

Bulletin of the Institute of the Brothers of
the Christian Schools



**CREATIVITY AND
COURAGE:
LIVING THE PROMISE OF
THE 39TH GENERAL
CHAPTER**

Years

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Lasallian women: past and present

DR. ROXANNE EUBANK
SAIN'T MARY'S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The renewal of the school calls for teachers who are prepared to meet the needs of modern man. “But the teachers realize that to the greatest possible extent they determine whether the Catholic school can bring its goals and undertakings to fruition” (GEM, 8). An Institute committed to the education of the youth of the world will contribute to the renewal of the school only to the degree that it emphasizes and develops the value of the teacher’s vocation.

Declaration, 48, 1

Introduction

At the 39th General Chapter in 1967, there was little mention of past, current or future roles of women in Lasallian ministries. The chapter documents state that the Brothers, from that point forward, could now run co-ed schools and teach in co-ed classrooms. Significant though this change was it did not herald the beginning of women providing support for Lasallian education. In fact, women are present throughout the founding story – not as teachers or students – but in many other influential roles.

Trish Carroll, a Lasallian from the PARC region, reminds us that, quite understandably, Brothers wrote Lasallian history for Brothers. The focus was on their own evolution. Of course, this makes sense. There is no reason they could have foreseen the diversity of modern Lasallian Schools. It is important that we do not rewrite history but add to it. The study of Lasallian women does not change our shared history, but it does indeed provide another window into how the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools came to be.

Carroll was one of the first people to do serious inquiry into this topic. She presented her research at the first Lasallian Women's Retreat sponsored by PARC and held in Thailand in 2012. At that retreat, she presented her work on two very important topics:

Our girls need to know about these women as a historic touchstone. Our boys need to see how women contribute to the educational project.

First, she provided a window into the world of De La Salle and the women who supported him and the early teachers in their work.

Second, she discussed association between male and female religious figures in 17th Century France that provide a historic perspective on association for mission between men and women.

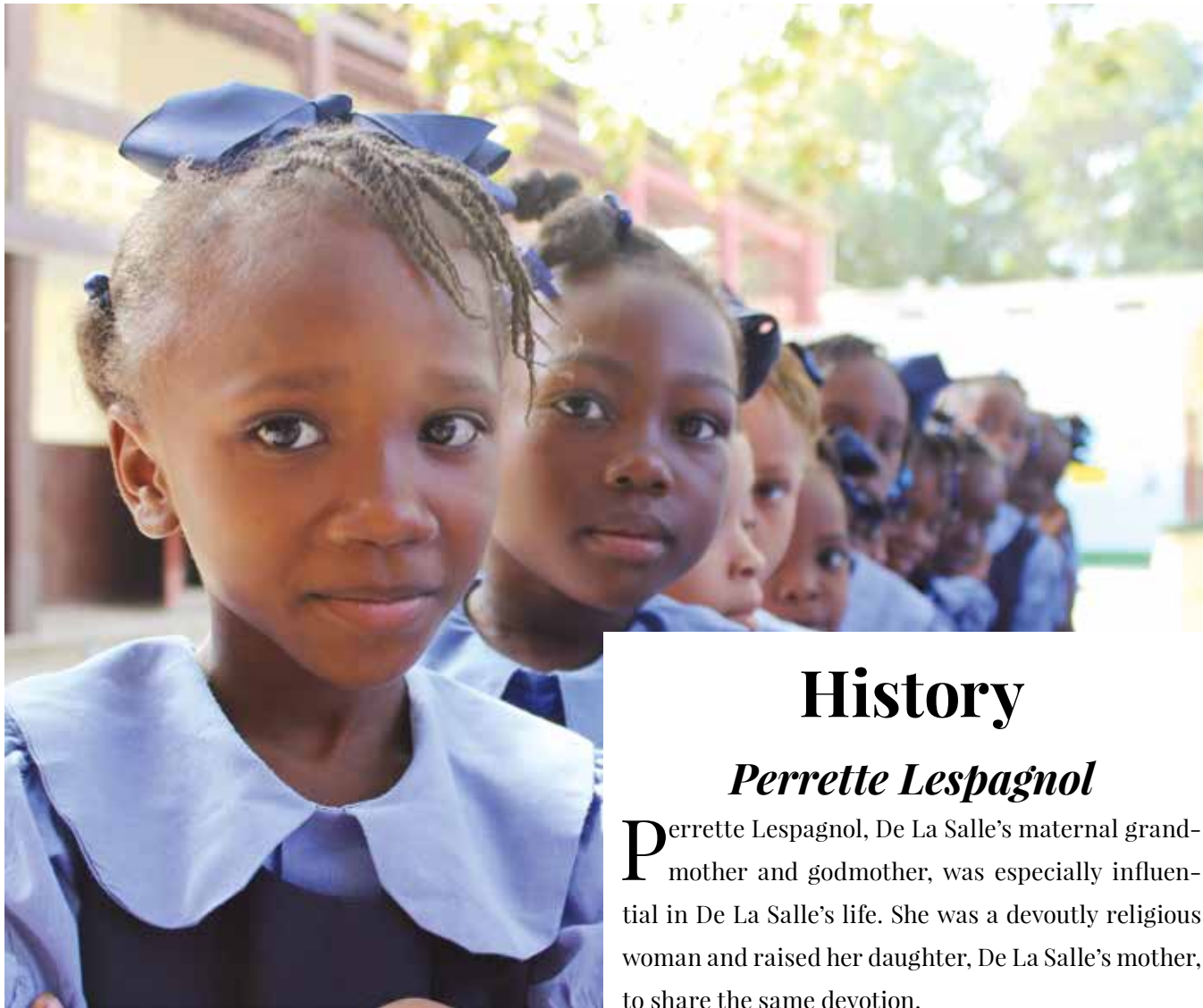
Another Lasallian Women's Retreat was held in ARELAN in 2014. In 2017, there were retreats for Lasallian women planned in New Zealand and Mexico. There seems to be a great interest in the Lasal-

lian network to understand the roles of women from the founding story to today.

Interest in the roles of women in the continued evolution of Lasallian education arises from many areas of consideration. Certainly, chief among these is the necessity of providing Lasallian female role models for all students and teachers. Our girls need to know about these women as a historic touchstone. Our boys need to see how women contribute to the educational project. Surely,

all Lasallians benefit from a deeper understanding of how association and shared mission between Brothers and partners and across genders are manifest in our lived reality.

Various Lasallian histories document the contributions made by women to De La Salle and the early teachers. Women funded schools, gave shelter



and provided food, offered guidance and sent their own children to the schools. The contributions of these women were instrumental in helping the early schools survive.

This article begins with a short overview of this history followed by a discussion of Lasallian women in today's ministries. In the interest of brevity, I will only provide a brief overview of the topics addressed. Readers should not assume that this is the complete story.

History

Perrette Lespagnol

Perrette Lespagnol, De La Salle's maternal grandmother and godmother, was especially influential in De La Salle's life. She was a devoutly religious woman and raised her daughter, De La Salle's mother, to share the same devotion.

It is probable that baby John was born in her house with her attending the birth. She doted on her grandson and he was often at her home. Upon the deaths of De La Salle's parents, Perrette provided grandmotherly love and much more. She headed the family council that determined the distribution of the estate. She was a shrewd businesswoman who advised a young De La Salle on both business and family matters.

She supported John's work in the ministry of education and she took on the care of the younger De La Salle children. She remained an important person in De La Salle's life until her death in 1691 at the age of 73.

Madame Maillefer

One of the most interesting women in the founding story is Madame Jean Debouis Maillefer. The story of Madame Maillefer is included in most of the books about the founding story. However, there are significant differences in the stories told about her. Blaine describes her as a repentant woman who gave up a life of vanity to embrace the poor. Others suggest that her behavior was consistent with that expected of her social class and that she was dedicated to the poor evidenced by her charitable works.

Madame Maillefer and her husband were generous benefactors. They provided funds to start schools for poor girls in Rouen. Since there were already schools for girls thriving in Rheims, the Maillefer's hometown, she decided to provide funds for a school for boys. She was familiar with Adrienne Nyel's work of starting schools for poor boys in Rouen and provided Nyel with a letter of introduction to take to Sister Françoise Duval, the head mistress of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus in Rheims. Maillefer's letter thus set the scene for the meeting between Nyel and the Founder. Madame Maillefer hoped that this would provide an opening into the political structure of the church in Rheims.

Sister Françoise Duval

Sister Françoise, Head Mistress of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, knew Father De La Salle well. He had completed the paperwork and negotiated the political structure of the Church in France to help get the letters of patent for the sisters. Given that he had experience navigating the political and social structures of the Church in Rheims, he would be an excellent advisor for Nyel. When Nyel arrived with the

letter from Madame Maillefer, De La Salle, providentially, was in the adjoining parlor. Sister Françoise invited De La Salle into the meeting and into the work of providing a school for poor boys.

There are several questions about how the meeting happened. Was the meeting a providential accident? Did Françoise Duval plan the meeting? We may never know with certainty but we do know that Madame Maillefer was the catalyst in the founding of the first school for boys in Rheims and that Françoise Duval pushed De La Salle to take his first step toward involvement in the school for poor boys. That school, started by Adrienne Nyel and later supervised by De La Salle, is often referred to as the first Lasallian School.

Madame des Croyères

Sister Françoise Duval's contribution did not end with this "providential meeting". Sister Françoise also assisted Nyel in procuring funding for the second school he started in Rheims by introducing him to Madame des Croyères, a benefactor of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. Madame des Croyères may perhaps have been a bit suspicious of this over eager man from Rouen, but when she was informed that Father De La Salle was engaged with the schools, Madame des Croyères requested to meet with him.

She knew De La Salle from the previous administrative work that he had performed for the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. She both respected and trusted him. When she met with De La Salle, she indicated that she would only provide funds for the second school in Rheims under the condition that De La Salle take a more active role in the school. She asked him to see to the quality of religious instruction and

the appropriate behavior of the teachers. He agreed. Madame des Croyères died prior to finalizing the arrangement in her will. Her heirs, knowing of her enthusiasm for the project, fully honored her promise and provided the endowment.

Madame des Croyères insistence that De La Salle be personally involved with the teachers precipitated the next instrumental step for De La Salle toward becoming founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. De La Salle's commitment to his promise to Madame des Croyères led him to try a number of methods to improve the teacher's behavior. He increased their schedules and was present at their house on a more regular basis. However, he was still not comfortable with the Christian depth and self-control demonstrated by the schoolmasters. Eventually, De La Salle invited the schoolmasters to live in his home. Bernard emphasized the importance of this event as central to our founding story when he stated, "For it was on that alone that the edifice of the society of the Brothers of the Christian Schools depended, and it was there that a start would be made to lay its foundations."

Sister Louise Hours

Sister Louise Hours may be the most well-known of the women in the founding story. Most biographies of De La Salle describe her as an illiterate shepherdess who was the foundress of the retreat house at Parmenie. While accurate, this is only part of what made her such an amazing woman.

Louise Hours a devoutly religious woman, who the local people called "Sister Louise", devoted her life to the rebuilding of the church at Parmenie as well as lodging for retreatants. For seven years

she lived next to the chapel, along with two other women and some goats, in a hut made of mud and sticks. They had no fire, no water and little food. Nevertheless, she persisted in creating the shrine to the Blessed Virgin.

When she and De La Salle met in 1714, they were elderly by early 18th century standards: Louise was 68 and De La Salle was 63. Both had lived lives in response to God's call. Both had made significant sacrifices to do so.

La Salle would have preferred to stay at Parmenie, conduct mass and provide spiritual direction for the pilgrims who arrived there. Sister Louise needed a spiritual director to work with retreatants.

The fact that De La Salle was such a spiritual and reflective man must have led her to want him to stay. One cannot overlook the sacrifice that Louise made when she told De La Salle that he must honor his vow of obedience to the Brothers. She had spent her life building the chapel and retreat center at Parmenie. She was thrilled with De La Salle's contributions to the work. Still she advised him to leave and return to the Brothers.

Mothers

Perhaps the least studied women in the Founding Story are the mothers of the early students. Families of the artisans and the poor worked diligently to provide for their families. Poverty and hunger were a part of their precarious daily-lived reality. The smallest financial setback could devastate a family. In order for families to survive, every family member needed to contribute. Women in this class worked in almost every job in which men worked. They did not



GLOBAL WOMEN SYMPOSIUM 2017, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND, JULY 2017

receive the same compensation as men received and could not join the artisan guilds. However, the meager wages they could earn meant the difference between poverty and becoming homeless beggars.

These women experienced a high rate of infant and maternal mortality. Maternal mortality rates estimate one maternal death in every 10 births. It was common for women to have five or more pregnancies. This put their chance of dying in childbirth at 50% over the span of their child-bearing years.

Infant mortality rates were even higher. Estimates are that 42% of infants did not survive to their first birthdays. Women returned to work as soon as possible after giving birth and often left their infants in the care of a wet nurse. Infants cared for by wet nurses had a higher mortality rate than those kept with the mother.

Once a healthy son was born, he was the family's future. His contribution to the economic viability of the family would be crucial. Most artisan families put their sons to work in their family businesses as soon as they were old enough to hold a hammer. When these mothers and fathers chose to send their boys to school it was, clearly, no small sacrifice.

The mother would have been the one who made sure the son had bread to take to school for lunch, clothes mended for modesty, head deloused, and the rare and occasional bath completed. She may have walked him to school, but she was never welcomed inside the doors. In essence, mothers turned over their most prized possessions to the Brothers and the great unknown. In a world where every day was a struggle for survival, the leap of faith and hope for the future this simple act displayed, is amazing.



FRATELLI PROJECT, LEBANON

Women beyond France

When John Baptist De La Salle began working with schools for the sons of the artisans and the poor, the world was a very different place than what we live in today. The men who joined De La Salle focused completely on the education of boys. As the Institute grew, more men joined the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The world of the Brothers of the Christian Schools remained almost completely, but not exclusively male until the Chapter of 1967. As the Brothers expanded beyond France, they needed generous benefactors to support their work. Many of those benefactors were women. In addition, the rigors of the work of the teachers was all consuming. The

Brothers often required cooks and housekeepers to assist the endeavor of keeping their entire focus on the task of being teachers. Women were the primary providers of that support.

One example of note is that of Rosella Mary (Mrs. F. W.) Colquhoun, AFSC. Rosella was a native of New Orleans in the Louisiana Territory of the United States and attended St. Patrick's Parish. In 1853, during a yellow fever epidemic, she noticed that the newly arrived Brothers from France were not attending Mass. She learned that they were all ill with yellow fever. Arriving at the Brothers' residence, she insisted upon caring for them. At first, Brother Adronis, the community director, refused. Nevertheless, Rosella persisted. She would not leave the residence. She

slept on the floor, nursed, fed and cleaned for the seriously ill brothers. She stayed at the residence without leaving until the last Brother was well. In 1869, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools formally presented her with papers of affiliation. The Brothers referred to her as “Mother Colquhoun”. From the time the Brothers withdrew from New Orleans in 1900, until her death in 1911 she prayed that the Brothers would return to New Orleans.

Similar stories often occurred as the Brothers extended their ministries beyond France. Many of the stories of the Brothers and these women are lost to time. It is essential that we document the ones that we retain in our Lasallian memory.

The tremendous influence of women on modern Lasallian education is an under researched portion of the heritage of the Lasallian family. For all of the first two centuries, our Lasallian schools were not allowed to employ women. While this may have been the official policy, most Brothers will acknowledge that women were working in the schools and supporting their mission long before that. Often, during wartime, it was a necessity to hire a female teacher when a male teacher could not be found.

In 1967, the 39th Chapter of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian schools determined that the Brothers could run and teach in co-educational schools. Since that historic Chapter, the increase in the number of females who are teachers and students in Lasallian schools is dramatic. Our network even has all girl schools, something the early Brothers and De La Salle would have never foreseen.

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Lasallian Schools in Modern Times

In 2016, the Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Brother Robert Schieler, FSC, released data from an extensive demographic study of Lasallian ministries around the world. Included in the data is a breakdown of the gender of employees of Lasallian ministries.

In 2016, laywomen represented the largest group of employees (54%). Today, women can be found in all professional roles in Lasallian ministries. In PARC, RELAL and RELEM women are the majority of employees while in RELAN they are approximately 49% of the population. In RELAF women are approximately 26% of employees of Lasallian Ministries. Below is a table of data provided by the Institute in 2016:

	PARC	RELAF	RELAL	RELEM	RELAN	TOTAL
Brothers FSC	250	224	569	281	155	1479
Non FSC religious	39	83	176	73	84	455
Lay men	7098	2469	12248	11753	5393	38961
Lay women	9920	958	16164	20420	5330	52792
TOTAL	17307	3734	29157	32527	10962	93687

The “Non-FSC Religious” category includes religious from other orders and priests and does not differentiate by gender. We do not have quantifiable data on the numbers of male and female students in our schools. Individual regions or districts may collect that information but is not available as consolidated data. This information could be critical in contextualizing the current realities of Lasallian education.

The International Symposiums on Lasallian Research has had a round table discussion dedicated to research on Lasallian women since 2014. As a community of researchers, participants realize that this is a rich area for research. Several studies are currently in process as a response. Studies on modern Lasallian women in leadership positions, John Baptiste De La Salle’s letters to women, association of women and men, and women in Lasallian history are currently underway. While this is great, there is so much more we do not know. But, given the dramatic demographic shift of Lasallian ministries in the past 50 years, we really need to do better. We need to understand our past and present in order to prepare for our future. We owe it to our students.

The lay character of the institute

CARMELITA I. QUEBENGCO
LASALLIAN EAST ASIA DISTRICT (LEAD)



The Church emphasizes her community character as the People of God and the sacrament of the presence of God among men. For this reason she teaches the importance of the apostolate as witness. The Church is defined as missionary by nature and gives prior concern to those who are separated from her. When the members of the Church receive the sacrament of baptism they assume their responsibility for the salvation of the world. Yet the Church respects the diversity of charisms which the Spirit imparts to each of her members of the apostolate.

Declaration 10,2

Introduction

In 1969, when I first worked with the De La Salle Brothers in the Philippines, I was not really aware of formal Lasallian formation programs. I learned the Lasallian story, either from the Brothers' sharing or lecture, and learned about the Lasallian ways of being and doing from their role modelling. This was the time when Vatican II was calling for great renewal throughout the Church and little did I know that the 39th General Chapter in 1966–1967 was the Institute's way of responding to this call. I realized later on that the 39th General Chapter was a major event in the Institute's history and its main output, the Declaration, is a significant document that contains the main propositions for institutional renewal.

This year, as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 39th General Chapter, I return to the Declaration to reflect on the lay character of the Institute—its development, growth, and future prospects.

Bringing Up to Date

The Second Vatican Council used “aggiornamento” as one of its key words. It is an Italian word that connotes ‘bringing up to date’ and which implies renewal and relevance. It is within this guiding spirit that decrees of Vatican II primarily called the Church to change paradigms:

- from a state of perfection to the People of God;
- from ‘above’ to alongside the People of God;
- from separation from the world to presence in the world.

The Declaration, for its part, translates this renewal or this ‘bringing up to date’ within the Institute as something that “must be continuous, re-discovering in the present the dynamic principle, the charism that gave birth to the Institute at its origin” (Campos, M. et. al., 2014). That origin, as we know, brings us back to St. John Baptist de La Salle, a priest who founded a congregation of exclusively lay male religious (Brothers not priests) to serve Christian schools for poor youth. Throughout St. La Salle's life, the Brothers took vows of association, and stability, and obedience among themselves, and only vowed the evangelical counsels of poverty and chastity much later, following the Bull of Approbation. In keeping with this, the 39th General Chapter states that “the lay character of the Institute was willed by the Founder” and identified specific reasons for affirming the lay character of the Institute, including the above-mentioned Bull of Approbation.

Declaration of the Brothers in the World Today

On June 1, 1966, an overwhelming majority of the Capitulants of the General Chapter voted for and affirmed the lay character of the Institute and intended it to remain that way. It also affirmed other foundational principles of the Institute and explained these in the Declaration.

The apostolate of the De La Salle Brothers, as it originates from the Founder, is service of the poor in education, not necessarily only through formal schools. Brothers are encouraged to be creative and innovative in their approach to education, depending

on what is appropriate to new and actual needs of the world, especially the marginalized youth. Br. Michel Sauvage (in Campos, et. al., 2014) states that “the renewal’s most vigorous objective is to convert the Institute to the service of the poor... the educational purpose of the Institute must expand without fear of non-school activities”. The Declaration likewise emphasizes that to be effective, education of the poor needs to be viewed in broader terms to include dealing with the root causes of poverty at the economic, social, political, and global spheres. Necessarily, this also includes categorically denouncing all policies, programs, activities, and practices that deny social justice, and working seriously towards societal transformation to bring about freedom, equality, and justice, especially for the poor. Lasallian educators, Brothers or lay teachers, are expected to develop in their students an orientation towards this perspective in thought, words, and deeds.

Brothers and Lay Partners

“**T**he figure of the Brother points to belonging to the People of God in its basic sense, not hierarchical sense”, as in “All of you are brothers (Mathew 28:3)” (Botana A, 2011). This renders working closely and collegially with Lay Partners more effective as it facilitates the joint conduct of ministry. Their being called Brothers (image of siblings) rather than Father (image of a male parent) makes the development of fraternal relationship easier and more natural to realize. Brothers are also more accessible and with more time for work as this becomes their main and major concern.

Lay teachers, for their part, are described by the Declaration as “... a staff rich in diversity but with unity among members. For this reason, Brothers work closely with lay teachers who make a unique contribution through their knowledge of the world of family life and of civic affairs” (Salm, L. 1994). In this regard, Br. Herman Lombaerts (2014) asks these very relevant and prophetic questions: “Would it be unthinkable for a secular lay person to be a bearer of the same Lasallian charism but in a different way? Could there emerge among these people another model, a mediator of the Gospel with a different identity, married, and a parent? To the question of what then differentiates the role of the Brothers from their committed Lasallian lay colleagues, the 39th General Chapter specifies this as “the heart, the memory and the guarantors of the shared mission... guarantors of its Lasallian character” (Meister M, 1994). The Declaration required a change in perspective among the Brothers, relative to their role in the world, the conduct of the Lasallian Mission, and in professionally and fraternally partnering with lay men and women staff in their apostolates.

The first years of the Declaration were spent mostly in trying to completely understand the vision it propagates, and more important, how each District and Region is to read the signs of the times, what plans are appropriate as response to the new needs, and how to best implement them.

Lasallian Family

Since the release of the Declaration, the variation and need for the Apostolates of the Brothers has increased. It became apparent that the Brothers would need to get help from laymen and women, who believe in and pursue the Lasallian Mission with the same vigor and commitment. This implies the necessity to create new structures, appropriate policies, and Lasallian formation programs for both Brothers and lay educators to be able to effectively collaborate in responding to new challenges posed by the Mission.

During the 40th General Chapter in 1976, the concept of Lasallian Family was highlighted. Article 45 of its propositions states, “Individual persons or groups of persons can be associated with the apostolic activity and to the life of prayer of the Brothers without completely sharing in their community life” (Salm, L. 1994). This statement implies being like siblings in a big family where there is substantial sharing in the Mission, though the identity of the lay persons are different from the Brothers.

Br. José Pablo Basterrechea, in his letters to the Brothers as Superior General, stressed the need for a full integration of lay educators in Lasallian apostolates and the wisdom of offering them Lasallian formation programs to further deepen their Lasallian spirituality. After the Declaration, the Brothers responded to this call with the establishment of formation programs at the international, national and district levels, among them: the *Centro Internazionale Lasalliano* in Rome, the Leadership Workshops of the International Association of Lasallian Universities, and various Mission Assemblies in the different Districts and regions. The Visitors, in their 1981 Intercapitular Meeting, followed suit and added the need to give lay educators leadership positions in the conduct of the Lasallian Mission.

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Shared Mission

Following the concept of the Lasallian Family, the 41st General Chapter in 1986 developed the paradigm of the Shared Mission, then considered a radical idea, primarily due to its implication of equality in the conduct of the Mission between Brothers and lay educators, with both learning from one another rather than the Brothers teaching and guiding their Lay Partners. In 1987, the phrase, Shared Mission, was used in the revised Rule. The following year, Br. John Johnston, then Superior General, coined the term Lasallian schools (rather than Brothers' schools) as "the more appropriate term because they would be defined by the vision of De La Salle, a vision shared by many different kinds of people on their staff... an articulation of new roles for lay Lasallians and Brothers was necessary for this renewal to occur" (Salm, L. 1994). There were Brothers who insisted that this new sharing of the mission should be a relationship of mutual learning from one another and not directing the lay on the conduct of the Mission as an entitlement.

The General Chapter of 1993 was historic because for the first time, lay educators were invited as Consultants. It was an opportunity to share their thoughts and provide inputs regarding issues and concerns raised about the Mission. It was also the first time they were called Lasallian Partners, defined as "those who share the Brothers' Mission in its multiple educational, catechetical, apostolic, and professional aspects... and make it possible for the work of schools to be accomplished" (Salm, L. 1992). This and other participatory types of assemblies such as the International Assembly of 2006 and 2013, as well as the Mission Assemblies in Regions and Districts were initiatives to find appropriate and viable structures

of communion, giving both Brothers and Partners voice and vote in the identification of Mission priorities, and the development and/or alignment of relevant policies and programs now being implemented throughout the Institute and at different levels. For the same reason, Mission Councils in Districts are meant to regularly and substantially engage Lay Partners at the local level. These imply that Lasallian Partners occupy an "equal and complementary place with the Brothers in the execution of Mission" (Salm, Luke. 1992) the core of which is the inspiration of the Founder and commitment to the Mission. Of the Lasallian Partners, some have been formally affiliated and/or associated by the Institute because their lives are clearly marked by Lasallian characteristics such as service of the poor and fraternal relationships.

"Statistics from 2004-2011 show a real educational commitment to the service of young people in situations of precariousness and poverty. There were also more universities established that contributed to an open ended study of education by holding five international colloquia that analyzed four important aspects of the new educational environment all over the world – globalization, the family, the megapolices, and new information and communications technology." (Capelle, 2013)

There are now more co-educational Lasallian apostolates compared to Brothers' schools exclusively for boys. In all the regions and most Districts and Sectors, the shift has been made from being Brothers' schools to Lasallian schools, where the Lasallian Partner commitment to the Lasallian Mission is more pronounced. There are also many more apostolates other than just formal schools. From a recent survey of some Brothers in the different Lasallian regions, it is clear that there are new works



with renewed and stronger focus on serving the poor and more creative approaches to responding to new needs. What used to be a centralized government has given way to granting more autonomy and responsibility at the local levels.

As of 2016, there were 976 La Salle schools serving almost a million students, with a total professional staff of 92,160—1,849 of them or about 2% are Brothers and 89,716 or 98% are Lay Partners, a majority of whom are women. If one views the Institute as strictly the Brothers, one will be tempted to think that the Institute is shrinking; however, if one views

the Institute as the viability and vitality in the conduct of its Mission, one can confidently say that, indeed, it has not only remained relevant and vibrant but has grown much in creative ways, considering the growing number and variety of apostolates being implemented throughout the world.

Several years after the Declaration, the variation of Lasallian apostolates has likewise increased. Br. John Johnston (published at 2012 in *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education*. Saint Mary's University of Minnesota)) describes the renewed Lasallian apostolates as:

- Program for the illiterate, street children, orphans, migrants, itinerants, physical and mentally disabled, youth with learning impediments, and youngsters with behavioural problems.
- Pastoral centers, centers for sports, and other forms of recreation and social activities.
- Programs for infants, children, adolescents, young adults, veteran adults, people in a variety of cultures, races, heritage, and language... Catholic but also Orthodox, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindu, Shintoists, Confucians, traditional religions and no religion.
- Represented in developed, moderately developed, and extremely poor countries.
- Enjoying peace but many are ravaged by division, violence, and war;
- Facing political realities – with some countries supportive of the Lasallian Mission, and some totally opposed to it.
- Operating as Lasallian apostolates but with no Brothers.
- Brothers' schools that have now evolved into Lasallian schools.

Evidently, the Declaration has developed in the Institute a stronger spirituality that is more gospel-oriented, more opened to new ideas and the world, and more focused and concerned for persons rather than on administrative structures and minutiae. The process and outcomes of this renewal can, in reality, serve as a living model of how an exclusively lay religious congregation effectively responded to the challenges of renewal by Vatican II. Particularly remarkable is the way the Brothers were able to inspire and engage their Lay Partners to substantially share the Lasallian Mission and Charism, thereby making these also their own. “In the growth of association with men and women who walk side by side with them and identify themselves today as the sons and daughters of St John Baptist de La Salle, the Brothers see a sign of the times which fills them with hope” (The Rule of the Brothers, 2015).

***The Institute
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organizational
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the poor.***

Continuing Challenges for the Institute

Fifty years after the Declaration, poverty has become even more visible in a world where social inequality is widening, the environment continues to be degraded, individualism and secularization are stronger, and the poor are vulnerable especially in war-torn countries and in the more developed countries where they seek refuge. These conditions pose continuing challenges to the apostolate of the Institute and yet at the same time point to the continuing relevance of the Lasallian Mission throughout the world.

According to a World Bank report in 2015, there will be a decline in poverty, but this will happen slowly and the eradication of poverty as a goal will remain a highly ambitious target. Reaching this global goal will depend on a highly complex combination of consumption, trends and processes, resilience, progress, stability, and, above all, a more deliberate granting of access to opportunities to those in poverty both at the local and national levels. Addressing poverty and inequality should be an integral part of every Lasallian apostolate's mission, vision, and policies. This should translate into strong advocacies in all Lasallian schools and education programs.

In Lasallian universities, research can be focused on policies and programs that are more innovative, aimed at the status quo, and advocating for structural change as well as change in government policies and priorities to benefit the poor sector first and foremost. Becoming involved in these advocacies may be viewed

by some as “political”, but it should not really be an issue if one remains non-partisan, in the sense that one does not support political candidates, leaders, and political parties.

Strengthening linkages, working in close collaboration and taking joint action with other national, regional, and international organizations of the same persuasion the way some NGOs do may be an option worth exploring. Lasallian universities doing research on policy development and programs for poverty alleviation can also work with local and national governments whose responsibility it is to serve the poor. Outputs can likewise serve as inputs in orientation and training programs for new local government and national leaders both at the legislative and executive branches of government. There are international and regional organizations that commission and fund action research done by universities with the goal of implementing the study outputs in remote and depressed localities, where a big portion of the population are poor. Educational innovations may likewise be initiated and pilot-tested in different countries, refined to become more effective, and then proposed to funding agencies for implementation support in less developed countries.

The Institute can be one of the organizational world leaders in the education of the poor. There are currently 71 Lasallian universities throughout the world. Certainly they have many competent professionals in various disciplines, including the field of education. Though the Institute has had a series of international assemblies and colloquia in education and related fields, the participation has mostly been by Lasallians. This can be done jointly with other network and international organizations also interested in surfacing, for instance, pressing issues and concerns in education,

alternative pedagogical approaches, distance education, and teaching-learning effectiveness in schools for the poor. Such collaborative colloquia/conferences make more impact on educators and can potentially exert a more significant influence on national education policymakers and other relevant organizations that provide services which directly benefit the poor.

There are also some propositions which evolved from the Declaration that can be better clarified, strengthened and renewed. Since the 80s, the Lasallian Mission has been officially considered a shared mission of the Brothers and their Lay Partners. As a general concept, this is understood by all and practiced to a significant degree in collegiality and fraternal relationships in the conduct of Mission. Its more specific and finer implications however now also include sharing the Lasallian charism as stated in Article 19 of the Rule of the Brothers (2015) – “the Brothers joyfully share the Mission together with their Partners who recognize and live the Lasallian charism. Together, they ensure the vitality of this charism by creating or developing organizational, formation, and research structures in which each one deepen their understanding of their vocation and of the Lasallian Mission.”

Enfleshing this in the conduct of the Lasallian Mission has invariably raised a number questions: How is it translated into more specific and realistic terms? How should formation programs be renewed to be more effective in developing a stronger sense of shared charism among Lasallians, both Brothers and Lay Partners? What “structures of communion” should be put in place to be able to sustain throughout the Institute the sharing of the Lasallian charism? What new policies should be defined and implemented to nurture its sustainability? Answers to these questions and the evolving lived experience of the Brothers and Lay Partners in the

conduct of their apostolates will determine the future of the Lasallian mission.

Within this sharing, will the role of the Brothers remain as “the heart, the memory, and the guarantor of the Lasallian Mission”? Article 157 of The Rule of the Brothers (2015) responds to this – “...the Brothers feel they have a special responsibility to share their pedagogical and spiritual heritage with all those they work. Through this sharing they receive the calls of the Spirit to be Brothers today – the call to be brothers with them and to live fraternally as a sign for all Lasallian educators – the call for them and with them as channel for the light with which God Himself enlightened the hearts of those He destined to announce His word to children – the call to be among them and with them, the heart, the memory, and the guarantor of the Lasallian charism”.

Does this then mean that since the Mission is already shared, when the Lasallian charism is also effectively shared and lived by the Lay Partners they too will become guarantors of the Lasallian mission and charism? Br. Antonio Botana replies – “This group of persons and communities form a nucleus that we can define as the heart, memory, and guarantor of the founding charism in the family. Without that nucleus which is not reserved to religious, the charismatic family could not survive”. This answers questions often asked by Lasallians, such as “Can you imagine a Lasallian school without Brothers?” “What will happen to the Lasallian Mission in Districts where there are no more Brothers?” Though success in genuinely sharing the Mission and the Lasallian charism with Lay Partners has happened in some cases, this is not yet as common as desired. The challenge is to further promote and en flesh this throughout the Institute, and their best practices shared with others so they may be adapted where appropriate.



On the Future of the Institute and of the Lasallian Mission

What is the future of the Institute? Though no one can say what this will be, there are trends that point to possible general directions. For exam-

ple, while the Lasallian Mission continues to grow in different parts of the world, together with a marked increase in the number of Lay Partners who commit to the Lasallian Mission, there has been a declining trend in the number of Brothers. This has resulted in more and more Lay Partners taking over leadership positions in apostolates usually led by Brothers.

In different Lasallian regions, there are also apostolates where there are no longer any Brothers and run solely by Lay Partners. In such situations,

the Lasallian character of the apostolate remains, through its continuing link with a Lasallian District, the Lasallian formation of its leaders and personnel, and the animation of Brothers who sit on school boards. In some countries, the specification of criteria or indicators of the Lasallianness of a school is done in a consultative manner, which Lay Partner leaders in charge integrate and implement in the conduct of the Lasallian Mission. It is possible that situations like this will increase through the Institute. What are possible ways of dealing with this?

In a recent survey of Brother-leaders of the different regions, the preferred scenarios are:

- Turn over the schools to Lay Partners already involved, formed as Lasallians, and have proven commitment to the Mission, and live the Charism.
- Turn over the schools to the Diocese of which it is a part, or to a Lasallian association like the Signum Fidei, or to a group of alumni willing to take over.
- Turn over the schools to a Catholic foundation.
- The Institute establish a new Lasallian Foundation with a trust fund. The most competent Lay Partners and some Brothers can comprise its Board of Trustees that will ensure the continuity and sustainability of the Lasallian Mission throughout the world.

Regardless of whether there will be more Brothers or less of them in the future, the Lasallian Mission will continue to be relevant especially in responding to the challenge to eradicate poverty. The Brothers with their Lay Partners who substantially share the mission and the spirit of the Institute, and their apostolates can, no doubt, take on that challenge by making quality education accessible, especially to the poor, and together with relevant national, regional, and international organizations become a world leader in development education and a most certainly staunch advocate of social justice.