

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

The General Chapters of 1928 and 1934

(as noted in Bedel (2007), *An Introduction to the History of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Volume V: 20th Century: 1928-1946*), p. 58:

- At the 1928 General Chapter, “to ensure greater perseverance among the Brothers, the desire was expressed . . . that ‘the dearth of vocations having stopped, we should employ only religious staff as soon as possible.’”
- “In 1934, capitulants were warned of the danger resulting from the presence of lay staff” in the schools. It was proposed that lay people would be trained in “Institute training colleges.”

Circular 318: Results of the General Chapter of 1946 (July 16, 1946)

Resolutions of the Fifth Commission, Part A: Schools and Gratuity

- 67 III. “It is important to proceed to a religious reorganization of our schools; (a) By the immediate removal of the feminine element employed in certain places in consequence of the war. (b) By progressive reduction of the lay element and by the Superiors refusing to open any new school which might mean an increase of the lay personnel in a District.”

Circular 354: Results of the General Chapter of 1956 (July 16, 1956)

Resolutions of the Fifth Commission, *Day Schools, Boarding Schools, Gratuity*

- 78 5. “That the lay teachers we take as our auxiliaries be truly Catholic, and that thus they be in a position to cooperate with us in the apostolate confided to us by the Church.”
- 78 6. “That the enclosure of our communities be duly respected by the lay teachers; and that where lady teachers are employed their number be reduced to a minimum, observing in their regard the rules of prudence.”

The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration (1967)

- ¶ 46.3 “The school will be molded into a community only through a community of teachers rich in diversity and the unity of its members. For this reason the Brothers are happy to collaborate with lay teachers, who bring to the teaching community a contribution that comes from their knowledge of the world, their experience in family life, civic affairs, and labor organizations. The Brothers act in such a way as to guarantee that the lay teachers are involved in the whole life of the school: with the catechesis, apostolic movements, extra-curricular activities, as well as in administration and matters of policy.”

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Circular 403: The Documents of the 40th General Chapter (1976)

Fraternal Meetings

38 “Among other meetings occasioned by the Chapter must be mentioned those between the capitulants and the Mixed Committee of the Former Students with the representatives of the Secular Institute of the Holy Crucifix of Turin and with the newly professed Brothers of the district of Valencia-Palma. These meetings were continued, moreover, throughout the liturgical ceremony of Saturday, the Vigil of Pentecost, and by the profession of a group of young Brothers and that of a group of members of the ‘**Signum Fidei**’ recently constituted by the Former Students and supporters. On Brother Charles Henry’s initiative, a few Brothers and Former Students had for some months given careful consideration to a program for meeting with the General Chapter. Part of it was, properly speaking, an audience but there was that close sharing in a liturgical ceremony together and the first attempt to translate into practice the will for every closer collaboration between Former Students and ourselves.”

The Lasallian Family

54 “During the same meeting [**the Intercapitular Meeting of 1971**] in 1971, a proposal was adopted for more attention to be paid to former students and friends of the Brothers who wished to have a greater share in their spirit, prayers and mission. From then on, therefore, we hear the ‘Lasallian Family’ spoken of, and even of ‘different degrees of belonging to the Institute.’ Quite recently the World Confederation of Former Students Associations confirmed this evolution by calling itself ‘The World Confederation of Lasallian Associations,’ for its ranks are open to all those who have been mentioned above.”

76 “The Brothers will share their Lasallian spirituality and the leadership of their works with all the members of the educational community. They will be concerned with the continuing formation of those persons and will make them aware of the different degrees of belonging to what is called ‘the Lasallian family.’ They will invite their alumni and co-workers to take part in movements that work for social justice and the promotion of the human person.”

79 “The 40th General Chapter maintains the exclusively lay character of the Institute. Therefore, it affirms that the priesthood . . . is not to be introduced into the Institute.”

79 “The Brothers should develop in their ministry all the possibilities of the Christian lay state, of baptismal priesthood, and the prophetic vocation. In their educative action, they will always have in mind to favor the development of a laity called to assume growing responsibilities in the Church.”

Degrees of Belonging in the Institute

86 “The Novices and the Brothers who are bound to the Congregation by religious profession are members of the Institute.”

87 “In addition to the postulants, either young men or men of mature age can be associated with the apostolic activity and the community life of the Brothers without having to make religious profession (their status and contractual arrangements would have to be made precise by the community in agreement with the District.”

87 “Individual persons or groups of persons can be associated with the apostolic activity and to the life of prayer of the Brothers without sharing completely in their community life.”

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Circular 406: Our Consecrated Life (1977)

60 “Our specific vow, that which constituted our identity, is really that of *‘association to keep gratuitous schools.’* . . . While the Founder was still alive, the formula of the vow of association started to be differentiated in its various parts, and then actually divided into two parts, the vow of teaching gratuitously becoming, at least in the terminology used, a separate vow. . . . However, in terms of exact terminology, we can speak of one specific vow: that of association to teach gratuitously. **Association of itself was never sought, but rather ‘to maintain by association the gratuitous schools.’**” [bold added for emphasis]

Circular 415: Perspectives for 1986: Intercapitular Meeting of 1981

Openness to Lay People

23 “The increasing number of lay people working with us in schools is a sign of the times which the Brothers must be able to interpret. It would be interesting, without going back too far, to read our capitular texts and see the evolution of those concerning our relations with lay people.”

23-24 “. . . after the 1976 Chapter had blessed the various ways in which lay people could be associated with our apostolate, community life, and spirituality, the Intercapitular Meeting devoted considerable attention to the subject either in a report dealing expressly with it, or in various reports on the school, catechesis, and even in relations with the Young Churches.”

Why Take an Interest in Lay People

24 “At last the Church recognizes that lay people have a part to play and a share in its mission. We are a cell of the Church and we must include this care among our responsibilities. Statistics show that we are in contact with many thousands of laymen, teachers of course, but also members of the administrative and domestic staff, not to mention former pupils, parents and sympathizers. The very nature of our work makes us one of the groups in the Church which has most to do with laymen and that in anything but a superficial way, since we have to form an educational community and even, given the right conditions, a faith community. We must realize the extent of this phenomenon, the responsibilities it entails and seize the occasion it offers.”

“We therefore make an extremely important contribution to the Church within the educational community itself as it brings together Brothers and lay people. We are called upon to fulfill a new role, that of sharing our spirituality with lay people whom we look on as our equals.”

“There has, therefore, been a considerable evolution from the not too distant past when we had to employ lay people because of the difficulties of the times and considered them simply as auxiliaries.”

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Interest and Train the Brothers

24-25 “The first directive of the meeting is addressed to the Brothers. In many countries, indeed, where the socialization of education is making progress, Brothers and lay people find themselves on the same footing when it comes to applying for a post. Even in more traditional situations the presence of numerous laymen calls into question the ‘Brothers’ School.’ It leads the Brothers to start asking themselves what it is that distinguishes them from laymen. The intercapitular meeting, therefore, recommends that more extensive discussions or studies be undertaken at various levels, community, district, General Council, to see what Brothers and laymen have in common and what distinguishes them, and also the precise point of our presence as Brothers in a school where laymen predominate. The directives suggest that we must make certain contributions to the educative community which relate to our consecrated life, such as the idea of gratuity, availability, brotherhood, care for the life of faith in the educational community.”

Interest and Train the Lay Staff

25 “The meeting on no occasion adopted the attitude in which the ‘well trained’ Brother came to the help of the ‘backward’ layman. It realized a fact confirmed in the discussions: lay staff, more or less everywhere, and to varying degrees, are interested in the Brothers’ spirituality and methods. For them they are a source of inspiration. It means that the Brother is for the layman a leader or teacher and shares with him the legacy inherited from St. John Baptist de La Salle and the present day practices of Lasallian spirituality.”

“As the introduction states, this is *a further step* the meeting suggests should be taken. For if we associate the layman in our profession, and a little less in our mission, we tend to treat our spirituality as our special preserve.”

“With all the facilities offered by the large number of laymen working with us, the meeting esteems it an urgent duty to get them to share in this mission and this spirituality.”

26 “An urgent duty because it is a debt the Church owes the layman. And our negligence now becomes apparent in the difficulties we encounter when we see many lay teachers ‘doing nothing.’ Whoever has helped them do anything?”

“The discussions revealed that for the most part Districts and Regions have accomplished a great variety of initiatives such as meetings, retreats, graduated courses, periods of common life, publications, visits of inquiry, too numerous to mention here. The participants suggest that the Institute publish the most significant of them.”

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Give the Laymen Posts of Responsibility

26 “The fact of being a Brother does not necessarily qualify him for a post of responsibility. The participants, however, stressed the need to have a sufficient number of Brothers in these posts to assure the Lasallian character of our schools or of those institutions for which we are responsible, such as pedagogical and catechetical centers, management, Catholic teaching, etc.”

“A great deal of time was spent discussing the trade unions in our establishments. This often leads to tension. The meeting insisted that all feelings of fear and resentment be set aside. And that, once we have recognized the correctness of our point of view, we maintain it with calm and patience and try to reach a just solution. This will be achieved more often than not by negotiation and understanding rather than by confrontation between the two parties.”

“It is within this framework that the meeting sees numerous posts of responsibility freely open to laymen and, as far as possible, to laymen who share our views and spirituality.”

Lasallian Associations

26-27 “If the meeting did not devote as much time to Lasallian Associations as to lay staff, it was through shortage of time rather than lack of interest. It was indeed evident from the discussions that the associations are experiencing the spirit of renewal in many areas. It is affecting former pupils, parents and sympathizers and is evidenced not so much by campaigns for a numerous membership as by an increased interest in the Founder and in the Brothers and by increased generosity in sharing our mission. It is more especially groups of young Lasallians who are making their presence felt in a number of regions and with a pronounced inclination to prayer, brotherhood and the cause of justice.”

27 “To speak of a Lasallian spring would perhaps be an exaggeration or too rhetorical. But it is true that ‘something’ is taking place under our very eyes. The discussions enabled the representatives of areas where such movements are occurring to inform those where they are not of the apostolic interest aroused and to show them that it is possible everywhere provided that one takes the local circumstances into account.”

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Circular 422: The Documents of the 41st General Chapter (1986)

1.4 Our Lay Teachers and the Lasallian Family

13 “The General Chapter has allowed us to investigate both the impact and the novelty of the Lasallian Family. To our amazement, we have witnessed how the spirit of Saint John Baptist de La Salle can animate numerous Christian educators who wish to live out their educational commitment, inspired by the experience and teaching of our Founder. Many of them also wish to multiply and deepen their relations with us, with our Brothers, our Communities, our Districts, and even with the Institute as a whole.”

“We believe that ***this fact, every day more widespread, is a call from God to us brothers to change our perspective and our way of fulfilling the ministry the Church has confided to us.***” [bold + italics added for emphasis]

“If, up until the past couple of decades we considered ourselves as the ‘proprietors’ of our work and mission, now we are being asked to consider our work as a ministry in which a great number of lay people who are already working with us are being called upon to participate. Thanks to this integration of Brothers and lay people working together in a common ministry, our schools will be better and we will be able to offer a service of greater quality to the Church.”

“Now, under the impulse of the Chapter, all of us must assume the new dimension which the Lasallian Family is progressively taking on. **There is opening before us a new path along which we must travel.**”

13-14 “We Brothers continue to be the mainstay of the Lasallian experience. In the years to come, we shall have to continue deepening our charism and developing our spirituality. Thus, we shall be disposed to accompany, sustain, and educate numerous groups of Christians – above all Christian educators – who wish to derive their inspiration from De La Salle in order to grow as men and women of faith, at the service of the local Church, and as people particularly committed to the field of education.”

14 “At the same time, we shall be disposed to allow ourselves to be enriched by the educational and Christian experience of the lay people who are following this same road together with us so that the Spirit of our Founder may vivify the new generation of Brothers, youth, and Christian educators.”

27 “A further, insistent call comes to us from the Lasallian family. We are not indifferent to those many men and women who, in one way or another, claim a share in the spirit of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, and who wish to be more intimately involved in our ministry and heritage. There are also young people who are fired by the Lasallian ideal which channels their energies into accomplishing amazing things. ***We recognize a sign of the Spirit in this new and powerful movement.*** We wish to play a part in the formation of these new disciples. We want to work together with them so that, through our works, there may be a greater participation of the laity in the mission of the Church.” [bold + italics added for emphasis]

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2.3 Message from the 41st General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools to the Members of the “Lasallian Family.”

29 “When we speak of the LASALLIAN FAMILY we refer to that body of persons who make up those movements and groups all of which have been forming according to the spiritual and pedagogical experience of St. John Baptist de La Salle.”

“The Brothers’ communities constitute the ‘heart,’ as it were, of this Lasallian experience, like a ‘faithful memory’ of the Lasallian Spirit.”

30 “We deem it important to single out several of the constant elements that are all part of the Lasallian experience:

- Its inspiration in the Gospel.
- Its spirit of faith and zeal.
- Its work in the field of Christian education.
- Its love and its preferential option for the young and the poor.
- Its communion with the Church, especially with the parish and the diocese.
- Its basis in Lasallian spirituality.
- Its relationship with a Lasallian community.”

“The Lasallian experience was born and nourished in the midst of a strong Catholic spiritual atmosphere.”

“Today we recognize that in several parts of the Institute there are numerous non-Christian educators who are inspired by the experience of De La Salle to grow in an interior spirit, to be faithful to their own spiritual pathway and to open themselves to the calls of the universal movements of the Spirit of God. We encourage these men and women in their religious quest. We open our own educational communities to them as spaces where they may grow spiritually.”

A Diversity of Groups

30 “Today, there are several groups that constitute the Lasallian Family and complement each other mutually.”

- “There are those LAY CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS who work in our schools and who are aware of their participation in the mission and spirituality of the Institute. We refer, in particular, to those who form part of some Association and who strive to live their teaching as a Christian commitment.” (30)
- “There are THE FAMILIES who confide their children to us in order to assure for them a really Christian education.” (31)
- “There are the different movements of LASALLIAN YOUTH which in their encounters and groups are experiencing, together with the Brothers, the meaning of Faith, Brotherhood, and Service.” (31)
- “There are the LASALLIAN VOLUNTEERS who pledge themselves for a definite period of time to a Lasallian educational service among the poor, or in the Third World.” (31)
- “We have the members of the SIGNUM FIDEI Brotherhood who, inspired by Lasallian spirituality, accept a life style and live a consecration to grow as men and women of Faith, radiating Christian life in the local Church and the world of today through their own educational plan.” (31)
- “We remember the AFFILIATED MEMBERS and BENEFACTORS who devotedly support the work of the Brothers.” (31)

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- “We have the members of the UNION OF CATECHISTS OF JESUS CRUCIFIED AND OF MARY IMMACULATE.” (founded in 1917 by Brother Teodoreto in Turin) (31)
 - “There are the LASALLIAN ASSOCIATIONS, part of the International Lasallian Confederation, who support the evangelizing and educational work of the Brothers and who find in De La Salle the inspiration and encouragement they need for their own life of Faith and for their commitment to the Church and the world.” (31)
 - “There are the ALUMNI and OLD BOYS groups. . . .” (31)
 - “The PARENTS and FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE BROTHERS who have partaken joyfully in the Lasallian spirit and who support us with their prayers. They also, at times will join some Lasallian Association.” (32)
- 32 “We are attentively observing the birth of other experiences:
- “The girl students, women teachers and friends who feel themselves called to live a religious life having been touched by the inspiration of De La Salle.”
 - “The groups of priests who look to join together or with some community of the Brothers in order to live their ministry with direct reference to the spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle.”
 - “The quickening of a ‘Third Order’ composed of a small group of Lasallians attentive to the Spirit that is manifesting Himself to them, and in profound communion with the Brother Visitor of the place.”
- 32-33 “At this time, we want to urge you to:
- “continue to go forward along the pathways you have traced out, enlightened and encouraged by St. John Baptist de La Salle and guided by his Brothers;”
 - “strengthen your relationships with the communities of the Brothers;”
 - “support the educational and evangelical mission of the Institute;”
 - “help us to be creative and faithful to open ourselves to the new demands that Society and the Church are putting to us;”
 - “ask God to bless our Institute with an increase of many good vocations to the Brothers and Lay Christian Educators.”

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The Revised Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (1987)

- ¶ 17 “Ever since the time of their foundation, the Brothers have contributed to the promotion of the Christian laity, especially among those educators who want their professional work to be a form of gospel ministry.”
- ¶ 17 “The Brothers gladly associate lay persons with them in their educational mission. They provide, for those who so desire, the means to learn about the Founder and to live according to his spirit.”
- ¶ 17 “The Brothers cooperate in forming Christian teachers. They help them to develop their professional competence and also to become increasingly involved in the work of the Church and in the field of education.”
- ¶ 17a “The Brothers’ community is ever mindful that its apostolic activity takes place within an educational community in which all the functions, including positions of responsibility, are shared.”
- ¶ 17b “To achieve the purposes of a school, the Brothers foster a spirit of collaboration and mutual enrichment among all the members of the educational community. They, that is, students, parents, teachers, other religious, priests, former students and friends help one another to fulfill their specific roles.”
- ¶ 17c “The Brothers make known to the rest of the educational community the essential elements of the Lasallian tradition. The Brothers offer to those who desire it, a more intensified sharing of Lasallian spirituality, encouraging such persons to make a more specific apostolic commitment. The Brothers join in the formation of faith communities which are witnessing to the truth of what the Brothers profess.”
- ¶ 17d “In conformity with the spirit of the Institute, the Brothers cooperate closely with those in the Church or in society who are involved in education, ministry to the young, the cultivation of a sense of justice, the use of mass media, or the integration of young people into social and professional life.”
- ¶ 25 “Wherefore, I promise and vow chastity, poverty, obedience, association for the educational service of the poor, and stability in the Institute according to the Bull of Approbation and the Rule of the Institute.” **[note the order of the vows]**
- ¶ 146 “The spiritual gifts which the Church has received in St. John Baptist de La Salle go far beyond the confines of the Institute which he founded.
- ¶ 146 “The Institute sees the existence of the various Lasallian movements as a grace from God renewing its own vitality. The Institute can associate with itself lay people who want to lead the life of perfection that the Gospel demands, by living according to the spirit of the Institute and by participating in its mission.
- ¶ 146 “The Institute helps them achieve their proper autonomy. At the same time it creates appropriate ties with them and evaluates the authenticity of their Lasallian character.”

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Brother John Johnston Pastoral Letter: *Peace-Identity-Conversion* (1987)

The Call to Association and Interdependence

22-23 “Brothers, the living of our spirit of zeal is rooted in our commitment to ‘work together and by association.’ This commitment to one another has been made freely. It is built on mutual trust and self-sacrifice. Our association as persons lovingly and freely committed to the same ideal enables us to serve the Lord and his Church with power – legitimate power – a power to do really worthwhile and significant things.”

23 “During the lifetime of the Founder, our Brothers made vows of association, stability, and obedience. The vow of association, professed not as an end in itself but in view of maintaining together gratuitous schools, can be called, in a sense, a ‘vow of identity.’ It expressed to the Brothers themselves, as well as to others, who they were – men totally consecrated to God, procuring his glory by uniting themselves, and remaining so, working together to maintain by association the gratuitous schools.”

23 “This association was not just an informal and loosely structured group. It had ‘teeth.’ To render its implications more explicit and unambiguous, the Brothers professed a vow of obedience, expressing their willingness, as we have seen, to go anywhere and to do whatever they were asked, in accord with their rules. In addition they made a vow of stability, indicating their determination to persevere, no matter what.”

A New Understanding of Association

29 “The evolution of the ‘Lasallian Family’ is one of the most important developments in the Institute today, one that demands our closest attention.”

A New Model of FSC/Lay Collaboration

29 “. . . the Brothers themselves, for some three hundred years, received, lived, and passed on the Lasallian ideal, aided for a number of those years by men and women collaborators in important but secondary roles.”

29-30 “This traditional model of FSC-lay collaboration has virtually collapsed everywhere. It neither can nor should continue to exist. It is not a question merely of the diminished number of Brothers. It is more the call to full apostolic participation of all Christians, and the willingness of so many highly motivated men and women to respond positively to the challenge.”

30 “As the percentage of lay teachers has increased, many of us have experienced frustration, demoralization even, that Brothers’ schools, as we once knew them, are things of the past. But many lay teachers have also experienced similar frustration because they have not experienced themselves as full partners in the creation of Lasallian schools. Lay teachers – as well as others associated with us – are expressing more and more their desire to participate actively in the Lasallian mission.

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Brother John Johnston Pastoral Letter: *The Destiny of the Institute: Our Responsibility* (1988)

SECTION VII: A SHARED MISSION

1. The Brothers and the Educative Community

- 31 Brother John Johnston quotes from Article 17 of *The Rule*, which was approved by the Vatican just a few short months before he wrote this pastoral letter:

“The Brothers gladly associate lay persons with them in their educational mission.... The Brothers’ community is ever mindful that its apostolic activity takes place within an educational community in which all the functions, including positions of responsibility, are shared.... They foster a spirit of collaboration and mutual enrichment among all the members of the educational community.... They make known the essential elements of the Lasallian tradition.” [*The Rule*, Articles 17, 17a, b, c]

- 31-32 Brother John Johnston then quotes Pope John Paul II’s talk to religious educators in the United States (*Oss. Romano*, dated September 12, 1987):

“In the beginning and for a long time afterwards, women and men religious bore the chief organizational and teaching responsibilities in this country. As pioneers they met that challenge splendidly and they continue to meet it today.... The importance of committed religious...has not diminished.... In recent years thousands of lay people have come forward as administrators and teachers in the Church’s schools and educational programs. By accepting and developing the legacy of Catholic thought and educational experience which they have inherited, they take their place **as full partners in the Church’s mission of educating.**” (bold + italics added for emphasis)

- 32 “They take their place as ‘full partners’ – and we Brothers gladly associate them with us in our mission. We accept that from now on our schools will not be ‘Brothers’ schools,’ animated by the Brothers’ community with secondary collaboration of lay teachers, parents, students. They will be instead ‘Lasallian Schools,’ schools animated by Lasallian educative communities of faith ‘within which the apostolic activity of the Brothers’ community takes place’ (*The Rule*, Article 17a).”

2. Lasallian Groups

- 32-33 “We provide for ‘those educators who want their professional work to be a form of gospel ministry’ and who wish to live that ministry in the spirit of De La Salle, ‘the means to learn about the Founder and to live according to his spirit’ (*The Rule*, Article 17). We offer to those members of the educative community who desire it – students, parents, teachers, priests, sisters, former students, friends, etc. – ‘a more intensified sharing of Lasallian spirituality, encouraging such persons to make a more specific apostolic commitment,’ and collaborating with them in the organization of faith communities (*The Rule*, Article 17c).”

- 33 “We welcome with enthusiasm those ‘who want to lead the life of perfection that the gospel demands by living according to the spirit of the Institute and by participating in its mission’ (*The Rule*, Article 146). We are convinced that **‘the spiritual gifts**

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which the Church has received in St. De La Salle go far beyond the confines of the Institute' (The Rule, Article 146). We see in these movements a special grace of God. On the one hand we help them achieve their proper autonomy; on the other, we create ties with them and evaluate the authenticity of their Lasallian character" (The Rule, Article 146).

- 33 “The Rule invites us therefore to **do all we can to promote the growth of faith communities or groups among our teachers, parents, former students, young people, and others associated with us.** What is described in that paragraph is not only an ideal. It is already a reality in many parts of the Institute. Fostering the formation of these groups and helping to animate them (without falling into the pitfall of paternalism or ‘clericalism’) is clearly an essential dimension of our service in the Church now and in the future.”

3. Our Identity as Consecrated Religious

- 33-34 “As we explore and reflect upon the changing roles of the Brothers and of those associated with us, and as we search for the language most apt to express the relationships that exist among us, we must – at all costs – guard against any careless confusing of ‘identities.’ We must be careful that we not reduce the Lasallian charism to faith, zeal, and community, and thus blur the distinction between the Brothers and those associated with us.”
- 34 “We are consecrated religious men. We express that religious consecration by vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, association for the service of the poor through education, and stability in the Institute. We live our consecrated life in community. Our manner of living our baptismal consecration is **different** and highly significant – both for ourselves and for others.”
- 34 “Let us, then, Brothers, give ourselves generously and energetically to the building of strong Lasallian educative communities and to the formation and animation of Lasallian groups of teachers, parents, former students, and young people. Let us commit ourselves to this mission with a clear and unambiguous understanding and appreciation of our own identity as consecrated religious.”

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Brother John Johnston Pastoral Letter: *Our Community Life: Some Directions* (1992)

Our Shared Mission

21 “I have insisted that the Brothers of the Christian Schools are called by God to live a form of community life which sociologists call ‘intentional’ or ‘total,’ as opposed to ‘associational.’”

“But the ‘associational model’ is perfectly appropriate to express the variety of relationships and groupings our lay colleagues can have among themselves and with us. Our invitation to lay colleagues to share our spirituality and educational mission is not, at least ordinarily, an invitation to the kind of ‘total community’ which is proper to the Brothers. It is rather an invitation to invest a certain amount of themselves and of their time and energy, but without prejudice to their personal autonomy and/or family obligations.”

“It is essential that this distinction be made. In promoting – as we should and must promote – collaboration with the laity, we must at all costs avoid a confusion of identity and roles. What we need today is the wisdom, creativity, and courage to revitalize our own life as Brothers and simultaneously to develop and foster a variety of structural forms whereby the laity can participate actively in our Lasallian educational mission.”

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Brother John Johnston Pastoral Letter: *Transformation: Reflections on Our Future* (1993)

Shared Mission

38 “Our mission today of human and Christian education is in fact a shared mission. For this reason we have proposed inviting a certain number of lay men and women to assist the General Chapter as consultors during the deliberations on mission. Increasingly we realize that if we want our schools to be truly Christian and Lasallian, we must have the informed and enthusiastic participation of our lay colleagues. It is encouraging to note that everywhere today appropriate programs of formation in Lasallian spirituality and pedagogy are being organized for both Brothers and lay men and women.”

38-39 “At the same time, we are gradually becoming more aware of the possibilities inherent in ‘shared mission’ for the education and evangelization of youth. In most Lasallian schools today, Brothers and lay men and women work in close collaboration. Some of these Lasallian schools have headmasters who are Brothers, while others have headmasters who are lay. But we also have an increasing number of Lasallian schools without any Brothers at all, a reality most of us never thought possible even a few years ago.”

39 “***What is of fundamental importance is that we accept our lay colleagues as full collaborators.*** Most of us have moved beyond the stage of considering lay men and women as ‘necessary evils.’ But I am not sure that most of us have moved beyond the stage of considering them as ‘inferiors’ who require our direction. I think that we must avoid at all costs the creation of dependency relationships which are nothing less than a new version of ‘clerical-lay’ relationships.” ***[Bold + italics added for emphasis]***

“An increasing number of our teachers, parents, former students, and friends are expressing their desire to live their faith in the spirit of John Baptist de La Salle and are participating in diverse forms of groupings.”

40 “I think that we are only beginning to realize the potential of ‘shared mission.’”

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The Documents of the 42nd General Chapter (1993)

SHARED MISSION

1. GENERAL REFLECTIONS

- 29 “The subject of shared mission was studied in depth by both Delegates and Consultants during the second and third weeks of the Chapter. Four major themes . . . seem appropriate areas on which to concentrate the focus of shared mission.”
- “the signs of the times and the shared mission”
 - “a grace and a movement for today”
 - “the challenges of this new situation”
 - “the demands of formation for the shared mission”

The Signs of the Times and the Shared Mission

- 29 “Young people are more than others affected by the inequalities of North and South, situations of poverty, the consumer society and the de-Christianization of society. . . . [T]hese call us, Brothers and Lasallian partners, to creative action in keeping with our tradition which favors the poorest and the most deprived.”
- 30 “The importance given to the Kingdom leads to a special emphasis on dialogue with other religions, development programs, solidarity and the promotion of justice and peace.”
- “There is also a gap between the cultural world of the young and the action situation of the Institute and the Church. Our charism suggests this is our special field.”
- “In order to develop fully the response to a new evangelization, the Church, in such documents as *Christifideles Laici*, is inviting more and more lay people to take on their rightful role in ministry in the proclamation of the Gospel among those with whom they live.”
- “The Institute, in its desire to support and welcome this promotion of lay people, offers to those men and women who wish to be involved in the partnership the opportunity to commit themselves more closely and deeply to the spirit and charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle, who saw educators as Ministers of the Gospel.”

1.2 Shared Mission: A Grace and a Movement for Today

- 31 “The considerable interest of some of our colleagues in shared mission and their evident commitment to it show that this movement is truly a ‘*grace*’ (Rule, Article 146).”
- 31 “We recognize and welcome the fact that the Church and the Institute, with committed lay people, are writing together a new chapter in their history of shared mission.”

1.3 The Challenges of This New Situation

- 31 “One challenge which arises from the needs of our time is to continue to seek ways to revitalize the schools and other educational enterprises, with particular attention to the service of the poor, to the promotion of justice, to pastoral action and to inculturation in the environment in which the mission occurs.”

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“A second challenge is to recognize and respect the diversity that exists in the Institute and among those who share its mission. There are also different levels of commitment. The development of the partnership in which the Brothers participate is something quite new; fresh ground is being broken. It requires of us all a new mentality and a common effort of imagination and creation which must propel us forward together. Those of other religions with whom we work share in the promotion of the spiritual and human values of the Lasallian mission.”

1.4 The Demands of Formation for the Shared Mission

32 “Shared mission is realized in the totality of our works in favor of the human and Christian education of youth, especially the poor. Association, in fulfilling this mission, expresses a dynamic force and a spirit of partnership (a spirit of association) which are embodied in relevant structures. Accordingly, at local, District and Regional levels, a formation which is appropriate to and in keeping with the developing nature of the partnership for shared mission is organized. These structures are flexible to be able to respond to the human, educational and spiritual needs of youth, especially the disadvantaged.”

32-33 “Some of these programs offer information and ‘pre’-formation, for example, about works, objectives and methods of the Institute for those who have a professional relationship with the Institute; others will be more specific, offering stimulating information and an appropriate formation for people who are committed. For those who want to share in the mission to the point of forming Lasallian communities and communities of faith, a deeper formation is needed.”

2. SHARED MISSION AND THE HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE

2.1 At the Beginning

34 “The vow of association of 1691 and of 1694 established the Society of the Christian Schools with a solid nucleus comprising the Founder and two, then twelve Brothers.”

34 “St. John Baptist de La Salle did not establish categories but he offered options for training and commitment suited to each one. Some made vows, some did not. Then there were the ‘principal Brothers’ to guarantee that the Society be faithful to its mission. The fraternal atmosphere allowed each one to find his place in the common mission. And all were nourished by the Meditations, where no distinction is made between those who made vows and the others.”

“The title of the Meditations for the Time of Retreat is especially meaningful: *‘For the use of all persons engaged in the education of the young, and especially for use during the retreat that the Brothers make.’*”

2.2 The 19th Century

34 “It was in the course of the 19th century that lay teachers began to work in the Brothers’ schools on a continual basis.”

2.3 The Present Moment in our History

35-36 “The movement toward shared mission has not been uniform: there has been teeth-gnashing and backsliding, understandable enough at that time. In this light, it is understandable that some Brothers today are known for having these attitudes and these hesitations.”

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36 “Thus, the Chapter of 1946 took a very negative attitude towards hiring lay professors in the Brothers’ schools. . . . The Chapter wanted ‘to suppress as quickly as possible the hiring of women’ and to reduce the lay male element, as it was said, a necessary evil.”

“Vatican II asked institutes to return to their sources: not to what their Founders did, but to their intentions.”

“During the years following the Chapter of 1976 it became apparent that there were two movements, which today are coming together. Many teachers, in a desire to commit themselves more deeply as they work with the Brothers, are learning about the Lasallian spirit and so discover that they are participating in a shared mission.”

“The Chapter of 1986 adopted the expression, the ‘Lasallian Family.’ Now the 42nd General Chapter adopts the language of the shared mission. We have entered a new era that requires a new understanding of the relationships within the mission that is expressed by the word ‘partnership.’”

37 **“Within the Lasallian Family we distinguish:**

- “Men and women who have made a total commitment by vows in an Institute of Consecrated Life”
- “Men and women who have made a commitment in some form of lay association, such as the Signum Fidei, Third Order”
- “Men and women who are committed by reason of their profession or ministry, such as teachers and other educators”
- “Men and women who are committed only for a limited period, such as Lasallian volunteers, Young Lasallians, etc.”

“Considerations of faith can show us that our recognition of the place of the laity in the mission of the Institute is not due primarily to the decreasing number of Brothers, but rather and more profoundly to the grace of their baptism.”

3. THEOLOGY OF THE SHARED MISSION

38 “The point of departure for a reflection on the theology of shared mission is the design of God that all people be saved.”

39 The document quotes from article 19 of the *Rule*:

The Institute is particularly conscious of the great design of God who wills that all people should come to the knowledge of the truth. Thus the Institute participates in the missionary activity of the Church whose essential task is to announce the Gospel to everyone and to all cultures.

40 “Today the Church speaks insistently about the **new evangelization**. The Gospel ought to be a response to the profound questions of the world today. *‘The new evangelization ought to be new in its methods, new in its vision and new in its expression’* (John Paul II).”

“. . . today, there is a rediscovery of the idea that baptism demands **the participation of all the faithful** in the mission of the Church. It is in this context that one can speak of the

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promotion of the laity. We experience in the Institute the same need of promotion of the shared mission.”

- 41 The document quotes from article 20 of the *Rule*: “The Spirit of God has given to the Church, in the person of St. John Baptist de La Salle, **a charism which even today inspires** the Brothers and a great number of other educators.”

“In the light of the charism of the Institute and of the Rule, those who participate in the mission of the Institute – whether they be Brothers or not – feel that they are challenged by the poor and the distressful situations that they know exist among young people today (cf. *Declaration*, article 11). These urgent needs of the young demand that the Institute discern and take a clear option to create, renew and diversify its educational works (cf. *Rule*, article 11) so that the ‘*service of the poor*’ becomes its ‘*effective priority*’ (*Rule*, article 40a).”

- 42 “What has changed is the ever-increasing role played by the laity in the mission of the Institute, hence the expression ‘shared mission.’”

“The spirit of the Institute, which is the spirit of faith, invites us to see in these circumstances something more than the decrease in numbers of the Brothers. Rather we should see it as **a call from God to maintain our place as consecrated lay persons** in the religious life, alongside our colleagues in a common mission that is shared.”

“**It is the Spirit that has led some of the laity** to participate for many years now in the mission of the Institute. The Brothers acknowledge the action of the Spirit in the promotion of the laity and find its significance in a renewed reflection on their vow of association.”

- 43 “Inculturation is an ongoing process. For the shared mission, **formation to inculturation** is necessary for both Brothers and lay persons. This formation includes a study of the language of the country, insertion into the life situation of the population, getting to know the young people, etc.”

“Guided by the Spirit, the Church has entered ‘the age of the laity’ and of a new evangelization. In this new perspective we see our shared mission as a sign of the times. Far from being a regrettable situation, it constitutes an integral part of our vocation as religious lay persons. The Spirit invites us to a deeper and richer understanding of who we are and what we are called to do.”

- 44 “Even if, in association for the shared mission, the Brothers are the heart, the memory, the guarantors of the Lasallian charism . . . the lay people who are associated in different ways, along with priests and religious men and women, provide today **a necessary and rich contribution to the living tradition of the Institute.**”

“Religious men and women, priests and lay persons in great number can all bring to the shared mission the specific contribution that comes from their state in life and their individual talents. The Brothers **welcome with thanks** the diversity of these contributions and they establish, especially at the District level, the structures that will facilitate both autonomy and communion among these different Lasallian movements (*Rule*, article 146).”

“The relationship among the partners in the shared mission ought to be characterized by respect, understanding, justice and mutual trust.”

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4. THE LASALLIAN FAMILY

45 “During the 42nd General Chapter the shared mission had a privileged place. The 41st General Chapter had already been marked by the force and the novelty of the ‘Lasallian Family.’”

“We must recognize that the inspirational richness of these texts has facilitated the development of these experiences. From now on, all the Lasallians together:

- consider St. La Salle to be their common Father and point of reference;
- consider the District to be the ambit (framework) of the Lasallian Family;
- organize Lasallian formation in its educational, spiritual and community aspects;
- strengthen the close relationship between the ‘Lasallian Family’ and the ‘Mission of the Institute.’”

“The Rule ‘*sees the existence of the various **Lasallian movements** as a grace from God renewing its own vitality.*’ (Rule, article 146).”

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

On the Local Level

46 “The educational planning of every apostolic work will be elaborated and evaluated by all the members of the educational community based on the District Plan and in co-operation with District organizations. This planning will deal with matters of a pedagogical nature and will be particularly attentive to the following:

- to respond concretely to situations of poverty;
- to become integrated into the culture and local situations;
- to plan the organization of Pastoral Ministry;
- to form members, respecting the personal journey of each one.”

At District Level

47 “The District will make the **Lasallian formation** of teachers and educators a **fundamental priority**. To achieve this aim, Brothers and Laity together:

- will intensify the activities of Centers of formation, suitable courses and programs;
- develop Lasallian research, information and communication;
- name one (or more) persons to coordinate, animate and supervise this formation.”

“The District will take the necessary means to ensure **that every Lasallian work, when that is possible, favors the birth of a community of faith.**”

47 “The District **will strengthen the structures** (people, places) **with a view to animating and coordinating the shared mission**, after having been the object of discernment between the Brothers and Laity.”

48 “The ‘Signum Fidei’ groups constitute for the Districts a form of spirituality well suited to the laity – especially educators – which finds its source of inspiration in St. John Baptist de La Salle.”

“The District will contribute to the renewal of Alumni Associations according to the spirit of the ‘Charter of the World Federation of Former Lasallian Students.’”

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To the Brother Superior General and His Council

- 48 “The General Council will make propositions for the **formation of formators** responsible for programs dealing with the shared mission.”
- 49 “The General Chapter strongly recommends to Brother Superior and his Council the drawing up and publication of a study (circular) on the shared mission which contains coherent teaching, guidelines and pastoral orientations.”

6. PROPOSITIONS

- 49 “The expression ‘LASALLIAN FAMILY’ designates all those who participate in the Lasallian educational enterprise, especially those who are moving toward a sharing of the spirit and the mission of St. John Baptist de La Salle. For that reason, by a process of initiation, formation and accompaniment, the Districts will stimulate groups among the Lasallian partners that will make possible a greater commitment.”

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Brother John Johnston Pastoral Letter: *Live Today Our Founding Story* (2000)

Meaning of "Partners"

16 "I need to explain my understanding of the word "partners." I use the word in a way that includes persons who participate in the Lasallian charism in very distinct ways and at different levels of commitment. I am not proposing "partners" as a formal category of members, or as persons who would work with others not considered partners. I think to define "partners" in this way would be divisive. We Brothers have gradually learned that looking upon ourselves as the "authorized agents" of Lasallian mission is "obsolete." (*Circ.* 435, pp. 8-9) We are working diligently to transform our schools from "Brothers' schools" to "Lasallian schools." We are learning to accept our lay collaborators as "partners" rather than as persons who help us run *our* schools. We don't want to create a new elitist group of "authorized agents" that would expect to be the privileged ones in a school."

"Rather than focus on who are "in" and who are "out," we should encourage everyone to become active participants in the task of creating schools that are authentically *Lasallian*. We should never stop inviting, perhaps more indirectly than directly, all members of the educative community to participate wholeheartedly in the Lasallian tradition."

16 "Because of the steady decline in the number of active Brothers, however, some Districts, in the not-too-distant future, will have to decide how many and which schools they wish to maintain in the network, to which schools and centers they will assign communities, what action they will take with the other schools - and, obviously, what criteria they will use to make these choices."

16-17 "Another important matter is that of participation of the laity in decision-making and in accountability. Clearly 'partnership' presupposes both. Our Lasallian Partners need a way to share in the determination and execution of policy regarding schools and works - and in the creation of new works. For this purpose we need suitable structures at every level."

17 "Obviously the success of all aspects of this movement depends on the willingness of the laity to assume responsibility for the Lasallian character of our schools, the openness of the Brothers to partnership with the laity, and the organization of effective formation programs at the Institute, District, and school levels. What many parts of the Institute are realizing in these areas is impressive. Nevertheless, we need to do better. The long-range success of Lasallian schools as instruments of human and Christian education is directly dependent on what we do today to invite and assist our lay men and women "to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission" of our tradition. (*VC*, 54) That is another way of saying that we must do even more to help our lay partners share as married or single lay men and women in the charism of John Baptist de La Salle."

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18 “Many Lasallian Partners have in fact endeavored to live their baptismal consecration in accord with the charism of John Baptist de La Salle. Some, relatively few, have become members of groups or communities of faith inspired by that charism. Most, however, have been content to live their commitment wholeheartedly as members of the larger educative community. They have not expressed any particular desire to become members of a Lasallian association.”

Search for new forms of association

18 “On the other hand, some of our partners are manifesting a desire to become more closely and more formerly associated with Lasallian mission and with the Institute. Although we lack precise data, indications are that their number is increasing. I think it important that the General Chapter take very seriously this interest and respond creatively to it.”

18 “Of course we have to be clear that what we are talking about is a structure of association for those who are spiritually and apostolically motivated. We are not talking about a ‘professional’ organization. There could never be any expectation, for example, that members of such associations would receive preferential treatment in the appointment of heads of schools and departments.”

19-20 “We don't want to propose to our lay partners a form of association that is in reality a ‘watered-down’ version of the Brothers' life. Such a proposal is paternalistic and a subtle form of ‘clericalism’ in that its underlying assumption is that a spirituality that is both lay and Lasallian is not feasible. The late Cardinal Pironio, a man of exceptional experience with both consecrated life and lay associations, once said that lay people are not looking for a ‘new form of consecrated life. What they want is to live in a secular way as true disciples of the Lord.’ We need to welcome enthusiastically those who wish to become *Lasallian Associates* and help them create new and original ways of living the Lasallian charism. They themselves, however, must be the protagonists in this search. Nevertheless, the Institute, Regions, Districts, and communities obviously have to help in establishing appropriate and sound formation programs for prospective *Lasallian Associates*.”

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The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter (2000)

I. Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor

OBSERVATIONS: LASALLIAN ASSOCIATION

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

- The 39th General Chapter reminded the Institute ‘that working with the poor is an integral part of the finality of the Institute’ (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1967, 1997¹, #28.2). The association of the Brothers is a response to this demand. The Brothers are conscious of this, and Partners will discover this gradually.”
- The 40th General Chapter made a serious study of its origins and attached great importance to this vow of association. This coincided with the consecration of the first members of Signum Fidei.
- The 41st General Chapter addressed itself to the Lasallian Family, thereby recognizing thousands of persons who were contributing to the mission.
- The 42nd General Chapter treated the theme of Shared Mission and spoke of Partners. For the first time, Consultants had the right to speak at a Chapter.”

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

2-3 “This present-day movement towards association obliges Capitulants and Consultants to examine what is happening on an international level, and lay down a number of guidelines for the future. Since ***we know that life is more dynamic than any definition or constraint***, what we need, at the present moment at least, is a *minimum framework which allows us to say clearly both who is associated today with the Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education, and how*. This is the purpose of the following guidelines for individuals and groups.”

¹ Brothers of the Christian Schools (1967, 1997). *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the world today: A declaration*. Rome, Italy: Author.

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GUIDELINES

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

The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

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

- 3-4 “In light of this, the Brothers need to question themselves continually on how, in practice they are associated among themselves, so that this association may be a source of nourishment for them, and stimulate their growth as persons, their solidarity with others, and their listening to what God says about the community mission, the educational service of the poor, their reason for association.”

Partners

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

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

Associates

- 4 “There are partners who have a long record of collaborating in the Lasallian mission, and who feel a call to deepen the charism, spirituality and Lasallian communion in which they wish to participate. In particular, their lives are already marked by a number of distinctively Lasallian characteristics:
- a vocation inspired by the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and his values;
 - a life of faith which discovers God in everyday life understood in the light of Scripture and, for persons of other religions, in the light of their own sacred texts;
 - a community experience of some form or other suited to the identity of its members;
 - a mission of some duration which associates persons with the educational service of the poor;
 - an openness of mind which makes it possible to see beyond the individual and his immediate environment.”

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5-6 “Given this, there are many different ways of living in association: as individuals and as groups.

A) Individuals.

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

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

B) Intentional Lasallian groups.

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

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

Among the groups recognized in 2000 as “intentional Lasallian groups” are “those which have their autonomy and proper recognition independently of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools” – these include the Guadalupanas Sisters, the Lasallian Sisters of Vietnam, and the Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate; and “those which are structurally linked with the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools” – these include Signum Fidei and the Lasallian Third Order.

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C) Other intentional groups.

“In the medium term, we think that it is possible that a number of other intentional groups will be founded. In fact, these groups already exist, although they may have no juridical structure.

They exist because their members have developed links and relationships, and have adopted projects, and have done so with explicit reference to the Lasallian charism which they share. If they so wished, they could envisage becoming intentional groups.”

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

7 *Recommendation 1: “In the light of the guidelines of the 43rd General Chapter each Region, District, Sub-District, and Delegation promotes the association of Partners and/or Associates and Brothers, and of Partners and/or Associates among themselves, to reflect on their identities as associates, and to develop forms of association for the Lasallian Mission.”*

Recommendation 2: “The Institute has extensive educational experience of working with young people and educators professing other faiths. We ask that more serious thought be given in the Institute to the way in which we share the Lasallian charism with educators and young people who are of other faiths.”

Proposition 1: “In order to encourage and support the development of Lasallian association for the educational service of the poor: that, in the next seven years, each Region, District, Sub-District, and Delegation decide on practical steps to promote the creation and development of groups of Partners and/or Associates and of Brothers, as well as of Partners and/or Associates among themselves, which will reflect on their identity in the context of the Lasallian mission and to develop forms of association.”

8 **Proposition 3: “That Brother Superior General and his Council in consultation with the Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts, and Delegations organize an international meeting of Brothers, Partners and Associates, around the year 2004, with a view to:**

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

That after this meeting, the Centre of the Institute publish a report describing the experiences of association that are most original and significant.” [note: this became Bulletin # 250]

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II. Leadership and Accompaniment Structures

OBSERVATIONS

- 8 “The evolution of the forms of association is the result of a number of factors which need to be considered together:
- the effort that the Institute has made to share spirituality and mission with Partners;
 - the warm welcome given by many Partners to the proposal of the Institute within the framework of shared mission;
 - the huge change that has come about regarding those involved in the mission, who have become more numerous and more diverse.”
- 8-9 “At the present time, there exist various forms of association:
- associations of a legal or functional type,
 - associations of a spiritual type,
 - associations of a canonical type.
- At the same time, some forms of association have all three characteristics. This is the case of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.”
- 9 “It is evident that, regarding the practice of association, the Institute is in a period of transition, and that it is important to take into account:
- the weight of certain of our historical structures which can make experiments with association difficult,
 - the need for a multiplicity of experiments for a limited period, so that they can be examined and evaluated when they end,
 - the nature and the evolution of each of these experiments,
 - the need to direct and accompany these different experiments.”
- “Consequently, we consider it necessary for the Institute to allow a period of freedom for the promotion and the accompaniment of structures and forms of association.”

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GUIDELINES

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

10 “Each District, while safeguarding the identity of the Brother (*Rule 9, 10*²), will leave to Partners the possibility of defining – ad experimentum – new types of association and commitment among themselves and/or with the Brothers, in the service of the educational mission of evangelization.”

“By committing themselves to such associations, Associates respond to their mission and to the Lasallian charism and live out their baptismal vocation. As for Lasallian spirituality, it is important that lay people find an expression of it which is proper to themselves.”

10-11 “The District will need to assume responsibility for evaluating these experiments, in order to authenticate their commitment as Associates of the Institute. It will ensure that members of legally constituted associations which are responsible for the functioning and direction of Lasallian educational establishments, and in particular of schools, are aware that the educational service of the poor is a priority.”

11 “Association develops especially when leadership and accompaniment are provided.”

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

“The General Chapter could ask the Districts:

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

12 **Proposition 4: “That, during the next seven years, the Regions, Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations:**

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

² Article 9 of the *Rule* states: “The members of this Institute are called by the name of Brother. By the fraternal character of their community life and their active and selfless presence among those they serve, the Brothers witness to the possibility of creating true brotherhood among people and nations.” Article 10 of the *Rule* states: “Each Brother takes upon himself the responsibility for integrating within his own person these constitutive dimensions of his vocation: consecration to God as a lay religious, apostolic ministry of education, especially of the poor, and community life.”

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III. The Participation of Lasallian Associates in Decision-Making Structures Concerned With the Mission

OBSERVATIONS

- 12 “In numerous places, many Lasallian Associates live out their baptismal vocation through a strong educational commitment, by sharing Lasallian spirituality and educational ministry, either with Brothers or by themselves, when no Brothers are present. *We recognize in the diffusion of the Lasallian charism a grace of the Spirit for our time.*”
- 13 “We have heard of numerous successful examples in various places, of our Partners and Associates assuming leadership roles and contributing to the vitality of the Lasallian mission.”

GUIDELINES

- 13 “It is time, therefore, for the Institute, strengthened by these successful examples and sustained by these promptings of the Spirit, to formalize this participation to a greater extent and recognize it both in principle and in fact.”

“Respectful of the particular identity of each individual and each group, Brothers and Associates must be allowed to live their respective vocations with the support and structures necessary for each group.”

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

- 14 **Proposition 5: “That in District, Sub-Districts, and Delegations, the Brothers and their Associates create a structure, where it does not exist, or improve a structure responsible for the Lasallian educational mission, in which all participate with a deliberative vote.”**

Proposition 6: “That in each District, Sub-District, and Delegation, the Chapter or the Visitor, the Delegate and the President of the Delegation and their Councils, in consultation with their Associates, determine the criteria for the participation of Brothers and their Associates in the structure responsible for the Lasallian educational mission, and define its relationship with the Visitor, the Delegate and President of the Delegation and their Councils. This plan will be submitted to Brother Superior General and his Council for approval.”

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- 15 **Proposition 8: “That the Standing Committee convoke an International Assembly on the Lasallian Educational Mission.”**

IV. Formation of Brothers and Partners for the Lasallian Mission

OBSERVATIONS

- 15 “there is still a great need for the formation of Brothers and Partners.”
- “In general, the Brothers have been responsible for the formation of Partners. There are now some Partners who also can assume this responsibility.”
- “Some programs must be restructured to meet more fully the needs of Partners.”
- 15 “The expectations of some Partners with regard to association and formation do not always correspond to those of the Brothers.”

GUIDELINES

- 16-17 “To ensure better formation for those involved in the Lasallian mission of human and Christian education, the following guidelines are important:
- Ensure, as a priority, that Lasallian spirituality is the central element unifying all formation processes.
 - Create formation programs for Brothers and Partners that are developmental and inculturated at every stage of formation.
 - In general, ensure at the Institute level, that formation programs and documents dealing with the formation of partners and Brothers are more widely publicized.
 - That Institute authorities at all levels ensure the accompaniment of Brothers and Partners in the formation process;
 - That Partners be encouraged to assume progressively responsibility for their own formation;
 - That competent Partners be encouraged to participate in the running of formation programs.
 - That the formation of Brothers and Partners not be simply intellectual, but also experiential, leading to conversion and commitment to association for the mission.”

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría Pastoral Letter: Associated with the God of the Poor: Our Consecrated Life in the Light of our Fourth Vow (2003)

Living the vow of association for the service of the poor - shared with the laity.

21-22 “The Founder, in his *Memoir on the Habit*, after defining what community is and who its members are, adds: ‘Provision is also made for training schoolmasters for rural districts in a house, separate from the Community, which is called a normal school. Those who are trained here remain for only a few years until they are well prepared in religious spirit as well as for their work.’ I like to think that this was the first form of association with the laity and a complementary way of living the same charism. It is interesting, or perhaps it would be better to say providential, to see how the movement undertaken by both the Church and by Religious Life in recent years has proposed a spirituality of communion that opens the potential of our common charism to others. In our case, in addition, this experience has been reinforced by our vow of association which today we are called to broaden - not necessarily by a vow but always with a particular attitude - to include all those who want to make De La Salle's charism their own within their particular state in life.”

22 “Three factors have influenced this new way of looking at things:

- An ecclesiology of communion and the rediscovery of the role of the laity.
- A new awareness of the potential of the charism.
- Ageing and the decrease in vocations which are making it difficult to maintain certain apostolates.”

22-23 “While normally the last criterion has been the starting point of these developments, fundamentally it is the least important. What is most important is the call to live an ecclesiology of communion, rediscovering the role of the laity and promoting the charism.”

24-25 “A charism is a gift of the Spirit to the Church and therefore we cannot ‘hijack’ it and keep it only for ourselves. Our relationship with lay persons helps us discover this new sense of charism which, in reality, is not so new because the original charism of many ancient orders was shared by the laity as in the cases of Third Orders. In fact we are not talking here about religious sharing a charism that belongs to them and which is now being adapted to a lay reality. Charism precedes its incarnation in a lay or a religious sphere. Consecrated and lay people are all called to ‘drink from the same well’ and to live the same charism based on their own specific vocations (*c.f. Antonio María Sicari, Gli antichi carismi nella chiesa. Per una nuova collocazione, Jaca Book, Milano 2002*).”

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

The Report of the First International Mission Assembly (2006)

ASSOCIATION

21 “It is important to be clear about the fundamental characteristic of Association – we are associated for mission, which is the educational service of the poor, which is part of the evangelizing mission of the Church.”

“We are still trying to understand and describe Association. People are at different places in their understanding of Association and in their Associative commitments. We have to respect that but we must also move forward so we can achieve greater Association for the mission.”

“It is important to always allow for varying levels of Associative commitment.”

“Guidelines are necessary to understand Association – or at least something needs to be said to move us toward guidelines.”

“Many are recognizing the need for good Lasallian formation for everyone at all levels, Brothers and lay people together. This will strengthen our Association.”

“Our community, our Association, arises out of the demands of our mission – the human and Christian education of the young, especially the poor.”

- 22 “We heard tensions between...
- Inclusive and exclusive
 - Formal, public Association commitment and *de facto* Association
 - Rules/legislation and Lasallian intuition
 - Continued experimentation/learning from experiences and authoritative definitions
 - Adherence to Brothers’ spirituality and developing lay spirituality
 - Traditional formation of Brothers and new formation of Brothers

MAIN ORIENTATION 6: THE UNDERSTANDING OF AND PROCESS OF LASALLIAN ASSOCIATION

37 “The Lasallian charism is pronounced and expressed by the Lasallian Association. This International Assembly of 2006, feeling responsible, with all the Lasallian Family, to give continuity to the Lasallian charism in the Church, sees the need to discern accurately the essential elements of Lasallian Association, by discovering and understanding the associative experiences, as well as the different processes and itineraries that lead today to Lasallian Association.”

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

Area of Emphasis No. 1: The Discernment of the Diverse Experiences of Association

“The International Assembly recommends that all those responsible for Lasallian mission and association at all levels:

- 6.1.1 Analyze and evaluate the diverse experiences of Association in order to highlight the essential elements and processes of Association, with special reference to the five criteria stated by the 43rd General Chapter. These results should be synthesized in the next two years by an International Committee that will share them at all levels in such a way so that they can be useful to promote further expressions of Association (Cf. 43rd General Chapter, Propositions 3 and 4).”
- 6.1.2 Promote reflection on the lived associative movement in the Lasallian Family, from a starting-point of ‘Church-Communion-People of God’ in multicultural and multi-religious contexts. This reflection must be integrated into formation programs.”

Area of Emphasis No. 2: The Community Dimension

“The Assembly asks especially that those responsible in the local levels:

- 6.2.1 Create relational community spaces to:
 - (a) Make known experiences of new communities
 - (b) Explore the concept of community
 - (c) Accompany persons and groups toward their community engagement
 - (d) Encourage community experiences which respond to the needs of the mission
 - (e) Promote Lasallian spirituality appropriate to a variety of life experiences
- 6.2.2 Develop personal and community accompaniment in order to promote the processes of association:
 - (a) By forming companions
 - (b) By offering places and times for resources and for maturation.”

MAIN ORIENTATION 7: INITIAL AND ONGOING FORMATION FOR MISSION AND ASSOCIATION

- 38 “The International Assembly of 2006 recognizes that initial and ongoing formation and the support of accompaniment constitute a priority of first order for all the Lasallian Family. Formation and accompaniment make it possible to create a process in which the essential elements of the Mission and Lasallian Association are integrated.”

Area of Emphasis No. 1: Formation and Accompaniment

- 7.1.1 “The Assembly asks that the International MEL Commission form a Committee to create a Guide that articulates essential elements of Lasallian formation and accompaniment for the Lasallian Family.”

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

The Documents of the 44th General Chapter (2007)

3. ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF THE POOR

INTRODUCTION

- 23 “Inspired by the General Chapters that have taken place since 1966, the last 40 years have been a true Exodus experience for the Institute. Many Brothers, and with them many Lasallian partners, have lived this journey toward our origins in a spirit of joy, though for some, that journey has at times had its uncertainties.”
- 23 “The Second Vatican Council, in the Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* (Chapter 2), uses the image “People of God” as the foundation for understanding the composition of the Church.”
- 23 “The Church-People of God has recovered for all people the charisms that were traditionally considered reserved for religious institutes. *‘Given the new situations, a large number of Institutes have come to see that their charism can be shared by lay people. As a consequence, they are invited to participate, in a deeper way, in the spirituality and the mission of the Institute. One could say that a new chapter in the history of relationships between consecrated persons and the laity has begun that is rich in hope (Vita Consecrata, 54, ¶ 2. Cf. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, “Starting Afresh from Christ,” 2002, No. 31).*
- 23-24 “In the same way, based on our foundational roots, we Brothers, have rediscovered our consecrated identity in light of our vow of Association for the educational service of the poor and it is through it that we attempt to ‘clarify our understanding of the other vows’ (43rd General Chapter, Circular 447, *The Brothers, Identity and Formation*, Orientation 3).
- 24 “We Brothers live out our consecration today in this new context of the ‘People of God,’ together with many others who also participate in the Lasallian charism and who feel called to associate in the mission, although with different vocations or states of life (cf. *Rule*, 146).”
- 24 “The challenges to which we must respond today come not only from those for whom our mission is intended, poor children and youth, but also from those who share in this mission with us. Through them the Holy Spirit moves us to live the call of *‘Being Brothers Today’*:
- The call to be Brothers with them and to live our fraternity as a sign for all Lasallian educators
 - The call to be, for them and with them, mediators of the light with which God ‘has illuminated the hearts of those he has chosen to announce his word to children’ (MTR 193, 1)
 - The call to be the heart, memory and guarantors of the Lasallian charism among them and for them and to foster new structures of communion for the mission

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

that the International Assembly 2006 proposed in *Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission*, (Main Orientation8).”

2.1 CHALLENGE: THE SPECIFIC ROLE OF THE BROTHERS IN ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER LASALLIANS

26 “Since the General Chapter of 1966-67 until the present day, the ecclesial and Lasallian context in which the Brothers are situated has changed substantially, thereby challenging us to adopt a new kind of presence: to live out and develop association for the educational service of the poor with men and women who participate in the Lasallian charism, spirituality and mission.”

2.2 HORIZONS

26 2.2.1 “The Lasallian charism has become a focal point for many believing educators who discover the worth of their mission through the journey and spirituality of John Baptist de La Salle and who Together, in this way, offer to the Church and the world, a living witness of the Gospel.”

“We see with joy that educators of other religions or without religious affiliation find in this charism an important source of inspiration that motivates them in their educational work.”

26-27 2.2.2 “We, as Brothers today, situate ourselves within this common foundation of the Lasallian charism together with many other believers and non-believers.... We have become more aware of our responsibility to be heart, memory, and guarantors of the Lasallian charism for all Lasallians. ***At the same time, we rejoice when other Lasallians take on this responsibility.***”

2.3 LINES OF ACTION

27 2.3.1 “The 44th General Chapter makes its own the Areas of Emphasis of the International Assembly 2006, *Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission* referring to the *discernment of diverse experiences of Association* (6.1) and the promotion of the *community dimension* (Area of Emphasis 6.2).”

“Wherever possible, and with discernment beforehand in the District or in the Delegation, in order to better respond to the needs of the mission, foster the opening of communities of Brothers and other Lasallians involved in the mission.”

27 2.3.2 “In line with Area of Emphasis 7.1.1 (The Report of the International Assembly 2006), that a Guide articulating the essential elements – biblical, theological, Lasallian and pedagogical – of Lasallian formation and accompaniment be created to orient joint formation programs for all members of the Lasallian family.”

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

3.1 CHALLENGE: NEW STRUCTURES OF ASSOCIATION FOR THE LASALLIAN MISSION

- 28 “The current structures of association for the Lasallian mission should better reflect the variety and complementarity of identities of those participating today in the Lasallian charism and mission from diverse multi-religious and multi-cultural perspectives.”
- 28 “It is urgent for us to renovate, adapt and create new structures in order to assure the best possible service for the mission and the proper development of association in the whole Lasallian family so that in this we Brothers might find our proper place.”

3.2 HORIZON

- 28 “We are moving at different speeds towards a new model of the Lasallian family at the local, regional and global levels.... We seek structures of animation and government where the mission is carried forth by all those associated with the mission, where the Lasallian spirituality is shared and enriched, and where the Brothers fulfill their proper role.

3.3 LINE OF ACTION

- 28 “The government of the Institute will take the initiative to construct, in the next two years, a possible model of the Lasallian family in line with the new forms of life present in the Church. For this, taking into account the Report of the International Assembly (Area of Emphasis 8.2.1) and establishing contact with those responsible for the other Lasallian institutes of consecrated life and lay Lasallian groups and movements in diverse contexts and in communion with them, develop structures that would be most adaptable in order to incarnate today, with a creative fidelity, the Lasallian charism within the Church-People of God and Church-Communion (Cf. *The Report of the Brother Superior General*, J 1 & 2, pp. 21-22).”

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

Circular 461: Associated for the Lasallian Mission...an act of HOPE (2010)

This document, addressed to “Brothers and All Those Who Serve the Lasallian Mission,” is dedicated entirely to the topic of ***Lasallian Association for Mission***. It was written by the General Council of Brother Alvaro Rodriguez Echeverria, Superior General. A series of pull-quotes would be inadequate to summarize the themes of the document. It deserves its own thorough and careful (and repeated) reading.

One section perhaps bears highlighting in this omnibus document: the articulation of “five fundamental elements to describe Lasallian association.” It is section 2.1 of the circular, and is reprinted here in its entirety:

- 2.1** In this circular we propose five fundamental elements to describe Lasallian association. Other elements undoubtedly exist, but these five are present both in the Institute’s founding experience and in its ongoing tradition. The survey of the worldwide Institute conducted by the Secretariat for Lasallian Family and Association (2009) has documented a great variety of experiences and perspectives on association. The five fundamental elements that follow identify the experience of Lasallian association and promote unity in the ongoing, dynamic process of association across the Institute’s Districts and Regions. New adaptations and experiences will continue to enrich these five fundamental elements. These elements are a rephrasing, for purposes of amplification and clarification, of those found in the Documents of the 43rd General Chapter of 2000 and cited in Chapter 4 of this Circular.
1. Association exists for the mission.
 2. Association implies being a member of a community for the mission.
 3. Association results from experience and is a dynamic journey, not an acquired status.
 4. Association stems from faith, vocation, and state of life.
 5. Association presupposes a freely made commitment.” (2.1)

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría: *The Prophetic Stance of Association* (2010)

What do we mean by Association?

The Founder and the first Brothers lived in the period of a Counter-Reformation Church and hence, a defensive Church, where greater emphasis was placed on institutional, rather than community, matters, resulting in the predominance of the hierarchical aspects of the Church. But the proximity of the poor and the work with the first schoolmasters led the Founder to intuit a servant Church from the perspective of a community ministry. On the other hand, his familiarity with the writings of St. Paul, especially seen in the Meditations for the Time of Retreat, led him to a mystical vision of a servant Church, in which the Brothers, with their lay vocation are *ministers of God, and transmitters of his mysteries, ambassadors of Jesus Christ, builders of the church*. Most certainly, this was a prophetic word for the Church of his time. Further, this vision also anticipated some of the intuitions of Vatican II.

Today, we find ourselves facing a very similar situation in the process of association which we Brothers and lay colleagues are living in a Church as People of God and Church as Communion, travelling as pilgrims on earth, in which we also feel called and sent, like the prophets, to accomplish *the work of God*, being instruments of salvation, brothers (and sisters), friends and guides of the young whom the Lord has confided to us. That is why I consider that the most important things in our association are not the structures, or the measures to ensure a certain efficiency, but a goal: answering the needs of the children and young people, especially the poor. What matters most are persons. This is the concrete way we give glory to God, the God of Jesus Christ, who wills that all be saved and have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10) This is the prophetic witness of our association.

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

The Report of the Second International Assembly (2013)

3 – Lasallian Educational Community

Preamble

The following challenges and responses have been formed to advance the mission, especially service to the poor, as well as to support orientations expressed in Circular 461 for all connected to the Lasallian Mission, commonly referred to as the Lasallian Family. Key themes such as Lasallian vocation, co-responsibility, innovative technology and inclusivity have guided the development of our challenges and responses. Implementation of all the responses is the responsibility of all those in leadership at the Institute, Regional and District levels.

CHALLENGE 1

3.1 There is a need for all members of the Lasallian Family to strengthen and advance the understanding and the experience of living Association for the Lasallian educational mission.

RESPONSES TO CHALLENGE 1

3.1.1 To assure and accompany meaningful experiences of association in all Lasallian works, such as:

- Volunteer programs for young people and adults;
- Young Lasallians;
- Programs of personal growth that allow Lasallians to live their Lasallian vocation more fully;
- Intentional communities.

3.1.2 To strengthen and revitalize the Lasallian network for association in order to improve the exchange of best and next practices, develop common projects, and promote communication with other institutions that can open new avenues for the mission.

- Promote innovative systems of communication and information;
- Systematize the sharing of best practices, experiences and resources;
- Provide formation in the Lasallian charism and spirituality;
- Create itinerant teams for formation;
- Collaborate with other religious congregations.

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

CHALLENGE 2

3.2 There is a need to diversify, update, develop and strengthen formation programs to enable every member of the educational community to fully live out their participation in the Lasallian Mission.

RESPONSES TO CHALLENGE 2

3.2.1 To develop, strengthen and evaluate a formation program for formators with the following priorities:

- Share Lasallian spirituality;
- Ensure the updating and transmission of our living tradition;
- Encourage every believer to deepen their faith;
- Develop and strengthen the use of new technologies in communication.

3.2.2 In every District, to create formation programs responding to the needs of the various members of the local Lasallian community. To achieve this, it is necessary to:

- Promote the informal lived experiences and encounters of Lasallian groups to strengthen the mutual knowledge and cohesion of the educational community;
- Analyze the needs and the expectations of members of the Lasallian Family;
- Develop and strengthen the use of new technologies in communication.

CHALLENGE 3

3.3 There is a need to achieve vitality and sustainability of the Lasallian Mission through innovation, and the advancement of co-responsibility among the diverse members of the Lasallian Family.

RESPONSES TO CHALLENGE 3

3.3.1 To establish an international mission council of Brothers and Partners, as well as strengthen and continue development of District and Regional mission councils, to further co-responsibility.

3.3.2 To deepen the meaning of co-responsibility as experienced at the local, District, Regional, international and Institute level by:

- Establishing working definitions of co-responsibility;
- Advancing a culture of co-responsibility;
- Creating tools to assess progress in Lasallian Association for Mission.

3.3.3 To form an international working group that will conduct research leading to the development of tools for the evaluation of Lasallian works, for the purpose of:

- Validating the quality of works;
- Identifying unmet and emerging needs;
- Promoting social justice;
- Securing funding.

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

The Documents of the 45th General Chapter (2014)

2. ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE OF THE POOR: AN ESSENTIAL DIMENSION OF THE LIFE OF THE BROTHER OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

- The **Brothers** and **Partners** “renew our focus on those who have inspired our association, **poor children and youth**” (2.2, p. 15)

Proposition 3

- The Chapter asks **Brothers** to make “themselves available to serve the mission wherever they may be sent.”

Proposition 4

- “The **Brothers** will accompany **Partners**, and also will allow themselves to be accompanied by them, in their respective journeys as Lasallian educators.”

Proposition 5

- “. . . the Chapter reaffirms its global commitment to association for the educational service of the poor in line with the spirit of **Circular 461, Associated for the Lasallian Mission . . . an act of HOPE.**”

Proposition 6

- The Chapter asks that “the Institute support and strengthen **a strategic framework for association at every level of the Institute**” . . .
 - “Each District or Sector will have a person, or team of persons, charged with this mission. This person, or team, will network with the Region and with the center of the Institute.” (from Proposition 6)

Proposition 8

- “. . . the Institute will ensure support for Priority 3.1.1 of the IAMEL 2013, ‘To assure and accompany meaningful experiences of association in all Lasallian works.’”

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

The Revised Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (2015)

- ¶18 The mission of the Brother finds its sustenance in the passion of God for the poor. Sharing this same passion, the Brothers have, from the beginning of the Institute, carried out their mission “together and by association.”
- ¶ 19 The Lasallian charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit given to the Church in view of human and Christian education. The Brothers joyfully share the same mission 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 can deepen their understanding of their own vocation and of the Lasallian mission.”
- ¶ 19.1 The Brothers strive to promote the spirit of association in educational communities. They are at pains to make the Lasallian message known to all their members; to invite those who so wish, to share the Lasallian spirituality and to strengthen their apostolic commitment; and to share in the creation and animation of intentional Lasallian communities.”
- ¶ 19.2 Since their foundation, the Brothers have contributed to the promotion of the Christian laity, and especially lay educators who wish their professional work to be a form of Gospel ministry. Each District recognizes the important role of all the Partners in the mission. For this purpose, and as an expression of the spirit of association, it establishes participative structures intended to help the Brother Visitor in areas which concern the mission.”
- ¶ 20 “Together and by association,” they undertake this saving work with their Partners, in a profession in which “the poor are evangelized,” and young people and adults grow as human beings and as sons and daughters of God.”
- ¶25 Revised vow formula is formally approved as part of the Rule **[note the order of the vows]:** ***“Wherefore, I promise and vow association for the service of the poor through education, stability in the Institute, obedience, chastity, and poverty, in accordance with the Bull of Approbation and the Rule of the Institute.”***

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

Brother Robert Schieler Pastoral Letter: *One Call, Many Voices* (2016)

- 17 “It is enlightening, Brothers, to consider the development of our Lasallian understanding of shared mission. Thirty years ago a modest sub-title in *The Rule* (1987) – “A Shared Mission” – became a bold initiative in the life of the Institute. A new subtitle in the current Rule (2015) – “Inspired by the same charism” – continues carrying us forward with greater intentionality. During the last three decades, new organizational structures have come into being: District mission councils and assemblies; two international mission assemblies; Lasallian formation programs for Brothers and Partners; research opportunities; and, the International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU). In addition, a variety of publications help to sharpen our understanding of the contemporary Lasallian reality, for example: *The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission* (1997), *Being Brothers Today* (2004); *Associated for the Lasallian Mission... An Act of Hope* (2011); *They Will Call Themselves Brothers* (2013); and the collection of *MEL Bulletins*. The reflection on *The Rule*, organized opportunities for sharing and planning and the various Institute publications are some of the “many voices” through which the Holy Spirit today continues to inspire and guide both Brothers and Partners.”

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

Brother Robert Schieler Pastoral Letter: *Set Out in Haste: Association for the Lasallian Mission* (2017)

- 4 “Brothers and Partners without limits – or borders – is more than a geographic metaphor; first and foremost it refers to the call to personal and communal transformation. It also refers to the transformation of our educational communities where the ‘primary concern is the educational needs of those whose dignity and basic rights are not recognized. By its mission [the Institute] seeks to make it possible for them to live with dignity as sons and daughters of God. The Institute establishes, renews, and diversifies its works according to the needs of the Reign of God’ [Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Rule*, 2015, article 13].”
- 5 Quoting Albert Nolan, *Jesus Today: A Spirituality of Radical Freedom*, Orbis, 2008, p. 99: “Personal transformation begins when we follow Jesus into the desert by setting aside time for silence and solitude. . . . We also need time to read, reflect, to pray, and to allow the spirit of Jesus to seep into our bones.”
- 5-6 “I am convinced that a valuable contribution of Association for Mission is the compelling voice of our Partners that challenges us to the personal and communal conversion indispensable to the detachment that permits us to go beyond borders. Over the years, Partners have certainly challenged me to cooperate with Jesus’ project for the Reign of God in ways consistent with our Institute’s documents.”
- 6 “Sharing our mission with so many women and men who desire to journey with us as Lasallian educators is a great blessing. Our Christian Partners experience their ministry as an expression of their baptismal commitment to Jesus and his kingdom. Our Partners of other spiritual traditions feel inspired to enhance their professional duties with the example of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and his Brothers.”
- 6 “Stirred up by the Holy Spirit – who seeps into our bones – and through an attentive listening to the voices of our Partners we can discover new invitations to conversion. In this regard, I believe that we Brothers must create new dynamics of encounter and conversation with one another and with our Partners. We must take the lead in being signs of hope for the future of the Lasallian mission.” [Then, quoting Leonard Doohan, *Courageous Hope*, Paulist Press, 2011, p. 113: “Leaders of hope create new forms and structures for a new kind of organization . . . [and] Leadership becomes a cooperative venture; we must imagine our organizations in new forms.”]
- 8 “Let us reflect on the scene [Luke 24: 13-35, *The Road to Emmaus*]: . . . and they were talking together about all that had happened. Imagine that the two disciples are two Brothers speaking in the aftermath of the 39th General Chapter. At first, they were thrilled with the Chapter’s decisions and the inspiring message of the *Declaration*. They were filled with hope and dreamed of a bright future. However, in a few short years thousands of Brothers left the Institute and the vocation well was running dry. Their expectations, like those of the disciples, seemed to have died. These two

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Brothers, however, faithful to their vow of stability, are still with us. They are older and wiser co-authors of our continuing story.”

- 8-9 “Today, the two disciples might be a Brother and a Lasallian Partner sharing their enthusiasm for our shared ministry of human and Christian education. They might be talking about formation opportunities in Lasallian spirituality and participation in ministry governance structures. They recall their appreciation for the consultative participation of Partners in the 43rd General Chapter. And they remind each other that ‘we are not convinced that the present style and format of the General Chapter will be appropriate for the future, given the increasing participation of Partners throughout the Institute’ [Bulletin of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Rome, No. 246, 2000, p. 44].”
- 9 “In the above examples we glimpse the Institute’s experience regarding our rapidly changing demographic reality and an encouraging sign for our time: Lasallian Association for Mission. Even as the Institute traversed the tumultuous decade of the 1970s, it was at the 40th General Chapter (1976) that the Signum Fidei members made their first consecration before the relics of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and in the presence of Brother Superior José Pablo. During those same years, the General Council published important circulars on our life as Brothers. The circulars, together with Lasallian formation programs, assemblies and chapters, can be imagined as two disciples telling the story of our evolving appreciation for our vocation in light of Lasallian Association for Mission. These writings and experiences are expressions of our Spirit-enlightened expectations for the contemporary Lasallian Mission.”
- 11-12 “Today, to be visibly recognized as credible and prophetic, our communities must be intentionally open to Association for the Lasallian Mission. The 44th General Chapter urges us ‘to open the community to Lasallians who seek to develop their faith and deepen their spirituality and understanding of the mission by their sharing with the Brothers’ [Circular 455, *The Documents of the 44th General Chapter*, September 15, 2007, p. 21, number 2.3.3]. Programmed times are needed for Brothers and Partners to gather together to share their experience of God’s presence and discern the will of the Spirit for the mission today. Let us commit ourselves to inviting our Partners to ‘come, stay with us.’ Let us create opportunities to listen to each other and to break bread together.”
- 16 “Let us now return to the beginning of our own narrative: “The founding event that links the Institute of today with its origins is that of June 6, 1694, when John Baptist de La Salle and twelve companions associated themselves to dedicate their lives to the Christian education of poor children. . . . [This event] is also the source of the Lasallian association of laity and religious who wish to join the Lasallian mission. This is where new responses originate in association for the mission’ [Circular 447, *The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter*, pp. 2 and 3 - adapted].”

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16 “Through the ‘eyes of faith’ we see that communication and communion open the door to receive revelation. A brief review of our developing story of Association for Mission is enlightening.”

16-17 “Twenty years ago (1997) in *The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: A Shared Mission* the General Council suggested new forms of association still needed to be invented:

Association, such as it was lived by the Brothers, had a deep impact on the organization and functioning of their schools. It was a decisive factor in helping their cohesion, effectiveness, and creativity. Today, under new forms still to be invented, the same spirit of association should continue to inspire and give life to the Lasallian Schools where colleagues are in the majority. The challenge now is for Brothers and other Lasallian educators to discover together in open dialogue how to found and promote in new foundations the associative dimensions of their commitment on behalf of the human and Christian education of the young, especially the poor. [3.31]

17 “In a presentation following the 43rd General Chapter (2000), former Brother Superior John Johnston summarized the Institute’s experience with Lasallian Association:

It is very satisfying to me that we are moving gradually, prudently, but decisively toward a new, creative, and dynamic understanding of Lasallian Association, an Association that:

- Expresses the international communion of Brothers, Partners and Associates, persons living the Lasallian charism in distinct ways and collaborating in the Lasallian Mission;
- Respects unambiguously the distinct vocations of all those living the charism;
- Has its own appropriate governmental structures at all levels;
- Exists for the human and Christian education of youth, poor youth particularly. [*Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor*, May-June 2000, p. 5]

18 “Former Brother Superior Álvaro Rodríguez wrote in his 2001 Pastoral Letter:

It seems to me that we should look upon association as a time of grace and renewal. . . . We know that the charism came from a movement and we have made it into an institution. This is an inevitable and necessary process. But it is important to revive the fire that gave us birth and to re-live the mystical moment of our origin. Are we not living in a time of new charismatic freshness with new blood and a new reading that is being done by lay persons? Might not this new reading be an opportunity to renew our community life? [*Being Brothers in Community: our Primary Association, Pastoral Letter*, 2001, p. 31]

19 “Bulletin 250 (2005) offered examples of how association was being lived in Districts, ministries and communities. It reminds us of the need for creativity and innovation. The examples ‘invite us to dream, not simply by repeating formulas from the past, but by inventing Lasallian Association for the new millennium with boldness and creativity.’ It goes on to say, ‘this Bulletin proves to us that Association does not exist for itself. On the contrary, its reason for being, its strength lies in the irresistible passion for Christ and passion for children and young people who energize the lives of those who have been associating themselves with the Church throughout the centuries’ [Bulletin 250, *Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission*, 2005, p. 4].”

What Have They Been Saying About Association?

Statements from Institute Documents Since 1928

19-20 “Two years later, echoing the above reality, Former Brother Superior Brother John Johnston, in his message to the capitulants at the 44th General Chapter (2007) said:

We Lasallians live in unity, a unity very evident in this Chapter but we live very different realities. A number of you represent areas that are blessed with vocations. You look at your institutions and are confident that their future is assured. Others of you have had few or even no vocations for the last decade or several decades. You have numerous Lasallian institutions. What is your plan? Do you intend to turn the schools over to others who will conduct them without direct reference to our Lasallian heritage? Or are you in the process of creatively, dynamically, courageously creating structures that will assure our institutions continue as Lasallians – with Brothers we hope, but without Brothers if necessary. To create such structures of governance and of Lasallian formation is a formidable task. We have no time to waste. [**Bulletin 251, 44th General Chapter, April-June 2007, p. 46**]

20 “Circular 461 (2010) continued the description of our experience:

At the present time, no universal model or system of association exists for colleagues in Lasallian educational ministries. What does exist is a kaleidoscope of experiences lived out in various countries and cultures pointing to new directions for the future. These experiences appear in two complementary global contexts: Christian and multi-religious. New forms of communion and of participation in the Lasallian charism are emerging in both contexts. . . . The challenge is to find ways to appreciate, acknowledge, and perhaps give form to this action of the Spirit. The opportunity is to identify and expand in the future this new and significant presence of the Lasallian charism in the world of the young, especially the poor. [**Circular 461, Associated for the Lasallian Mission ... an Act of Hope, General Council, Rome 2010, pp. 34-35**]

21-22 “. . . carefully look at the following issues:

- The rapidly changing demographics of the Institute.
- The fact that, until now, Lasallian Association for Mission has developed with the support of the Institute’s organizational structures and financial support.
- The survival and flourishing of Association for the Lasallian Mission without the presence, or the memory of the presence, of the Brothers.
- The survival and flourishing of Association for Lasallian Mission in an educational community where there are no longer Partners who co-ministered with the Brothers.”

22 “The whisperings of the Holy Spirit, the invitations from the Church, and the demographic changes in the Institute obviously urge us to ‘**set out in haste**’ to examine these issues as we attempt to discern the best way to insure that the poor, the vulnerable and all those seeking a human and Christian education will continue to find welcoming Lasallian educational communities.”