

INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS FOR THE 46TH GENERAL CHAPTER

BUILDING NEW PATHS TO TRANSFORM LIVES

CREATING A NEW LASALLIAN MAP



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PART I



INTRODUCTION





**IT IS *NOT*
BUSINESS AS USUAL**



The Preparatory Commission of the 46th General Chapter invited Lasallians throughout the world to think about, discuss, and share their thoughts about the future directions of the Institute.

The principle vision they chose to help guide us into our future is building new paths to transform lives. With this illuminating and challenging metaphor, the Commission identified three primary topics to be explored: association for mission; leadership, sustainability and governance; and life of the Brothers (Circular 476, April 2020).

It is with this inspiring, expressive, stimulating image and invitation that we share our thoughts and convictions with all in the Lasallian family. We are convinced that the Preparatory Commission's invitation for input signals the need for a dynamic response for the future effectiveness and relevancy of our Lasallian charism. This also acknowledges that we are no longer enclosed in the time honored world of our past, a world in which the Brothers and the entire Lasallian family faithfully lived, worked, educated, and was formed in the spirit of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. The world and Church in which our global Institute now exists has already experienced transformation—a transformation certainly not entirely of our own making!

The entire world has had to encounter a stark and alarming reality. Nations and people were stunned by the terror of the coronavirus pandemic. This universal horror crashed upon an unsuspecting and unprepared world. Since this initial shock, there is a growing international realization that this is not simply a global medical crisis. The horror is that this pandemic has become an economic, psychological, interpersonal, familial, educational, and religious world disaster. In an instant, this international catastrophe transformed the normal and the expected into the extraordinary and the unpredictable. In essence, even if therapeutic medications are found and a vaccination is developed, all will not be the same as before. Life is not now and will not be *business as usual*.

Let's face facts—we Lasallians, along with everyone else on this planet, can no longer exist in our traditional comfort zones.

Recall the account of Jesus' Ascension into heaven. A startling question was asked of those present: "Suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They asked, 'Why do you stand here looking into the sky?'" (Acts 1:10–11).

Yes, Jesus left this earth; but he left us, the people of God, with his grace and the Holy Spirit. We are called to love, to do good, and to teach all nations in his name. Jesus does not want us to be stunned onlookers, gazing at the sky. We must not just be dazzled and bewildered onlookers—we are energetic and effective *doers*. We are Lasallian *doers*!

Lasallians *doers* must confront the reality that our traditional, successful approaches and methods are not enough for today's world. We can't just gaze at our great Lasallian past.

We must create new paths.

These new paths must nurture a faith and zeal that will propel us to transform lives for the new realities that have fractured our past assumptions, expectations, and successes.

Jesus does not want us to be stunned onlookers, gazing at the sky. We must not just be dazzled and bewildered onlookers. We are energetic and effective doers. We are Lasallian doers!

AND NOW . . . TODAY'S WORLD

Even without the global pandemic, the need for new and effective responses and solutions for the modern world's growing problems and new challenges is apparent everywhere.

Automation, digital advancements, quantum computing, and other changes have transformed how people live, work, and worship. Also, in society and in the Church, we see growing ideological differences, damaging discriminatory forces, and a diaspora of many endangered populations. Peace and harmony among people, nations, religions, and even among people of faith are at risk. Perhaps it is better to admit that the global pandemic intensified and magnified, rather than caused, the world's corrosive and growing tensions.

We must transform how we are Lasallians together and by association—not apart and in isolation!

Troubling and turbulent realities—technological, environmental, political, and religious in nature—have unquestionably changed how we interact together, communicate together, and work together. They have also changed how we pray together, worship together, share Eucharist together, educate together, and live as brothers and sisters together. Therefore, we must confront the current social distancing norms, and transform how we are Lasallians together and by association—not apart and in isolation!

Indeed, only those who are content simply to gaze into the sky would conclude that it is *business as usual!* The need to discover new ways to be together and by association has never been more pressing than now. We must seek a variety of new paths to nurture Saint John Baptist de La Salle’s charism in the reality of today’s world, where diversity abounds. It will be in, through, and with a diversity of pathways that we discover Jesus living in our hearts—all our hearts, together and forever.

However, who among us has to be reminded or admonished that such transformation is no easy task for individuals, institutions, cultures, or nations? And who among us would argue that history has not demonstrated clearly that even more difficulties and resistance arise when the Church is confronted with the need for change and transformation? Just look at recent Church history. Have we yet assimilated, fully and universally, the hoped-for *aggiornamento* of Vatican II within the one, holy, Catholic Church as the people of God?

The record is undeniable and clearly demonstrates that, in the course of its 2,000 year history, the Church has led us on a prudently cautious and gradual path to innovation and change. We in the Institute, as part of the people of God, have faith in the discreet and studied decisions the Church has made in order to be respectful, true, and mindful of our Christian traditions and revelations. Yet we sometimes have to recognize and accept that significant, crucial, and startling circumstances arise that do not always allow us to pause or hesitate. The Founder realized this over 300 years ago. Now again, three centuries later, such a momentous time for transformation and action has come upon us!

The reality of the modern world, with its global technology, has transformed distance, time, economies, communication, and education. Can the Church or the Institute deny that we also inherit such forces and influences? Can any reasonable, faith-filled person believe that all we need to do is wait for *a return to normal*? The normal has already ceased to be normal. The ordinary is now the extraordinary. We must discover new paths that will make our traditional Lasallian faith and zeal effective and manifestly Christian as the people of God for the reality of a new world and Church! It is certainly not business as usual.

We, as the Lasallian family, must accept individually and regionally that what we do not know, what we will ever hope to know, and what we need to know, will not be ours in the future if all we do is repeat our traditional thinking and approaches. It will only be the free and open sharing of our rich diversity, our unique ways and experiences in following the Founder's charisma, that will enable us to build new paths for our Lasallian future.

The Lasallian spirit that has been infused in us and our institutions worldwide is captured not just *with information* presented in words, proclamations, or mission statements. Rather, Saint La Salle's spirit is living together and by association *within formation* as we respect, accept, and interact with the diversity among ourselves. That is what will bring to fruition the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."





LASALLIAN MAP MAKER'S TAKEAWAY

If we are to be true to Saint La Salle's charism for the 21st century, a sustainable Lasallian future requires nothing less than a metanoia. It will take a conversion in how we think, plan, and interact in society, the Church, and the Institute. The building of new paths has become an urgent and critical need requiring radical and fundamental transformation. Whether it is in the developed world, the developing world, or the emerging world, globalism and the pandemic certainly brought us all together, in horror! Yes, we have become "one" . . . in adversity!

MY MAP MAKING NOTES

PART II



CONTEXT





CHAPTER 1

**THE MAP MAKERS: A LASALLIAN
JOURNEY IN THE 21ST CENTURY**



Realizing we are still *in formation* as we bring new life to Saint La Salle’s charism, we respond to the Preparatory Commission’s invitation to reflect on issues for the 46th General Chapter.

To help us with this reflection, we suggest that all Lasallians should envision themselves as Map Makers. If we are to be building new paths to transform lives, embracing the image that the Map Maker metaphor conjures in our imaginations can be quite helpful. There will be many and varying roads, pathways, routes, and highways that can lead us to our Lasallian future. The Map Maker is challenged to explore, search, and seek the best directions to a desired destination.

We, Lasallian Map Makers, cannot be content with complacently gazing at the sky and going nowhere, doing nothing at a fast rate of speed! We should heed the Gospel message and accompany people on a journey where they can realistically encounter *the signs of the times*. To be willing to chart such a journey compels us to find new directions so as to avoid today’s roadblocks and detours, exploring possible pathways to new horizons and destinations, so that the Founder’s charism may be rediscovered in today’s world.

We strive to entice the faithful to be ready, willing, and able to take this Lasallian journey with us.

We endeavor to make that journey by exploring a relevant and impressive map that leads to a pragmatic, living, and active theology. We re-envision our spirituality by exploring new and fascinating vistas on a journey to the Gospel message of love. We strive to entice the faithful to be ready, willing, and able to take this Lasallian journey with us.

As practical Lasallians, we understand and acknowledge that we cannot fully embrace every global issue. We must carefully and deliberately choose the most critical and timely issues of the times. As the Map Makers that will find new paths needed to transform lives, Lasallians are aware that it is necessary to accept the challenges and risks that befall animators who bring about change to the status quo.

We must be prepared to accept that when charting new vistas in the evangelization of the faithful, even more demanding challenges will surely arise. (Recall all the trials and tribulations that the Founder encountered with civil and ecclesial authorities.) Given the divided world and Church that exists today, we must accept and embrace this faith-filled objective in the spirit and boldness of our Founder. Our aim as a consecrated religious community is to be loving and serving companions with all the women and men in the Lasallian family, and with all the youth and others entrusted to our care.

We may even have to chart a pathway toward a new, contemporary Heroic Vow for the future of the Lasallian family, mission, and charism.

TRANSFORMATION: IT HAS HAPPENED

The issues that need to be explored will necessarily be complex and controversial. You will find no easy answers in this presentation. There are no individuals, groups, or regions in the Institute that have the one right solution. Although even we Lasallians do not always see concerns and issues in the same way, all Lasallians must have an openness and trust that we will be guided by the Holy Spirit, demonstrated by an openness and trust for and among all in our Lasallian family.

We are able to read the signs of the times well enough to understand that a core and elemental world transformation is not about to happen; it has *already* happened. Today's reality strongly suggests that we can no longer rely solely on traditional, catechetical, doctrinal, or pedagogical propositions. How human beings seek their individual ends to a life worth living is not found on old maps that plot familiar and traditional paths. This is evident from the diversity of current views on morality, ethics, marriage, family, gender, and sexuality. In today's world, laws, rules, and regulations are not the roads that most people, especially the young, are willing to take in order to embrace Gospel values.

The problem is not a weakening of the truths and values that Jesus taught. For many in today's culture, Christian love does not rely on rigid traditional norms and propositional catechetical rationales. Two thousand years ago, Jesus was the new and unexpected Map Maker. Jesus found a deeper reality and significance for his Father's teachings

than the one charted via Old Testament pathways. He used parables, extended metaphors, to help people see new directions in relating to God's love. Jesus became the Map Maker for the people so that they would take the journey with him to his Loving Father.

We are very familiar with many of Jesus' metaphors:

I am the bread of life. JOHN 6:35

I am the light of the world. JOHN 8:12

The kingdom of God . . . is like a mustard seed. MARK 4:30-31

I am the good shepherd. JOHN 10

I am the true vine; you are the branches. JOHN 15:5

We hope this presentation may be the beginning of a new map, one that charts the terrain and traces the different roads that may lead to the destination: Saint La Salle and our loving Creator God. We are well aware that the General Chapter and the entire Lasallian family will be the essential Map Makers and will decide on the specific new directions needed for our future. We who share this reflection believe it is timely, essential, and urgent for Lasallians to start mapping out this journey now.

The core of our Founder's charism was his unwavering commitment to explore and create new ways to bring Jesus' Gospel message to the people of his time. It is now our time to be the bold, courageous, and prophetic Institute that will map out ways to bring that same Gospel message in understandable, effective, and relevant ways to the people of the global and rich diversity of the 21st century!



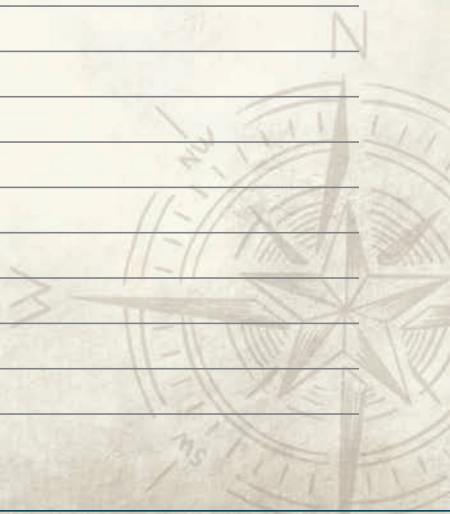
LASALLIAN MAP MAKER'S TAKEAWAY

The Lasallian Map Makers will chart new paths, roads, and challenging ways to make Saint La Salle not only the Patron of Teachers, but also the animator of Christian transformation for our rapidly changing world.

We must attempt to create a map that reveals new and different roads, ones that make our Founder's vocation of caring for those entrusted to us alive in today's very different cultural, religious, and spiritual times.

We are not a group of lazy and feeble stargazers who just stand here looking into the sky.

MY MAP MAKING NOTES





CHAPTER 2

**DISCOVER. DREAM.
DESIGN. DELIVER.**



In the over 300 years of our Institute’s history, the Brothers and their Partners have been consistently successful in nurturing and making timely pragmatic decisions that reflected the Founder’s spirit of faith and zeal.

Such an outstanding historical record could only be achieved with the energy and courage of trailblazers who did not fear the future or the challenges it posed. With their vision, sacrifices, and tremendous, pragmatic drive to serve all those entrusted to their care, the Brothers and their lay colleagues have continuously made Saint La Salle’s charism relevant and effective for their time. We believe that the reason for, and the driving force behind, such a historical achievement is captured in the Lasallian Reflection #5:

The Brothers and their lay colleagues have continuously made Saint La Salle’s charism relevant and effective for the times.

Lasallians do not close their doors to dreaming and believing. We want to think big, to get rid of old dreams and give God the opportunity to shape His dream for humanity through us. We expect great things from God and undertake great things for Him. We do it “together and by association” without fear of sharing our faith and our dreams

With that reflection in mind, we suggest that the Chapter and the Lasallian family, after reviewing the Chapter proceedings, give some added dimensions and structure to that quest and *give God the opportunity to shape His dream for humanity through us.*

THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED IF THE CHAPTER, AND THEN THE ENTIRE LASALLIAN FAMILY, PURSUE THE FOLLOWING:

- ❑ **Seek to DISCOVER**, together and anew, the best of our Lasallian historical foundations, our mission of service to the poor through education, and our spiritual legacy grounded in faith and zeal. We do this with the inspiration that Lasallians embrace through








- living and dedicating ourselves to our twelve Lasallian Virtues: Gravity, Silence, Humility, Prudence, Wisdom, Patience, Reserve, Gentleness, Zeal, Vigilance, Piety, Generosity.
- ❑ **Seek to DREAM** of new pathways and structures that will provide healing for our fractured world and infuse new energy, vitality, and hope into all the youth and families that are entrusted to our care, ensuring the much needed presence and service of the Lasallian family.
 - ❑ **Seek to DESIGN** new and sometimes non-traditional and creative responses to issues that have been determined as critical. We will suggest some structures and initiatives that may make the seemingly impossible tasks possible, and that may necessitate some future innovative commitments.
 - ❑ **Seek to DELIVER**, as God's *coworkers*, the promise of fullness of life for all whose lives we have the privilege to touch, embracing the challenges to be healers and agents of change so that we Lasallians may help bring to fruition the prayer, "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."




To accomplish these challenges, it is important for us to appreciate the context of our deepest values and faith as Christians. We know that in the beginning God created a perfect world and it was *good—yes, very good*. What has happened to the peace, harmony, unity, and love that was the creation of a loving and merciful God? In this presentation, we point out what we see in our fractured world. We fully accept Pope Francis' poignant insight from his homily during an open air Mass at Cuba's Revolution Square, Havana, in 2015:

"Service is never ideological—for we do not serve ideas, we serve people."

A SNAPSHOT OF THE 21ST CENTURY

With the Holy Father's observation in mind, let us take a snapshot of our 21st century garden, which is a creation of our own making and not of God's will for us.

-  The plight of many children and families without access to the fundamental necessities of life. Dysfunctional families facing traumatic experiences that diminish or destroy the quality of life and hope for tomorrow.
-  The too-common lack of respect for life, and the taking of lives in gun violence and gang and drug activities that threaten the safety of children and families in many countries and cities of the world.
-  The creation of a culture that fails to integrate the sacred with the values of the world, thus devaluating care of our soul, spirit, and need for wholeness.
-  The void created by cultural and generational disharmony, which separates men, women, and children from the wealth of experience and knowledge that is needed and desired.
-  The exploitation of children, which subjects them to abuse, neglect, and human trafficking, demeaning and destroying God's plan that all should be able to achieve fullness of life.
-  The reality of geopolitical discord and terrorism, which threatens the safety, stability, and very existence of human life within countries and between the countries of peoples of the world.
-  The inequitable distribution of wealth and the denial of economic opportunity for many, which results in poverty and hopelessness for countless children and families.

-  The human cruelty of turning away from our struggling brothers and sisters, all members of our human family, who, because they want a better life for themselves and their children, have become refugees, seeking welcome but instead coming up against physical and metaphorical walls that have been constructed to keep people away and apart.
-  The injustices, racism, and violence manifested in hateful discrimination and perpetrated on persons of color.
-  The disharmony in our institutional Church—and indeed in many religious traditions—that impedes substantive dialogue and real inclusion among its members, exacerbating already pernicious problems of alienation and conflict.

As Lasallians and as citizens of the world, we know that this fractured world is not what God had planned or intended when he created all things “good.” God’s presence continues to be with us, calling us to become healers of the world and agents of transformation. Our Lasallian tradition and our mission of education impel us to hear the cries of the poor; to use our mission to further the rights of all in need; to find ways and structures and pathways to harness our power and influence, not just in the classroom but in an educational environment without walls; to build the kingdom of justice, harmony, unity, and love that God has intended for us and continues to desire for us.

We know and understand that healing this fractured world will be no easy task for Lasallians. Certainly, our journey will be trying and formidable. We must heed of the insightful admonition that Pope Francis shared at his Mass at *Domus Sanctae Marthae* (Feb. 10, 2015):

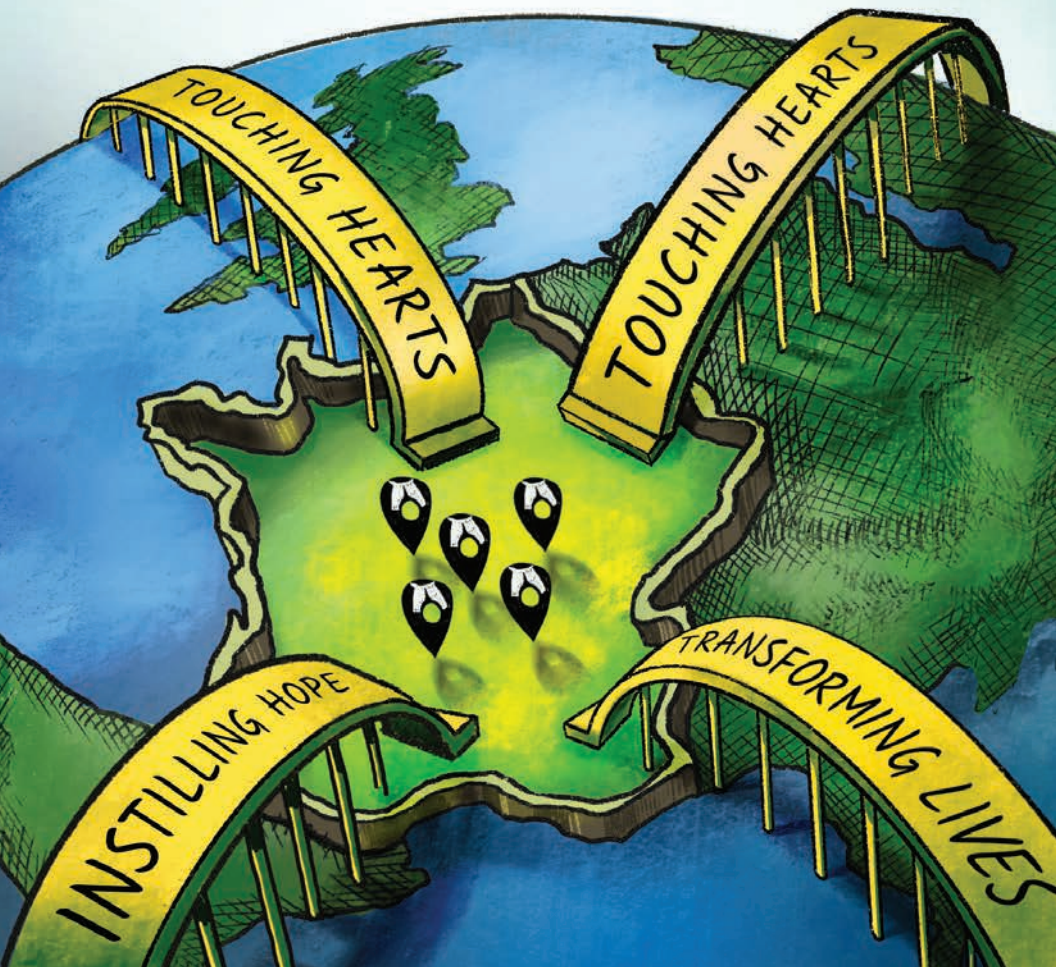
We know and understand that healing this fractured world will be no easy task for Lasallians.

Whoever does not go on a journey will never know the image of God, will never find the face of God. Armchair Christians, lethargic Christians will not know the face of God.



CHAPTER 3

**THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL
MISSION: VITAL AND DYNAMIC**



The Lasallian educational mission was born in a time and place (17th century Reims, France) that was very different from our 21st century global world.

This mission was born because Saint La Salle courageously and boldly accepted God's will in his regard. Never expecting to follow a life journey that would challenge him to embrace the lives and circumstances of the poor, he nevertheless was the creative and founding inspiration that created a map, the pathways of which have led to a Lasallian Mission that is alive and flourishing today in over 80 countries of the world.

From our humble beginnings over 300 years ago, we now serve youth, adults, and families throughout the world. Globally we serve in settings that include, but are not limited to, schools, child care and residential agencies, community outreach services, child rescue and advocacy services, family counseling and support interventions, and Lasallian formation and

*Beyond the walls and
locations of the classroom*

training programs. Our educational focus today displays a map that reaches beyond the walls and locations of the classroom.

We go wherever we find youth, adults, and families in desperate need of our presence, helping them overcome the poverty of mind, heart, and spirit that impedes God's will for fullness of life for all. We certainly did not arrive at where we are today by just standing around looking into the sky.

Evidence of Lasallian action and planning for the future of our educational mission can be clearly seen in the impressive and insightful *Declaration On the Lasallian Educational Mission: Challenges, Convictions and Hopes, 2020*. In this excellent presentation a context is set that gives us a compelling reason for our planning for the future:

We have to live through the turmoil of the present as heirs of a 300-year old tradition that unites us and that also calls us to rethink the nature and value of education for new generations. Only in this way will we respond to the challenge of offering an education that is relevant for today's children and youth. (P. 85-86)

We believe that the Lasallian educational mission is a vital and dynamic force for social and values-centered transformation, as well as for pragmatic and professional human and spiritual development and growth. All Lasallian educators, together and by association, strive to embrace the foundational principles of this mission: touching hearts, teaching minds, instilling hope, transforming lives. The Lasallian educational mission is centered in our Christian faith and in our zeal to serve those in need. Our twelve Lasallian Virtues inspire and guide us to be educators, mentors, and guardian angels who model compassion, mercy, justice, and peace. We make goodness visible, alive, and real in the lives of others.

The heart of our Lasallian educational mission is fundamentally relational. We believe that everyone we serve needs someone who pays attention and provides inspiration, hope, and love. We seek to embrace others with our minds and hearts, no matter their life circumstances, race, creed, or economic status. We seek to know each person as the good shepherd knows his flock. We seek to heal the wounds caused by adverse, traumatic childhood experiences that our young people and families have endured. We seek to build bonds of trust with each person and create an educational environment that is inclusive and that embraces growth and understanding rather than punishment and control, that fosters respect for all, and that creates a community of caring learners invited into a caring communion of mind and heart.

As the Lasallian educational community of the 21st century, we have been blessed with the heritage of our founding Lasallian story. We have been called to this ministry and given the opportunity as coworkers with God to revitalize and transform today's social networks, economic systems, and educational communities. In the *Conduct of Schools*, our founding Lasallian community of Brothers mapped out and created a structured blueprint and model of their educational vision, based on shared and cumulative experience, focused on practical and innovative methods that would create a safe learning environment for youth who were abandoned and left to themselves, offering them an oasis in the midst of poverty, class distinction, and violence.

OUR OBLIGATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

In today's fractured and troubled world, we have the awesome responsibility and obligation of building on the foundations of our Lasallian heritage a new heritage that creates a renewed Lasallian educational system, structure, and philosophy, and a passionate commitment to our call and profession as Lasallian educators to teach as Jesus did. We must create a Lasallian educational culture of care that shines out in all Lasallian hearts, and shapes our very core existence: learner-centered and valuing spiritual interiority, community, pragmatism, responsibility, ethical behavior, and advocacy for the needy.

In the 21st century, our Lasallian educational mission is indeed global. Thus, we need to think of our mission beyond the walls of the classroom, and envision the role of the teacher and student as part of a more encompassing reality, pondering what Lasallian education is called to be in our global society. Technology, social media, online learning, the internet, Google, and other developments have transformed education. We need to strive to make “all things new.” We need to create a new pathway and understanding—a new declaration—of the need for, and the challenges of, the Lasallian educational mission for today and for tomorrow. We believe that today, just after the 300th anniversary of the death of our Founder, our Lasallian mission is needed more than ever before. So much has transpired in the centuries that have passed since the Lasallian educational mission was born.

Our educational pathways must embrace a unifying philosophy and commitment, and at the same time allow for that philosophy, commitment, and conduct to be lived in multiple, diverse, and creative ways that respect the cultures, religious traditions, and values of those we serve.

But are there core principles, beliefs, and values that we can agree on as a unified Lasallian family dedicated to quality, inclusive education?

Here are some suggested questions for reflection and discussion toward the advancement of our Lasallian educational mission.

- Do we still believe and affirm, as in our founding tradition, that our Lasallian educational mission is rooted in the *preferential option for the poor*, and that poverty in our world today (including

new forms of poverty), especially for young people, limits potential, damages self-esteem, diminishes hope, and shatters dreams for a better future?

- Do we still believe and affirm that our call to be teachers, mentors, and caregivers is a sacred and noble trust, shared as a gift to others, and that we must use this gift to guide, instruct, inspire, encourage, challenge, and journey alongside those we serve, to help them become the best version of themselves and to build a more just and peaceful society?
- Do we still believe and affirm that our Lasallian educational mission has the potential and the power to influence, inspire, and transform individual lives and influence societal structures for the good of all and for the bonding of the human family in harmony, respect, dignity, and love?
- Do we still believe and affirm that our schools, classrooms, communities, neighborhoods, cities, and countries need to be environments of protection, safety, equal opportunity, compassion, inclusion, and excellence, and that they need to be infused with the living Spirit of God?
- Do we still believe and affirm that our Lasallian educational mission is a call to live our Christian identity faithfully and also welcome all who believe, share, live, and practice other forms of religious expressions and faith traditions, and that God's love and Spirit dwells within all without exception?
- Do we still believe and affirm the challenge to rethink our Lasallian educational practices and boldly and creatively map a new *Conduct of Schools* that will respond to the ever-growing needs of youth and families today, focused on people who have been discarded, disregarded, exploited, dehumanized, and left without hope for fullness of life?
- Do we still believe and affirm that our Lasallian educational mission must be committed to a renewed and revitalized association within a community of Brothers and Partners who believe that only together and by association can we build God's Kingdom here on earth and be healers of a fractured world?

- Do we still believe and affirm that we are laborers in God’s vineyard, one that embraces all of creation and calls for a commitment to our earth as a home to be protected, centered around an ecology that supports, nourishes, and sustains what God has entrusted to us?
- Do we still believe and affirm that renewed and revitalized programs for Lasallian formation and professional leadership and training in our historical heritage, educational philosophy, and spiritual roots are necessary for the enhancement, renewal, and growth of our Lasallian educational mission?
- Do we still believe and affirm that education for justice, equality, promotion of the rights of children and families, and access to quality educational and support services are the foundations for hope and for the building of a new world order, and that these should be integral components of our Lasallian educational mission?

We discover all the good that has been accomplished, and the lives that have been touched and transformed with hope, in the legacy of the centuries that form the evolution and the growth of the Lasallian educational mission. Building on that foundation, we can dream of a new Lasallian educational mission and world, one that courageously believes, affirms, and embraces the new challenges that have been presented to us as Lasallian educators in the 21st century. It is our call to continue God’s work, and—as today’s Map Makers—to design a new educational vision and environment that, together and by association, delivers on God’s promise of salvation and fullness of life for all.

Let us now leave the context part of this presentation and begin to take on the task of Map Makers, seeking directions and paths to consider for a Lasallian future.

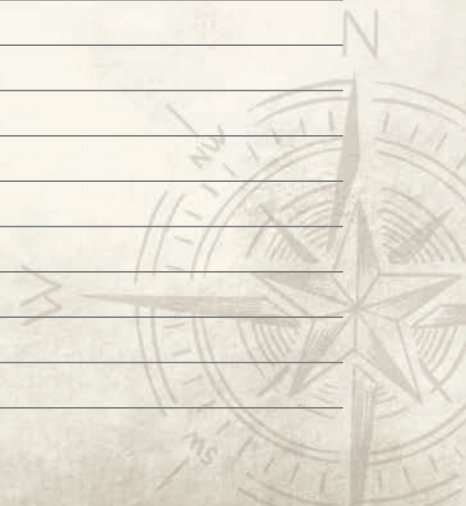


LASALLIAN
MAP MAKER'S
TAKEAWAY

*We must creatively and boldly propose a new educational vision, declare our beliefs, and create a *Conduct of Schools* for our times.*

Because of the global, international identity and presence of our Lasallian educational mission, we need to look at the kaleidoscope of diversity reflected in whom we serve, why we serve, and where we serve, along with the programs and services that form the focus of our ministry.

MY MAP MAKING NOTES



PART III



**DIRECTIONS AND PATHS
TO CONSIDER ON THE MAP
FOR A LASALLIAN FUTURE**





CHAPTER 4

**A HANDFUL OF SAND
IS NOT THE WORLD**



As we seek to chart new directions and paths to the future, we must be as pragmatic as the Founder was. He was the original Map Maker for the new emerging Institute. Now, over 300 years later, the Institute exists in an intimidating and fractured globalized world.

This world did not just happen overnight. There was a warning of this coming brokenness in the internationally popular book by Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (1974). Pirsig challenged the cherished cultural Western world bias toward Aristotelian philosophical propositions, classical rationalism, and dualistic thinking. Pirsig wrote of the danger of a single philosophy or cultural approach that manifests a monopoly on truth that everyone must accept. He insightfully said,

We take a handful of sand from the endless landscape of awareness around us and call that handful of sand the world.

It is clearly seen that the myopic cultural bias that Pirsig identifies exists today. Ideological biases are embedded within global economic machinations, media arrangements, entertainment venues, and geopolitical interactions. These are manifestations of a pervasive and predominant mindset. The Westernized and Northern Hemisphere's cultural, philosophical, economical, and religious biases are disproportionately embedded in the infrastructure of today's global power structures. Unfortunately, this ensnaring, systemic intrusion is also evident in the workings and operations in the Church itself, emerging from those same or similar predispositions.

The Westernized and Northern Hemisphere's cultural, philosophical, economical, and religious biases are disproportionately embedded in the infrastructure of today's global power structures.

Some two millennia ago, Saint Paul gave the Church some good advice about not falling into this trap of narrow, biased, and myopic thinking:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:2)

Or, perhaps more to the point, a more recent observation by Albert Einstein may be considered in order to remedy this situation:

“No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it.”

While Westernized and Northern Hemisphere biases predominate global power structures, competing influences are also present. Paradoxically, the world is at the same time more ideologically, religiously, culturally, and economically diverse than ever before—both quantitatively and qualitatively. We have a fractured and broken world! The result is an unequivocal separation that stems from conflicting and contradictory realities that—although supposedly *global*—do not in fact bring people together in peace and harmony.

We see refugees fleeing persecution, famine, war, poverty, violent religious conflicts, terrorism, and pandemics. We see Church scandals and Church infighting made public. The powerful make decisions that they believe everyone must accept because it is the *right way* to think and act—which is to say, *their way!* How insightful was Pirsig’s observation that a handful of sand was not the world!

NATURE AND THE NATURAL

When considering advancements in technology, medicine, and communications, we must acknowledge that what was always considered *unchangeable* natural law has already been changed, transformed, and fractured.

Today the very notion of what is *natural* is debated. People can now alter human-built systems. We are able to clone, map, and manipulate DNA and the human genome. There are biochemical drugs that can change human emotions, behaviors, and appetites of all kinds. We are learning to extend or modify the behavior of organisms and engineer them to perform new tasks. We are bringing together engineers and biologists to design and build novel biomolecular components, networks, and

pathways, using these constructs to rewire and reprogram living organisms. We are now fusing together living tissue with mechanical components to create a *biohybrid* system that can mimic human parts. We have developed *climatic engineering* science that intentionally intervenes with natural climate systems.

We are choosing who and what we will become in ways that people had never even dared to think or imagine was possible or “natural” before!

The ways and roads that Lasallians had mapped out so successfully in our past educational initiatives will no longer lead us in the direction that Jesus mapped out for all of humanity 2,000 years ago, or the direction that Saint La Salle mapped out 300 years ago. Now, in the 21st century, humans can choose, are choosing, and will choose who and what they will become in ways that people had ever even dared to think or imagine was possible or *natural* before!

Let us understand that there is an alternative to the road of **what is** and **what will be**. We must create a new map that shows us the way to

what can be. This takes imagination, as Saint Paul directed us,

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.”

Expressed another way, the great French philosopher and phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur pointedly stated,

Every real conversion is first a revolution at the level of our directive images. By changing our imagination, we alter our existence.

No longer can we imagine ourselves simply as *the international Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* divided into geographic regions. We are not—and we must not be seen as—a microcosm of our fragmented and fractured world. Did not the global coronavirus pandemic destroy the apparent divisions and regions of the world?

We must not unintentionally portray ourselves as fragmented by nation, race, gender, the color of our skin, or any geographic area on the global map.

All people, nations, and cultures became one in suffering! We Lasallians must not unintentionally portray ourselves as fragmented by nation, race, gender, the color of our skin, or any geographic area on the global map.

Lasallians transcend borders, labels, and differences. The Lasallian family is a family united in faith and zeal so that *we may be one*, no matter where we come from in the world. This is not accomplished by hiding differences and diversity. It is realized by encouraging, exposing, and integrating the best paths that lead to the Gospel message of acceptance and love. We embrace the rich variety of different ways that Lasallians have discovered Jesus' revelation within their own unique experiences. Our Lasallian compass does not point to geographic regions on the globe. Our Lasallian compass points only in one direction—to Jesus' unconditional love for all.

We must not make the same mistakes of the current fractured world—mistakes that establish rules and procedures that exploit nationalism, regionalism, geopolitics, and rigid ideologies. Our map does not create pathways that limit diversity among people. A Lasallian map transcends biased and banal directions that lead ultimately to division and discord, impeding peace and harmony among the unique people of our globe.

It could not have been said better than in the recent book by Richard Rohr, OFM, *The Universal Christ*:

A cosmic notion of the Christ competes with and excludes no one, but includes everyone and everything (Acts 10:15, 34) and allows Jesus Christ to finally be a God figure worthy of the entire universe.

This is why our Lasallian family must create a new Lasallian map. This is why we must create new ways to make it our priority, as Saint La Salle taught, to remember that we are all, with all our diversity and all our differences, in the Holy Presence of God.



CHAPTER 5

A *CLICK* TO HEAL THE BROKENNESS IN OUR WORLD?



As we strive to transform our imaginations in order to effectively respond to the signs of the times, Lasallians treasure the image that we are truly and always in the Holy Presence of God.

The Founder initiated this compelling image in the 17th century. Since then, that image has sustained and energized the zeal for our Mission for the past three centuries. The Founder reminds us that wherever we are, there is no place that is not honored by God's presence. This image also reminds us that the classroom is sacred space where hearts are touched and God's Spirit permeates every action and every relationship.

However, in today's world, our classrooms are no longer limited by four walls within which we could more easily control student conduct and attention.

OUR CLASSROOMS ARE NOW NOT ONLY IN A PHYSICAL SPACE... THEY ARE FOUND IN A *CLICK!*

Click, click, and click away on a computer as you enter a non-space, the technological cloud—online, no walls, no boundaries, no people, no limits! Where is God's presence in a cloud that is nowhere, no-thing, no location? (It is certainly not the cloud that led the Israelites through the desert.)

Where is God's presence in a "Cloud" that is nowhere, no-thing, no location?

Lasallians are challenged to make it possible to see the reality of a loving and merciful God in an educational realm that is not contained or controlled in material space. Today's reality is a phenomenon that has never been experienced before. Today's education is not confined or limited to space, books, or time. Compounding this confounding state of education, technology has now made it possible for us to enter an unreal/real world: virtual reality. How do we make sense of this?

As Map Makers in this new world, Lasallians need to explore new pathways of making God's Holy Presence real, relevant, and reachable.

This is an urgent need and a compelling call for all Lasallian educators. Many of those entrusted to our care struggle with economic poverty and the poverty of low self-esteem. Many throughout the world are pressured by the dangers of a violent and often a racially or religiously prejudiced society. This often leads to the loss of some of our traditionally greatest gifts to our students: safety, hope, and an image of God's Holy Presence.

We must enable everyone to see their goodness before they even see it in themselves. We must name and make real that goodness and love so effectively that they can begin to believe in their own goodness. It is in this way that we may bring those entrusted to our care into the Presence of God, a God who wills the fullness of life for all people. We need to believe that every encounter with those whose hearts we strive to touch is an encounter with God; whether it occurs within the four walls of a classroom, the boundless open nowhere/no-thing realm of the cloud, or the unreal/real world of *virtual reality*.

GOD'S HOLY PRESENCE NOW

The Founder brought home to us the reality that God was to be found everywhere: in the events that affected him, in the Brothers with whom he shared community life, in the poor entrusted to his care. God was the persistent Spirit and Presence that imperceptibly moved his life on a path he never envisioned or anticipated.

Today we are once again in a world that we have not envisioned or anticipated. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, **Who** is that God whose presence we recall, who can be understood in today's world? **Where** is that God to be found? **How** do we recall the presence of God in today's technological world so that we can creatively reimagine our association and commitment to the Lasallian educational mission? As members of the Lasallian family, we are the face and presence of God each and every day. Now we must also find new pathways to be that reality in the fractured existence that technology has brought about in the 21st century.

Let us embrace the challenge to be Lasallian seekers and forge a pathway for all to be able to seek God, even to be able to *click* and find the God who wills everyone to know truth, justice, and peace.

*You will seek me and find me when you seek me
with all your heart. (Jer. 29:13)*

Of course, we show the presence of Jesus in our hearts through the way we live out the Twelve Virtues, and through our commitment to the call of the Beatitudes. God's Spirit dwells in each of us and in our Lasallian faith community as we passionately serve as guardian angels for youth and all those entrusted to us, and passionately commit ourselves to heal the wounds of our fractured world.

God did not create or intend a world that fosters the brokenness of racism, injustice, or violence. God does not intend for the poor to be cast aside. God does not desire that the rich become richer at the expense of those who live on the margins and who struggle every day for dignity, respect, support, and love. God is present and his Spirit dwells in the midst of the poor—in their hearts, souls, struggles, and longings. A Lasallian spirituality that embraces and calls on a loving and merciful God to be present in our day-to-day realities must hear the cries of the poor and the oppressed in our world. A Lasallian spirituality calls upon us to be their advocates.

It is not enough to piously intone a *preferential option for the poor*. The option for the poor demands that *Lasallians engage in a war on poverty* through our educational mission if it is to be more than a nice but inconsequential phrase. To be true Lasallians in today's world, we cannot play it safe. We must speak out to authority and break down systemic structures that do not support the dignity of people.

*It is not enough to
piously intone a
“preferential option
for the poor.”*

In the words of Elizabeth Barrett Browning,

*Earth's crammed with heaven. And every common bush
afire with God: But only those who see take off their shoes.*

We Lasallians see the fractured world. *We take off our shoes* as we teach on the rough landscape in order to be with hurting people. There is no place on a Lasallian map that is not infused with, and does not lead us to, God's Holy Presence.

Our Lasallian map will not permit people to be content with nice sounding homilies, or pietistic and platitudinous orations. We walk together with all those in need until we make peace, justice, and the integrity of God's Creation not just a virtual reality but the true reality experienced by all people.





CHAPTER 6

MAPPING PATHS TO AN INCLUSIVE WORLD AND CHURCH



As we take off our shoes and prepare to walk the very rough road of making God’s Holy Presence real for today’s world, let us be fully aware that it will cause us pain and distress.

Increasingly we see global forces and ideologies that work against the formation of a vision for an inclusive world. More and more, our world accepts intolerance for diversity and fails to respect different cultures and faith traditions. Evidence of such divisiveness is clearly seen in increasing incidents of heinous acts of terrorism around the world.

The continuance of alienation and violence precludes an inclusive world that respects the rich and abundant variety of people everywhere. Therefore, we believe it is appropriate and urgent for Lasallians to address this question as part of their educational mission: *What happened to Vatican II’s communion ecclesiology that emphasized a radical change from earlier Church understandings about holiness?* In the image of the Church as the People of God, we were invited and called to renewal. It was to be a renewal not only of the Church in the modern world, but also in the role of all men and women in furthering the Good News and building the Kingdom of God on earth—for all people.

Clearly Vatican II created a new map for the Church. No longer was the Church to understand itself as separate from the world, separate from its realities and problems. *Gaudium et Spes* insisted that nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an “echo” in the hearts of those who follow Jesus. Because of this, all men and women of good will should feel a deep solidarity with all humanity and its history, in all of its diversity.

The Lasallian educational mission has been blessed in its history with geographical, religious, and cultural sharing. It has nurtured communities focusing on Saint La Salle’s spirit of faith, service, and mission. We are convinced that Lasallians are equipped to recreate a visionary map that sets up paths and highways to a new ecumenical and communal ecclesiology. This can facilitate the nurturing of a Church as the People of God. Such a map responds to the universal call for an inclusive and integrated respect for all persons as children of God and citizens and

stewards of God's creation. A new Lasallian educational map will show the many diverse and varied roads our globalized world may offer.

A new map will not just point to those limited and exclusive geographic or cultural signposts that predominate within the institutional Church. Pursuit of the goal of holiness for all in the Church should *de facto* open up and democratize dialogue in the Church, just as Vatican II opened the windows of Rome over 50 years ago. It is not enough for Lasallians to believe only in freedom *of* religion; we must also nurture freedom *in* religion. We do this by facilitating and encouraging open and constructive dialogues of differences. Such inclusion and openness must be reflected and practiced through and within our Lasallian educational mission in the spirit of Saint La Salle and as envisioned by Vatican II.

It is not enough for Lasallians to believe only in freedom of religion; we must also nurture freedom in religion.

The Church, built on communion, necessitates the participation of all people with, in, and through the abundant richness found in our diversity. Yet to this day, many within the Christian world resist this kind of democratization and communion. They hold on to older, more authoritarian, controlling, and exclusive images of the Church. Instead of communion as the People of God, this approach unwittingly brings *ex-communication* as the strategy of choice, a strategy that is mistakenly believed to protect the Church's institutional ideology. Adherents of this strategy run the risk of becoming religious ideologues within the Church itself, proclaiming that it is better to be a smaller Church with everyone *singing from the same hymnal!* That kind of controlling conformity leaves no room for the inspiration and grace of the Holy Spirit to *kindle in us the fire of divine love.*

Lasallians must strive to draw up new roadways that bring the People of God together while remaining loyal and faithful to the Church. We do this just as the Founder did, by and through our educational mission and embracing Paul's fascinating and compelling message of inclusion to be *all things to all people* (1 Cor. 9:22).

The approaches amplified in *Lumen Gentium* encourage Lasallians to map out new ways for today's world. The document introduces a

new image of the Church, an image that includes not only the clergy and religious but also the laity as participants in the shared mission of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King. All of us, laity included, are reminded that we participate in the salvific mission of the Church. This is necessarily and truly an inclusive mission. In this way, and with such a Lasallian commitment, we partner together, and express our faith to the Church by teaching and modeling the hope of an inclusive Church as the People of God.

INSTITUTIONAL DISPARITY IN THE CHURCH

There is a timely and critical need for Lasallians to partner with the institutional Church. When we consider the Church's current world demographics and trends, along with those of our Institute, we see signs of institutional and organizational disparity. Many faithful believe that the actual global composition of the institutional Church does not equitably represent the magnificent diversity that exists among people. Of the approximately 1.3 billion Catholics worldwide, many live outside of what is called the Western World. By the middle of this century this group is expected to increase to nearly two-thirds. Most of them will live in the Southern Hemisphere. At present, however, two-thirds of the world's 415,000 Catholic priests are in the Northern Hemisphere.

For many hundreds of years, Europe—and in particular Rome—has been considered *the center of Christianity*. Do we still envision Rome or the West as the Christian center of gravity? If so, we surely need corrective lenses, for that center of gravity is now shifting quite well south of the equator.

We need even more powerful corrective lenses if we fail to see that this shift from the Northern to the Southern Hemisphere has drastically changed the look of the Roman Catholic Church. Catholicism is no longer only a phenomenon of the developed West with mainly white faces. What does this say about inclusion in the Church or the Institute? *Look again at that center of Christianity!*

Catholicism is no longer only a phenomenon of the developed West, with mainly white faces.

Given these circumstances, it seems that we Lasallians are compelled to carefully consider our own structures and organization. We must take Paul seriously when he wrote to the early Christian communities in Galatia two thousand years ago,

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28)

Paul, emphatically and unequivocally, exposes Jesus' Gospel message: all are included in the Church, period! Paul is teaching that now, through faith and following Jesus' Gospel of love and inclusion of all, grace and salvation is ours. He is unfolding for us the relationship between the Old Covenant and Jesus' Gospel, a relationship that has opened and freed God's salvific love to all. He is saying that all people are now embraced with the freedom of Jesus' inclusive redemption, grace, and love.

To be a follower of Jesus is to belong to a Church that embraces the *universality of humankind* and is not just limited by past cultural interpretations, controls, and understandings of God's will for us:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. (Matt. 5:17)

This truth is as true today as it was 2,000 years ago. However, what we must contend with today are the interfacings, interactions, and intercommunications of our globalized society. Today's society has brought an immediacy and connectivity to people's differences in a way that has never been seen before in the history of the world.

Our Lasallian educational mission must show us the way to open dialogue with all people, respectful of all the various ways that they seek truth and understanding. We must not fail to acknowledge that varied cultural underpinnings of beliefs present significant challenges for us and for the institutional Church. Those in the Southern Hemisphere do indeed bring different views and gifts in response to Jesus' Gospel than those in the Northern Hemisphere, in the West, in the East. Those in developing regions bring different perspectives than those in developed regions. There are Asian voices, African voices, South American voices,

North American voices, Oceania voices, and others. All hold different ideas that may be shared.

What about the different religious perspectives of people of color, the marginalized, the young, or the old? How do we lovingly and without inconsiderate and hurtful accusations embrace the exploding and contentious issues of human sexuality along with related interest groups and societal issues: the divorced, the LGBTQ community, birth control, premarital sex, same sex marriages, gender identity issues?

Disagreements, acts of terrorism, and religious conflicts are currently on the rise in all areas of society. Instead of harmony and peace, *globalism* has ushered in a *populism* that fragments human groupings, coercing the less powerful into restricted and one-way ideological road maps to truth, or rather, to the populists' version of truth! Today's world is the scene of growing corruption and abuses of human rights, and a staggeringly large and growing refugee diaspora. Simultaneously, the growing powerful, fundamentalist cliques within all institutional religions are destroying any hope for peace and harmony.

These religious populists have made an ideological God—a God in their own image instead of vice versa! With such ideologies, inclusion of all people is but a fiction. And let us be honest—we Catholics are not immune to such divisiveness. Recently in the Church we have even seen public displays of division within the hierarchy.

Lasallians must create a road map that will lead the world today towards a self-correction, an epiphany that will create a global and sustainable equilibrium through the acceptance of diversity in the cultural cores of our societies and Church. We must lead people to that vision, which already lies hidden in so many diverse spiritual creeds in our world. Such a map may be the catalyst for a worldwide awakening. A cursory review of key teachings in different mainstream religions reveals a compatibility involving some significant shared moral and human insights:

**Judaism**

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

**Buddhism**

Buddha encouraged the “Noble Eightfold Path,” the “Middle Way” of avoiding extremes.

**Taoism**

In the Chinese philosophical tradition of the Tao, the goal is to have harmony as the natural order within the entire universe.

**Islam**

The Qur’an’s Mizan encourages balance and moderation in order for people to consider the propriety and justice of their actions.

**Christianity**

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph. 2:19–22).

We must have the faith that we, reinforced with Saint La Salle’s spirit, can rise to the challenge and create a map that will point out the pathways to an inclusive world reality. We see the poignant truth and insight that Pope Francis related on October 1, 2013, in the journal *La Repubblica*:

I believe in God, not in a Catholic God. There is no Catholic God; there is God. And I believe in Jesus Christ, his incarnation.

Now, that’s inclusion!



CHAPTER 7

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH AND INSTITUTE



In light of the previous chapter's emphasis on nurturing an inclusive world and Church, we believe it is important to draw specific and particular attention to the development and advancement of the role of women in society, in the institutional Church, and in our Lasallian family.

The time has come when all institutions and people should seriously address this issue. We need to truly and unequivocally present Christian values based

This is a Christian issue, a justice issue, a world issue, a Church issue, an Institute issue. And, yes, this is truly a men's issue.

on what our faith teaches us: men and women are created "*in the image and likeness of God,*" without reservations or limitations.

This is not a topic about and for women only. This is not a specialized topic to be understood as just a women's issue. This is a Christian issue, a justice issue, a world issue, a Church issue, an Institute issue. And, yes, this is truly a men's issue.

It is an issue about the legitimacy and respect for the dignity of individuals, an issue about the inclusion of all God's children in today's world. It is a topic that needs to be addressed if we are to be faith-filled Christians for the 21st century.

Significantly, we stress from the outset that we are not addressing doctrinal theological issues or the teachings concerning the Church's tradition to the effect that priestly ordination is reserved to men alone. However, we simultaneously urge, support, and encourage the Magisterium of the Church to seriously and urgently examine these teachings and facilitate an open and constructive dialogue that examines the theological underpinnings of their traditional exclusionary position regarding women's ordination to the ministerial priesthood.

We must remember that the earliest practices in the Church included not only the male Apostles but all faithful followers as Jesus' disciples—men *and* women. When addressing this topic, we should recall the familiar mandate that Jesus gave to Peter that provides the basis of the evolved hierarchical structures of the Church:

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16:18–19)

However, we must also recall that in that same Gospel Jesus speaks not only to his male Apostles but also to all his women and men disciples. He speaks to his faithful followers, women and men who are part of his newly established “communion” of believers, with inclusivity, an inclusivity that evolving tradition has come to see as defining the People of God. Jesus tells these faith-filled women and men followers,

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

(Matt. 18: 18–20)

It is essential to note here that, as Jesus establishes his Church, he does not limit or qualify those *two or three gathered in my name*, with whom he is present, as men only. Nor does he say *to men only* that when *two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven*. This essential inclusion of all men and women followers into Jesus’ Church has been clearly restated 2,000 years later. In *Lumen Gentium* (Chapter II:12), where we read,

The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples’ supernatural discernment in matters of faith when “from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful” they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.

At the core of our understanding, we believe that women as voices, influencers, leaders, and contributors in the institutional Church and within our Lasallian family are equal to men in all aspects of

decision making. We cannot be oblivious to the trend that today's world, undeniably, is advancing in a direction in which women and men are equal partners with equal opportunities. We need to create a Lasallian map that will give direction

and substance to our Church's and our Lasallian family's organizational structures and spirituality for a more inclusive role for women. A map that points out paths that lead to a loving communion in which women and men are welcomed equally and without exception is essential. Such a spirit of inclusion for women leadership has not been clearly evident in the history of the institutional Church.

At the core, we believe that women as voices, influencers, leaders, and contributors are equal to men in all aspects of decision making.

LET US LOOK AT THE FACTS

The institutional church has not reflected the growing global inclusion of women into societal and organizational structures. We must be sensitive to the fact that, through and by its own actions and practices, the institutional Church has given occasion for many people to question its commitment to the effective inclusion of women.

People have seen, for example, the following:

- ✦ At Vatican II, of the almost 700 men in attendance, only 15 women were present from the entire world; they had no vote nor were they even permitted to speak in public at the Council.
- ✦ At the 2015 Family Synod in Rome there were 270 voting men and not one woman with a right to vote.
- ✦ At the 2018 Synod on Youth, Young People and Vocational Discernment in Rome, there was not one woman with a right to vote.
- ✦ At the 2019 Synod in Rome on the Amazon, there were 185 voting men and not one woman with a right to vote.

Lasallians should consider their response to the observable waning of patriarchal dominance throughout the world and prepare to address the new educational and religious needs and growing influence of women in society and the Church. Women are finding many more opportunities for success than ever before.

For example, the following facts speak volumes about this new more powerful role of women in society:

1. Globally, women now make up 20 percent of elected legislators, almost double the figure fifteen years ago.
2. Worldwide, significantly more women are getting college degrees.
3. Women are beginning to dominate a number of professions, including accounting, financial management, optometry, dermatology, forensic pathology, and veterinary practices.
4. Educational systems are now preparing a new generation of more women leaders than ever before.
5. The number of female billionaires across the globe is increasing; the number of Asian female billionaires in particular has increased from just three in 2005 to 25 in 2014.

These powerful new directions do not seem to be reflected in the institutional Church. In an op-ed article in the Spanish newspaper EL PAIS (January 2019), the woman editor, Lucetta Scaraffia of *Women Church World*, the monthly magazine published by the Vatican, boldly stated,

But now another question arises, that of non-existent and invisible women in the eyes of ecclesiastical hierarchies, accustomed to taking their service for granted.

This situation should energize Lasallians to be Map Makers that will lead all on a journey to enhance the rightful role of women.

The Institute can be a model that concretely expresses the end of an embedded and continuing cultural, structural, and dominant patriarchy. Fortunately, we are beginning to see a little progress even in the Vatican Curia, as some new administrative restructuring reflects the need to advance the role of laity in general and women in particular. There is the beginning of a recognition that a layperson may be able to preside over a dicastery. In fact, the Curia supports the idea that lay leadership should be encouraged, especially in areas of family and life, peace and justice, and the environment.

Lasallians should continue their tradition of responding to the signs of the times by becoming exemplars for the inclusion of women in the structures, organization, and leadership of the educational mission of the Institute. The Institute should be proud that it has made significant positive strides in the integration and inclusion of women into our Lasallian family during recent years. We must continue in this positive direction.



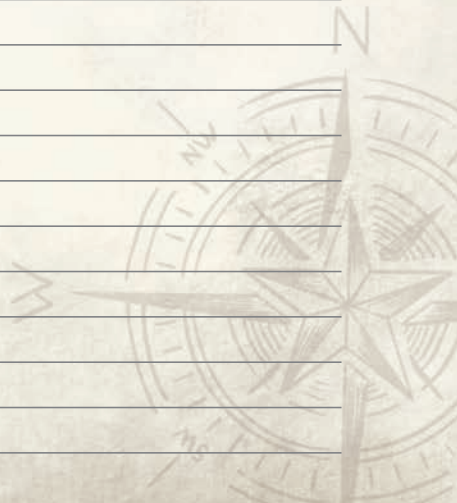


LASALLIAN MAP MAKER'S TAKEAWAY

We will continue to "chart" and "broadcast" pathways that will end patriarchal dominance in the 21st century.

As the Map Makers, we will strive to provide innovation and leadership in the task of enhancing the role of women in our mission. We will pave new and more effective paths towards a more equitable role for women in the institutional Church and in the world.

MY MAP MAKING NOTES





CHAPTER 8

PERSUASION. DIALOGUE. DISCERNMENT.



No one has to be reminded that it will be difficult to achieve a unified spirit in support of the acceptance and inclusion of women—and indeed everyone—in the Church and in the world.

Yet we should bear in mind the fact that a kaleidoscopic diversity of thoughts and values are freely and easily disseminated to all people in today's technological world, and these include thoughts and values pertaining to religion. Today's technology makes real a *free market* of information, ideas, values, and beliefs. Men and women, the young and the old alike have access to this freedom. Religion has become *democratized!*

It becomes very difficult today for those in authority to be clearly heard within the inescapable presence and intrusion of this technological explosion of easily accessible information. Authority is no longer presumed to hold innate, intrinsic, and inherent legitimacy as the privileged provider of truth.

Authority is no longer presumed to hold innate, intrinsic, and inherent legitimacy as the privileged provider of truth.

Those in authority, whether in the secular or religious realms, now must earn their status and power to influence people and ideas. Authority's traditional power to *decree* and expect people's docile acquiescence has greatly diminished.

Now political, cultural, educational, religious, and other kinds of authority must be earned. This authority is not earned by coercion, command, or control. Authority's power in today's world, understood as the ability to influence others and to be seen as leaders of opinion, must be earned through a spirit and process of persuasion, dialogue, and discernment.

Authority, whether secular, educational, or religious, can no longer simply command, dictate, and control people's beliefs and values. An institution or educational enterprise is not even seen to be relevant if it does not facilitate an open and constructive dialogue within its *modus operandi*. As we have already pointed out, freedom of religion is meaningless unless there is freedom *in* religion—especially in religious institutions.

Lasallians can address this need for openness by creating a map that will enable everyone to see pathways that bring people together and facilitate free discussion of controversial matters. We must do this without negatively judging or condemning others—whether they are non-believers, religious believers, other Catholics, or other Lasallians.

Given the brokenness and pervasive secularization in most global societies, our Lasallian family must be willing to accompany and mentor all whom we encounter, even those who have different beliefs than the ones we hold. To respect, and dialogue with, those with different beliefs does not mean we accept everything they hold or believe as conclusive. It does, however, mean that we accept the dignity that rests in their *birthright* as persons—persons who must be true to the sanctity of their consciences. (John Henry Newman called conscience “*the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.*”)

We respect the different paths that people take on their unique journeys into the mystery and meaningfulness of their lives! That is what healing, respect, and solidarity are all about. It is about persuasion, dialogue, and discernment while interacting with the other person’s experiences and beliefs. If Christians are only willing to serve those who think and believe as they do, then how do they bring Jesus’ Gospel of unconditional love to everyone in the world? How then do we Lasallians *teach all nations*?






HEALING NOT LABELING PEOPLE


Important and pivotal topics need to be addressed—controversial, difficult, and diverse concerns that are dividing people and causing acrimony among them, Catholics included. Past reliance on doctrine, legalism, control, and authority has become less effective in this open, globalized world. Many people today are more open toward and accepting of a spirituality that is pastoral and relational, not rigidly conformed to inflexible rubrics. Controlling, judgmental pronouncements from religious ideological *cultural warriors* do not contribute to the healing process in today’s fractured world.

As Pope Benedict said in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*:

Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.

Many people now experience some new situation that *gives life a new horizon*. Some of the groups most effected are the following:

-  Those, especially the young, who experience uncertainties with regard to sexual practices, values, and norms, and many other psychological questions pertaining to their personal development. They are not greeted with an open, welcoming, and reciprocal listening by many in the Church. *They feel excluded by the institutional Church.*
-  Those living together but who are unwed, gay, divorced, remarried, or have gender identity issues are labeled “objectively disordered.” Many in the Church condemn them as evil. *They feel excluded by the institutional Church.*
-  Those who, when they have personal moral conflicts, questions, and constructive criticism of institutional Church actions, experience isolation and abandonment. *They feel excluded by the institutional Church.*
-  Those who believe many in the institutional Church attach more importance to *orthodoxy*, in the form of rigid formulistic statements, than to a holistic and inclusive spirit of Jesus’ love for the person. *They feel excluded by the institutional Church.*
-  Those faithful Catholics who, in the sanctity of their conscience, believe that there is necessarily a distinction between civil law and religiously informed moral practices in an open, free, and democratic society. These faithful are judged to be unfaithful; some are even refused the Eucharist. *They feel excluded by the institutional Church.*

 Those faithful who do not feel supported because they attach greater emphasis to issues of the environment and the integrity of God's creation rather than to culture war and sexual ethics issues. *They feel excluded by the institutional Church.*

These examples are not meant to be exhaustive. We do not have predetermined answers. We merely wish to state, clearly and emphatically, that institutional or authoritarian pronouncements alone—without listening to people's concerns—do not end differences, heal people, or solve problems. Rather, the authoritarian approach *causes* problems!

Taking sides on ideological issues, labeling others as liberals, conservatives, religious, non-religious, non-believers, disordered, or heretics does not encourage people to listen to each other or to the Church.

Lasallians listen to people and do not label them, because labels only help ideologues listen to themselves.

We do well to heed the poignant observation of Pope Francis, while celebrating Mass at St. Peter's Basilica (May 31, 2020):

The world sees us only as on the right or left; the Spirit sees us as sons and daughters of the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus. The world sees conservatives and progressives; the Spirit sees children of God. A worldly gaze sees structures to be made more efficient; a spiritual gaze sees brothers and sisters pleading for mercy.

Effective listening and understanding in today's world *comes* from a profound spiritual discernment arising from the power of a *servant presence*, not a controlling presence.



LASALLIAN
MAP MAKER'S
TAKEAWAY

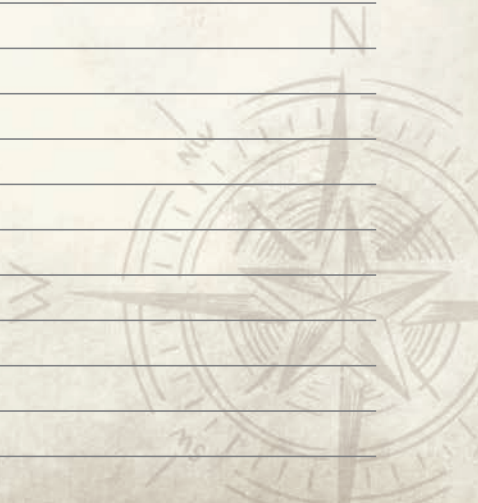
We will create a map that provides an educational model that serves people in a free and open dialogue, one that facilitates a respectful and reciprocal listening among people.

As the Map Makers, we will strive to guide and serve all whom we encounter on pathways that will promote healing, respect, and solidarity through persuasion, dialogue, and discernment instead of dissuasion, monologue, and disregard.

Lasallian teachers do not control the education of others.

We model, mentor, and accompany others on their own unique learning journeys.

MY MAP MAKING NOTES



CHAPTER 9

THERE IS NO GPS THAT
LEADS US TO GOD



To serve people by using persuasion, dialogue, and discernment certainly is no easy job. In fact, the attempt to integrate and guide people to Jesus' Gospel message of unconditional love is an enormous and complex undertaking.

For Lasallians, the task of building new paths that transform lives necessarily involves charting ways and directions towards an ambitious destination: God the Loving Creator.

In essence, the Institute calls upon the Lasallian family—its educators, researchers, youth and family providers, social welfare specialists, and others—to form a new, rich, and Christian landscape. There are no easy or perfunctory ways to accomplish this. However, there are many and various directions that can be taken, and certainly many of these will be controversial. We do well to heed Karl Barth's keen insight as we consider what paths to build:

Jesus does not give recipes that show the way to God as other teachers of religion do. He is himself the way.

The Lasallian family must be the way before it can teach the way.

Good intentions, pious exhortations, and pedagogical techniques alone will not give us a map that *shows the way to God*. The Lasallian family must *be the way before it can teach the way*. This challenge compels us to be educators, mentors, promoters, and innovators who do more than catechize the Christian message. It should provoke us first to see how we can holistically be the way through our faith, then *do the way together and by association with our zeal*. The challenge, for Lasallians, is not met by teaching scripted formulas about our faith in God. The challenge is to make a living choice to be mentors and examples of unconditional love to all those entrusted to our care.

We must be there especially for those who are considered outcasts, untouchables, and marginalized, whoever is treated as disordered and discarded in today's society.

We can be such Map Makers to the degree that we accompany, support, and facilitate the healing of all those we encounter and serve. In Barth's words, we must *become* the way just as Jesus was the way to his heavenly Father. We can do this to the degree that we lovingly and unequivocally accept and embrace all people in our teachings and actions, structures and institutions, dialogue and decision-making, gatherings and communities. We must be there especially for those who are considered outcasts, untouchables, and marginalized, whoever is treated as disordered and discarded in today's society. And let's face facts—if we are successful doing this, we must be prepared, as Saint La Salle was, to receive criticism from many different people and authorities.

For Lasallians to embrace this challenge means that we must partner with all women and men of good will. We do this not in spite of, but because of the growing global diversity in our shrinking world. Our way must make us more than recipe-givers, dispensers of rigid, doctrinal, and demanding Christian prescriptions. We are *followers* of Jesus in our relationship with him, just as he was present and relational with all people and their particular needs.

Like Saint La Salle, we serve people in their needs and miseries. Lasallian service is not conditioned on what creeds and dogmas people profess. We are the People of God and faithful to the Catholic Church because we are followers of Jesus, because we lovingly treat and respect real diversity even among ourselves, because we share acceptance while embracing the dignity of all people and their particular needs and differences, even though it may cause us difficulties and present us with hardships.

NEW WAYS OF THINKING

We are challenged to tear down the rigid, ideological, cultural walls that continue to be built—walls that separate people and give rise to mean-spirited and destructive conflicts. We cannot break down these walls simply by proclaiming doctrines or giving recipes

Become Map Makers who chart modern day trails, roads, wide avenues, and grand vistas

about the effective way to transform peoples' thinking. We do well to heed the profound observation of Richard Rohr, OFM, in his book *The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*:

We do not think ourselves into new ways of living; we live ourselves into new ways of thinking.

Map Makers become trail blazers through their actions and explorations. The Lasallian trailblazers are the brothers and sisters who accompany those whom they serve as they become responsible citizens, caring leaders, and nothing less than Christian agents for social transformation.

This social transformation makes Jesus' Gospel message a reality for all, not because we are all the same, but because *we are all one* in our diversity through Jesus' unconditional love for us all. But we must first *live ourselves into new ways of thinking*. We must become the Map Makers who chart modern-day trails, roads, wide avenues, and grand vistas that will lead to Jesus' loving spirit, so that it may enter into each person's life. We can accomplish this mission if we enthusiastically seize the Founder's charisma as our compass. That charisma becomes the way—Saint La Salle's way. He is our compass pointing to a horizon that will lead us and those entrusted to our care to God's Kingdom, come on earth as it is in heaven.

For the Lasallian family to be such a compass, we must live ourselves into new ways of thinking. This is not just some new Christian fad or ideology. It is not some new progressive or liberal theology. This dynamic must become integrated around our Catholic roots and traditions, around the principle of *Imago Dei*, which provides the foundation for *doing* Christianity. *Imago Dei* unfolds the Divine Mystery that all people, men and women, are created in the image of God, even those who look, think, and believe differently from ourselves. However, this mystery revealed has been diminished in the imagination of modern day people due to secularized social media and technological explosion.

Thomas Groome, theologian, author, and professor at Boston College, in his book, *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent*, wrote powerfully about this dimension of Christianity:

The Imago Dei tenet witnesses not only to the essential goodness of persons, but also to the equal dignity of all human beings—men and women; people of every color, class and creed. As reflections of God, all have an essential dignity that gives them the “birthright” to be treated with reverence and with dignity befitting a daughter or son of God. All human beings have innate rights to what is needed to become fully alive persons, and they have corresponding responsibilities to maintain the rights of others—to live life for all.

We are true to this tradition as we Lasallians keep in mind the caution presented in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The common good concerns the life of all. It calls for prudence from each, and even more from those who exercise the office of authority...The order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way around.

This is the spirit and understanding that will enable our Lasallian family to develop our educational map, territory, and horizons. Yes, we must remain true to our Catholic traditions. Yet we must enliven that tradition with new, unique, meaningful, and extraordinary ways in order to do effective Christian education that responds to today’s needs. Lasallian respect for tradition is not merely a docile acquiescence to prior paths; it involves a dynamic and pragmatic doing that creates a new future. We must live ourselves into new ways of thinking.





CHAPTER 10

CELIBATE CONSECRATED RELIGIOUS: STILL RELEVANT?



There are those who say that celibate consecrated religious communities no longer make sense.

They are convinced that religious communities serve little useful purpose in solving current world problems. They contend that science, economics, and technology have replaced religious myths and dependence on a Divine Being's compassionate providence for remedying the existential mess in the world. Their convictions are reinforced by the expanding secularized global network of politics, social interactions, entertainment, media, and cultural priorities. Ideological secularists throughout the globalized world see the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience of religious congregations as antiquated relics of a religious mindset that is fantasy-ridden and delusional.

In the face of these perceptions, we feel compelled to observe that many institutional religions, including the Catholic Church, have unwittingly contributed to this polarizing secularization. Globally this has evolved into a dynamic that has gradually eroded the spiritual and ethical perceptions that people have about religion. Money has become the redeemer that will bring salvation to the brokenness of today's world. Money promises redemption from

Money has become the redeemer that will bring salvation to the brokenness of today's world.

worldly suffering and injustices. Unfortunately, instead of material wealth being used appropriately and justly, it has often proved to be an insidious and toxic force within society. The idolization of money has infested the world with a different kind of pandemic—a pervasive, nonbiological pandemic called *the consumerist society*.

This consumerist pandemic has also introduced degrading, distorted, and damaging elements into a number of religions throughout the world. Certain religions and their associated institutions have publicly demonstrated a lack of good judgment as to the use of wealth in a way that is consistent with their declared values. Instead of nurturing the spiritual and material welfare of people—especially the poor and needy—they have created an *unholy mess!*

Evidence of this problem may be found in the growing number and influence of institutional religious movements in many regions of the world that embrace the so-called *Gospel of Prosperity*. These movements promote the belief that wealth and financial success are God's reward for those who conform to their teachings. These churches teach that it is God's will that people give them financial donations; in turn, they promise, those donations will result in God increasing the giver's personal wealth. In essence, money has become the ruler, the provider, and the deity, a modern day graven image.

A related problem can be found in the rise of televangelism. This media advancement can certainly be a good and positive venue for bringing God's message to the world. However, it is alarming to see how many televangelists are primarily using their so-called ministry to grow their self-serving personal and institutional financial resources. The personal worth of the top 30 televangelists throughout the world is now estimated in the billions of dollars—billions of dollars that did not find their way to God's people, especially not to those marginalized youth and families living in poverty and facing a hopeless future.

Unfortunately, even our institutional Roman Catholic Church has seen revelations of fraudulent and inappropriate financial dealings. In a 2015 report, *Moneyval*—the Council of Europe's financial evaluation authority—charged the *Istituto per le Opere di Religione* (The Vatican Bank) of taking part in illegal money laundering over many years (along with other illegal machinations). In a 2017 progress report, they indicated that the Vatican Bank still had not held anyone accountable for crimes such as *fraud, serious tax evasion, misappropriation, and corruption*. Over recent years, many other illegal or unethical financial scandals have become public. How many billions of dollars did not find their way to those most in need?

Such public expositions certainly undermine trust in religion and religious institutions. The result is that, in too many cases, religious communities that are truly serving peoples' needs suffer from the public perception of religious institutions as misusers of money.

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES' NEEDED CHARISM

Such reports undoubtedly detract from the worldwide dedication and charism of religious communities that serve the poor. Lost to the public eye are religious communities' good use of their financial resources in ways that enhance the dignity of the marginalized and help those in need.

In order for our Institute to present a convincing and timely case for the value and relevance of our life as a celibate religious community, we should reignite the essence of our charism as followers of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. As we revive the core of our vowed lives as religious, we should appreciate and be mindful of the unfolding power of a charism in the Church, as it is expressed in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2003):

“Charism” is the Greek word used in the New Testament for “favor” or “gratuitous gift.” Charisms, or spiritual gifts, are special abilities given to all Christians by the Holy Spirit to give them power both to represent Christ and to be a channel of God’s goodness for people. Whether extraordinary or ordinary, all charisms ought to be exercised in the service of God.

We understand Saint La Salle’s charism as a spiritual gift. It is a gift in which our loving and caring God continues to call us to serve others through those in our vowed community.

The Brothers’ vows are not a one-time prescribed replication of past cultural and spiritual understandings.

The Brothers’ vows are not a one-time prescribed replication of past cultural and spiritual understandings. The Brothers can be committed to a renewed, reimagined understanding, receptive to serving today’s world while

remaining faithful to the essence of that treasured charism.

The Lasallian family must make it clear that the Brothers’ consecrated life as a celibate religious community has a special and significant meaning for and in today’s world. Our consecration is not an antiquated relic of the past—unless we ourselves make it irrelevant in our failure to adequately respond to the signs of the times!

We must demonstrate that our commitment as vowed religious is being strengthened and maintained in and for today's world. We do this in order to uniquely manifest our commitment to embrace our Lasallian mission within the Church's all-encompassing mission to do God's will on earth for the benefit of all creation. It is essential that the Brothers live and work within the Lasallian family as vowed religious. This choice that the Brothers freely make is not something that makes the Brothers more holy than others, nor is it necessary for others to do the same. It is a choice that Brothers make with a God-given grace and calling, so that they may be more effectively *worldly*—yes, more worldly by pragmatically freeing them to be better able to serve others, concretely being more available to others just as Saint La Salle was 300 years ago.

The Brothers *call* to serve in a vowed, consecrated community allows them the opportunity and the privilege to foster the integration of the spiritual and the secular in this fractured world. With the ethical and social use of our resources—people, money, and material goods—we will help create a map that is needed for the world and for the Church. Through our Lasallian educational mission, which centers on a *preferential option of the poor*, we will build relationships that touch the hearts of all in order to embrace Jesus' inclusive and unconditional love for all.

These new roadways will be feasible only if we openly, effectively, and fully seek those pathways that welcome and embrace our lay Partners and Associates. We must do this not out of sadness or regret for the fact that our presence (numerically) has been reduced over the years. Rather, we celebrate that our Lasallian educational mission is alive and thriving because of the integration of laywomen, laymen, and families as essential partners on this journey to build God's Kingdom on earth.

Within appropriate Church guidelines, we should create for and in the Institute new kinds of timely, innovative governance and organizational structures, ones that integrate us as consecrated religious with women, men, and families who share and support our charism. Everyone should collectively share in the appropriate governance of our organizational structures in the exercise and implementation of our Lasallian educational mission. These new structures need not diminish the Brothers in community, who live within their own communal responsibilities and

adhere to established and prescribed Church governance norms regarding religious congregations.

In creating these new forms of associative community options, we believe we would enhance our Lasallian charism as vowed religious and build a powerful community of Lasallians dedicated to expanding our mission. The identity and role of the Brothers remain vital. This evolution, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in the spirit of the Founder, makes it possible for the entire Lasallian family to become as one within the Institute. We must conclude that the manner of living in association and the manner of living our Lasallian mission are not reserved to religious alone, but are part of a new creative and expansive fraternity and community of Lasallian Brothers and Partners who work together in harmony with the will of God in our regard.

As the Map Makers for our Lasallian future, we must continue the already successful attempts throughout our Lasallian world to be creative in developing new ways to unite with our Partners. With openness and much dialogue and discussion, we can further address the creation of new and more expansive community structures, such as those that have in some instances been formed to include single men and women, married men and women, and families.

The expansion and creation of such new forms of *intentional communities* would help and inspire the entire Lasallian family by allowing for unique cultural, social, and geographical richness within our global Lasallian network. Our international Institute becomes the guide for the establishment of these new Lasallian communities and associations. Such communities may also create a fertile environment for encouraging some to embrace the vowed life within the Institute. Such a new direction of developing a *network of intentional Lasallian communities* is a bold pathway to a renewed passion for our mission and a rebirth of our charism as the Brothers of the Christian Schools.



LASALLIAN
MAP MAKER'S
TAKEAWAY

The Brothers, as a celibate religious community, can be more relevant than ever by reimagining new forms of community with our lay women and men Partners and by expanding the role of "intentional communities" integrated into the Institute.

The entire Lasallian family must join together and not fear to seek and explore new pathways that will enable the world to see the Institute as a family of celibate, vowed religious, partnering with lay men and women together and by association.

To be the Lasallian family in today's world is not an either/or situation; it must be a both/and opportunity for all who are committed to the work and spirit of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

MY MAP MAKING NOTES

PART IV



CONCLUSION





CHAPTER 11

**EXPLORE NEW POTENTIAL
HIGHWAYS FOR A
LASALLIAN 21ST CENTURY**



As the delegates come together in the 46th General Chapter, they and all Lasallians are well aware of the many challenges that lie ahead. Of course, it will not be business as usual.

Our entire Lasallian family has faith that the spirit of the Founder will challenge us to be the Map Makers who will chart potential new highways to the 21st century.

Given what we have expressed in this presentation, we suggest some other and familiar areas that should be explored with new vigor and vitality. We do not present these suggestions as a limiting factor, nor do we delineate specific remedies. If we are to effectively discover potential highways that give specific direction to our future, we must do that together and by association. We are convinced that the 46th General Chapter can begin to plot specific pathways to respond to this challenge. Then the entire Lasallian family will have a global perspective from which to chart specific highways to a vibrant Lasallian future.

WE POSE THESE SUGGESTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF AN INVITATION FOR THE CHAPTER TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES THAT ARE PRESENT IN THE HERE AND NOW:

- To revitalize and renew our Lasallian international and local governance and organizational structures so that they will enable and actualize our dream of diversity, inclusivity, social and religious unity, and a world without walls and borders for the building of God's Kingdom.
- To revitalize and renew our Lasallian educational mission beyond the walls of the classroom so as to actualize our dream of embracing the world of the poor, the migrants, and our brothers and sisters who suffer from violence and racism, and to advocate for justice and peace for all.

- To revitalize and renew our Lasallian vocational journey with new formation initiatives that actualize our dream of an association of Brothers and Partners who are motivated by faith and zeal as Lasallian heroes, dedicated together and by association for the future of the Lasallian Mission.
- To revitalize and renew our Lasallian spirituality in a way that will actualize our dream of always remembering the presence of our loving and merciful God and inspire all whose lives we touch by our embrace and our practice of Lasallian Virtues.
- To revitalize and renew our commitment to the Church, as People of God, so as to realize our dream of a welcoming community of believers who accept all as brothers and sisters without exception.
- To revitalize and renew our commitment to justice in a way that will actualize our dream of a world healed of the divisions of race, creed, culture, sexual bias, and all forms of discrimination, bringing to reality the peace that, by God's design, was meant to be.

By addressing these general challenges, we believe the members of the Chapter will actually be true Catholic, Lasallian traditionalists—not by imitating Saint La Salle's times, but rather by creating today's living map that shows potential highways to justice, peace, and integrity within God's Creation here and now, 300 years later!



CHAPTER 12

**SAINT
LA SALLE'S
AMAZING
GRACE**



We come to the conclusion of this journey, which is only the beginning of the exploration of a new Lasallian map.

This living map will help us chart new highways and paths to make our traditional destination real and relevant for the 21st century. We all know that this will not be an easy task.

We accept that there really is no one, single, and all-encompassing way to chart that destination in today's diverse and pluralistic global and religious landscape. No one nation, culture, or any one region in our Institute has all the answers!

Diversity abounds, thrives, and expands as technology, media, and travel shrink our world. Our shrinking globe brings conflicting, competing, and combative ideas, values, and ideologies closer together on the present-day world map. Neither the Church nor the Institute are immune from this collision of differences. No one is free from these existing tensions and divisions.

As a modern-day Lasallian family, we must clearly understand, embrace, and seize upon our Founder's charism and spirit. Saint La Salle must be our compass. We are called to create a map that will lead us away from a dead end of hopelessness to a new horizon where all can live in peace, harmony, and dignity as God's precious children. We are assured that the *amazing grace* that was part of Saint La Salle's life and the founding of the Institute is with us, provided that our response is courageous enough to seize his spirit and pragmatism.

This means that we must have the *faith, holiness, spirituality, and courage* to be the Map Makers who will explore pathways that respond to real people and their needs. And then we must have the zeal to be dynamic and pragmatic enough to create solutions that will help heal all those in need, all those who are entrusted to our care.

We are assured that the amazing grace that was part of Saint La Salle's life and the founding of the Institute is with us, provided that our response is courageous enough to seize his spirit and pragmatism.

That spirit is our living tradition.

That is our Lasallian tradition.

That is our Lasallian response to the signs of the times.

*That is the amazing grace of Saint John Baptist de
La Salle's faith and zeal that we have inherited.*

Lasallians must not be deceived into thinking that our mission is complete because we expertly teach about the injustices of our times. We accomplish only half of our mission by pointing out present realities to our students and the others we serve. We are called by Saint La Salle's charism, spirit, and pragmatism to create new, transformed, effective, and concrete solutions for a better future for every woman and man on our globe. This is what zeal is all about.

The faith and zeal to accomplish this goal arise from our identity as Brothers of the Institute. As Brothers, we are compelled and destined to be devoted brothers to each other. As Brothers, we are propelled to be brothers to our Lasallian Partners. As Brothers, we are forged, actualized, and sustained by God's Holy Presence as Jesus lives in all our hearts. This is the unequivocal living-out and amazing grace of Saint La Salle's tradition for the Brothers in today's world. As paradoxical as it may seem, it is the very spiritual Holy Presence that made Saint La Salle a great worldly, human, and pragmatic innovator and which will also make the entire Lasallian family faith-filled, spiritual, worldly, and pragmatic ambassadors of Jesus' Gospel in today's world.

As Brothers, or as the Institute, we are not now, and we never have been, perfect spiritual beings without material, bodily shortcomings. Yes, we are humans, children of God, with frailties, differences, and limitations. But that is part of the reality of the Mystery within God's creation.

We would do well to recall C. S. Lewis' insightful observation:

There is no good trying to be more spiritual than God. God never meant man to be purely a spiritual creature. That is why He uses material things like bread and wine to put new life into us. We may think this rather crude and unspiritual. God does not. He invented eating. He likes matter. He invented it.

Saint La Salle's faith-filled respect and embrace of Catholic tradition was more than simply following past paths to destinations on old maps in the Catholic faith. His traditional Catholic faith inspired him to innovate, creating new highways and pathways that led the people of his time, with their unique needs, into their future destination—God's Kingdom *on earth as it is in heaven*.

Saint La Salle did this by creating—for his Brothers, his colleagues, and his students—an education and a community that released the power within each person. That power removed the binding and confining shackles forced upon them by unjust pressures and prejudices, whether from society's embedded favored and advantaged, or from governmental authorities, or from the Church clericalism of his time. Yet Saint La Salle remained, at his core, a faith-filled and loving follower of Jesus' Gospel and of the Church as the People of God.

NO LESS A QUEST IS NEEDED FOR TODAY'S LASALLIAN FAMILY.

Make no mistake about it—Saint La Salle was a faithful Catholic *with a capital C*. However, *as an agent for social transformation*, he also gave birth to and nurtured a catholic Lasallian education *with a lower case c*.

That is, he fostered an education that has *universal* application to the real world and to real people of good will. The essence of Saint La Salle's education was, is, and must be to honor and respect the dignity and *the right of each person to become who she or he decides to be for herself or himself*.

Without this dimension that embraces *the power of each person to become the person she or he yearns and hungers to be . . . it is not Lasallian education.*

But to teach with that spirit is also risky. We need to take that risk. And if we do take that risk, we will be blessed with the same *amazing grace* that sustained the Founder.



We end this presentation with a profound and pertinent observation that was not said by a Pope, a theologian, or a philosopher. It was said by a wonderful and caring comedian (*yes, a comedian*) Gracie Allen:

***“Don’t put a period where God has placed a comma.
God is still speaking.”***




To all our cherished and treasured
Lasallian family, let us never forget or
ever doubt that Saint La Salle is still among us.



"Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." — Mark Twain

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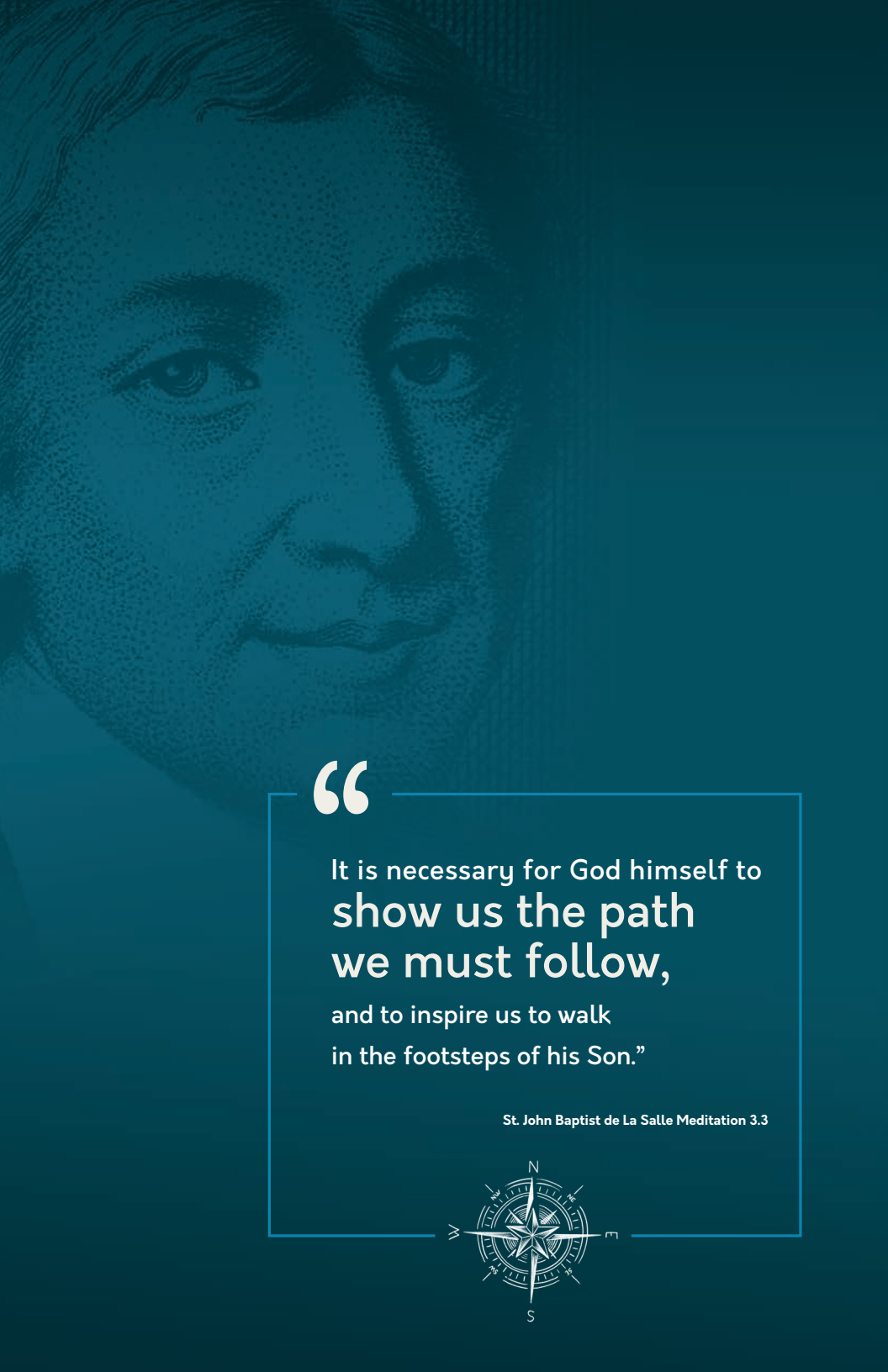


NO MATTER
WHERE YOU ARE
ON THE MAP,
BEGIN YOUR
MAP MAKER'S
JOURNEY TODAY.



BUILDING NEW PATHS TO TRANSFORM LIVES

CREATING A NEW LASALLIAN MAP



“

It is necessary for God himself to
**show us the path
we must follow,**
and to inspire us to walk
in the footsteps of his Son.”

St. John Baptist de La Salle Meditation 3.3

