

SERVICE WITH THE POOR

DISTRICT OF SAN FRANCISCO NEW ORLEANS (SFNO)

BACKGROUND & GUIDE



Background

One of the four themes addressed during the *Assembly for Mission* (AKA Mission Assembly) for the District of SFNO is that of *Service with the Poor through Education*. The 65 delegates from around the District came to Mont La Salle to read, listen, discuss, consider, and put together four directional statements, along with appropriate action steps. Once endorsed by the District Chapter and approved by Rome, they become the directional statements for the District moving forward.

This prayer service focuses on the work of the committee on *Service with the Poor through Education*, bringing their directional statements to the Boards for their future planning at the school. The CEO and school leadership develop strategies for implementing the substance and intentions of the directional statements. The Board annually monitors the CEO in responding to elements specified in the directional and action statements.

There are various ways to use the resources in the packet, according to individual board circumstances. Please review all the elements provided so that a substantial session may be provided and the board might be fully engaged in the important process initiated by the 2016 Mission Assembly.

Guide

TIME REQUIRED: 20 Minutes (*More, if needed or desired*)

- ❖ **NOTE:** If a member of the board or institution attended the 2016 Mission Assembly, then he or she may be well placed to guide this process and perhaps take responsibility for one of these prayer/formation sessions.
- ❖ Make sure that you have enough copies of the PRAYER and other elements provided. All of these should be part of this packet. You may want to email them to board members for their perusal and study prior to the meeting.
- ❖ 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 in the formation section [name] will give some background and impressions of the Mission Assembly, after which we will”)
- ❖ Be sure to observe a pause (30-60 seconds) after the first reading and a longer pause (1 – 2 minutes) for the Personal Reflection Moment.
- ❖ The video is 2.5 minutes and does not have to be included. However, it is quite well done and the board members will enjoy it. <https://youtu.be/5AT7Tb5lx88>

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

[PAUSE]

Reading 1: (*Luke 10:25-37*)

One of the legal experts tested Jesus, asking: "Master, what should I do to have eternal life?" Jesus replied: "Well, what have you been taught by the Law and by all the reading that you do?"

The man thought about that and said: "The Law says that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and that we should love our neighbor as we love ourselves."

"That's really good," Jesus said. "Do that. And then you will live." But the man wasn't satisfied with that general answer and wanted more details, saying "And what do you mean by 'neighbor'?"

So Jesus told him a story. "There once was a man traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho. A group of bandits robbed him, beat him, and left him half dead. A priest happened by, saw him from far away, but walked around him because he was on his way to the temple. A Levite did the same thing a little while later, briefly glancing in his direction and deciding not to bother himself. Then a Samaritan came along (someone who was pretty much an outcast within the Jewish community of the time). The Samaritan came along on his mule, stopped and looked at the man lying there, and was touched with pity. He got off his mule, went over, bandaged the man's wounds, placed him on the mule and brought him to an inn, where he took care of him that day. He needed to leave the next day, but he spoke with the inn-keeper, telling him "Here is some extra money. Please look after him for me. When I come back through here on my return trip, I'll pay you back whatever more you had to spend."

"Which of those three people do you think acted as a neighbor in this story?" The legal expert replied, "The one who actually helped him." "Okay then," said Jesus, "Go and do the same thing."

[PAUSE]

Reading 2: (From <https://www.dowellwebtools.com/tools/lp/Bo/psyched/7/Good-Samaritan>)

It is 1973 at Princeton Theological Seminary. Forty students took part in an experiment which was ostensibly a study on religious education and professional vocations. In one building, they completed a questionnaire. Then they were instructed to go to another building to give either a talk on jobs or a talk on the parable of the Good Samaritan. The participants were told to hurry, but to different degrees - slight, medium, and extreme hurry.

On the way to the second building, a colleague (an actor who was part of the study) was hunched over in the alley, in plain sight, in clear need of help. Did these participants help?

First the researchers found that it didn't matter whether the participants were going to talk about vocations or about the parable of the Good Samaritan. Second, the "hurry variable" was significantly correlated to the helping behavior. That is, the more the participants were in a hurry, the less helping behavior they demonstrated. In fact, only 10% of those who were in the "high hurry" category offered aid to the suffering actor... Those in less of a hurry offered more help—as many as 63% of the subjects in the low hurry condition.

It was suggested that distraction and pressure of speaking could have caused the participants not to be consciously aware of the suffering actor—at least not fully process the situation. Although, in a post interview the participants did claim that they were aware of the victim as someone "possibly in need of help."

We are all too quick to apply dispositional labels on people for their actions or lack of actions, while ignoring the situational factors that are so influential in behavior. We need to stop and think before being too hard on ourselves or on others for actions and behaviors.

[PAUSE]

Personal or Group Reflection (*Choose one*)

- ❖ Think of a time when you “could have” or “should have” done something and didn’t. Why do you think that stays with you over the years?
- ❖ The last paragraph of the Princeton study applies the conclusions of this experiment to the priest and the Levite instead of the Samaritan. Do you agree with what it says?
- ❖ Where in your institution is a “Good Samaritan” situation that deserves attention now?

Our Common Prayer Response:

(Adapted from Baptist Union of Great Britain website)

All: God of love, give us a deep love for you,
so that we can see the world as you see it,
feel the compassion you feel,
and be a people whose lives mediate your love to others.

Open our eyes that we might see what the Good Samaritan saw.
Grant us the insight to see the need in others,
the wisdom to know what to do, and the will to do it.

We pray for those we might cross the road to avoid.
Who have been excluded socially because of their race,
their financial status, or their history.
May the dignity that is theirs be restored to them.

Open our eyes, that we might not cross the road from human need.
Give us a deep love for you,
that we might see your love at work in this world,
and that we might Go and do likewise.

Closing Video (*2.5 min. – Optional – Great video about how we and others see things.*)

The Power of Words - <https://youtu.be/5AT7Tb5lx88>



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

Live, Jesus, in our hearts Forever!





In Jesus, God knew what it meant to be a migrant and poor. Jesus gave us a blueprint in the Parable of the Good Samaritan of what our Gospel adventure involves. We should not fear the migrant or the poor. We can learn and be enriched by persons who are different to us. In fidelity to our Lasallian identity and ideals, we can discern what is right and just.



How did we get to “Service with the Poor” when it used to be “Service of the Poor”?

The change from “of the poor” to “with the poor” came from Young Lasallians. These young adults want to be active Lasallian agents of change against poverty and injustice, and contribute to transform the lives of the young, especially the poor, through education.

At their 2014 3rd International Symposium, their “Vision and Passion” statement included this new phrase, which Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría referenced in his 45th General Chapter talk “A Song of Hope: For the Regrowth of the Founding Charism” when he said the following:

“In the Symposium of Young Lasallians there is a suggestion that seems to me responds to a very important Gospel idea: ‘As young Lasallians we are impassioned by: Being active in the Lasallian Educational Mission, especially through service with the poor.’ The change from **of** to **with** does not seem to me to be artificial. On the contrary, it responds to refined Gospel sensitivity. It is not from above, not as benefactors that we carry out our mission. It is **with** the poor, trusting in them, learning from them, allowing them to be the first ones in charge, trying to introduce their simplicity into our lifestyle.”

Why should I care?

The perspective we bring to how we engage the poor does make a difference in both our words and our actions. Instead of being something we do FOR people, meaning that they have little or no involvement in the how and the when, we now say and do what with do WITH the poor. They are agents in the essentially human encounter, one that is guided by Gospel priorities rather than strictly pragmatic or “feel good” ones. The poor are people, and this change empowers that fact.



A Gospel Adventure - Confronting New Poveities

As Lasallians, we have always considered poverty and its impact on young people. Youth are the most vulnerable, and have the least choice and capacity to defend themselves. There isn't much they can do to help their families, nor should they have to. When they are first victims of poverty we know this is not right and just.

We know very well that nearly all possible causes and effects of poverty have an impact on the lives of the young. Their lack of education, malnutrition, the violence they confront in their own homes, child labor, diseases of all kinds, are caused by poor infrastructures, unemployment, lack of basic services, inadequate income and deteriorating environmental conditions. We see that their sense of identity is under attack, from pressures coming from people and nations with vested interests. Youth, especially the

poor, are often seen as objects to be manipulated and with a price tag. One can often see that they are not treated as persons but as bar-coded commodities. Is this right and just?

Jesus's story of the Good Samaritan is meant to stir our heart so that we, at last, see the abandoned person at the side of the road to be embraced, as a neighbor. Investing in the integral development and protection of youth and migrants then becomes a Christian and Lasallian priority. We can no longer step conveniently to one side once we see the impact of commodification. When our most vulnerable neighbors are sold and used, we are compelled to act. We understand that our response requires an integrated and holistic approach supporting the communities in which migrants and youth live. We must be aware of their needs. We also recognize that there has to

be a participatory involvement that will not only produce active citizens of the future, but also provide sustainable solutions to the causes and effects of poverty and migration. *(Lasallian Reflection #1)*

From the 2015 RULE

Deeply moved by the human and spiritual distress "of the children of artisans and of the poor," and in response to the call of God, John Baptist de La Salle and his first Brothers made a lifelong commitment to God to provide these children with a human and Christian education, and so extend the glory of God on earth. They reformed the kind of schooling available at the time to make it accessible to the poor, and to offer it to all as a sign of the Reign of God and as a means of salvation.

(Article 1)

From the Brother Superior & the General Council

The General Council invites Lasallians to re-read this parable in the light of our personal and collective responsibility to respond to the poor in our midst. This is a journey that requires us to embrace the condition of the poor with mercy and compassion. This is a journey of understanding of what it means to be human in a world that is increasingly consumerist and commercial. ... Today, more than ever, we are

called to make a qualitative leap in the way we share the joy of the Lasallian Mission as a Gospel adventure. We do this in the face of striking forms of poverty that often have at their root the commodification of both the human person and the earth we call our common home. ... We have a common project, to work toward the common good, and we do this in our common home. When people are reduced

to instruments for gain and enrichment, they are no longer agents and authors of their own history.

They lose their inherent dignity in this spiral of dehumanization.

