

# ASSOCIATED TO RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

## I ASSOCIATED FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF THE POOR

### OBSERVATIONS

#### 1. ASSOCIATION IN THE PRESENT WORLD

It is clear that societies are taking people and their hopes increasingly into account. More and more, each day, concerned individuals and groups seek to take the future into their own hands and to influence the course of events, by expressing their opinions and making decisions in areas which concern them. It has been noted that, in most parts of the world, large organisations such as NGOs, especially those which promote education and the rights of children, are linked to numerous associations.



For its part, the Church is trying to promote a broader concept of the Kingdom of God, one in which each person becomes aware - both through his own and other traditions, history, culture and hopes - that he or she is a son or daughter of the same Creator, a member of the same family, called to take part with others in building up a Kingdom of God in which all will see themselves as sons and daughters of God.

The Church is very interested in Christians who work on behalf of their brothers and sisters, and who wish to do so in the 'Areopagus' (VC 96-99) where previously only religious congregations were present. The Church recognises the action of the Spirit in this and gives its support.

## 2. LASALLIAN ASSOCIATION

Association has existed since the origins of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, but has developed in an altogether unprecedented way during the past forty years. The foundation event which links the Institute today to its origins is that of June 6th 1694, when John Baptist de La Salle and twelve of his followers came together to consecrate themselves for life, to the Christian education of poor boys. The link between this foundation act of association and the growing interest in association in the Institute today can be clearly seen in the following chronological sequence:

- The 39th General Chapter reminded the Institute “that working with the poor is an integral part of the finality of the Institute” (D 28.2) The association of the Brothers is a response to this demand. The Brothers are conscious of this, and Partners will discover this gradually.
- The 40th General Chapter made a serious study of its origins and attached great importance to this vow of association. This coincided

with the consecration of the first members of Signum Fidei.

- The 41st General Chapter addressed itself to the Lasallian Family, thereby recognising thousands of persons who were contributing to the mission.
- The 42nd General Chapter treated the theme of Shared Mission and spoke of Partners. For the first time, Consultants had the right to speak at a Chapter.

During this same period, more or less everywhere, the formation being given developed a certain expectation in Partners who, not satisfied with being simply collaborators, wished to share in the spiritual heritage of the Institute, and have a place in the Lasallian mission as volunteers or Associates.

This present-day movement towards association obliges Capitulants and Consultants to examine what is happening on an international level, and lay down a number of guidelines for the future. Since we know that life is more dynamic than any definition or constraint, what we need, at the present moment at least, is a mini-

num framework which allows us to say clearly both who is associated today with the Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education, and how. This is the purpose of the following guidelines for individuals and groups.

## **GUIDELINES**

The development of the Lasallian Mission requires the Institute to allow itself to be stimulated by the dynamism apparent among partners and associates, and to encourage and support collaboration among themselves and with the Brothers, so that all can deepen their own understanding of association, in the light of the observations made, the Lasallian charism and the present theology of the Church.

This guideline is evidently dependent on how persons and groups function vis-a-vis the Lasallian charism and their involvement in the Lasallian mission. That is why, at the outset, we define “who is who.”

## **THE INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

The Institute is the first form of association desired by St. John Baptist De La Salle. The original vow for the service of the poor, which associated the Founder with twelve Brothers in 1694, is the source of Lasallian associations of lay persons and religious who wish to be part of the Lasallian Mission. This is where new forms of association for the mission have their origin.

In the light of this, the Brothers need to question themselves continually on how, in practice, they are associated among themselves, so that this association may be a



source of nourishment for them, and stimulate their growth as persons, their solidarity with others, and their listening to what God says about the community mission, the educational service of the poor, the reason for their association.

This has consequences for their lifestyle, relationships, fidelity and their various loyalties.

## PARTNERS

There are Partners who in fact share our mission in its multiple educational, catechetical, apostolic and professional aspects, and make it possible for the mission to be accomplished. They collaborate with conviction for the time they are with us.

We need to reflect on the process they need to follow to become Associates, if they so wish.

## ASSOCIATES

There are partners who have a long record of collaborating in the Lasallian Mission, and who feel a

call to deepen the charism, spirituality and Lasallian communion in which they wish to participate. In particular, their lives are already marked by a number of distinctively Lasallian characteristics:



- a vocation inspired by the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and his values;
- a life of faith which discovers God in everyday life understood in the light of Scripture and, for persons of other religions, in the light of their own sacred texts;
- a community experience of some form or other suited to the identity of its members;
- a mission of some duration which associates persons with the educational service of the poor;
- an openness of mind which makes it possible to see beyond the individual and his immediate environment.

Given this, there are many different ways of living in association: as individuals and as groups.

#### A) Individuals.

For some persons who are involved in the mission, sharing tasks and responsibilities is a truly personal response to an interior call which they feel, and which motivates them to give their time, to accept formation, to share, and to listen to Lasallian appeals for commitment to the service of young people in difficulty. By mutual agreement they may eventually be associated with a community of Brothers or a District, depending on their type of commitment. Perhaps they are already part of a process which will lead them, later on, to join an intentional group, if they so desire.

In certain cases these persons, if they so wish, and at their request, may express a desire to be associated in a more formal way with the Institute. It is for the Brother Visitor and his Council to recognise these persons as Associates.

#### B) Intentional Lasallian groups.

We call groups 'intentional' when

their members, in response to an interior call, come together voluntarily to practise some aspects of Lasallian life, each group choosing a particular type of life and the length of their members' commitment. For this to be considered an intentional Lasallian group there are three necessary conditions:

- that some aspects of Lasallian practice are clearly visible;
- that there is a clear commitment to young people and the poor;
- that the Visitor and his Council have authenticated it in an official document for a prescribed time.

An analysis of the present situation leads us to recognise a number of intentional Lasallian groups:

- those which have their autonomy and proper recognition independently of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. This is the case of the Institutes of the Hermanas Guadalupanas La Salle, the Lasallian Sisters of Vietnam and the Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate;
- those which are structurally linked with the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: Signum Fidei and the Lasallian Third Order.

C) Other intentional groups.

In the medium term, we think that it is possible that a number of other intentional groups will be founded. In fact, these groups already exist, although they may have no juridical structure. They exist because their members have developed links and relationships, and have adopted projects, and have done so with explicit reference to the Lasallian charism which they share. If they so wished, they could envisage becoming intentional groups.

Such a request could come from a whole variety of groups. There could include, among others: Lasallian teams, teams of educators and teachers, joining forces temporarily to respond to the specific needs encountered by young people in difficulty, Christian Lasallian communities, volunteers, Lasallian Youth, young people doing missionary work, former pupils, parents of students...

We should note that in the composition of these groups one can meet Brothers, other Christians, members of other religions, and

persons of good will whose point of reference, as the 42nd General Chapter indicates, is the “human and spiritual values recognized and pursued by lived by all Lasallians- meditation, service of the poor, the family, human rights, the rights of children...”. (Circular 435, p.43.)

Consequently, we recognise as being associated with the Lasallian mission all intentional groups and all persons who respond to an interior call by an educational commitment which has Lasallian characteristics, and which has been authenticated by a competent authority.

Together, these persons and groups are associated with the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, in order to respond, in a complementary manner, to the demands of the Lasallian Mission. The charism inspiring this mission was given to Saint John Baptist de La Salle, and was authenticated by the Church, for the service of young people.

This imposes on the Brothers of the Christian Schools some obli-

gations with regard to the process of accompaniment and formation of Associates.

### *Recommendation 1*

*In the light of the guidelines of the 43rd General Chapter each Region, District, Sub-District, and Delegation promotes the association of Partners and/or Associates and Brothers, and of Partners and/or Associates among themselves, to reflect on their identities as associates, and to develop forms of association for the Lasallian Mission.*

### *Recommendation 2*

*The Institute has extensive educational experience of working with young people and educators professing other faiths. We ask that more serious thought be given in the Institute to the way in which we share the Lasallian charism with educators and young people who are of other faiths. That the Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations concerned establish groups to study this question.*

### *Recommendation 3*

*That our Institute continue to develop its collaboration at all lev-*

*els with the Institutes of the Lasallian Guadalupana Sisters, the Lasallian Sisters of Vietnam and the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, who share Lasallian spirituality and the Lasallian mission.*

### **Proposition 1**

**In order to encourage and support the development of Lasallian association for the educational service of the poor: that, in the next seven years, each Region, District, Sub-District, and Delegation decide on practical steps to promote the creation and development of groups of Partners and/or Associates and of Brothers, as well as of Partners and/or Associates among themselves, which will reflect on their identity in the context of the Lasallian mission, and to develop forms of association.**

### **Proposition 2**

**That Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations set up study groups on our way of sharing the Lasallian charism with educators and young people of**

**other faiths.**

### **Proposition 3**

**That Brother Superior General and his Council in consultation with the Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations organise an international meeting of Brothers, Partners and Associates, around the year 2004, with a view to:**

- sharing experiences of association;**
- analysing and evaluating the implementation of the process of association; and,**
- presenting plans of action for the next General Chapter.**

**That after this meeting, the Centre of the Institute publish a report describing the experiences of association that are most original and significant.**

## **II LEADERSHIP AND ACCOMPANIMENT STRUCTURES**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

1. The evolution of the forms of association is the result of a number of factors which need to be

considered together:

- the effort that the Institute has made to share spirituality and mission with Partners,
- the warm welcome given by many Partners to the proposal of the Institute within the framework of shared mission,
- the huge change that has come about regarding those involved in the mission, who have become more numerous and more diverse.

2. The ways of practising association today in the Institute are very diverse and vary a great deal from one District to another. In addition, the possibilities of association offered by Districts also vary greatly. The same is true of the availability of Brothers and Partners to promote and support association. During all this time the mission grows and the challenges it faces become more numerous.

3. At the present time, there exist various forms of association

- associations of a legal or functional type,
- associations of a spiritual type,
- associations of a canonical type.

At the same time, some forms of association have all three charac-

teristics. This is the case of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

4. As Districts already exist, it is natural they should be called upon to be the frame of reference for all forms of association already in place, or that are going to be



adopted. There is a need to:

- foster in all these experiments a deep sense of belonging,
- define more clearly the role and the identity of the Brother in them.

5. It is evident that, regarding the practice of association, the Institute is in a period of transition, and that it is important to take into account:

- the weight of certain of our historical structures which can make experiments with association difficult,
- the need for a multiplicity of experiments for a limited period, so that they can be examined and evaluated when they end.

- the nature and the evolution of each of these experiments,
- the need to direct and accompany these different experiments.

6. Consequently, we consider it necessary for the Institute to allow a period of freedom for the promotion and the accompaniment of structures and forms of association.

## **GUIDELINES**

1. The Institute is experiencing important changes today in Lasallian institutions, in the life and the expression of its spirituality, in the role of Brothers' communities, in the ownership of buildings and so on. All these changes call for modifications in the very concept of the District and its leadership.

2. Lasallian association, which collaborates in the mission of the Institute, adopts forms of community life adapted to local circumstances and to the identity of each person, Brother and Partner.

A) The Brothers welcome sharing

with Partners, and particularly with those who desire to live according to the Lasallian charism, the contribution of their respective identities. They see in this a sign of spiritual and apostolic fecundity.

For this purpose they contribute in a creative and dynamic way to the setting up, and the development of different structures of association, assuming the role of alert and, if necessary, critical judges. The specific character of their contribution is based on:

- the total gift of their life,
- the witness of their community life,
- the experience of God as a absolute.

B) Each District, while safeguarding the identity of the Brother (R 9,10) will leave to Partners the possibility of defining -ad experimentum- new types of association and commitment among themselves and/or with the Brothers, in the service of the educational mission of evangelisation.

C) By committing themselves to such associations, Associates re-

spond to their mission and to the Lasallian charism and live out their baptismal vocation. As for La-



sallian spirituality, it is important that lay people find an expression of it which is proper to themselves. Such expression will take into account the diversity of situations and the significant number of women committed to the mission of the Institute.

D) These associations will need to:

- affirm their attachment to St. John Baptist de la Salle and to his spirituality,
- work out a link with the superiors in charge of the District,
- establish forms of membership, shared life, and formation.

E) The District will need to assume responsibility for evaluating these experiments, in order to authenticate their commitment as Associ-

ates of the Institute. It will ensure that members of legally constituted associations which are responsible for the functioning and direction of Lasallian educational establishments, and in particular of schools, are aware that the educational service of the poor is a priority. In view of this, they will evaluate each year how, in practice, this has been a priority when administrative and financial decisions have been made.

3. Association develops especially when leadership and accompaniment are provided.

A) Such structures are developed in full collaboration with the local community of Brothers and with a strong conviction of belonging to the District, which is the guarantor of their Lasallian authenticity.

B) The Brothers will endeavour to contribute to the setting up of these structures by showing a willing acceptance, and by forms of commitment adapted to their possibilities and to those of the community. This will lead them to:

- facilitate the setting up of the

necessary structures,

- establish links between the different partners who meet there,
- take an active part in running these structures.

C) The General Chapter could ask the Districts:

- to involve in their structures partners who have leadership and accompaniment roles linked with the mission.

- to ensure that the leadership and accompaniment structures that are set up take into account all aspects of the personality of young people, so as to provide the integral education wished by John Baptist de la Salle;

- to ensure they make available to all educators, whatever their school or institution, the activities they organize;

- that Districts in which vocations are drying up, or which are affected by ageing, ensure that their leadership and accompaniment structures are gradually linked with those of other Districts.

D) These leadership and accompaniment structures, which give life to association, need to determine, from the outset, objectives,

means, and the amount of time needed to enable Lasallian identity to mature sufficiently. The implementation of these structures should come about as the result of genuine collaboration between Brothers and partners.

#### **Proposition 4**

**That, during the next seven years, the Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations:**

- evaluate and strengthen present forms leadership and accompaniment offered to partners in Lasallian establishments; and**
- encourage, sustain and evaluate new forms of collaboration and association, which will enable those who implement them to find new forms of commitment in the educational service of the poor.**

### **III THE PARTICIPATION OF LASALLIAN ASSOCIATES IN DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES CONCERNED WITH THE LASALLIAN MISSION**

#### **OBSERVATIONS**

The educational mission of the Institute to help young people, especially the poor, remains relevant today, and is even more necessary than ever before. In many places in the Institute, numerous men and women who collaborate with us, tell us they wish to work more closely with us in carrying out this mission, and to do so with greater energy.

In this they are motivated by the inspiration of John Baptist de La Salle, his charism, and his spirituality.

In a pluralistic and inter-faith context, and in countries where Christians are a minority, educators appreciate Lasallian educational values and methods, and they participate actively in the work of education. Also, in numerous places, many Lasallian Associates live out their baptismal vocation through a strong educational commitment, by sharing Lasallian spirituality and educational ministry, either with Brothers or by themselves, when no Brothers are present. We recognise in the diffusion of the Lasallian charism a grace of the Spirit for our time.

We have heard of numerous successful examples in various places, of our partners and Associates assuming leadership roles and contributing to the vitality of the Lasallian mission. In many places, precisely because of this vitality and commitment, we have given our partners and Associates the right to speak and vote when decisions are made regarding the mission and the running of establishments. But the situations in which this participation takes place are quite diverse.

## **GUIDELINES**

1. It is time, therefore, for the Institute, strengthened by these successful examples and sustained by these promptings of the Spirit, to formalise this participation to a greater extent and recognise it both in principle and in fact.

2. The Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations of the Institute have not advanced in the same way, or at the same pace, in this matter, but all are aware of its basic reasonableness. It is, therefore, necessary to take into account, in each instance, the local

and regional situation, while resolutely taking the steps needed to move in this direction.

3. Respectful of the particular identity of each individual and each group, Brothers and Associates must be allowed to live their respective vocations with the support and structures necessary for each group. As the Rule reminds us (Art. 39a), “The solidarity among the Brothers that results from their vow of association for the service of the poor through education, gives support to the apostolic activity of the Institute.”

Similarly, the Rule (Art. 146) declares, “The Institute sees the existence of the various Lasallian movements as a grace from God renewing its own vitality. . . . The Institute helps them [Lasallian Associates] to achieve their proper autonomy. At the same time it creates appropriate ties with them and evaluates the authenticity of their Lasallian character.”

4. Taking into account the diversity of local situations, we need to adapt existing structures and invent new ones where needed, in

order to ensure the participation of Associates in the Lasallian mission, both at decision-making levels and in the accomplishment of this mission.

**Proposition 5**

**That in Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations, the Brothers and their Associates create a structure, where it does not exist, or improve a structure responsible for the Lasallian educational mission, in which all participate with a deliberative vote.**

**Proposition 6**

**That in each District, Sub-District, and Delegation, the Chapter or the Visitor, the Delegate and the President of the Delegation and their Councils, in consultation with their Associates, determine the criteria for the participation of Brothers and their Associates in the structure responsible for the Lasallian educational mission, and define its relationship with the Visitor, the Delegate and President of the Delegation and their Councils. This plan will be submitted to Brother Superior General and**

**his Council for approval.**

**Proposition 7**

**That Brother Superior General and his Council create a Standing Committee for the Lasallian Mission,\* including among its members:**

- one or two General Councillors representing the Brother Superior General,
- a number of persons responsible for the educational mission in Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations; and,
- a Secretary for the Lasallian Educational Mission, based principally in Rome, but available to visit Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations.

*\*The Standing Commission for the Lasallian Mission, coordinated by the Secretary for the Educational Mission, should among other things:*

- serve as adviser to Brother Superior General on questions related to the educational mission
- accompany Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations through visits or appropriate interventions, in order to promote interdependence,
- encourage educational forums on education in the Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations,
- convoke the International Assembly on the Lasallian Educational Mission,

*-ensure Institute representation in civil and Church educational organisations.*

### **Proposition 8**

**That the Standing Committee convoke an International Assembly on the Lasallian Educational Mission. It will determine the criteria for participation and propose the objectives of the International Assembly. It will convoke this assembly at least once before the General Chapter.**



## **IV FORMATION OF BROTHERS AND PARTNERS FOR THE LASALLIAN MISSION**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

1. Despite the great diversity of formation programmes and experiences in the Institute, there is still a great need for the formation of Brothers and Partners. Lasallian formation tends to create unity in diversity among Partners, despite multi-cultural and multi-religious contexts.

2. In general, the Brothers have been responsible for the formation of Partners. There are now some Partners who also can assume this responsibility. However, there are some Brothers who still resist the formation of Brothers and Partners together.

3. Some programmes must be restructured to meet more fully the needs of Partners. Moreover, the formation of Brothers and Partners for the Lasallian mission sometimes tends to be insufficiently linked with the formation programmes of the local Church.

4. The expectations of some Partners with regard to association and formation do not always correspond to those of the Brothers.

5. There are some Brothers who resist giving responsibilities to Partners. However, some Partners feel pressured by Brothers to take responsibilities while others, with regard to the Lasallian mission, feel unsure about their exact responsibilities in that mission.

6. While many Brothers and Partners have followed programmes, often they are not appointed to positions for which they have been prepared, owing mainly to unforeseen circumstances and improvisations.



7. In some areas of the Institute, there is a lack of human and economic resources for the formation of Partners

## **GUIDELINES**

To ensure better formation for those involved in the Lasallian

mission of human and Christian education, the following guidelines are important;

1. With regard to spirituality:

- Ensure, as a priority, that Lasallian spirituality is the central element unifying all formation processes.

2. With regard to pedagogy:

- Create formation programmes for Brothers and Partners that are developmental and inculturated at every stage of formation.

- In general, ensure at the Institute level, that formation programmes and documents dealing with the formation of partners and Brothers are more widely publicised.

3. With regard to accompaniment:

- That Institute authorities at all levels ensure the accompaniment of Brothers and Partners in the formation process;

- That Partners be encouraged to assume progressively responsibility for their own formation;

- That competent Partners be encouraged to participate in the running of formation programmes.

4. With regard to evaluation:

- That the formation of Brothers and Partners not be simply intellectual, but also experiential, leading to conversion and commitment to association for the mission.

#### *Recommendation 4*

*Priority of Formation. In order to strengthen “association for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21st century”, we recommend that formation of Brothers and Partners be a priority in the Institute for the next seven years.*

#### *Recommendation 5*

*Formation Centres. That Institute formation Centres for Brothers and Partners at international, regional and local levels promote the participation of Brothers and Partners in formation sessions organised in flexible modules.*

#### **Proposition 9**

**That the Centre of the Institute organize two sessions for the formation of formators during the intercapitular years, which will include a study of association for the educational service of the poor.**

#### **Proposition 10**

**That the Bursar General and the International Finance Committee, with the approval of the Brother Superior General and his Council, ensure that the appropriate funds are raised and administered to support the formation of Partners in Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations with limited resources.**

#### **Proposition 11**

**That those responsible for the organization of plans for Lasallian formation throughout the Institute ensure that they include a period of first-hand experience in the educational service of the poor, which is worthwhile, sufficiently long and accompanied.**

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