

THE LASALLIAN WORLD OF ASSOCIATION TODAY



BACKGROUND & GUIDE

Background

The topic of “Association” and “Lasallian Family” has become much more discussed and considered over the last ten years. The realities that are expressed by those two terms are ones that have been active and even foundational throughout Lasallian history, but the articulation of their implications are still being developed, and with great success.

This prayer/formation program keeps the topic on the front burner. This is important because of the implications a greater awareness of our Lasallian identity individually has on the life of the school, and more specifically the deliberations of the board about the schools ends policies, priorities, and outreach.

The prayer could also serve as an introductory prayer for a morning or evening retreat. Ideally, having more time to read and discuss Circular 461, upon which this program is based, would yield the greatest benefits.

Guide

TIME REQUIRED: 20-25 Minutes (More, if needed or desired)

- ❖ Make sure that you have enough copies of the prayer sheets, and that these are handed out prior to starting 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: “You will see a reflection question at the end of the first page. We will take a couple of minutes of silence at that point. On the back, the “Left” side will be ... and the “Right” side will be”)
- ❖ Be sure to observe a pause (1 – 2 minutes) for the Personal Reflection.
- ❖ The video is about 5 minutes. Please **don’t leave this out.** It dates back to 1998, and even though the topic is about Lasallian Association today, the video still provides the consistent impression of what is meant by “Lasallian Association” among all those who count themselves as part of the Lasallian Family.
- ❖ The video can be found at www.lasallianresources.org by searching for “I am Lasallian.”
- ❖ The closing prayer may be said by the leader or by everyone together.

Circular 461: ***Associated for the Lasallian Mission*** – LINK: goo.gl/w1iHbE

Bulletin 254: ***Stories of Hope*** – LINK: goo.gl/LwpJE8

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

[PAUSE]

Readings:

“The original experience of together and by association that begins with John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers now continues in eighty countries on five continents. The Lasallian charism appears to have a new dynamism because of its presence in a variety of ethnic, cultural, and religious settings. Educators throughout the world find in De La Salle and the Lasallian educational mission an inspiring element to integrate into their daily lives.” (*Circular #461 – Associated for the Lasallian Mission ... an act of HOPE – 3.1*)

Lasallian Identity – Voices from the Lasallian World

“Being Lasallian is my spiritual home. It is where I live. For me, being a Lasallian Associate has become a natural and foundational part of my whole life - personal, social, work and spiritual - because it has become an integral part of who I am. I am Lasallian. I am Lasallian 24 hours a day - in my work, with my family and when I pray. The values I hold, the person I try to be, the work I do and the relationships I have are all lived within this context. Being Lasallian is where I find God and it is where I am called to try to live as faithfully as I can the values of the gospel.”

“Truth be told I cannot separate my personal life from my professional life as a Lasallian educator. ... I have spent the last 34 years in association with the Brothers and their lasting commitment to the lives of young people. It has touched every part of my human experience and I will continue to associate myself with it as long as I am able.”

“For me association is a plan of life, something that is totally embedded in me; something that goes beyond the area of work, professionalism, and vocation almost even before you begin. It is my identity. This is my response to God's call, in the Lasallian mission, and I want to do it with my Lasallian brothers and sisters. That is how I have felt and lived with Brothers and Lay Lasallians with whom I have journeyed. They have seen to it that there is a need for me to associate in order to journey together in community. I want to build up God's Kingdom with all of them.”

“I am discovering that the Lasallian bonds I create with people are the most significant ones because they are aimed at a common objective – education. I have been enriched to a large extent by the witness, knowledge and presence of many people (Brothers and Lay Partners) who provide fundamental support in the mission and who have left their ‘mark’ on me.”

(PAUSE)

Personal Reflection: In what ways does this “Lasallian” identity impact my life?

Our Common Prayer Response: *(Slightly adapted from Circular 461)*

Left: The image of a God who welcomes,
who walks alongside of us,
who asks us to trust in the unimaginable,
is the daily act of faith that has sustained
the Brothers of the Christian Schools for more than three centuries.

Right: This image also symbolizes the vocational call of all Lasallians
to confide in a God who calls
“in a quiet imperceptible way...
so that one commitment lead[s] ...into another
without... having foreseen it in the beginning.”

Left: This was De La Salle’s miraculous adventure
with a God who always welcomed him.
All of us who serve the Lasallian Mission
should remember what God has promised us.
As He spoke to the prophet Jeremiah
so He speaks to us today:

Right: “I know what my plans are for you,
plans to save you and not to harm you,
plans to give you a future and to give you hope...
When you call on me I will listen...
I will gather you up from among all the nations...
I will bring you home”

ALL: Let us all rejoice in this pledge of hope...this bright future...
this life-giving dream that invites us
to remember always the holy presence of God
and to touch the hearts of the young, especially the poor,
together and by association.

Group Reflection

- ❖ How would I explain my Lasallian identity to someone who is brand new to the Lasallian Family?
- ❖ Within my own Lasallian context (school, organization, professional group), what sort of “indicators” would reveal others who share this Lasallian identity?
- ❖ What could we do to develop a greater appreciation of association with the larger Lasallian community?

Closing Video (5 min. – *I am Lasallian?*) <https://youtu.be/3mPKBNHW7X8>

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, you led St. John Baptist de La Salle and Brothers throughout history to do great deeds with small steps. As we face the challenges and opportunities for the Lasallian mission today, right here in our own backyard, help us know and follow our own small steps with the same dedication, vision and trust in your holy presence in our midst. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **AMEN**



"The immediate and ultimate goal of all Lasallian association is our educational mission. There is no point in talking about association unless the discussion focuses on this mission. These reciprocal and dynamic realities of association and mission make explicit the Lasallian approach to faith, service and community." (Circular 262 - 2.2.1)

What does "Association" mean?

"Associated for mission supposes a participation in a collective Lasallian identity. It can be framed in three fundamental dynamics. The first is **Attraction**; coming together around a common leader, a touchstone for discernment and a foundation for the guidelines for the life of all members. For the Institute, the founder is St. John Baptist de La Salle who becomes a life-model and spiritual guide, not only a symbol of union. Second is **Co-Responsibility** which makes sure that the members are ever faithful to their intended purpose. The final dynamic is **Belonging**. It signifies assuring cohesion among the members of the educational Mission. It is important to state here that this sense of Lasallian belonging transcends any local educational center or small circle of people known. It is an invitation to feel part of a common adventure and of a salvation history that supersedes any one project in which one may be involved.

Associated as Lasallians means being committed to an educational ministry within this reality." (Circular 461 - 2.2.2-3)

Why should I care?

Association is very probably the key insight that enabled St. John Baptist de La Salle and the early Brothers to succeed where so many others had failed. It became the primary and most important vow, and its influence spread throughout the school communities.

Today, that same principle of association is the invitation, the grace, and the commitment that permeates and empowers great Lasallian communities of learning throughout the world.



Voices of Association from Around the Lasallian World

From a Brother

"Being associated to the Mission means to be in a position to brave the challenges of change, to learn how to see the unpredictable future of God through a new lens, grow together but always in the light of Christ who called us."

From a Lasallian Administrator

"The last time I tried to plan my life, God had a really good laugh. I try to remain aware of God's presence and His plan for my life and I believe that it is deeply rooted in my Lasallian spirituality. As I get older I would like to remain active and deeply involved in the Lasallian charism. I'd like to be able to pass on my own Lasallian experiences as a lay person to [others] ... Our sense of Lasallian association is much deeper than just words, meetings, gatherings, etc. Lasallian association is a way of life."

From a Lasallian Educator

"For me association is a plan of life, something that is totally embedded in me; something that goes beyond the area of work, professionalism, and vocation almost even before you begin. It is my identity. This is my response to God's call, in the Lasallian mission, and I want to do it with my Lasallian brothers and sisters. That is how I have felt and lived with Brothers and Lay Lasallians with whom I have journeyed."

From a Board Member

"I feel privileged, and I have expressed this on many occasions, to have received a great gift from God in becoming part of the Lasallian mission in various roles ... This is why I am part of this Institute that inspires my life, my relationship with God and my commitment to others in the style of our Founder."

From Circular 461 (2.1)

1. Association exists for the mission.
2. Association implies being a member of a community for the mission.
3. Association results from experience and is a dynamic journey, not an acquired status.
4. Association stems from faith, vocation, and state of life.
5. Association presupposes a freely made commitment.



From the Brothers & the Documents of the 45th General Chapter

2.4 Our religious consecration leads us to support the laity with whom we work in the mission so that they become authentic protagonists in the Lasallian mission.... As Pope Francis notes, charisms "are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather, they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the center which is Christ,

and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse" (EG 130)

2.5 In sharing the charism, we Brothers have a special responsibility which defines us: fraternity. It is a gift that we have received for all. We have become its sign; hence, we feel called in a special way when the Pope declares, "I especially ask Christians in communities throughout the world, to offer a

radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another: (*Evangelii Gaudium* 99).





STORIES OF HOPE...

Associated for
Our Lasallian Mission

Bulletin N°254

1.C. Formation Experiences

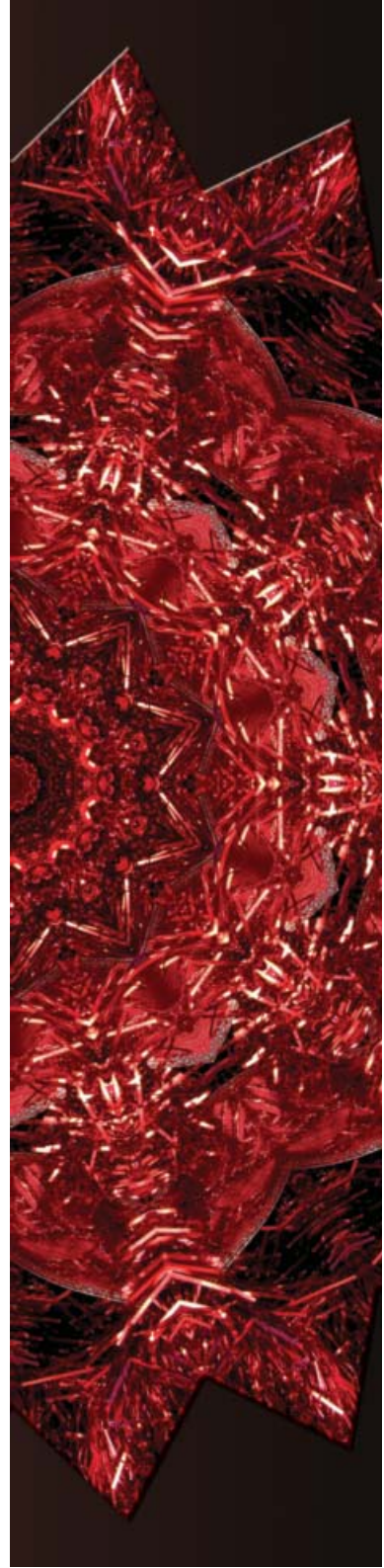
“ **6.12.** *The principal themes of Lasallian formation include community, commitment, charism, the founding story, spirituality, pedagogy, and mission. Formation presupposes a free decision that participants base their commitment on their personal vocational call. Quality Lasallian formation is essential to keep alive the Lasallian charism as a gift for the universal Church.* ”

- “It was when I was hired in 2002, at a day treatment center in Philadelphia (USA) to work with juvenile delinquents. I was sent to the Lasallian Leadership Institute the following year, where I became pretty well immersed in the values, the principles, the heritage and the history, and came back filled with enthusiasm. I wanted to do all the things that I had learned and share it with everyone. But I didn’t quite feel comfortable. But there was a moment, when I then could call myself ‘Lasallian’: opening a staff -meeting or gathering teachers together, when I opened with, ‘Let us remember we are in the holy presence of God’.” (W – RELAN)
- “I once had the chance to go to Ivory Coast for one year to teach. A little flame of interest in education was ignited in me; it filled me with hope. I found I had entered by accident into a network I had no idea existed. I was a young teacher full of ‘zeal’ so I took seriously my mission as an educator but I also took seriously my mission as a baptized Christian and became involved in the religious program of my school. And this is how



I got to know some of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.”
(W – RELEM)

- “The first time I called myself ‘Lasallian’ was upon my return from a month of service in the Philippines, at Bacolod, where I worked with teachers who taught young children through the university. We spent time in supervised schools, and as a community, with the children. I returned to my university on fire with the Lasallian charism and sharing it with my colleagues, telling them that they are part of something much bigger than our small institution.” (W – RELAN)
- “Even though we have accomplished much, I believe that we still need to work together to understand better our Shared Mission, formation, personal development, and the strengthening



Chapter One


of being 'heart, memory... of the Lasallian charism.' This is absolutely necessary." (M – RELEM)

- “In my first years of formation I almost never heard the word 'Association.' Only when I read my formula of vows; little by little, thanks to meetings in RELAL from 1980 onwards, I grew to appreciate the depth, energy and strength of this word in the Brother's consecration similar to the way De La Salle discovered it when he associated himself with the first Brothers.” (FSC – RELAL)
- “We are formed and we form one another, Brothers and Lay Partners; each offers his or her own uniqueness of their voca-



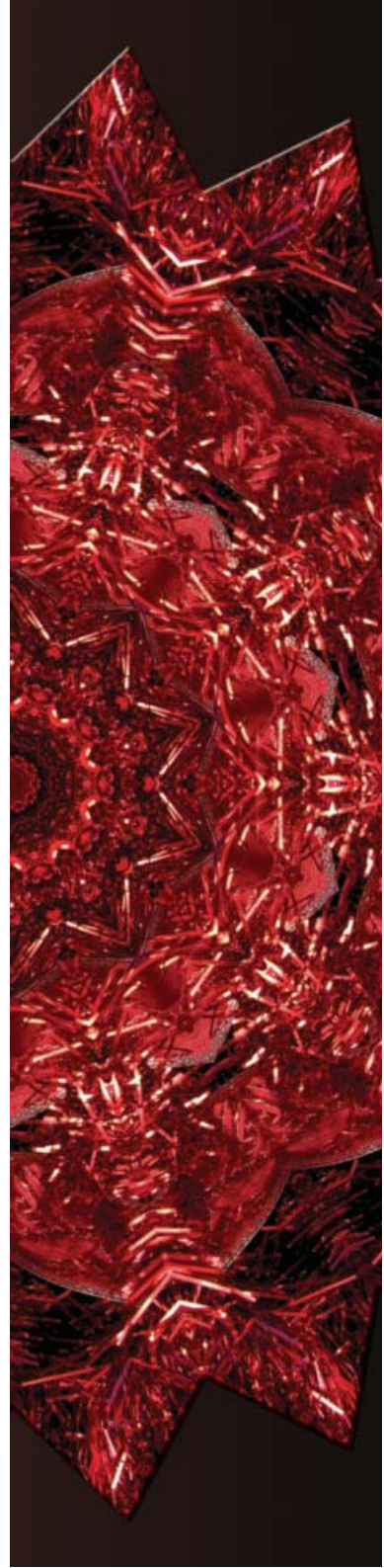
tional response. Let us not reject those who chose not to participate in formation programs. Rather let us recall that in God’s plan we do not all have to be engineers. Let us invite others to the ‘journey’ according to each one’s situation.” (W – RELEM)

- “Practically all of the Brothers in my community belong to the Lasallian Mission and Association Team that we have in the school. We meet each month to deal with particular topics based on our monthly plan. On Mondays we pray together and once per quarter we have spiritual reading, followed by supper. Together we also attend Mass at the school on Sundays.” (W – RELEM)



1.C. Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- 1.** What was the “entry point(s)” to my Lasallian vocation? How did this vocational realization grow in me?
- 2.** If I had the opportunity to be responsible for the formation of persons new to the Lasallian mission, with what experiences of formation would I begin?
- 3.** What innovation would I bring to the formation process?



“ **2.6.1.** Association also implies a process – a spiritual path that takes one where he or she might never have chosen to go. This graced journey is evident in De La Salle’s own words, “God who conducts all things with wisdom and gentleness...wishing to draw me into undertaking entirely the care of the schools, has done so in a quiet imperceptible way...so that one commitment lead me into another without my having foreseen it in the beginning.” ”



Chapter Two – A



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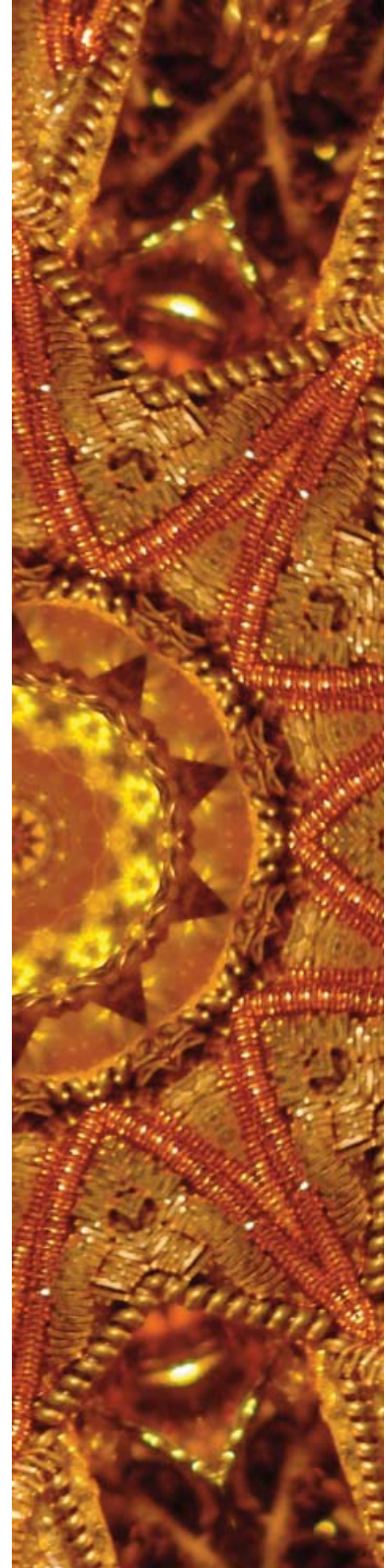
2. A. Association as Vocation

“ 2.5. Association stems from the awareness through faith of receiving a vocation that combines personal and social aspects of the individual’s own life. ”

- “Even though there is a need to define the official, institutional and legal terms of association, I understand how much more a life stance can shape one’s identity. This identity is a vocation and a mission to be lived out in community and aimed at educating those who need our help. I would say, without pretense, but with my all heart, that I understand this as a partner with the God of Life and as a Lasallian Partner. As such, I place my life (with all its potential and limitations) in the service of building up a fraternal community and in promoting an educational style in which I firmly believe.” (M – RELAL)
- “When I began working in a Lasallian school I could not have imagined that God was preparing a new path for me. I was introduced to De La Salle’s life story. As I was doing catechetical work in a poor area, I found an ideal response for those who need our help through education. I discovered that this response was well within my reach.” (W – RELAL)
- “I now know that I am a Lasallian deep down inside. The fibers of my being are Lasallian, and no matter where I may be, whether in a Lasallian context or not, I know that the concern for the human and Christian education of young people will always be part of me. I also know that my family (my wife and

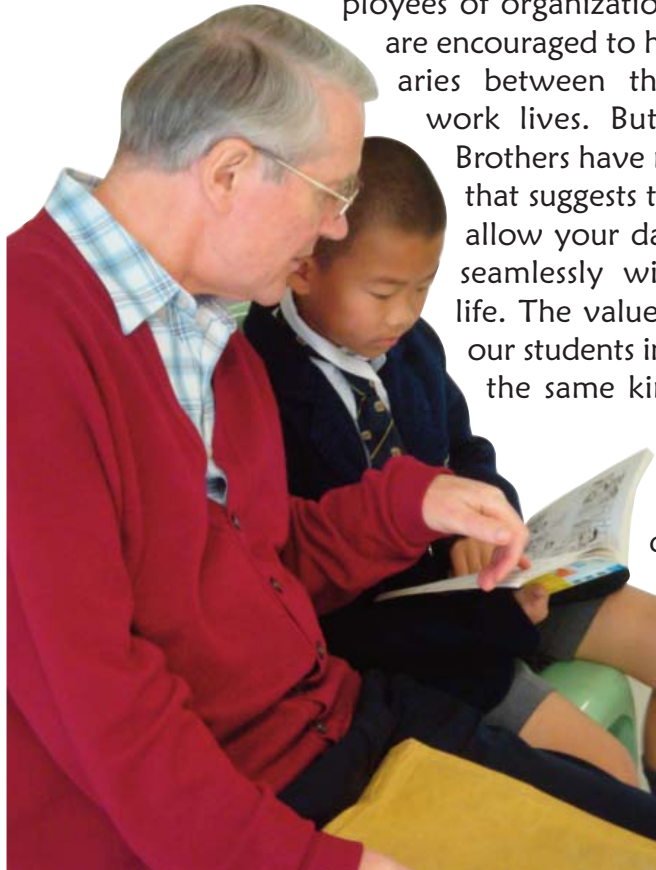
children) are welcome within the network. I know that my being married is of considerable benefit to the network in these times when vocations are so scarce! I know that I can and should be a beacon for those who are following me in this adventure. It is an honour for me to be able to give back to the Brothers something of what I received from them”. (M – RELAN)

- “I have the feeling that I belong to a large family and network: the Lasallians!” (M – RELEM)
- “In my own case I try to witness to those clear calls of faith through which God invites me to deepen my commitment to the ‘Lasallian Mission’. My personal life plan is carried out within the Signum Fidei experience. If I were to leave the Fraternity it would be a clear sign that I have abandoned my faith in CHRIST JESUS.” (M – RELAL)
- “Living in association means sharing in a thousand ways the daily building up of a consciousness centered in social justice from a Christian perspective. We do this together with people we know; people rooted in this issue and who chose it before we did; people who continue to do so day by day. The possibility always exists that we may be called at any time to help out in a particular situation, and because of this, we can never abandon our neighborhood. It means we are called to make, sustain and commit ourselves to relationships among the people we serve. It means making an enormous number of decisions, big ones and small ones, which will lead us to walk with them (and to really want to be with them) more and more. It entails responding to the needs of the needy in the way we think is most appropriate

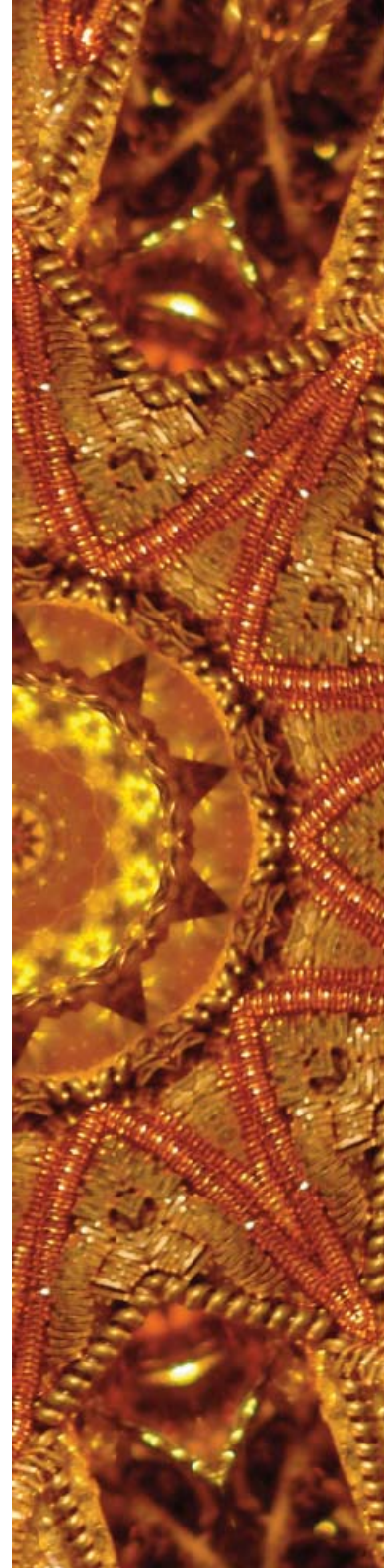


and also trying to encourage others to do likewise.” (Married couple – RELAL)

- “I knew that my work was becoming more than simply a job – I began to see it as a vocation. One thing that this realization has meant for me is that there isn’t always a clear separation between my work life and my personal life. In our society, employees of organizations and companies are encouraged to have strong boundaries between their personal and work lives. But the De La Salle Brothers have modeled a lifestyle that suggests that it is possible to allow your daily work to blend seamlessly with your personal life. The values that we instill in our students in the classroom are the same kinds of values that we should model outside the classroom. They have demonstrated that knowing the students outside the classroom is just as important as knowing them inside the classroom.” (M – RELAN)



- “I see myself a Lasallian for the rest of my life. I remain a teacher in a Lasallian school forever. Wherever the Lord places me, I serve Him as He wills. My family, my personal life, my dreams and everything that I am are all engulfed in my belonging to the Lasallian Family. Structures, systems, policies and responsibilities may change in the coming years; but the spirit of Lasallian Association and communion in mission remain. Whatever lies ahead in the future, I don’t see myself disengaging from Lasallian association. I dream that my own children receive a Lasallian education and that they too may experience the core values espoused by every Lasallian institution.” (W – PARC)
- “Let me start by saying that I describe vocation as something that fits a person like a hand fits into a glove – a glove that was made just for that hand! That is what my vocation as a Lasallian feels like. Some are now calling me a ‘lifer’ – someone who is as committed as he can be to the Lasallian Mission, someone who isn’t going anywhere, someone who is in it for the long haul. And they are right. I have stopped trying to get out of education. And I feel as though the Lasallian educational mission is my home. I have made no public profession or promise, and I have attached no time limits on my commitment – but I am deeply committed to this mission.” (M – RELAN)
- “We have been trained and formed to be a part of the mission, and we consider being a Young Lasallian to be a vocation, which is why we have a desire to be in dialogue with each other and the Institute. We feel we share this calling with all members of the Lasallian Family who live the essence of the dream of St. John Baptist de La Salle, working with and for the youth and



those most in need. Because we all share and believe in the Lasallian charism, we feel that we can significantly contribute to the future of the Institute by dedicating ourselves to the Mission.” (ICYL)

- “Through the connections I’ve developed over the years with the Brothers and other Partners it makes me increasingly excited for the future and proud to say that I plan to be a life-long Lasallian. I want to see our mission come alive everyday and I know this can only be done ‘together and by association.’ I feel so blessed that the Brothers welcome this partnership and that I am able to be a part of this Lasallian association.” (W – RELAN)

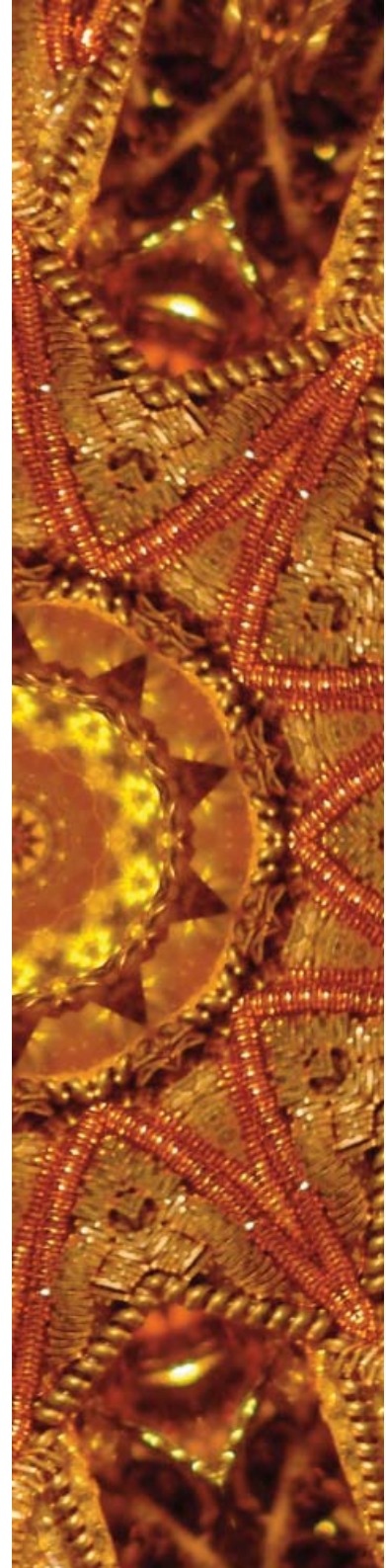
2.A. Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- 1.** To what extent do I see my participation in the Lasallian mission as a vocation - a call from God?
- 2.** How do I live this Lasallian vocation from my particular lifestyle (Single, Married, Religious)?

2.B. Lasallian Communities

“**1.1.** *The dynamic of association, that is, of associating for a common purpose, is an essential component of the Lasallian adventure that appears in the Institute’s first decade. The initial group of would-be teachers in 1680 gradually forms a community as Brothers who in turn create the Society of the Christian Schools, which the Church in 1725 approves as the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.*”

- “My personal life project as a Brother goes hand in hand with Lasallian association. Indeed, I want to be Brother to everyone, a Brother whose heart opens out and offers room for everybody. I truly believe that education must show a more human face to our world. ... if only those involved in it could be moved to show compassion.” (FSC – RELAF)
- “For me, community meetings are a source of strength, conviction and confidence in my mission, because I know I can count on others in faith and prayer. The fundamental elements of these meetings are mutual respect, faithfulness in attending, joyfulness, sharing, and above all the confidential nature of whatever is said.” (M – RELEM)
- “The ‘connectedness’ I feel within the larger Lasallian world is something that I strive to continue into the future. It is difficult to see my work in education without being associated to a community of people committed to the Lasallian mission.” (M – RELAN)





- “Being associated to the Mission means to be in a position to brave the challenges of change, to learn how to see the unpredictable future of God through a new lens, grow together but always in the light of Christ who called us.” (FSC – RELEM)
- “For me community is the basis for growth and formation in faith. It is my community that supports me in my daily life and encourages and strengthens my faith. Community is the place where the Gospel and Lasallian values of faith, fraternity and service are lived out. ...I think that without community the work one does would not make much sense, because it is the community that sends us out to evangelize, teach, catechize and to make

God's kingdom present in the world, especially to De La Salle's chosen ones - the poor." (M – RELAL)

- “What has changed in my life since I became an associate? I would say that basically nothing has changed. I continue to be the person I always was; committed to something I feel is mine. For me it is something worth fighting for. Perhaps I could say that my way of living as a Lasallian has changed, because now I belong to a community that grows in the light of the Gospel. I think that the community enriches us and makes us feel more like a brother or sister day by day. It is in community that our journey is made easier.” (M – RELEM)

2.B. Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What role does community play in my understanding of being Lasallian?
2. With what community (School, District, Region, Institute) do I identify most as a Lasallian?
3. What do I contribute to the growth of my community?
4. What kind of personal and faith accompaniment do I need from my local Lasallian communities?
5. How do I help young people understand the real meaning of Lasallian community?

