1)/2] = 143,380$



"Never speak except in a kindly manner. When you fear to fail in this, remain silent."
- De La Salle -

What does an Inclusive Community look like?

A new principal at one of our schools came into that school from another country, where the schooling was a bit more exclusive than in the Lasallian school. He brought his wife and two teenage sons, both of whom would attend this new school.

One of his sons was the kind of personality who excelled in both sports and natural leadership

opportunities, and he was soon involved in both, making friends, playing on as many teams as he could, and every once in a while getting in trouble just a bit.

Toward the end of the year, when he was riding back home with his father and they began to discuss their experience, how different it was from their previous school, which hadn't

had the "feel" of community that they had found at this Lasallian school, his father asked, "So what's so different here?"

His son thought for a moment and said, "You know, Dad, this is a place where everyone can find a friend, even the weird kids, and everybody's okay with that."

That's a pretty good snapshot of an inclusive school.

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GROUP REFLECTION

On this sheet are the three suggested movements for thoughtfully considering the topic and guiding questions that were provided to you as part of your board packet.



FIRST

REMEMBERING GOD'S PRESENCE

Let us remember that we are in the Holy Presence of God

"We can consider God present within us to maintain our existence ... God is not far from any one of us, for in God we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28)" - De La Salle

[PAUSE]



SECOND

REFLECTIONS & CONVERSATION

- A) What ideas or parts of the INFOSHEET caught your attention?
- B) How is your community seen as "inclusive" by those within the community? By those outside of the community?
- C) Where could this sense of inclusivity be stretched further?



THIRD

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious and loving God. All of us at this school work to make the loving and saving presence of your Son, Jesus Christ, a living and effective reality in the lives of those who are entrusted to our care. Be with us in all that we talk about and do, so that all those involved with Lasallian education here may discover your presence in their midst and come to hold dear what we hold dear. It is your work that we do. Help us to be worthy of the task. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

De La Salle insisted from the very beginning that any new enterprise would have to have at least two or three Brothers, never just one. Community was not just a nice-to-have thing, but even minimally it was a have-to-have characteristic. They were Brothers to one another and to the students in their care.



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THOUGHTS ABOUT COMMUNITY

Character and “Witness” are Shaped by a Person’s Communities

Everything depends on the person who stands in the front of the classroom. The teacher is not an automatic fountain from which intellectual beverages may be obtained. He is either a witness or a stranger. To guide a pupil into the promised land, he must have been there himself. When asking himself: Do I stand for what I teach? Do I believe what I say? he must be able to answer in the affirmative. What we need more than anything else is not textbooks but textpeople. It is the personality of the teacher which is the text that the pupils read; the text that they will never forget.

- Heschel, Abraham Joshua, *I Asked for Wonder*. Pg. 62

De La Salle’s Charism Lives Through a Living Community

1 - The charism of the Founder involves institutions only through the mediation of persons. From the beginning, Saint John Baptist de La Salle founded a living community of Brothers with whom he shared his apostolic ideal and who in turn passed on this ideal to their successors. Fidelity to the specific goals of the Founder and to the tradition of the Institute is confided to us as the living persons that we are, and it is as such that we have to carry on the search.

2 - This dynamic fidelity to the Founder consistently follows its own internal laws. It is marked first of all by the community character of our search. Although confided to us as persons, the institution and its purpose are not in the hands of individuals. Fidelity to the Founder is entrusted to the Institute, that is to say, the community of the persons who constitute it. A living community in dialogue is the locus par excellence for the presence and the action of the Holy Spirit.

3 - The community which undertakes the search must do so in fidelity to an objective historical fact. There can be no question of “refounding” the Institute. This respect for the action of the Holy Spirit will in no way prevent the Brothers from being attentive to the signs of the times.

- 1967, *The Brothers of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*, Chapter 1, Section 7

A LASALLIAN REFERENCE



“It is impossible for several people living together not to have to suffer from one another. One will have a touchy disposition; another will have a contrary spirit; another, bad manners; another will be disagreeable; another will be too prone to give in; another will say what he thinks too quickly; another will be too reserved and secretive; another will be too critical.

“The way to maintain union in a community in spite of all these different personalities is to bear up charitably with the defects of one another, to be ready to make allowances for others just as we want others to make allowances for us. This is what we necessarily commit ourselves to do when we decide to live in a community. Pay serious attention to this today and for the rest of your life.”

- *Meditation 65.*

De La Salle