

**Some points of reference  
for a theological reflection  
concerning Shared Mission (2/2)**

**Brother José María Valladolid**

### 3. Levels of participation in the Shared Mission.

This aspect is derived from the previous point, that is to say, the identity of the Brother and of the lay person in their contribution to the Mission that is shared.

This is related to the use and application that is usually applied to the term “together and by association” as used to describe the two components who are sharing the mission.

I believe, nevertheless, that from a theological perspective, the meaning of the expression should be clarified.

Among the Brothers, no one denies the fact that the expression “together and by association” is a vowed commitment to have and keep Christian schools with the total giving of the person and that the “association” refers to the other Brothers who have “united themselves”, also with a total giving, for the same purpose.

The “together and by association” applied to the realization of the mission as shared with lay colleagues is of another kind since they cannot, nor should they, by reason of duties to their state, take on the same commitment as the Brothers.

So there are two levels of commitment in the mission:

– For the Brother, the level is “essential” and we could say that it is also “existential” because it is his entire being that he puts at the service of his mission and for which he is personally and communitarily responsible.

– For the lay person, the level is one of contributing his activity and along with it his qualities, talents and personal disposition. And certainly there is compensation which is so necessary because he needs to take care of the duties of his state - personal, family and social - as the fruit of his labors.

These are two levels that are based on the two distinct states in which they have chosen to live. And this does not mean that one is greater or better than the other but simply that the sharing is done through different situations.

When both the Brother and the lay colleague share and collaborate in the mission, what is common and stays on the same level is the work that is being carried out, which both can “convert” into an action of ministry, at the service of the

Kingdom of God, as the Rule says to the Brother that his work becomes a “ministry”.

This brings us to the point where the “way” of sharing the mission on the part of both the Brother and the lay person is raised, that is to say the implications that this mission has for each.

### 4. Implications of shared mission.

When the respective identities within the shared mission are clarified and also the subsequent diverse levels of participation, one needs to ask just what is the role that each has in carrying out this shared responsibility.

And here one needs to take into account the personal charisms or the qualities that each one has with a view to the work that one is going to carry out.

Now is the time when any type of bias needs to disappear so that each can exercise his competence according to his own qualities. If the lay person has the charisma or the necessary qualities to administer a school or a department within a school or perhaps to take charge of studies or whatever...it would not be inappropriate that the community – by means of competent authority – assign him to such a role. This task could also be assigned to a Brother if he has competence in this area.

But something else is also necessary because we are talking about a shared mission with a view to a work that evangelizes.

The evangelizing activity is not a mere profane material task. It is an effort that presupposes faith.

Each one’s role, according to personal charism, is to carry out the shared mission of evangelization by means of education. This cannot be done as a simple human or material task. In our ministry of administering schools, teaching or animating a group of students, organizing study sessions, leading sports activities, sharing life with students and their companions, etc., all of this becomes - or can become - an apostolic work, when one looks upon it that way and has the intention of carrying out the work as a way of extending the Kingdom of God. Otherwise it remains as a simple material work which can also be valuable for salvation and meritorious in God’s sight, but it would not be a ministerial role since it would lack the transforming element or spirit that transforms the simple task into an apostolate.

Our work should become an apostolic ministry. And this is done by infusing it with the spirit that can transform it.

The Founder told the Brothers that we need to be animated by the spirit of faith and zeal in order to be real Brothers. That is to say, to be apostles of the school. And if we do not have that spirit, we are dead members...even if we work very hard in our jobs. The spirit of faith and zeal is that which animates our mission and our ministry.

And in the Rule, article 13 tells us “the Brothers consider their professional work as a ministry”. The ministry is something more than a mere job. It is a job which has been transformed into a ministry.

So then if our mission is shared with lay persons, it is necessary that they also are animated by that spirit so that they can transform their work into an apostolate and convert it into an apostolic ministry.

The Brother underwent a period of preparation and

formation before he made his commitment to the service of the mission. During the time of formation - novitiate, scholasticate, advanced studies - he had the opportunity to acquire the spirit which is proper to the Institute.

Baptism and the reception of the sacraments of Christian initiation facilitate the acquisition of that spirit since our spirit of “faith and zeal” is “the same spirit of Christianity”. But the seed that was implanted in the soul need to grow and develop, it need vitality and strength...it needs cultivation and formation.

And how can teachers without faith or those who are non-Christian do this?

Current Church thinking considers that the salvation of Christ reaches out to all humanity, including those who have not had direct access to the Gospel. It recognizes that other religions also play a part in the seeking of truth: above all the Church recognizes the value of the good will of the person when he works with honesty even though he is not a believer. All human persons are related to the Mystical Body of Christ.

Many, without even knowing it, carry out their actions under transcendent or superior motives. The Spirit acts even in those who do not know the Spirit.

This reality that the Church today recognizes in total respect and openness, also establishes a base so that our mission “can be shared” even with those who are not Christians or those who are but do not practice their faith.

We see, then, that in the way of sharing the mission there is a relationship between mission, work and ministry. Many activities can remain on the “work” or job level. But one must intend that the work is transformed into an apostolic “ministry” at the service of the extension of the Kingdom of God.

This is done by means of “formation” and it is nourished and cultivated also by “continuing” formation that includes study, reflection, an ascetical life, prayer, a spiritual life, periodic evaluation of one’s own job, interchanges with colleagues involved in the same task, etc., etc.

This formation is as important for the lay person who shares our mission as it is for the Brother.

## **5. What requirements come from the reality of “shared mission”?**

There are many but I will only mention a few of them.

### **a) On the part of the Institute:**

1. There needs to be a commitment to the formation of all colleagues whom the Institute itself has invited to share its mission.

When the mission was shared only among the Brothers there was a very great effort to form new candidates and young people and the material cost for this was high. It was necessary to prepare each one spiritually, intellectually and pedagogically in order to carry out the apostolic ministry.

Now the Institute (each school, each District, the Congregation) needs to extend its wings and see that those

who collaborate in the mission that God and the Church have confided to us are also taken care of.

Many lay people already have the scientific and intellectual preparation to carry out their “job”. Perhaps they have not had the same opportunities for formation in the spiritual-apostolic aspect and in the appropriate pedagogy of our tradition. The Rule tells us: “The Brothers...provide, for those who desire, the means to learn about the Founder and to live according to his spirit” (17). And also: “The Brothers cooperate in forming Christian teachers”...and this refers in general to those who dedicate their lives to education. What better reason do we need to apply this in relation to those who work with us side by side? And the Rule, in article 13d also says: “In order to fulfill their mission, the Brothers, together with those who work with them, undertake a periodic evaluation and revision of their educational programs”, which in a certain way is a renewal in pedagogical practices by means of continual review.

Let us think that what we have and who we are should be viewed in light of the mission. And therefore this is a basis for helping those who share the mission so that they might do it adequately.

2. In this entire process of continuing formation one must keep in mind that a true Christian education comes from the Christian community. Let us also recall that the educational community of the school is also called, as much as possible, to be a community of faith. This will carry over into the apostolic and ministerial activities.

This supposes in a certain way that some elements of our life as consecrated persons also need to be shared: prayer, reflection, living together, formation, recreational periods...

### **b) On the part of the lay collaborator in the mission:**

1. There needs to be an effort at integrating oneself in the educational community, taking on its spirit and its sense of evangelization. It should be well understood that this should be done as much as possible, with respect for each person, for each person’s personal rhythm, options and circumstances.

2. An openness and willingness to assume the spirit of faith and zeal is necessary and it should permeate any apostolic activity as appropriate to one’s state in life as a lay person. This does not mean that our collaborators should become religious but that they can apply Lasallian spirituality with originality to their own life situation. This spirituality is simply a Christian spirituality which is carried out in the area of education.

3. A willingness to become familiar with and apply certain pedagogical principles that make up the Institute’s educational heritage. That is to say, there should be an overall Lasallian educational style in order to be able to identify more and more with educational teams who are carrying out this “shared mission” within the Church.

4. Contributing one’s own wealth of personal richness and experience as a person in the lay state, adding this to the experience of the educational teams and to the journey that the Institute is following in its evolution and adaptation to the call of God. •