

**LASALLIAN IDENTITY  
AND SHARED MISSION  
(3/3)**

**Brothers Fortunato Berciano,  
David Cachazo, Pablo Herranz**

**3. THE MISSION PROGRAM:  
“AN ENDLESS CREATION IN FIDELITY”.**

**A. MISSION, THE PROGRAM THRESHOLD.**

The Mission (God's work entrusted to mankind) needs the Program (mankind's creativity) in order to be able to be carried out. The Program is based on an analysis that mankind makes of reality; an analysis which is more or less exact, more or less true or in error. According to the analysis, it points out objectives, always limited ones, and chooses some means which will attempt to be way to obtain the objectives...

**NOTE:** We refer here always to an *educational program*. This is a program that responds to the needs of the education of young people; this is the “portion” that has been entrusted to us in the Mission.

But the Mission is always beyond the scope of the Program and should not be reduced by it; like the work of God - his Kingdom - is always beyond the scope of human endeavors, although it accepts his mediation. Therefore the Rule warns us: “*Mission needs constantly to be rediscovered*” (Rule 51).

The Program has its threshold in Mission - that is to say, in the Kingdom of God that is made present in education. Within it the question comes up that should continually be raised: How to reach to goal? How to advance the educational process so that it is an authentic process of evangelization? When this question is ignored, when Mission disappears from the Program's threshold, then it loses its very reason for existence. Of course, we are speaking of a prophetic Program: the educational work that comes up should be an attention-grabbing sign for the Church and for society.

The Lasallian community designs and carries out its Program of action. The entire educational community intervenes in the Program, but it is the Christian Community that must keep vigilant that the Program responds, as far as possible, to the goals and demands of the Mission.

**B. IN FAITHFULNESS AND CREATIVITY.**

The Program is established and reestablished in a continual dialogue of the Community with the Mission. It is a “*continual challenge to be creative*” (Rule 149). Each educational group of the Lasallian community - Brothers, lay teachers, parents and young collaborators - discerns its specific contribution to the Mission in order to include it in the Program. *Fidelity to the Mission consigns them to creativity for the Program.*

No facet of the Mission and as a consequence, of its inclusion in the Program for action, is exclusive nor reserved to any one group (of Brothers or lay colleagues). Each one is called to emphasize, but always complementarily with others, those aspects of evangelization that are more related to their own Christian vocation. And so lay colleagues will feel invited to contribute when there is reference made to Christian life in society and world realities. Religious will consider it their special expertise a certain emphasis on the Mystery of the Kingdom, the experience of faith, references to the radicalness of the Gospel. In any case, each one's role will be subordinated to the harmony of the whole.

This collaboration - on the same level - of Brothers and lay colleagues in the educational Program supposes a change of mentality:

*“For the Brothers this change of mentality will presuppose that they not consider themselves as the only ones who hold the Lasallian charism; it will also presuppose a belief in the vocation of the laity and to contribute to it and foster it. More important still will be the practical consequences at the personal and community level of the specific responsibility that they have within Shared Mission as the ‘memory, heart and guarantors of the Lasallian charism and the ferment of an adult Christianity”* (Circular 435, page 43).

*For lay colleagues the change of mentality will presuppose considering the Lasallian ministry where they work as their own enterprise and not as something which is incumbent only on the Brothers. This would involve assuming their places and responsibilities within the Lasallian Educational Program in a complete way. It would also involve a progressive discovery, naturally keeping in mind their social and familial obligations, their sense of gratuity and generous surrender in the educational commitment.*

*For both, Brothers and lay colleagues, the change in mentality will involve acceptance and respect for differences, especially those that arise from respective identities, the state of life and the different basic options. It will likewise involve taking on conflicts and crises and the means for overcoming these in truth, mutual respect of persons and in areas of the common good.* (General Council Document on Shared Mission, page 2).

(See in Circular 435 what the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Chapter has proposed for the drawing up of the Educational Program at the District Level (page 49, proposition 5 and for each school (page 46, recommendation 5.1).

Two essential characteristics of the Mission should be found in the Program as a guarantee that the Program responds to the Mission:

\* The first refers to the **recipients**: It is clear that the Mission is directed towards all, with no one being excluded; but it also has stated preferences: those most in need, the poorest, the marginalized...these are the preferred recipients.

The program should assume this preference and make it explicit.

\* The second refers to the **goal of the Mission**: full evangelization. Based on the current reality of mankind - "mankind in his situation" - it establishes a process that allows a person to arrive at a God experience, at identification with Christ, becoming that New Man who proclaims the Gospel. The Program should incorporate that character of a process so as to avoid as much as possible any kind of stagnation in any phase. At the same time, it should point to that final objective of evangelization which is the reign of God.

As it takes on the limitations and the ambiguity that any human program carries with it, the Lasallian Christian community should incorporate, with great determination, the tension to which these two dimensions of the Mission give rise. It is that tension which prevents the Program from becoming an end in itself and thus running out of steam.

What the entire Lasallian Program can be is a **prophetic program** in the field of Christian education before the Church and society. But this will depend on the sense of ministry that is being carried out by the educators and, in a special way, if in the context of the community there are some "prophets" who function as clear signs of the most important or risky aspects of Mission. The Brothers are called to this role, although it need not be theirs exclusively. They seal this with their Consecration.

### C. DANGERS.

There are two dangers that threaten the Lasallian community program in this new era of "Shared Mission":

\* **The first danger** consists of eliminating the Mission Program and confusing one with the other. This happens when one views "Shared Mission" from the viewpoint of "something to be done" and "effectiveness" and everything can be resolved by "sharing roles". The Program is carried out as a distribution of tasks, forgetting the utopia of Mission and the signs that reveal the transcendence of the Kingdom, the dynamism that should stamp the Program with the dimensions of the Mission to which we referred earlier.

The consequences of this are serious: professionalization and the disappearance of the ministerial consciousness, progressive and rapid displacement of the consecrated one (the Brother), since the "role" does not need consecration. The consecrated one is a prophet and this is the only requirement for Mission, for being a sign of the dimensions that reveal God's initiative, the presence of the Kingdom.

This danger can be fostered, in part, by the need for an ur-

gent solution to the legal requirements of teaching; it seems then that "one is obliged to distance oneself from utopia and go towards what is effective". But also the current situation of the reduction of religious personnel as opposed to lay colleagues frequently translates in a type of concealment of the ministerial dimension of our program since either by convenience, fear or mistrust the laity are not initiated in that area.

\* **The second danger** consists in making a "tabula rasa" of the different identities that intervene in the Program; frequently, because of not knowing their different meanings and how they complement one another in terms of the Mission, or because of a poor understanding of what it means to share the Mission. The confusion of roles may be the cause for many of a perplexity about their own identity. In a special way, the one who usually ends up on the losing end in this case is the Brother, who is then devoid of that which justifies the one who is "not normal": being the "prophetic sign" of the Kingdom, being the "Gospel memory" for the Mission. Of the Brother it is hoped that is might be, above all:

– a witness of faith, a proclamation - by means of his consecration - that God is present in the ministry of education;

– a sign of faith, of the New Man who is born again and reveals himself in the outstanding fraternity that is the Community of Brothers;

– a sign that points towards the final objectives of the Mission and its preferred recipients, as he commits himself and is more available for roles that require greater self-sacrifice.

*"As religious vowed to the ministry of Christian education, the first apostolate of the Brothers consists in the witness of their consecrated life' (Rule 24). We witness by our community life and the vow of stability, our availability to take on urgent tasks when others are unable or unwilling to do so and our unselfish dedication to the advancement of the laity. The Brothers' vow of association for the educational service of the poor is an indispensable sign for everyone of fidelity to a mission received from God" (Circular 435, page 44).*

Beyond good planning, organization and effectiveness the Brother should contribute to the Lasallian program concrete signs that the principal value is God, the Gospel, faith; signs that persons are more important than programs or schedules and it is worth "wasting" time with them, listening to them, accompanying them; signs of the preferential option for the poor, the little ones, those who are unloved and one who experiences - in his own poverty - life in solidarity with them; signs that what really counts is the Kingdom, creating the Church and for this purpose to be willing to collaborate and place one's energy at the service of and along with other members of the educational community, both believers and non-believers alike. •