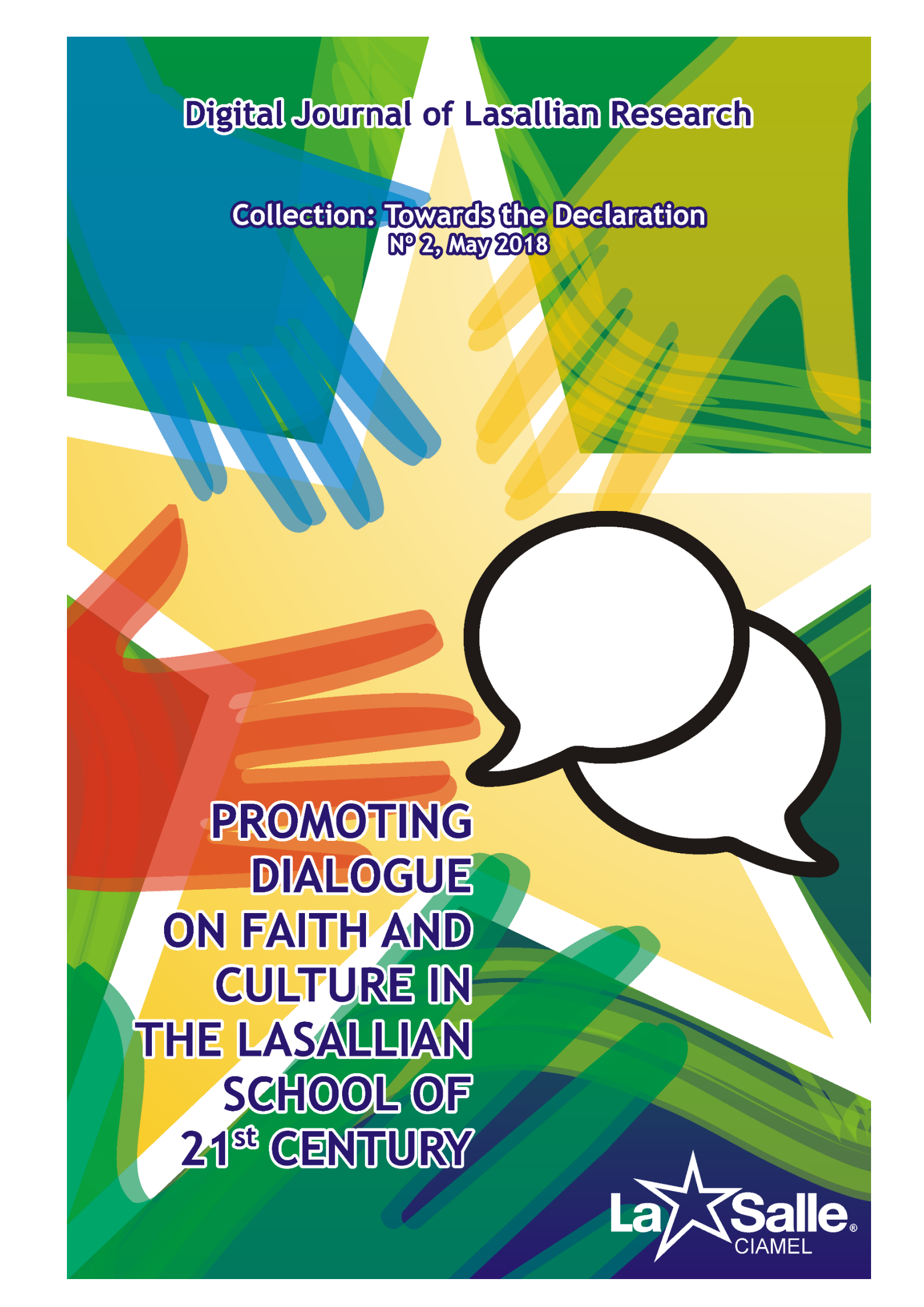




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**PROMOTING
DIALOGUE
ON FAITH AND
CULTURE IN
THE LASALLIAN
SCHOOL OF
21st CENTURY**

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PROMOTING DIALOGUE ON FAITH AND CULTURE IN THE LASALLIAN SCHOOL OF THE 21st CENTURY
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**PROMOVER EL DIÁLOGO FE-CULTURA
DESDE LA ESCUELA LASALIANA DEL SIGLO XXI**

**PROMOUVOIR LE DIALOGUE FOI-CULTURE
DEPUIS L'ÉCOLE LASALLIENNE DU XXI^e SIÈCLE**

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for Association and Educational Mission**

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Because you are ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the work that you do, you must act as representing Jesus Christ. He wants your disciples to see him in you and to receive your instructions as if he were instructing them. They must be convinced that your instructions are the truth of Jesus Christ, who speaks with your mouth, that it is only in his name that you teach, and that he has given you authority over them. They must also be convinced that they are a letter that Jesus Christ dictates to you, which you write each day in their heart, not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, who acts in you and by you through the power of Jesus Christ. He helps you triumph over all the obstacles that oppose the salvation of these children, enlightening them in the person of Jesus Christ to make them avoid all that could be displeasing to him. To fulfill this duty with as much perfection and exactness as God requires of you, frequently appeal to the Spirit of our Lord to make you act in your work only under his influence, so that your mind may have no part in it. This Holy Spirit, then, will come upon them generously, so that they will be able to possess the Christian spirit fully.

Saint John Baptiste De La Salle
Meditation 195.2

PRESENTATION

A piece of history

From the Mother House in Lembecq-lez-Hal, Brother Imier of Jesus, Superior General, prepared a circular for the Institute dated August 15, 1914. With this official communication he wanted to make known two initiatives to the Lasallian world: the *Pedagogical Bulletin* and *Pedagogical Studies*. Both represented the path of reflection that had borne fruit at the end of the 19th century since the animation of Brother Gabriel-Marie, the previous Superior General. Unfortunately, the First World War broke out and the Circular could not be sent to the Brothers.

This detail of our history, which we have been able to save thanks to the richness of the *General Archives of the Institute*, records the creativity and the dynamism which the Brothers showed during these periods of particular crises and as a result allowed them to preserve and revive their educational ministry.

The world that was developing in the twentieth century was one of constant challenge for the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Already present on the five continents in the second half of the 19th century, and rapidly spreading at the beginning of the 20th, they had supported their academic effort using the methodology tested by the experience of two centuries and summarized in the *Conduct of Christian Schools*. However, the development of the New School pedagogical movement that had arisen in the United States and Europe, as well as the challenges of industrial modernity, would draw a completely new perspective for the Brothers as specialists in school management.

Christian pedagogy

In the *Notes on Christian Pedagogy* (1897) which had been written for a new edition of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, the Brothers defined education in these terms:

Education consists in the formation of the good physical, intellectual and moral habits of the child.... Education proposes the methodological, progressive and harmonious development of the physical, intellectual and moral faculties of the child, aiming to lead him to his double natural and supernatural end. To educate a human life is for the Christian to prepare the children to become saints (1897, p. 1-2).

From the beginning of the schools conducted by the Brothers, education was profoundly Christian in its conception, its practices and its direction. Both in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* and in the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, the Founder dedicated himself to training the first Brothers as ministers of Jesus Christ in the school. Thus, *The Notes on Christian Pedagogy* (1897) recalled:

God, whose goodness is infinite, says Blessed J. de La Salle, having created men, wants them all to come to the knowledge of truth. This truth is God himself, and what he has been willing to reveal to

his Church, either by his Son Jesus Christ, or by the holy apostles, or by other holy persons whom the Holy Spirit has inspired. (1897, p.2).

At the end of the 19th century, the Brothers were the repositories of a theological thinking that was more apologetic than propositive against the weight of modernity, especially that which was inspired by French secularization. For them, it was necessary to insist on the centrality of catechesis in the school. This vision was maintained at the beginning of the 20th century. This is reflected in Bro. Victor Junien's Circular 300 on *The Catechetical Action of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, dated February 19, 1938. The Superior General insists once again on the role of the Brothers and their fidelity to the tradition received:

The Supreme Pontiff Pius X, in conferring upon us the glorious title of Apostles of the Catechism, at the same time noted and consecrated one of the characteristics peculiar to our Institute. In fact, to instruct children in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, to train them in the practices and virtues of the Christian life, is the first goal, the very end of the Society founded by St. John Baptist de La Salle. Few congregations are also formally dedicated to this mission and are concerned, to the same degree, with the catechetical formation of their members (Circ 300, p. 3).

To be the defenders of the doctrine, faithful to the Church from the locale of the Christian school had been the primary goal of the Brothers. The catechetical movement experienced before the Second Vatican Council posed new questions to the Brothers and to their Christian Schools. Brother Nicet Joseph, in his Circular No. 371 of February 2, 1962, *The Mission of the Catechist of the Brother of the Christian Schools*, emphasized the need to reflect on the meaning of the Christian school in the new socio-political realities of the world in the 1960's:

... it is only in terms of the catechetical mission of the Church that the work of the Christian school is justified and realized. As far as all its teachers, religious and laity, enter it without hesitation or caution, the catechetical renewal represents the best chance offered to the Christian school to appear and to be what the Church wants it to be: the privileged place for an education of the living faith through catechesis, but without any divorce from human values. Such an objective is of burning relevance at a time when this risk of divorce between secular culture and religious knowledge has particularly heightened (Circular No. 371, p. 32).

It is only since the Second Vatican Council that the Lasallian Christian school begins to make visible a reality that lives in its heart: the dialogue with other religious denominations. The Lasallian schools around the world had "informally" embraced the diversity of local cultures, including their multiple religious perspectives. The Brothers had been pedagogues in the art of listening to, welcoming and promoting local cultural riches. But the lack of a theological-pastoral basis of a theology of incarnation and openness to ecumenical dialogue had not facilitated inter-religious exchange. Indeed, from the 1970's, with the presence of the Young Churches and the need to build bridges to a world where God has a word and a significant presence appear strongly in the Institute. The world after Vatican II was then the place where the dialogue between faith and culture began a new stage, rich and unsuspected for an already three-hundred-year-old Institute.

The faith-culture dialogue of our daily life

Those of us who have participated in the production of this publication come from Lasallian schools. We are Brothers and Partners from five continents, invited to reflect on the 7th International Session of Lasallian Studies (SIEL) which took place in Rome in October, 2017. Each of us shared the daily ways of living one's life and faith in one's own context. We were challenged by Brothers and Partners who specialize in history, theology, pastoral work, inter-religious dialogue and religious education in the Lasallian School. We have asked ourselves questions from those related to our daily routines to

our more fundamental concerns. Therefore, all the works presented are born from our questions as teachers.

We do not intend to propose the answers on the faith-culture dialogue that should take place in the Lasallian schools of the world; on the contrary, we want to invite each of you, along with your educational and local community, to identify the questions you need to ask from the reality that corresponds with your experience. If we are not able to let ourselves be challenged by reality, the Word of God will not resonate in us. Therefore, we dare to propose this publication as the beginning of a reflection that will move towards the future *Declaration of Lasallian Pedagogy in the 21st century*.

May the Spirit also speak to us about our actual pastoral reality. The SIEL participants raised questions and reflected on evangelization, pastoral ministry, religious education, processes of accompaniment, the interior life, fraternal dialogue, values and best practices. What invitations and questions do you receive from the world of the school where you develop your educational mission?

How to read this second publication?

As we have done with the first publication, this second one is intended for reading and reflection by those who lead the educational animation of the Institute.

At the end of each part of the publication a methodology for analysis is offered. We are looking forward to receiving your contributions between July and December 2018 to this e-mail address: declaration@lasalle.org

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From the Secretariat of the Association and the Mission, we would like to thank the individuals, communities and educational centers who contributed to the production of this publication.

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Our sincere thanks to all those who collaborated and supported this reflection and dialogue on faith and culture in the Lasallian school today.

*Br. Nestor Anaya, F.S.C.
Secretary for Association and Mission
Generalate -Rome*

PART ONE

STARTING AFRESH FROM THE SCHOOL

PART ONE

STARTING AFRESH FROM THE SCHOOL

In order to enrich the common reflection within the global Lasallian educational communities, we want to begin this first part by cautioning the reader against two very common mistakes that we find when we reflect on the processes of pastoral animation:

- There is often a lack of a historical perspective that does not allow us to fully understand the itinerary of an Institute like ours which has lived with intensity more than three centuries of history, inside and outside of Europe. The history of France has undoubtedly affected us directly, especially since the Institute was considered "French" until the beginning of the 20th century. The political, social, educational and religious events of post-revolutionary France conditioned and determined the decisions of the Superiors of the Institute. That is why if we want to make our various itineraries of animation on a common path, we must begin by rescuing our local memories. Knowing where we came from, the convictions that marked the path of our founders and how the evolution of our institutions has taken place throughout the centuries, will give coherence to our current reflection.
- Secondly, it is not easy to conceptualize and characterize educational-pastoral processes in a worldwide Institute. We are working in eighty different educational systems, corresponding to a similar number of countries, each with a particular history; if we add to that the local realities - for example, the federal governments - the educational diversity increases exponentially. In addition, this diversity is evident in the multiplicity of local Churches where we accomplish our educational ministry. As Lasallians today, we are united by a common educational project, even if we are not all Catholics. This continues to be a great wealth for a universal community called by God to work for justice, peace and truth starting in the school. Pope Francis' call "to go beyond borders" has echoed in our community because it has always been part of our Lasallian identity.

We offer you in this first part some resources on concepts that we consider to be foundational for the future *Declaration* in order to share in the reflection with your educational communities.

- First, and as we have done with previous publications, we offer an institutional-historical itinerary that helps us to ask questions about our local realities.
- Secondly, we want to insist on reflection about the current context of profound secularization and the challenges it implies for today's Lasallian school and its religious education.
- Thirdly, we propose three different ways of understanding the pastoral dynamics of our centers based on experiences from the Philippines and Latin America.

This first part ends with a conclusion and suggests a proposal for reflection and a methodology for the preparation of Notes to be sent to the International Council of the Lasallian Association and Educational Mission (CIAMEL) during the second semester of 2018.

HUMAN AND CHRISTIAN FORMATION IN THE INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS. HISTORICAL NOTES (1680-2018)

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1.1 Introduction

In the beginning, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools limited its mission to the Christian education of children and young people. In fact, the first Common Rule stated that

“...it is for this purpose that they maintain schools, so that, morning and afternoon, the children may be under the direction of the masters, who will teach them to live properly and instruct them in the mysteries of our holy religion, inspiring them with Christian maxims and so giving them the right education.” (RC 1,3).

So it was taken for granted that a master with the right skills for the task would be employed to work daily with the pupils in a school setting, following a programme inspired by Christianity and leading to the acquisition of knowledge applied to real life. The Brother was not just a catechist working in a school, nor was he a schoolmaster doubling as a catechist. There was a profound unity that characterised his apostolic ministry as an educator (Sauvage, 1961). John Baptist de La Salle saw intuitively the need for the Brothers to bring together the different facets of their lives and combine them in an identity that was quite new in the Church and the schools of the time (cf. CT 16,1,4).

Between the foundational phase of the Institute at the end of the 17th century and the current period of the second decade of the 21st century, we have lived through an historical itinerary of almost three hundred and forty years, and this has had an effect on the notions of school, schoolmaster, teaching and catechesis. In what follows, we will present an outline of that lived itinerary, using some historical points of reference, which will allow us to appreciate the continuities and the changes, the moments of crisis and the challenges for today.

1.2 The Founding Intuition of De La Salle and the First Brothers (1680-1719)

- Society and the Church in the 17th century

The Church that John Baptist de La Salle knew was dominated by the orientations of the Council of Trent, which considered knowledge of the fundamental truths of faith to be absolutely necessary for salvation (Boudon cited by Sauvage, 1962, p. 376). For that reason, the parishes used the catechism to combat religious ignorance.

In the time of King Louis XIV, the Church acted as the principal force for social integration. Nevertheless, dissident elements began to emerge within France, especially in the two religious and political currents of Gallicanism and Jansenism. The first of these defended the privileges of the French crown against the decisions of the Pope. The second brought eschatological pessimism and moral severity to Christian living based on a fundamentalist reading of the theology of St Augustine. Both currents had their effects not only on the future of the monarchy but also on the education of children and young people, which extended beyond the French Revolution.

- The Apostolic Ministry of Education

John Baptist de La Salle was a theologian who took on the responsibility of training lay schoolmasters who had done no “studies,” (which meant they did not use Latin to gain access to classical culture), and he turned them into “ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ” in relation to children in order to collaborate in God’s plan of salvation, because *God wants everyone to be saved and to arrive at the knowledge of the truth* (cf. MR 193,3,1).

De La Salle followed the models of education of the time but introduced some new approaches, and he organised schools in which the children acquired the basic tools for learning (reading, writing and arithmetic), the basic elements of social living (the rules of Christian politeness and civility) and especially the fundamentals of the faith (catechism and sacramental life). In this way, the whole work of a school was impregnated with the Christian spirit. This project came into conflict with the interests of the corporations of Writing Masters, and as a result it was subjected to attack all through the life of the Founder. The schools contributed to the socialisation of the children, not just through the simple teaching of the catechism but also through a consistent plan of education which in a few decades transformed even the families of the pupils and their social environment.

If the community of Masters was to fulfill its commitments, it would need an organised and disciplined life in the form of a regular timetable and study programme, in order to acquire a knowledge of the truths of the faith, to develop the right skills for work in the classroom, to master the techniques of catechetics and the accompaniment of young people during their time of education through the fraternal and demanding supervision of the Brothers. For that purpose, De La Salle wrote a number of pedagogical and catechetical works to train his Brothers in their school mission (*The Duties of a Christian before God; Spiritual Hymns*). In addition, he gave them conferences, or days of reflection, when the more senior in the art of teaching would share their experience with others. He supported his reflections with citations from the most relevant authors of the time. As a result, his writings bear the mark of a community which lived in school from morning until evening.

1.3 The Institute Moves Forward in a World in Turmoil (1719-1789).

- Society and the Church in France in the Years after Louis XIV

The European crisis of conscience which developed from 1680 onwards slowly changed the mentalities of those sectors of society that possessed the benefits of a Latin education. Social tensions arising from the use of reason invaded people's minds and had a big influence on the Enlightenment movement. The *philosophes* developed a new style of thinking and of socio-political action. All this, added to the forces of Gallicanism and Jansenism, contributed to the development of a real revolution. Thanks to the Christian schools, the ordinary people also advanced within a few decades to a certain level of literacy and social awareness. France came to a point of no return, and as part of that development, the Church was challenged. Because it was associated with the monarchy, it was regarded as a power that needed to be opposed.

- Fidelity to the Tradition of the Institute and to the Church

The Brothers remained faithful to the teaching of catechism as prescribed in the *Rule* approved by the *Bull of Approbation* (1725) and in the *Conduct of Christian Schools*. It meant teaching catechism in school for half an hour every workday and for one hour and a half-hours on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (cf. GE, chapter 9°). As lay persons far removed from the bitter theological and philosophical arguments of the day, the Brothers fostered their fidelity to the Church of Rome through the catechetical training promoted within the Institute which sought to shield them from Jansenism.

The Superiors, from Brother Barthélemy (the first) up to Brother Agathon towards the end of this period, gave orientations which invited the Brothers to consider the teaching of catechism as a central exercise of the school, by which they meant that through it the whole work of education was given its meaning. There is a significant statement by Brother Agathon in his *Circular* dated January 1, 1784 regarding the preparation for and the teaching of the catechism. It says that the Brother should study the topic so as to prepare himself interiorly and that during the class times he should seek to make pupils understand the truths of faith through questions and sub-questions, explaining things clearly so as to give a moral lesson and help the children make practical resolutions. In addition, the Brother should be a personal and professional example for the pupils (Agathon, 1784). Nonetheless, for the *philosophes* the Brothers were “ignorant men” (i.e. without classical education) running schools for people who did not need them. For all this and for their fidelity to the Church, they were suppressed and even put to death during the French Revolution.

1.4 The Institute is Reborn after the French Revolution (1802-1875)

- Between the Napoleonic restoration and the liberal republic.

France in the 19th century was marked by ideological confrontations which made for a turbulent environment in politics, society and the Church. The restoration of the monarchy was resisted by the liberal, revolutionary movements inside and outside of France. Gradually, the Church began to be excluded from the centres of power, especially from the running of schools. During that century, we see the paradox of an active form of Catholicism existing in the midst of a

progressively laicised society, which was accompanied by a profound de-christianisation of all sectors of society. In the mid-1870s, the liberal movement organised the Third French Republic.

- The Institute Seeks to Maintain its Fidelity to the Traditions It has Received.

The Institute was faced with a new panorama in education. The French government took over the supervision of schools. This became a new battleground, since the enemies of the monarchy introduced a new system of teaching (called mutual or Lancastrian), which originated in England. Its underlying effect was to reduce the importance of the teacher and the place of religious education in schools. The Brothers were the defenders of the simultaneous method of teaching, and after a long debate lasting twenty years, they succeeded in making their position, based on experience, prevail. Nevertheless, they did adopt the best features of the mutual method, and so they created a third model, the simultaneous-mutual method, which was included in the *Conduct of Christian Schools* from 1838 onwards.

In the *Circulars* of the Superiors of the time, in the resolutions of the General Chapters and in the various editions of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, there is a continued emphasis on the catechetical activity of the Brothers. Fidelity to the origins produced continuity of thought and action in this area, although in other areas significant advances were being made. The primary schools opened their doors to the need for more technical and scientific training for their pupils through a re-designed curriculum. For example, in the 1863 edition of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* (Beau, Versailles) the following details are given for the preparation of a catechism class: 1st determine the goal; 2nd ensure that all the words being used are ones that are understood; 3rd formulate sub-questions; 4th look for reflections that can be put forward; 5th look up the historical or scriptural aspects that are relevant; 6th find suitable comparisons; 7th foresee the practical outcomes that may result from the lesson. All this is to be undertaken in fidelity to the catechetical activity inherited from the past.

1.5 The Institute in Relation to the Laicisation of French Society (1875-1907).

- A Political Society which Promoted Laicisation

The last quarter of the 19th century in France was marked by a decisive advance in the political movements that promoted the separation between Church and State. Schools continued to be the battleground for ideologies *par excellence*. The free, obligatory and lay schools of France became a model for the whole of the western world. The Brothers were gradually forced to leave the state schools and form their own network of schools called the “free schools”. As time went by, the teaching of religion was excluded and finally in 1886, the Brothers themselves were banned from being teachers. From then on the Brothers were replaced in the schools by ‘associated’ Christian teachers. The Brothers were expelled from France in 1904.

In general, there was a widespread movement in western countries towards a renewal in pedagogy referred to as The New School, which drew upon ideas from sociology and psychology. For its part, the Catholic Church reacted to this evident de-christianisation of society by promoting a profound catechetical renewal beginning in 1870. The Brothers as consecrated educators and

catechists, endeavoured to systematise their experience. Gradually, they too began to enter into dialogue with the new human sciences, but they did not have the right tools for relating this to fidelity to their tradition. It was a time of opposing socio-political ideas and theological perspectives that were incapable of entering into dialogue with one another.

- The Catechetical Models of the Apostles of the Catechism

The Brothers found themselves obliged to revise their educational project. Faced with new trends in pedagogy, they began a revision of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* (1903 and 1916) which was the result of a long process of reflection. This work was initiated especially by the decisions taken in the General Chapter of 1894, which centred its discussions on the religious formation of the Brothers and on the topic of catechesis. Their efforts were rewarded in 1903 when Pope Pius X bestowed on them the title of “Apostles of the Catechism”.

After the publication of the *Notes on Christian Pedagogy* (1897), two currents of catechetics developed in the Institute. The first came from the hand of Brother Paul Joseph, and it was published as the *Elements of Pedagogical Practice* (1901) and the *Methodology of Religious Teaching* (1902). These publications ratified the traditional methods of the Brothers, using deductive and expository methods. The second was developed by Brother Bernard Louis and was published in *The Manual of Catechetics* (1907). It showed the influence of the Munich catechetical movement, which aimed to be inductive and to take psychology into account so as to lead the children to apply the ideas to their lives. This was the start of progressive catechesis in the Institute. These two models continued in the Institute during the first half of the 20th century (Capelle, 2013).

1.6 The Institute and the Pre-conciliar Catechetical Movement (1907-1966)

- A period of conflicts and debates

Between the First World War (1914-1918) and the start of Vatican II (1962-1965), the world went through bewildering changes. Educational theory developed greatly as a result of the New School, and the new pedagogy was expressed in different ways and was enriched by exposure to human sciences and new research into philosophy and social experiments. For its part, the Catholic Church, up to then stuck in an ‘apologetics mode’, began a profound process of revision of its theological stances, which naturally entailed great debates and confrontations. Its theology of the incarnation enabled the Church to initiate a dialogue with the new human situation, and it helped especially in the understanding of the Church’s role through Catholic schools. While the new socio-political perspectives questioned the Church’s authority and challenged the school itself, Christians were led to debate among themselves the merits of continuity or renewal. Both these extremes would have consequences for the organisation of schools, for teaching and for catechesis.

- Fidelity Put to the Test

In the pre-conciliar period, the Superiors General continued to emphasise the catechetical work of the Brothers and of Lasallian schools. Here we shall give just a few examples. In 1938, Brother Junien Victor published Circular No. 300 *The Catechetical Activity of the Brother of the Christian*

Schools. In it he insisted on the need to be aware of the catechetical movement which had brought about great changes in the twenty years prior to that. He invited the Brothers to undertake serious studies in the teaching of religion, to revise their methodology by incorporating new pedagogical trends and to train volunteer catechists in our centres. In 1956, Brother Nicet-Joseph issued Circular 353 *Our Vocation as Religious Educators* in which he invited the Brothers to undertake a process of adapted renewal, including the new problems that were affecting the Christian education of children and young people. Finally, in 1962, the same Brother Nicet-Joseph published Circular 371 *The Catechetical Mission of the Brother of the Christian Schools*, in support of the French team behind the production of the periodical *Catéchistes*. On the threshold of the Second Vatican Council, the Circular talks about the role which the Christian school has in the whole pastoral ministry of the Church, and it refers to the value of catechesis as a ministry of Jesus Christ which the catechist announces through his work and through the witness of his life.

This period in the Institute's history was rich in catechetical initiatives. The Italian Brothers were pioneers in the discussions on and in the production of material for catechesis. From 1936 to 1977 Brother Candido Chiorra edited the periodical *Sussidi per le riflessione e il catechismo*. From 1937 to 1968 Brother John Joseph Mc Mahon edited *La Salle Catechist* in conjunction with the Catechetical Commission of the USA. From 1950 to 1974 Brother Vincent Ayel directed *Catéchistes* which played a part in the renewal process in France. From 1951 to 1959, Spain organised the *Jornadas Catequísticas Nacionales* which led to the founding of the De La Salle Catechetical Centre and later to the appearance in 1953 of the San Pío X Higher Institute of Catechetical Sciences. From 1953 to 1975, Brothers Christian Moe and Aloysius Carmody edited the periodical *Our Apostolate* for the Brothers of Australia, New Zealand and Papua-New Guinea (Pérez Navarro, 2001). Numerous other initiatives testify to the desire for renewal and research on the part of the Institute worldwide. Even so, the convening of the Second Vatican Council marked a turning point in the Church and in the Institute in particular.

1.7 From the Renewal of the Vatican Council to the Institute of Today (1966-2018)

▪ The Social Upheaval of 1968 and Globalization

The movement of social upheaval, which was begun by young people in 1968, had a very big impact on society. It represented the spirit of a new humanity eager to ask new questions. Social scientists are still trying to identify this “change of epoch” (which means more than the expression ‘an epoch of changes’, often repeated but not always understood). We must also say that the fifty years since Vatican II have not been sufficient for a full understanding of the way its message has been received and the consequences it has had for both Church and society.

Over the course of the last fifty years, various models and systems for understanding catechesis in schools have been able to emerge. Some are firmly anchored in confessional teaching and have kept to religion as the fundamental, historical root of national culture. Others recognise the cultural potential of the religious factor and have been open to the teaching of religions as part of the school curriculum. Still others have shown awareness of the fact that liberty of conscience is a right and something that enables people to live together, and so they have proposed a kind of education which is more in tune with a global ethics, looking for greater social cohesion. The way forward

is still open, and today more than ever people insist on the need for a dialogue of faith and culture in a Christian school, faithful to its identity but belonging to a multicultural world (cf. Pajer, 2017).

- An Institute that is Universal and Diversified

The Institute that emerged after the 39th General Chapter (1966-1967) was one with a new face. The Superior and his Council embodied the diversity of cultures in which Lasallian education was being developed. The Institute experienced some perplexity over the post-conciliar changes. The modification of the *Rule* was begun in 1967 in order to respond to the times, and the *Declaration of the Brother in the World Today* (1967) set out in detail the new road map. There followed difficult decades when the school and religious education were called seriously into question. Nevertheless, a new stage began in the 1980s which was less conflictual, although perhaps it was less creative in ideas and trends.

The Superiors General of this period, with their leadership teams, have fostered Institute reflections on education and pastoral ministry. In their *Circulars*, they have stressed the main conciliar and post-conciliar lines of thought, such as the need to provide an education in the faith which is appropriate to new human situations, intercultural dialogue, the importance of educational communities, catechesis based on experience, participation by all in the pastoral ministry and the theological and catechetical formation necessary for a renewal of pastoral ministry. The *Rule* of 1986 reiterated the intentions expressed in the *Declaration* of 1967.

By its organisational structure and the climate it engenders, the Christian school makes catechesis possible. This catechesis should be lively, centred on the person of the student, in touch with life as it is, based on Scripture and the liturgy, attentive to the teaching of the Church and concerned with an integral presentation of the Christian message. (R 15a)

Finally, the 45th General Chapter has again insisted, if somewhat timidly, on the need to strengthen the profile of the Brother as a catechist, and it does so as a response to the revised *Rule* of 2015. “[The Brothers] believe that catechesis, as the Founder insisted, is ‘their principal function’. (R 17). Will this statement become an isolated proposal in the body of the *Declaration on Lasallian Pedagogy in the 21st Century*? To what extent will it play a part in the renewal of catechesis among the body of Lasallian educators as a whole?

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL IN THE NEW SITUATION OF SECULARIZATION OF THE 21st CENTURY

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2.1 First of all, allow me to emphasize that the phenomenon of secularization, as is well known, is far from being the same, not only at the global level, but also within continents themselves, and specifically speaking, in countries as well. This is due to the strength of its civil and religious diversity, its original culture and the never-ending colonization process. The Catholic school as well – pluralistic in its different historical times as well as in its local, regional and national identities – suffered in different times and ways the backlash of the secularized culture. It would be necessary to analyze, case by case, the “Catholic” feature of our school, whether it is located for example in a secularized region of the old Christianity (West) or in a region of widespread religious pluralism where Catholics are a minority (Asia), or perhaps in a region of natural religion (Africa). In this latter situation, paradoxically, Christianity is not called to confront secularization nor to bring another religion among others, (many) already existent. It is, however, called there to evangelize in its own radical way, i.e. desacralizing the instrumental or idolatrous abuse of divinity in order to be able to welcome that healthy and free lay vision of the world, originally coming from biblical revelation and Christ’s incarnation (cf. in this respect my previous article “Post-secular laity as a theological place”).

2.2 Leaving the territorial context aside, allow me to draw your attention to the meaning of “Catholic”, a word which we traditionally use to define the identity of our school. By using the term “Catholic”, we may be willing to distinguish our school from other State, neutral, lay schools, and we may as well distinguish it from other confessional schools (Protestant, Muslim, Buddhist schools). I deem that, in this case we would be caught in an old ideological mentality (which had accustomed us to seeing the world in sort of a Manichaean way) and in an anti-ecumenical or pre-ecumenical mentality. This way of thinking in the times of the post-Tridentine Church had envisaged the Catholic school as a rampart of the “Catholic doctrine”, against the menace represented by deviations of the “separated Churches”. In mission lands, it had considered the Catholic school as a strategic conquering outpost to spread the Kingdom of God, identifying it *tout court* with the Catholic Church. In both cases, “Catholic” ends up becoming a synonym of a loyalist orientation, of a sectorial, if not even partisan, vision of the world, controversially opposed to other visions. More correctly closer to its etymological root, the word Catholic means *universal, general*, and this is the meaning accepted at the end of the Paleo-Christian times (cf. for example the thought of Ignatius of Antioch, or the *Letter to Diognetus*) to indicate the unconditioned openness of the evangelical faith to the cosmic, historical and cultural reality as a whole. The term “Catholic” at the beginning defined one of the most prestigious features of the early Christian community: the ability to naturally evade local limitations, ethnic bonds, cultural contingencies to open up and welcome any person without distinction. Later on, in modern times, that word lost the prophetic potential of the early times to identify only a portion of humanity (the Church), and in the end only a portion of the latter (the Catholic confession). We surely cannot erase with impunity centuries of history, but if we were able to restore the substantial meaning of that name, to return it to that historical undertaking which we still define “Catholic school”, this would be a huge advantage for the credibility of our educational mission. Before focusing on the organizational

aspects of education or functions, theologically speaking, the Catholic school must first of all guarantee the evangelical openness “to any person and to all people”, in order to become truly “Catholic” in the most appropriate meaning of “universal”.

2.3 Within the framework of this dynamic concept of Catholic school, in hypothetical terms always requiring empirical testing, it is possible to indicate some ideal features. I think that these should be imperatively included in the strategic vision of educators and managers of a school which, in the present climate of general secularization and growing pluralism, aims at appropriating the title of “Catholic school”. In an effort of extreme synthesis, I will introduce four:

2.3.1 *A school managed democratically*: in the past, we had the school of the Brothers, completely managed by the religious community. Later on, there was the Lasallian school which shared responsibilities between Brothers and lay Collaborators (mostly junior teachers); then the LaSalle inspired-school, managed only by lay persons formed in the Lasallian charism. In this process, the old sacred halo of the Brother and the religious community is lost up to completely vanishing especially within a mainly secularized society. Families and students do not necessarily recognize a most prominent authority to religious personnel compared to lay people. It is not only this, but also in the case of completely lay-managed schools there can be traces of vertical authoritarianism, sediment power, bureaucratic relationships, which undermine the Catholic quality of the school. We could define as Catholic school the school which roots its educational action into the right-duty of participation of “all involved people” (*demos*-democracy), including students, families, local civil authorities and Church.

2.3.2 *A multicultural school out of necessity, but intercultural out of vocation*: secularization implies dealing more and more with an educational clientele that is disconnected from ethical principles, rites, habits and beliefs shared by the majority. Society is formed more and more of multiple cultural minorities, often “liquid” ones, who do not have binding landmarks (hence the risk of relativism or “apathy”). If they still hold strong benchmarks, these are lived in a defensive or self-referential way (risk of fundamentalism, sectarian community approach...). The new vocation of a school willing to gain the definition of Catholic, would be to create and implement an intercultural communication language, in order to enable young people, who are not alike, not only to recognize themselves in their neighbor’s culture (minimum standard of tolerance), but also to be enriched by that culture through a dialogue respecting one’s identity and at the same time appreciating the other’s alterity. It is therefore necessary to implement an “interface” between ethical and value systems, visions of the world, religious traditions, non-religious spirituality. This is in the end a huge but capital task in which the Christian school, most of all because it is “Catholic”, should be committed at the forefront in order to experiment with its bold prophetic creativity a pedagogy of inter-culture: starting from values and partial truths in order to search for larger values and truths in an inclusive way.

2.3.3 It is therefore a kind of school which *includes differences*: all differences, being them cultural, religious, economical and sexual ones. This is exactly the contrary of many shaping structures which traditional school – mono-cultural by definition – invented to level out minds and sensibilities, to control the content of uniform programs for all, aiming at standardizing times and methods of learning processes. Functional educational strategies in a “closed society” (in the sense of K. Popper), which however turn out to be insufficient and even detrimental for secularized, open, liquid, plural societies. In school it is necessary to implement a *culture of difference*, required to overcome the instinctive traditional culture of mistrust towards what is new, unprecedented, different, peculiar, unforeseen, alternative... Even present pedagogical trends draw attention on education to divergent thinking, as well as

to the necessary critical thinking. They demand respect for multiple intelligences rather than inducing abusive atrophy by fostering conformist consensus at the expense of acquired knowledge. They carry out from below, an inter-convictional process of analysis, while avoiding to inculcate only the good convictions from above. A school can be defined as Catholic if it dares to step over the boundaries of the “what was said”, “what was thought”, “disciplined knowledge” and most of all dares to welcome its students with their insuppressible personal, character, affective and vocational differences, as well as obviously the religious ones.

2.3.4 A school has to be religiously qualified not really and not only by the curricular religious culture courses (which obviously appear legitimate and advisable if they are offered in the respect of their epistemological relevance), but most of all for the humanizing potential spreading across all its educational curricula. I am deeply convinced that Catholic schools should have the ambition to argue the pseudo-separation between religious and secular knowledge, the exercise of faith and reason. Of course, not with the aim of falling pray of past inappropriate disorientation (uncritical fideism opposed to a rationalism closed to the transcendent) but wishing to heal the artificial fracture among the various systems and levels of truth: empirical, historical, scientific, symbolic, religious truth, which belonged to the modern era of the Age of Enlightenment and Positivism. I believe that, at least in the Western world, our school is still dominated by the cultural imprint of the 18th and 19th centuries when it felt compelled to offer courses of “religious education”, considering that all the other academic courses, once ideologically deprived of their religious intrinsic dimension and relevance, appear to have a dry meaning, to be neutral as for comparing vital values, to be other tools for learning but useless for the real education to the deep humanization of the person. Within our own framework of post-modern (or post-secular) culture, subjects like history, literature, art, philosophy, natural sciences, etc. may and must return to be real places of “revelation” of the Divine, who is present and active in the person, the environment and history¹, through an adequate and holistic school vision. If the so-called profane knowledge is not enough to get to the “novelty” of biblical revelation and initiation in Christian faith from a confessional point of view, it could however prove useful – even necessary in a school pretending to be a Catholic one – for the best “religious initiation”. This anthropological initiation or opening to transcendent values appears to be needed and urgent today, in a climate of widespread secularization which, as we know, not only disregards and devalues religious messages in general but also weakens in most young and adult people the innate ability to “sense” the Divine and look for Him.

¹With this aim I developed some practical suggestions in a short work that is now available online: http://www.lasalliana.it/images/pdf/fp/SRI_t_1998_eter_itinerarioscuola.pdf p. 549-567 of the original text.

EXPLICIT AND/OR IMPLICIT? THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE LASALLIAN MISSION

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3.1 Introduction

Education has been one of the most important topics in the modern world and as different changes and developments in the modern society occur it does so in the area of education. Along with those changes come significant challenges that demand immediate attention. The Lasallian mission, being a mission focused on education, is naturally among those which spearhead the vast efforts to respond to the challenges of educating the present generation. Central to this mission is the mission to lead the students to “follow Christ by turning from their evil ways and living instead by the Gospel teaching” (Wright, 1996, p. 106) which necessarily brings us to the concept of religious education.

Religious education (RE) is an essential element of the mission of Lasallian schools. This is in consonance with the Catholic Church’s declaration on the mission of Catholic schools. In the document *The Catholic School (TCS)* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977), the Church teaches that Catholic schools exist primarily to be part of the “saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith” (TCS, 9). This perfectly resonates with the teaching of Saint John Baptist De La Salle that religious instruction is the Lasallian schools’ primary concern (Grieken, 1999). During the 42nd General Chapter, it was succinctly expressed that the Lasallian mission revolves around a kind of education that gives “a human and Christian education to the young, especially in schools, with the service of the poor as a priority, to evangelize and catechize, to promote peace and justice, accomplished together as a shared mission” (as cited in De La Salle University, 2012). This is not an easy task and it becomes even more difficult with the present reality of heightening globalization, secularization, pluralism, religious indifference, social media, and other issues in the socio-economic and political milieu that often prove problematic and challenging to Lasallian educational institutions. This reality is present not only in the so-called First World countries like many places in Europe but also in Third World countries such as the Philippines; and with it come new challenges that bring to the fore the need to re-think the kind of religious education curriculum presently in our educational institutions. Enormous effort and time have been spent on this re-thinking. A very good example of this effort to reflect on the new identity that Religious Education (RE) must take particularly in the European context are the works of Br. Flavio Pajer, FSC who has been studying this question of adapting the teaching of RE to the young people of Europe (Pajer, 2003).

At present, there are different notions of RE. The presence of these different nuances in the understanding of RE may lead to confusion, misunderstanding and possible obstacles in the realization of our mission. Fleming (2009) highlights the problematic situation in the understanding of this term when he stated that, “In the discourse about religious education in the Catholic Church one of the greatest difficulties has been with language and definition” (p. 607). Citing Moran (1971) he further wrote that this issue, “had reached the point where there was a crisis of religious education that emerged from the relationship between the two words religious and education” (Fleming, 2009, p. 607).

In different parts of the world, the understanding on the meaning and purpose of RE has acquired different meaning and appearances. Pajer (in Lombaerts, 2007), for instance, identified several polarizations in the understanding and teaching of RE in Europe brought about by the emphasis on religious freedom. According to him, RE in Europe has become non-confessional and is more allied with human sciences. Schreiner (2005), has a similar opinion and talks about RE in Europe as a “multi-layered” subject. He identified three types of teaching RE in Europe: education into religion, education about religion, learning from religion. In Australia, Buchanan (2012) wrote that religious education has put too much emphasis on the education dimension of RE and has downplayed its religious dimension. In the United States and in many other parts of the world, the same tension exists (Moran, 2010).

The Philippines is not exempt from this tension. God has blessed the Philippines with a social context very conducive to Catholic schools and a population that is 79.5% Catholic (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015). However, the Philippines has its own share of social problems. The Philippine local Church and the different religious congregations and educational institutions such as Lasallian institutions, have given their share, individually or in groups, to reflect on the challenges that the present context poses to the meaning and purpose of RE in schools. This becomes even more complicated at the tertiary level (colleges and universities) where students who are mostly Catholics are already young adults. Philippine Catholic higher education institutions require students to take RE classes as a matter of policy. However, there are diverse opinions on the content of the religion courses, the teaching methodology to be used or even the descriptive title for the course. Some of the titles being used, for instance, are: Religious Education, Religious Studies, Theology, Theological Studies, Christian Living, etc. There is also an on-going debate on the number of hours or units RE should be taught to students and there is a growing tendency to reduce it to the lowest possible.

Thus, the question that may be asked is “What kind of religious education curriculum should we offer to our students?” But more importantly, we should ask, “What do we mean when we say religious education?” This begs for a deeper reflection from those who are involved in this mission of education and unquestionably points to the need to clarify our concept of religious education. Such need provides the impetus for this study. Thus, my main objective is to present the nature and purpose of religious education from the point of view of the Catholic Church, Lasallian tradition, and contemporary opinions and reflect on the character and place religious education should take in the mission of Lasallian schools particularly in the Philippines. Specifically, I focused on the following objectives: a) to examine how the term religious education has been used and understood within selected literature, particularly in Catholic and Lasallian documents; b) to present a synthesis of the nature and purpose of religious education and to reflect on its role in the Lasallian mission in the Philippines.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

The underpinning framework of this study is founded on the opinion that according to the Lasallian tradition, Lasallian schools are collaborators with the Catholic Church in the latter's mission of education in the faith. Thus, education in Lasallian schools must be grounded in the teaching of the Catholic Church (TCS, 9) with consideration of and in dialogue with the existing cultural context of the place where the school is situated (TCS, 15). Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the conceptual framework (see Annex 1). The opinions/suggestions on what is RE and how should it be taught come from these factors which serve as the bases for the suggestions on how Philippine Lasallian schools, specifically the De La Salle University-Dasmarinas, should devise their RE programs.

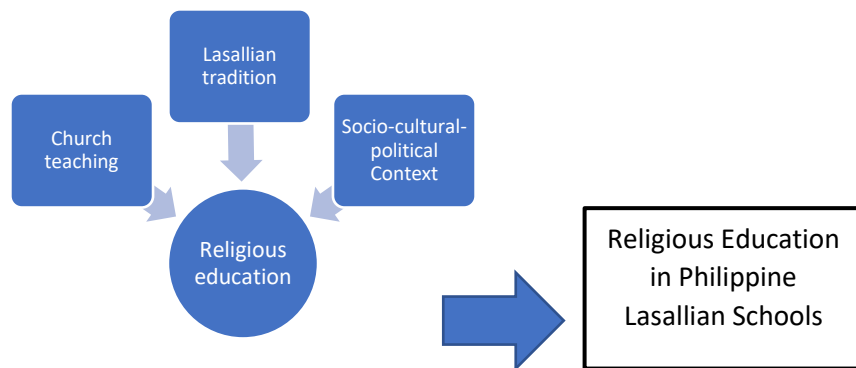


Figure1. Conceptual Framework

3.3 Methodology

This study is a qualitative study that analyzes the concept of religious education. It follows the four steps in doing a concept analysis as suggested by Näsi (1980, as cited in Nuoppen, 2010). The four steps are presented in Figure 2 (see Annex 2).

The data for this study was taken from three different groups of sources: a) Church documents, specifically *Catechesi tradendae* (CT) (John Paul II, 1979), *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School* (RDECS) (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) and the *Religious Education in Schools* (RES) (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2008). They were chosen because of their authority and special focus on the issue of education, particularly on religious education. The Philippine local church document used is the National Catechetical Directory of the Philippines; b) the Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family; c) other contemporary opinions about RE.

3.4 Results and Discussion

The coming of the Second Vatican Council brought about a kind of modern Renaissance to the Church. It was a kind of renewal that effected changes in the whole Church – a renewal which until now is still in the process of unfolding. Among the many changes that Vatican II brought about was a new way of looking at Christian education and the interest in how to make it relevant to the modern world.

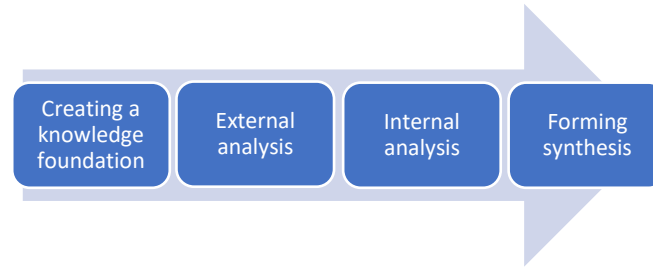


Figure 2. Methodology

The use of the term *religious education* is something new in the history of the church and it has gone through a process of semantic evolution in the last fifty years or so. It entered our church vocabulary only in the twentieth century (Moran, 1998) and started to be commonly used in the church only after the Second Vatican Council. During Vatican II and even years after that, the term that was usually being used closest to it was *catechism* or the more general term *Christian education*. Until now however, many Catholics are still confused with the differences among the terms *evangelization*, *faith formation*, *catechesis*, *religious instruction*, and *religious education*. In many Catholic Church documents, we can see many instances where these terms are used differently as well as where their meanings overlap. In the document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988) there is an attempt to distinguish catechesis from religious instruction, with religious instruction appearing to be synonymous with RE. In the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) it is highlighted that there is an absolute necessity to clarify the nature and purpose of RE and to distinguish clearly between religious instruction and catechesis (GDC, 73).

▪ Contemporary Perspectives in RE

In the present educational context, the answer to the question, “What is religious education?” is sometimes problematic due to the qualifying adjective attached to education which is “religious”. The existence of different opinions about RE basically spring from the different connotations attached to the word “religious” (or even the loss of the meaning of such word) and the difference on the emphasis given to each of the two words. Some prefer to emphasize “religious” over education while some emphasize “education” over religious. Consequently, the objective of RE has gone from an education that is focused on the element of “religiousness” in RE, that is, grounded in a particular religious confession, to an emphasis on its education aspect with the aim of forming better citizens of the world regardless of any religious affiliation or even absence of it.

Religious educators are currently unanimous (and in agreement with the Catholic Church) in their opinion that RE must be treated just like any academic discipline in the school. However, the agreement seems to end there as the differences in opinions become clear when it comes to other aspects of RE, most specially in its purpose. In general, among current writers on RE there are at least two prevailing schools of thought on the nature and purpose of RE (cf. Buchanan, 2012; Harris & Moran, 1998; Pajer, 2015; Schreiner, 2005; Moran, n.d.). The first one considers RE as a kind of education that although sensitive to the plurality of the culture and faith present in the school is still rooted in a religious tradition (Christian tradition) and gears towards a better understanding and living out of one’s religion. It holds that the dimension of faith formation must not be set aside or downplayed in any RE class especially in a Catholic school. It must be done however, in such a way

that it is respectful of the different culture, faith (or absence of it), and tradition of the students. The second one is the view of RE as an education that aims to provide knowledge about different religions. It is teaching religion as a discipline, just like any discipline in the school and usually focuses on ethics and how to live in the context of new religio-ethical pluralism. A similar idea was presented by Harris and Moran (1998) in their opinion that there are two aims of RE: (a) to teach people to practice a religious way of life, and (b) to teach people to understand religion. In the European context, Pajer (2015) identifies three paradigms: the political-agreement paradigm, the curricular-academic paradigm, and the ethical-values paradigm. Several writers/religious educators highlight the observation that in many places in the world today, emphasis is on the educational or informative dimension of RE (Buchanan, 2012, Pajer, 2015, Moran, etc.).

▪ Meaning and Purpose of RE in the Church Documents

Although *Catechesi tradendae* (CT) is focused on catechesis and the term “religious education” was not extensively discussed (the term was used four times though) there are reasons to surmise that CT’s discussion on the nature and purpose of catechesis as the whole act of education in faith (CT, 18) includes RE. For instance, it states that “The specific character of catechesis, as distinct from the initial conversion - bringing proclamation of the Gospel, has the two-fold objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ” (CT, 19). This two-fold objective resonates with what the Congregation on Catholic Education states on the aims of catechesis and RE: “catechesis aims at fostering personal adherence to Christ and the development of Christian life in its different aspects... whereas religious education in schools gives the pupils knowledge about Christianity’s identity and Christian life” (RES, 17). CT further states that teachers of catechesis devote themselves to the “religious education of many generations” (CT, 66) and calls the education of the faith within the school framework as “religious education” (CT, 69).

In CT, catechesis includes the whole act of education in the faith which essentially includes RE. The lack of clear distinctions between catechism and RE in CT may be interpreted that the nature and purpose of catechesis includes religious education. Thus, it can be said that religious education, just like catechesis, must be Christocentric; a priority in the pastoral programs in the Church; a shared responsibility among members of the Church; systematic, serious and orderly study of the message of Christ; must have integrity of content; must be ecumenical; and it provides the essential identity of a Catholic school.

RDECS presents the differences and interrelatedness of *catechesis* and *religious instruction* (RDECS, 69) but in its discussion, it presents these two under an overarching idea which is religious education (RDECS, 66). This idea is also present in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) where RE is presented as an umbrella term that includes both religious instruction and catechesis whose relationship is “one of distinction and complementarity” (GDC, 73). It presents catechesis as the process that seeks the formation of faith while religious instruction as an academic education or instruction in the faith. Following this line of thinking, it can be surmised that RE may be actualized either in the act of doing catechesis or religious instruction.

Religious instruction is described in the GDC as “within the ministry of the Word” (GDC, 73). As complementary to catechesis, “it makes present the Gospel in a personal process of cultural, systematic and critical assimilation... religious instruction in schools appear as a scholastic discipline

with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge” (GDC, 73).

However, the document *Religious Education in Schools* (RES) (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2008) added a nuance to the understanding of RE. While the document reiterates the previous descriptions of RE, it presents RE as an academic endeavor that “does not require the assent of faith but conveys knowledge on the identity of Christianity and Christian life” (RES, 18). The document further clarifies that RE “has its own specific nature vis-à-vis other school subjects” (RES, 12) and it is not simply a “presentation of the different religions in a comparative and neutral way.” The document states that a religious education presented in a “neutral way” would create confusion and generate religious relativism and indifferentism (RES, 12).

In the Philippines, the *National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines* (NCDP) (Episcopal Commission for Catechesis and Catholic Education, 2007) sees RE as not very much different from catechesis, particularly because catechesis classes are also being held in the classroom, both in private and public schools. Here, the term *religion classes* may mean both catechesis and RE. NCDP also highlights the integration of the three important dimensions in RE classes in the Philippines namely: intellectual (doctrinal), behavioral (moral), and affective (sacramental-worship) dimensions (NCDP, 460). NCDP also reiterates that these dimensions must be grounded firmly in “Scripture and Church teaching”, related to the “concrete, enculturated experience of the students”, and within the students’ “specific socio-cultural-religious context” (NCDP, 460). NCDP further suggests a progressive presentation of RE depending on the maturity level of students. This is in acknowledgement of the fact that in many private schools and in all Catholic schools, students from elementary to college/university levels take religion classes.

At this point, I would like to argue that based on Catholic and Lasallian literature, RE is first and foremost instruction in the Catholic faith. It cannot be just an education that presents information about religions. It is different yet complementary to catechesis. It is complementary to catechesis for its contents overlap with that of catechesis: it “fits in the evangelizing mission of the Church” (RES, 17) and it conveys “knowledge on the identity of Christianity and the Christian life” (RES, 18).

However, RE is at the same time different from catechesis. The difference lies, first of all, in their aims. The aim of catechesis is primarily the believer’s maturation in the faith while the aim of RE is primarily knowledge about the nature of Christian faith, Christian identity, and how Christians are trying to live their lives (RDECS, 69). In the classroom setting, the purpose of catechism is to make the students grow in their faith while religious education aims to make the students understand the tenets of the faith. The former is focused on believing while the latter is on understanding. Secondly, they have different settings. The appropriate setting of religious education is the classroom, it seeks interdisciplinary links with other course materials (RDECS, 70) and taught by paid teachers while catechesis is usually in the parish or under the program of the parish and being taught by volunteer teachers/catechists. Lastly, it is important to note that RE as an academic discipline, does not require an assent of faith while such is essential in catechesis.

▪ RE in the Philippine Lasallian Context

The concept of RE in the Philippine Lasallian schools is rooted in the Lasallian mission of Christian education which is essentially founded on the mission to proclaim the Gospel as expressed in the three values that are fundamental to Lasallian identity -spirit of faith, zeal for service, and communion and partnership with the local church (DLSU, 2012). Understandably, central to this mission of education is Christian education (Rummery, 2013). Rummery (2013) further emphasized that by Christian education, St. John Baptist De La Salle always connoted religious instruction. Thus, religious instruction is indispensable and a priority in the Lasallian schools' mission of educating the young. Citing the General Council, Br. José María Pérez Navarro, FSC, wrote that:

It would certainly be a serious mistake if the catechetical programs and activities of the school were reduced to the bare minimum because of other demands of the curriculum (Navarro, 2005).

Being collaborators of the Church in her mission of evangelization, Philippine Lasallian Schools are expected to devise RE programs consistent with the mandate of NCDP specifically, the use of Scripture and Church teachings, the incorporation of the three dimensions of intellectual (doctrinal), behavioral (moral), and affective (sacramental-worship) in RE classes and relating the lessons to the socio-cultural-religious context of the students with particular emphasis on the promotion of Gospel values particularly the preferential option towards the poor (De La Salle University, 2012).

▪ RE as both Explicit and Implicit

Founded on the Church's mandate, RE in Philippine Lasallian schools takes on both implicit and explicit character. The Document of the 43rd General Chapter (*Circular 447*) states that "The explicit proclamation of the Good News takes place during religion classes as part of the school time table and during the extra-curricular pastoral activities" (*Circular 447*, p. 29). This kind of religion classes must be done "where it is possible" (*Circular 447*, p.25) as in the case of the Philippines. Thus, Religious Education in the Philippine Lasallian context must be both explicit, i.e. teaching students about the Catholic faith during religion classes while at the same time implicit, i.e., educating students to become better persons through an implicit integration of the Christian values and/or lessons of the faith in different school programs and activities and in the witnessing of the people within the Lasallian community. *The Guiding Principles for the Philippine Lasallian Family* highlights these implicit and explicit elements by considering the Lasallian mission as "a mission and ministry at the service of God, the Church and society, and directed towards integral human and Christian development and liberation" (De La Salle University, 2012). Philippine Lasallian schools intend to make this possible by: "participating in the Church's mission and committing to ease the plight of the vulnerable and marginalized sectors of the society; assuring the integral human and Christian development of learners in all their uniqueness and diversity; by being co-responsible for creating a culture and climate conducive to genuine learning and character formation; by working in association with one another; by creating educational works of quality that will be 'signs of God's Kingdom and instruments of salvation' for the various individuals and groups who seek to realize the fullness of their dignity and humanity through education" (De La Salle University, 2012).

Philippine Lasallian documents, especially *The Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family* (De La Salle University, 2012), present three important dimensions/emphases of Philippine Lasallian education which I termed the three E's, namely, education, evangelization, and extension. As presented in Figure 3 (see Annex 3), these three essentially overlapping areas represented by three

concentric circles, characterize Lasallian education in the Philippines. In the center of all these is the Gospel which is of course central to the Lasallian mission. The education circle refers to the implementation of the schools' academic programs to provide human and Christian education for the service of the young and the society. Evangelization refers to the schools' specific activities/programs that aim to promote the Christian values and faith and form students according to the Christian/Lasallian ideals. Extension refers to the community outreach programs and services that recognize the realities of human suffering and the stewardship role that each member of the Lasallian community shares and promote the preservation of the integrity of creation and the creation of a humane and just society (De La Salle University, 2012). The triangle that covers the three circles emphasizes the integration of implicit RE in all the strata of the Lasallian education. RE as an academic program serves as the explicit education in the faith and is viewed as the merging of evangelization (faith dimension) and education (academic dimension). The figure also shows that the Lasallian mission involves the interplay among faith, culture, and life.

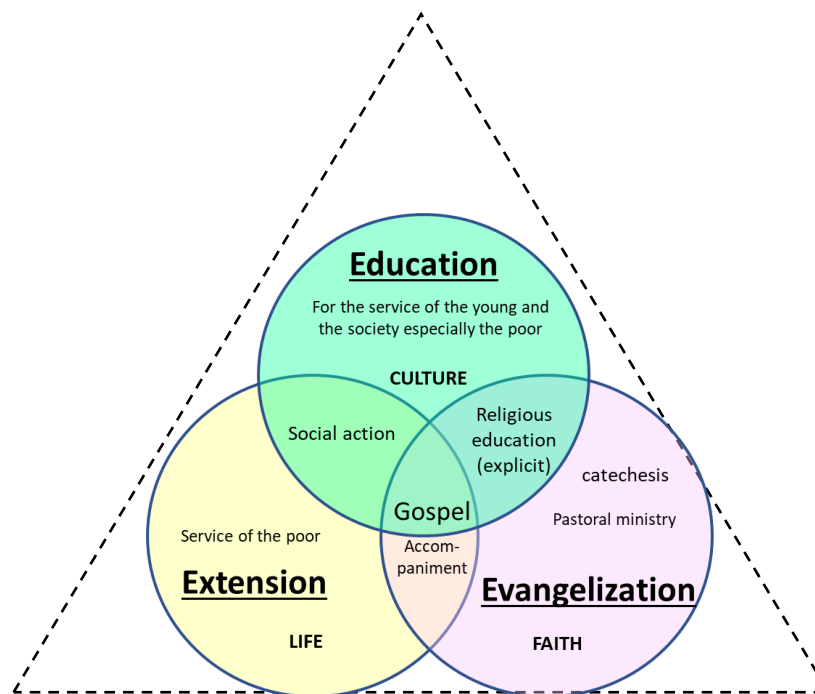


Figure 3. The Place of RE (explicit and implicit) in the Lasallian Mission of Education

It must be highlighted that RE is an indispensable element in the *raison d'être* of the Lasallian schools and while it must be true to its name education – an activity that facilitates learning and acquisition of knowledge - it must not set aside the important role of faith or catechetical dimension for it to be a truly Lasallian religious education.

I would like to argue that if Philippine Lasallian schools are to remain loyal to the Lasallian tradition, they have to present an RE program that provides balance between being an academic discipline and an education into faith. Lasallian schools (where it is possible like in the Philippines) must not only present the Christian message implicitly but also consciously and intentionally make an explicit

presentation of the Christian (Catholic) message and event in the RE classes while implicitly presenting the same in their programs and activities.

3.5 The Necessity of Explicit and Implicit RE

An ideal Catholic school curriculum offers both explicit and implicit RE. This is rooted in the Catholic schools' participation in the salvific mission of the Catholic Church as expressed in the Church document *The Catholic School* (CT). It is stated that the Catholic schools are considered as:

...privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man, since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed... The Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith... It is precisely in the Gospel of Christ, taking root in the minds and lives of the faithful, that the Catholic school finds its definition as it comes to terms with the cultural conditions of the times (CT, 8,9).

Explicit RE may not be possible in many parts of the world due to their current situations and context. The document *Gravissimum Educationis* (GE) acknowledges this when it states that although schools dependent to the Church must conform to the Church's concept of a Catholic school, there are Catholic schools that have to "take on different forms in keeping with local circumstances" (GE, 9). In such situations, Catholic schools must incorporate RE at least implicitly in the different programs/activities of the school. In the case of the Philippines, Filipinos are religious people where 79.5% of the population is Catholic (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015). This religiosity is evident in the number of people in the churches during Sundays and during different religious celebrations. In a study made by the Pew Research Center in 2015 (as cited in Bagaoisan, 2016) 87% of Filipinos consider religion very important in their lives. Another study made by the Social Weather Station reported that 85% of Filipinos consider religion important (Social Weather Station, 2017). Thus, the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) encourages all Philippine Catholic schools to offer "religious instruction as an essential element of Catholic education" (Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines, 2017). Consequently, Philippine Catholic schools require students to enroll in religious education subjects/courses that provide explicit presentations of the tenets of the Catholic faith. This makes an explicit RE in Catholic schools not only appropriate but also necessary in the realization of the Catholic schools' role in the salvific mission of the Church.

In some countries, the increasing desire to make RE on par with other subjects may have lessened the desire to make religious education classes faith-formative, thus essentially downplaying the catechetical-formative-evangelizing dimension of religion classes and giving more emphasis to informative-academic dimension (Buchanan, 2012). In the Philippines, Philippine Lasallian higher education institutions, such as the De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, in the province of Cavite some 50 Kilometers south of Manila, offer RE courses that explicitly focus on the presentation of Catholic teaching. However, it is not a distant possibility that the changes and challenges brought about by globalization, secularism, religious pluralism, and religious indifference that led to the dichotomization between academic and values formation in religious education in other parts of the world would reach the Philippines. This makes the mission for new evangelization even more urgent. New evangelization or the "re-evangelization" of those who have been evangelized is "the task facing the Church today, especially in countries with a Christian tradition" (*Instrumentum Laboris*, IL, 13). The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines responds to this task of new evangelization and to the challenge posed by *Gravissimum Educationis* to make Catholic schools aids "to the fulfillment of the mission of the People of God and to the fostering of the dialogue between the Church

and mankind” (GE, 8) by highlighting religious education as the “core of the core curriculum” (John Paul II, 1992, # 5) and by promoting a model of teaching religious education in the Philippines founded on the Catholic teachings and aims to form students in their Catholic faith.

The presence of diverse religious convictions in the campus should not lessen the effort to promote the faith and offer RE courses that explicitly present the Church teaching. However, RE teachers are enjoined to be sensitive to the presence of students belonging to different faith traditions in their classrooms. Sectarianism is another extreme that is contrary to Catholic educational philosophy. Catholic schools must be open to all, regardless of faith confession, and teachers must ensure that all students are properly accommodated and respected. Religious freedom and tolerance must be promoted and the RE teachers’ aim should not be to convert non-Catholic students to the Catholic faith but to form them into becoming better persons, present to them the rich Christian heritage and make them understand (not necessarily believe) the rituals and doctrines of the Catholic Church.

As mentioned earlier, there is also an on-going debate on the number of hours or units RE should be taught to students and there is a growing tendency to reduce the number of hours/units to the lowest possible or to merge RE with other subjects/courses such as those in the social sciences in an attempt to lessen the load of students. This is, to reiterate the words of Br. Jose Maria Perez Navarro, FSC, “a serious mistake” (Navarro, 2005). This reality highlights the need for us Lasallians to revisit the vision-mission of our institutions and the Church mandate to all Catholic schools. Lasallian schools, especially in the Philippines, must keep in mind that they exist in humble service to the evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church and therefore have to highlight the work of evangelization foremost among its intentions, if possible in all its programs, whether explicitly or implicitly, but most specially in religious education classes. The Congregation for Catholic Education emphasized this when it wrote that, “Since its educational goals are rooted in Christian principles, the school as a whole is inserted into the evangelical function of the Church” (RDECS, 69). St. John Paul II further states:

Religious education in Catholic schools refers to the integral education of the pupils, both through the religious dimension of the school as a whole and through the specific programme of religious studies which it provides. This religious education is broader than catechesis, but it must also include catechesis, since a principal goal of the Catholic school must be to hand on the faith. The Gospel is the living centre which must animate and shape all that is said and done in the school. (John Paul II, 1992, # 5).

Thus, we must reflect not only on the kind of RE we offer to our students but also on our willingness and determination to be true to our characteristic as a Catholic school. God has blessed the Philippines with a social context that is very conducive to a catechetical/evangelizing model of RE. With the worsening social problems in the Philippines, should we not make use of the opportunity available at our disposal, most specially RE, to possibly help create a better society by not just promoting the Christian values implicitly but also by promoting the faith explicitly? It is my humble opinion that to make RE responsive to the challenge of new evangelization and to be relevant in the Philippine context, RE teachers must carefully devise a balanced RE program that is on par with other disciplines, i.e., with the same seriousness and rigor as other disciplines (NCDP, 459) without downplaying the dimension of education *into* faith. This is necessary if Lasallian schools wish to remain steadfast to their God-given mandate. This is possible, as I have already argued, if RE in Lasallian schools is presented explicitly (as much as possible) and/or at least implicitly. In doing so, it will remain loyal to the identity of the Lasallian education being demanded by the Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family which states that:

As inheritors of De La Salle's legacy and collaborators in the Lasallian Mission, we are convinced that: Lasallian education is a mission and ministry at the service of God, the Church and society, and directed towards integral human and Christian development and liberation. (De La Salle University, 2012).

ORIENTATIONS TO DIRECT PASTORAL ACTIONS IN LASALLIAN WORKS A LOOK FROM RELAL

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4.1 Introduction

The work of pastoral ministry is vast and very rich because it contextualizes and translates into gestures and concrete actions the task of accompanying people in their integral growth - and integrating their being in all its dimensions – in search of transcendence. The one who understands the meaning of pastoral accompaniment of people and communities, in a comprehensive and global way, can affirm that it is not a simple task. Moreover, in the members of Lasallian communities, with or without formation, regardless of the role they play or their state of Christian life, there is a limited understanding of what the term *pastoral ministry* means.

From the experience of the authors, we note the need to deepen the understanding of the term *pastoral ministry* because it is sometimes used in an ambiguous or biased manner, generating confusion both in the agents who lead the processes and in the educational community itself. In view of this, diverse positions are adopted ranging from generalization ("everything is pastoral ministry"), to reduction ("pastoral ministry covers only some aspects of school life"), leading to a diversity of approaches (traditionalist, academic, business, recreational, etc.) that results in the separation of the educational act and evangelization¹, making an organic pastoral program difficult.

The following investigation has been motivated by the need to delve into the following question: What are the orientations that allow for the directing of and giving meaning to pastoral activity in Lasallian works based on the understanding of the term *pastoral ministry*?

4.2 Assumptions

The orientations of this work have been established from the process of understanding the term *pastoral ministry* from the perspectives of the Church and the Institute. With this, we seek to contribute to the reflection of the Evangelization, Pastoral Ministry and Catechetical Network² of the

¹ On this topic, an interesting work exists in Rodríguez Mancini (2015), *Teología de la educación para una pastoral educativa. Comprender y hacer la escuela desde Jesucristo*. Editorial Stella. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires.

² Evangelization, Pastoral and Catechetical Network is a structure of the Latin-American Region that carries out a systematic reflection on the Evangelization in general, and Catechesis and Pastoral in particular. So, the Districts of the Region share their good practices, prosper mutually, identify common challenges and generate the best answers to the

Lasallian Latin American Region (RELAL). This Network has as one of its objectives the development of a guiding document for the Districts of the Region that contains the vision that unifies and enlivens all pastoral action involved in the explicit announcement of the Gospel. At the same time, we hope that this process of reflection will serve as a reference for other Regions of the Institute with an open and communal dialogue between diverse cultures, contexts and religions.

For this research we have used the methodology of see-judge-act that, from the Lasallian perspective, we have translated it into three phases according to the spiritual itinerary of Saint John Baptist de La Salle (cf. *Lasallian Reflection* 3, 2017):

- 1) become aware of the personal and surrounding reality;
- 2) illuminate reality with the Word of God; and,
- 3) decide, assuming personal and community implications.

In the first phase we made a brief historical itinerary to understand how the term "pastoral ministry" has been used in the Church and in the Institute. In the second phase, through a hermeneutical exercise, we take the meaning of the term "pastoral ministry" in relation to some icons of the Gospel. In the third phase, we offer some guidelines for directing and giving meaning to pastoral actions in Lasallian works.

It is the wish of the authors not to give definitive answers but to offer some bibliographical bases and clues to keep the dialogue open and to be able to continue reflecting on the subject, helping to recover and resignify concepts that had already been used in the Region and that are still current, as in the case of "Escuela en Pastoral" (School as Pastoral Ministry).

The research is contextualized in a predominantly Christian continent. From this reality, we try to reflect with a vision towards other regions where religious diversity is greater.

4.3 First phase: See. Become Aware of the Personal and Surrounding Reality

Brief approach to the term pastoral ministry from the ecclesial and Institute points of view

4.3.1 Approach to the term "pastoral ministry" from the ecclesial perspective

For this section we have made a brief historical journey through the official teaching of the Church, the Scriptures and theological reflections to approach the understanding of the term "pastoral ministry". When you want to explain a term, it is necessary to find the clearest way to make it understandable "because when we speak of evangelizing, of mission, of the Good News, we do not all understand the same thing" (*Cuadernos MEL* 40). From our reflection on the understanding of the term "pastoral ministry" we have noted the various forms of how this term has been used to accompany and / or imply ecclesiastical practices and pastoral activities carried out in the function of evangelization.

Without using the word "pastoral ministry" in an explicit way, the Church created structures committed to accompanying the believing community, the parish community and the different existing teams for the animation of evangelization (*Pastoral Vocational Dictionary*, 2005, p. 843).

An initial understanding of this term was provided by the *Dictionary of Catechesis and Religious Pedagogy* (2006, page 1313), where it stated that pastoral ministry is: "a branch of Catholic theology

same ones. It is a regional response to the Proposal 15 of the General Chapter that proposes to realize a study of the activity of the pastoral department in the network of La Salle Educational centers (45th General Chapter).

that studies the apostolic activity and the moral and spiritual actions of believers that are done for religious reasons. It is a theoretical and practical study of what has to be taken into account in the activity of spiritual animation." Our intention is not to define the term as such nor to take on an existing definition; but rather we want to delve into the way it has been used and understood, proposing essential elements of the term so that whoever uses this reflection can continue to develop an understanding of the term based on their own experience and context as an evangelist.

We can find many activities that support the announcement of the Gospel and clarify their meaning; but, within the limits of this reflection, we refer only to those in common with the various subjects / agents that animate and are responsible for pastoral teams, parish communities and ministerial experiences.

From the Scriptures, in particular from the New Testament, for example, there are a number of passages that demonstrate the term pastoral ministry (cf., for example, Mt 10, 6 and ss; Mc 6,8 and ss; Lc 9,3 and ss; Lc 22.35) as well as in the letters of Saint Paul, the Patristic Writings, the books of Saint Isidore of Seville, of Saint Bernard, among others (*Dictionary of Catechesis and Religious Pedagogy*, 2006, page 1313). If we seek to understand the term from the inspiration of biblical texts, we would also find that the task of every baptized person should be a function of what the Good Shepherd does, who cares for and protects his sheep; he knows them and calls each one by name (Jn 10, 1-18).

In interpreting these considerations, one can see how pastoral activity is oriented in terms of making the proclamation of the Gospel real, but not only as an announcement from functional and organizational reasons of what is done, but from what motivates a life experience. It is also important to note the resonance that *Lumen Gentium*, in Chapter III, gives to the work of the pastor, where it states: "...Jesus Christ, eternal Shepherd, established His Holy Church and sent his disciples to be shepherds, until the end of the world.". Throughout history, the Church has embodied as a mission the explicit proclamation of the Gospel and has exercised this proclamation through different methodologies, perhaps not always the best ones, but ones that give life to what Jesus left us as a legacy: go and proclaim the good news (Mt 28, 19-20).

For a better illustration of what is expressed here, we can approach what the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) points out in the section entitled, "The transmission of Revelation, through the mediation of the Church, is the work of the Holy Spirit", in the first chapter, and from number 42 onward that specifically emphasizes, "...and, sending them from the Holy Spirit, he commanded them to preach the Gospel throughout the world."

Between the 1930's and 1940's, the Church, influenced by French thought, was developing an understanding of pastoral practice which, at the time, was considered to be poorly focused and lacking influence. This reflection, centered on pastoral action, elaborated a theological, theoretical and practical project that wanted to become a reference point. Within this study, a broad and comprehensive understanding of pastoral ministry in the overall plans of the local church emerges, evoking the development of a coordinated pastoral ministry both in its planning and in its implementation (Chico, 2006).

In this movement of reflection, the expression "organic pastoral ministry" also appears, above all to emphasize the nature of the Church as an organic body, as a living and harmonious organism from which an action that can only be organic, solid in its organization and, even more, well rooted in its original inspiration, understanding that the pastoral commitment of the Church must be placed at the service of humanity.

In this quest to better understand and enliven the experience of evangelization at the hand of true pastoral action - in which it is no longer only the "ordained minister" who fulfills it or who has been entrusted with it - new forms of Christian life emerge that nourish themselves in the different charisms and specific vocations in the Church. Therefore, today it is understood that pastoral action is less and less the work of a few and more the responsibility of all, depending on the charisms, ministries and services from which it is proposed to evangelically soak up the different environments. For this reason, it is said that:

Pastoral action has an indissoluble link with evangelization and is the extension through action and a specific modality. Evangelization takes on, above all, its missionary character and frees pastoral activity from a reductive conception and practice ("reified"), as if it only consisted of initiatives and programs (Borile, 2015).

From the Latin American perspective, the Episcopal Conferences of Medellin, Puebla, Santo Domingo and Aparecida highlighted the need to accompany the different groups of people that make up the region (indigenous, African-American, peasants, migrants, students, workers, among others), taking into account the cultural wealth present in the continent as well as in the different stages of people's lives (childhood, youth, adulthood, old age) with the clear emphasis on the commitment to help them eliminate the multiple situations that threaten their dignity.

The accompaniment of people in the process of the growth and maturation of their faith should not be separated from their cultural, political, economic, educational and social realities, but must take these into account in order to propose the message of Jesus in a relevant way in a context that fights for dignity, justice, peace and development opportunities (Aparecida, 2007, 100 d.).

Another feature that we highlight in this Latin American context regarding the process of accompaniment and structuring of pastoral ministry is the importance of the sense of community, that is, the basic Christian communities³. These communities of missionary disciples listen to the Word of God and critically read reality within it and seek ways to transform society from the Christian perspective.

To understand what is expressed here, pastoral ministry would be considered the concrete action carried out by ecclesial communities, respecting the vocational characteristics of individuals and groups, to experience communion and to set in motion an action, which at the same time is unified and differentiated in its project as in its implementation, capable of announcing the Gospel in diverse contexts and situations where the sharing of life in community brings us closer to dialogue and to others so that together we can live a diverse experience of love and devotion to the most needy, building the kingdom of God here and now.

4.3.2 Approach to the Term "Pastoral Ministry" from the Institute

Starting with the *Meditations* of the Founder, John Baptist de La Salle, in the seventh *Meditation for the Time of Retreat*, illustrates in a precise way how the ministry of the Christian educator is in continuity with the ministry of pastors, of fathers and mothers, of those who initially take care of the

³ The "base community" is a local or environmental community, which corresponds to the reality of a homogeneous group, and that has such a dimension that allows for the personal fraternal treatment between its members. Consequently, the pastoral effort of the Church must be orientated to the transformation of these communities in " God's family ", beginning with becoming present in them as yeast by means of a core, though it is small, that constitutes a community of faith, of hope and of charity [LG 8]. The base Christian community is like that first and fundamental ecclesial core, that has to, in its own level, take responsibility for the richness and expansion of the faith, including worship that is its expression. It is, therefore, an initial cell of ecclesial structure, and area of the evangelization, nowadays a basic factor of human development.

instruction of the children and who, afterwards, are entrusted to the teachers through educational ministry. A pastoral task, without being the exact word as the same meditation, says that St. Paul fulfilled at the beginning of the Church, the role of an emissary of the Word and from whom, moreover, we must take for our example as educators.

In addition to the seventh *Meditation for the Time of Retreat*, there are writings of the Founder that mention and specify from the perspective of the ministry of the Christian educator the importance of bringing and living the Gospel to the field of education through pastoral activity. This theme has been better developed and updated for our time by the Brothers who have contributed to the experience and who join the reflection of understanding and perceiving the importance of such valuable work⁴.

Making specific reference to the MEL notebook 40 of 2008, we find a very interesting approach to the definition of the term pastoral ministry as such. It develops an understanding that allows us to understand in a specific way the proper use and characterization of the explicit announcement of the Gospel, having as its primary base the individual person.

In the writings of the Founder, there is a similarity between the pastoral ministry of the priests - and especially of the bishop - and that of the Brothers, in terms of receiving the commission from the Church to announce the Word, promote catechesis and accompany the Christian community in its liturgical and sacramental life.

Today as yesterday, we continue to write about the Brothers' educational ministry as pastoral action itself. Through these reflections, we are offered an approach, including on the theme of Educational Pastoral Ministry in texts such as MEL Notebook 28 (2015) and the document *On Educational Pastoral Ministry: God is the Life of the School*, written by the Brother Santiago Rodríguez Mancini.

We see then that in the Lasallian world pastoral activity must also lead to a closer relationship between people and God and also promote community life. De La Salle invites us to experience a Church, where we are all brothers and sisters, in order to lead the schools together. This experience will allow us to understand our pastoral action from the perspective of an organized, harmonized and comprehensive pastoral plan, where Evangelization is the center and catechesis is one of the means used, without ignoring the importance of the reality of a multi-religious and pluri-cultural Institute which relies on the school's openness to dialogue and meeting with others who think, believe and feel differently.

Today, some of the Lasallian institutions of our Districts pursue a variety of models of quality education, whether based on business or other models, that seek to give order and structure to the academic, administrative and even pastoral processes that are followed in each one of them. While it is an opportunity to evaluate ourselves, to observe what we do and, among other things, systematize our actions, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of not losing the pastoral horizon to which we must respond from our essence as Christians and as Lasallians: the proclamation of the Gospel, which covers our mission in the world with the most needy, thus demanding a clear explanation of the relationship between the pastoral, administrative, and pedagogical plans, which could be the features of institutional structures, even when they do so in different spheres.

Pastoral ministry as a sphere and dimension of evangelization must direct all actions within the school, whatever they are called and keeping their interdependence, in order to make the educational mission of human and Christian formation a reality.

⁴ cf. Hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas (1998). Temas Lasalianos N°3. Numeral 86. Ministerios, ministro. Roma; y Hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas (2008) Cuaderno MEL N.º 40: Experiencias Pastorales en el mundo Lasaliano. Roma.

The Lasallian school today, from its pastoral action, must lead us to a dialogue between faith and culture that allows us to read reality in a critical and transformative way that is open to all.

In conclusion, as the previous observations indicate, pastoral ministry refers to organized action that, based on the explicit proclamation of the Gospel; it energizes the educational mission of Lasallian institutions from a community experience, and, like Jesus, closely and fraternally accompanies people in their entirety regardless of their culture, race, thought, beliefs and religious manifestations.

4.4 *Second Phase. Judge: Illuminate Reality with the Word of God*

Icons of the Gospel regarding the term "pastoral"

The Sacred Scripture is full of images of shepherding or accompanying the people that God desires to save. Regarding the term "pastoral ministry", the Old Testament had already referred to God as a shepherd who guided and protected the people (Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34: 12, Isaiah 40: 11). In addition to this metaphor that explicitly refers to pastoral imagery, we can cite other efforts embodied in beautiful literary resources that are used by sacred writers to represent the presence and care of God with respect to his people at different levels of need (physiological, security, of affiliation, recognition and self-transcendence)⁵. This reveals God's desire to take care of the totality of the human person. In the New Testament, Jesus recovers this image and proposes other icons full of depth.

This Lasallian reflection is inspired by a view from the experience of the faith of the authors from the work of pastoral accompaniment that they carry out, as a way to integrate theory, life and the prayerful reading of the Word of God.

We have chosen from the Gospel only three icons that we consider significant in order to extract from them the meaning of the term "pastoral ministry": The Good Shepherd (Luke 15: 3-7), The Good Samaritan (Luke 10, 25-37) and the story of the Way to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35). In these three icons we want to describe the same intentionality of God the Father as lived in the person of Jesus who accompanies humanity.

4.4.1 The Good Shepherd

This icon is a profound and enriching way to interpret the meaning of the term "pastoral ministry" from a double perspective: from the attitude of those who lead the people and from Jesus in front of his people.

From the first perspective, Jesus tells the parable known as "The Good Shepherd" before the Pharisees and scribes who criticized his attitude of welcome toward sinners (Luke 15: 3-7). Instead of interpreting the parable as a defense of Jesus before those who criticize him, we wish to orient it in the pedagogy of Jesus from the perspective of his role as a formator who trusts that the seed will grow at the right time. In this way, we will consider this story as a "class on leadership" for those who listened to it.

The parable precedes the other two parables "of the lost and the found": "The Lost Coin" (Luke 15: 8-9) and "The Prodigal Son" (Luke 11:32). The three parables are part of the same pericope and, therefore, we must consider them together to understand the depth of the message.

⁵ We invite the reader to realize a reading of the Bible from the hierarchical organization of the human needs proposed by Maslow to discover the way in which God answers to these needs.

In the first story, the shepherd loses a sheep from his flock of one hundred. Faced with this situation, he leaves the ninety-nine in the desert and goes searching restlessly for the lost sheep until he finds it. When he returns with the sheep on his shoulders, he communicates his joy to the others.

The parable is controversial for two reasons. First, the central character of the story is a shepherd whose work was little valued and had a poor reputation. The shepherds were labeled as thieves, profiteers and sinners. They did not have privileges in society and their word was questioned, so they were not allowed to testify in trials. Furthermore, it is controversial because Jesus invites his listeners to compare themselves with an impure shepherd, a role that they were not used to considering. It is a call to exercise a type of leadership that values people by their essence and not by their condition, leadership motivated by goodness without prejudice.

When the shepherd finds the sheep, he rejoices and celebrates, first with himself and then with the community, that he has found the lost sheep safe and sound. Both in the parable in question and in that of the lost coin, the celebratory dimension does not receive the strength in comparison with that of the Prodigal Son, where the magnitude of the celebration is detailed and enhanced. It is important to note, however, that in the Greek text the expression that is used often refers to an invitation to a banquet. Considering this, the idea of joy is present as a central element.

The second element of controversy comes by making a connection to another text of the Gospel (John 10: 11-16), where Jesus calls himself "The Good Shepherd." With this image, we can say nothing more (and nothing less) about the way Jesus acts, as it is described in the New Testament, that better clarifies for us where and how to act in the exercise of pastoral accompaniment. Looking at this way of being and acting allows us to discover how for Jesus the most important thing is people, especially the excluded ones.

4.4.2 The Good Samaritan

Recently, pastoral accompaniment has been placed in relation to the Samaritan dimension of the faith, and with this the classic term "care" is recovered, which was traditionally applied to the one who exercised the ministry of the "care of the soul" (*Dictionary of Vocational Pastoral*, 2005, page 843). Today it is understood in a more global way, encompassing the whole person.

The story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37) is contextualized in a dialogue between Jesus and a teacher of the Law who wanted to put Jesus to the test (Luke 10: 25-28). By means of questions and answers the central issue is gradually revealed: Who is my neighbour? To guide the process to where he wants to lead the teacher of the Law, Jesus tells the parable that we will try to interpret.

We will approach this pericope from two perspectives. In the first place, regarding the interlocutor of Jesus, a teacher of the Law. Second, from the anonymous characters of the parable. We will use the technique of not placing ourselves as spectators before each of them, but we will see them as our contemporaries, aware that their history, their attitudes and reactions may be ours.

- From the Perspective of the Teacher of the Law

The teacher of the law positions himself before Jesus as someone expert in the theological and leadership issues facing the people. He tries to test Jesus, a humble Galilean. Behind his question: What should I do to achieve eternal life, a reality is discovered: the teacher of the Law does not know how to access eternal life. It is the feeling that something is missing. It is precisely this precariousness and the search for meaning that will make him participate in some way in the situation of the wounded

man in the story. Jesus does not engage in doctrinal discussions and complex arguments. He guides this person to conclude for himself what he is looking for.

The story told by Jesus poses an unknown wisdom to the teacher of the Law. It leads him to new ground where he finds his own ignorance: Who is my neighbour? It is a new kind of argument in which prefabricated answers are not offered, but in which the person reaches for himself the answers thanks to the mediation of the teacher: the Samaritan is the model of mercy and of neighbor. Jesus does not judge him, he simply dialogues with a language addressed not to reason but toward the spaces that need to be filled: to the heart.

The only invitation that Jesus makes to the teacher of the Law consists in imitating the merciful attitude of the Good Samaritan.

- From the Anonymous Characters in the Parable

Four characters appear in the parable: the man who fell into the hands of the assailants, a priest, a Levite and a Samaritan. The first character is not described very much, but it is enough to know that he was Jewish. Both the priest and the Levite were people linked to worship and understood what referred to God. The Samaritan, on the other hand, was a declared enemy of the Jews, a reactionary of the centralism of Jerusalem, ignorant of the prophets, a heretic and, therefore, excluded from the plan of salvation.

The central character of the parable is not the man assaulted and badly wounded. We interpret this character as the different realities of humanity that need to be treated. The other characters represent the attitudes regarding these situations. From our interpretation, the central character is the Samaritan, "ignorant and a sinner" who is able to stop to take care of the misfortune of his enemy. The reason: because he performs a series of eloquent concrete actions to attend to the unfortunate (he saw it, he felt compassion, he approached, bandaged his wounds, threw in oil and wine, mounted him on his own horse, took him to an inn, took care of him, paid for his care). He puts the value of a life first, no matter who the other is (even if he is impure) regarding his time and interests.

In the figure of the Good Samaritan, Jesus describes himself. He is passionate for humanity, decentralized and inclined toward his brothers and sisters. He himself stops before the diverse realities and conditions of suffering humanity. He proposes a relationship with the Father full of compassion for the brother or sister, he becomes a neighbour, a companion.

The icon of the Good Samaritan is an image of the passion for mission, understood in the double aspect: passion for Christ and passion for humanity

4.4.3 Jesus and the Disciples of Emmaus

In the Gospel of Saint Luke (24:13-36) a brilliant model of accompaniment is presented. In the first place, we find the attitude of Jesus who goes and meets two people who followed him and who walk back to the place that represents their previous lives in order to know him. Jesus "takes the initiative" (EG 24) and goes out to meet the realities of life, to heal the person, as a prelude to a revelation.

Secondly, he asks them about their anguish and they share that they talked about what "they hoped for but did not happen", about their broken hopes and their frustrated expectations. He, in a forceful and passionate way, helps them to understand the necessary process so that they discover the meaning of these events. In reality, he helps them to interpret the realities of the present time from a more transcendent perspective that implies hope and joy. He does it with such clarity that their hearts

burned with emotion and the feeling was already there that the one who was speaking was already known to them.

In the third place, it is only at the table of the community, of the word, of the bread, that Jesus reveals himself as the Risen One, provoking in them the true paschal encounter, up to now known by hearsay, mediated by third persons. This event, the encounter with the risen Jesus, sets the disciples on their way to the community to witness to what they have experienced. When they reach the community, they find a tremendous fact: Jesus arrived first. Their role will be to witness what others already felt so that faith grows in the community.

4.5 Third Phase. Act: Decide, Assuming Personal and Community implications

Orientations to direct pastoral actions in Lasallian works

As a starting point, we invite the Lasallian community (pastoral teams, Planning Councils, District Councils and Educational Mission Councils, formation commissions, networks, foundations, associations of parents, committees, intentional groups, etc.) to generate participatory spaces of critical dialogue to review their work embodied in institutional educational projects and district policies. This first necessary step is to become aware of the meaning of what we do, of what we are doing to accompany the Lasallian community. The "how" will be subsequent to this search for meaning. If we do not intentionally revise our walk, we run the risk of resembling the attitude of the Pharisees, priests and Levites of our icons: clinging to a ritualism devoid of compassion and emptiness, more concerned about the form than in the deep sense of the things. For this kind of attitude, it would be advisable to remember the woes of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke (6: 24-26).

Based on our reflection and considering the previous sections, we offer some guidelines to direct and give meaning to the pastoral actions that are carried out in the Lasallian works. We will understand the term "orientation" as the action of directing someone or something towards a certain end.

In this opportunity we invite you to consider the following aspects:

The pastoral action must:

- Respond to the needs of the person considering them in their multi-dimensionality and as an active subject of their own educational and evangelizing process.
- Raise the sensitivity of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, for those who lead, as well as for particular agents and teams. To do this, define ongoing formation and accompaniment itineraries⁶ that help integrate people (to be) and qualify them to accompany others from the Lasallian charism and spirituality (to know and know-how).
- To allocate time, economic resources and human talent to professionally organize pastoral actions in itinerary projects.
- Articulate the different programs, projects, itineraries and / or plans of the different components that make up the educational community from the creation of spaces for dialogue, participation and community discernment from a Gospel perspective.

⁶ An itinerary is a way, a tour of intentional search, personal and groups, proposes by the Lasallian community. A formative itinerary is not reduced to a summary of courses and activities; it is opposed to homogenization and the incorporation of the closed and pre-conceived processes; it is not only an intellectual or affective process. A formative itinerary will have to bear conditions, premeditations in mind, addresses, stages, processes, methodologies and contents (cf. *Itinerarios formativos y de Acompañamiento*, RELAL).

- Foster and care for interpersonal relationships among the members of the community as the first Gospel witness where everyone can grow and contribute regardless of their conditions, beliefs and religions.
- To create spaces for celebration where the life and faith of the community are united so that "the joys and hopes, sadness and anguish" (GS 1) are the raw material that nourishes prayer and action.
- Mobilize the community to leave itself and go to take care of those wounded by life, to evangelize the human structures (family, society, Church) and announce the joy of the Good News.

Table 1. Comparative chart of the Gospel icons

	<i>The Good Shepherd</i>	<i>The Good Samaritan</i>	<i>Jesus and the disciples of Emmaus</i>
Recipients	Pharisees and scribes	Master of the Law	Disciples
Questions	Why do you accept the sinners?	What should I do to obtain eternal life?	Why all this happened?
Precariousness	Misunderstanding, lack of empathy	Desire to justify	They lost hope, they do not recognize it
Prejudices	Sinners – shepherds	Samaritans	Women
Antagonisms	Pure vs sinners	Wise vs simple To know vs to do	Disciples vs. Witnesses

Scheme 1. Articulation of icons with orientations

<i>Icon</i>		<i>Attitudes</i>	<i>Dimension</i>
Good Shepherd	Responsible Agents Equipes	Centrality in the person Sensibility Mercy	TO BE
Good Samaritan	Programmes Projects Plans Itineraries	Discernment Participacion Dialogue Criticity	TO DO
Road to Emmaus	Encounter with the Lasallian Community	Inclusion Availability for the Mission Opening	TO KNOW
	Horizon EVANGELISM		

THE CHALLENGE OF FORMING LASALLIAN RELIGION TEACHERS IN EXISTENTIAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN BELIEFS AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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5.1 Introduction

Catechesis is in our Lasallian roots, not only as an inspiring source, but as a mission and reason for being. We believe in education, we believe that through education the world can take a direction in its evolution. Our roots are not pieces in a museum, they are inspirational and a reference for continuous review of our practices, including one of the most precious ones, catechesis.

In this study, some elements are presented as assessment of religious education. In reviewing the official teachings of the Church as well as the documents related to the Lasallian educational mission, some lines of thought are proposed that can improve the ongoing development of religious education. A distinction is made between the objectives of the teaching of the basic (primary and secondary) and higher (university) levels, since they present different needs and challenges; nevertheless, they are united by the continuity of the students' formation, and by their belonging to the same evangelizing mission from the Lasallian inspiration. Even when religious education starts and ends in a particular context, its global vision allows one to participate in the reflection of the Institute on religious instruction, especially in the contexts of a Christian majority.

In Mexico, the line that separates religious education from catechesis is so thin that it is only distinguished by the former taking place in the school context. Frequently, religious education is understood as the same as catechesis. However, this is unique only to basic and secondary education in denominational schools. The education provided by the State (public school) is totally secular and politically it would be unthinkable that there could exist a subject on religion. As a result, the Catholic school is allowed to impart religious education without restrictions, strictly speaking, in a country with a Catholic majority. However, this alone has not guaranteed the most appropriate religious teaching is given.

In higher education institutions, the picture is different. The students themselves expect a more secular formation, less proselytizing of the faith, more open. However, from the students, the challenge goes further: preparing professionals to respond to the challenges of a society often divided by religious ideologies could be completed in order to allow every man/woman to grow in fullness.

A common line in religious formation at any school level is: faith needs reason to be strengthened and academic knowledge enlightened by faith favours the fullness of the person.

In many contexts where the Lasallian educational mission is developed there is a very clear separation between religious teaching and catechesis. But there are still educational centers in the Institute where direct catechesis can be developed in the school. This reflection seeks to collect valuable elements of this type of religious teaching and propose a way to strengthen a religious formation in Christian environments. It "navigates" between the terms "evangelization", "pastoral ministry", "catechesis"

and "religious education". The terms are explained, not with the desire of an exhaustive definition, but only as practical clarification:

- Evangelization seeks to extend the Kingdom of God, the witness being the first way to evangelize. Non-Christian environments are also subjects of evangelization even when their adhesion to the Christian faith is not intended.
- Pastoral Ministry is the organization and action that takes place in educational institutions, in this case, to evangelize.
- The purpose of catechesis is to systematically and gradually evangelize according to the local culture and the human person, who lives in a particular context according to their age and time within an even more nuclear culture.
- Religious education is the academic subject that is taught in a formal educational institution with religious content, which does not directly seek to promote the faith.

5.2 Catechesis in the Lasallian Educational Mission: Mind, Heart and Will

"The purpose of this Institute is to provide a human and Christian education to young people, particularly the poor, according to the ministry entrusted to them by the Church" (R. 3). The need for quality human and Christian education, embodied in its context and individual needs, faithful to the teachings of the Church, with ardent zeal and community spirit are still present and are the inspiration of every Lasallian. The tradition of our Institute, the call of the Church along with our own conviction, maintains that catechesis is "our main function, as the Founder points out" (R. 17).

Through catechesis, the person evangelizes his heart, his mind and his will. In other words, catechesis seeks: a) to increase and strengthen faith, in a Trinitarian God who is the origin of and the goal in life; b) to know and to understand Christian doctrine, that revelation by which God makes His will known to each person and which demands a human understanding that respects and contemplates the mystery that is beyond any person's reach, and that one takes on as their own a revealed knowledge that motivates and defines them as a member of the Church of Christ; c) to live according to the principles of Christian morality, where faith and knowledge would have no meaning if the evangelical attitudes that lead to concrete actions were not assumed as integral to a true Christian.

The evangelizing dynamic, which includes catechesis, takes different pastoral routes according to the context in which it is carried out. In countries with a Christian majority, and especially in Latin America, a warm and expressive culture where symbols and affection play a predominant role in the religious experience, it could be more natural or simple to work the "heart". This deep-rooted and positively felt faith can be strengthened through meaningful experiences, reflections and outward expressions that in turn generate actions of service, solidarity, forgiveness, and overcoming difficulties. Sharing the faith through the apostolate, missions and gatherings helps to forge the "will". This attracts young people and excites teachers with the response of their students. Less attractive is to work the "mind" and if, moreover, one recalls the doctrinal catechesis in the form of questions and answers, the emphasis on the formative approach would be more attractive. This style of teaching is not typical of catechesis alone. Current educational models have left behind important content and information in order to develop skills and competencies.

In Mexico, high school graduates from Lasallian schools tend to be young Christians with well-established values and principles, who share in common values such as solidarity with the most vulnerable, commitment, a sense of universal brotherhood and sisterhood, service, belonging to the Church, respect for human rights and justice, young people with a more or less solid spiritual sensitivity, who are open to the transcendence of God in their lives. But also, these same young people usually have great gaps in the knowledge of the doctrine of the Church. Many of them are not only

unable to express it clearly, but also do not distinguish the teachings from other currents of thought: they are confronted in universities with confusion regarding their own faith, which is very much felt and believed, but less defined. Again, it must be considered that the non-assimilation at the end of a stage of studies of large blocks of content of any subject, is more a problem of the teaching-learning process in general and not only of catechesis. However, there is a more obvious difference that puts the teaching of religion at a disadvantage with the other academic disciplines: the formation of the teacher. For a teacher to take care of a subject in secondary education, he must have studied a specific career as a teacher in that area and have the official documentation for that purpose. However, to be a professor of religion, the endorsement of the academic coordinator of the institution is sufficient.

5.3 Basic Catechesis: Stir up Faith, Educate the Reason

Faith is a gift from God; however, for its seed to germinate and deepen its roots, it requires accompaniment. It is the first years of life in childhood and even in adolescence when it is easier to cultivate faith, naturally within the family, but supported by the school where a child spends most of the day, where they reflect and come into contact with the world that surrounds them. All school pastoral activity takes this into account and it is religious teaching, especially when it is linked to catechesis, which allows educating reason in the light of faith, as expressed in Circular 371, *The Mission of the Brother of the Christian Schools as a Catechist*:

If the catechesis is not based on the Bible and the Liturgy, it would not really be an educator of the faith. We do not promote a faith without knowledge. But not only an acceptable knowledge, but a structured and progressive knowledge so that the religious truths are not the poor relatives beside other knowledge. It should not be outside other historical, scientific or philosophical truths, because it must be really integrated into the life of intelligence, even as truth that illuminates and unifies all truths (*Circular 371, p.77*).

Sometime later, the *General Directory for Catechesis* made a similar emphasis, referring to religious teaching:

It is necessary, therefore, that religious instruction in schools appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge. (*General Directory of Catechesis, No. 73*)

Years ago, Pius XII insisted in the same tone on the importance of a religious formation based on solid knowledge:

You must have a reasoned knowledge of your faith. In this way unstable young people will not be seen as those who, after having lived piously their teenage years, soon begin to weaken, because their poor background in religious matters has vague, incomplete, imprecise notions that fade with age like snow under the sun (*Circular 371, p.77*).

Faith must reign in the intellect as it does in the heart and the will. In its turn, faith needs better knowledge of its beliefs in order to mature. This is the origin of theology: *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding (*Circular 371, No. 78*).

The ideal is that after the first years of religious education, students should be able to clearly express historical, ecclesial, biblical, liturgical, and doctrinal content that allows them to structure their faith and make them mature as Christians and grow as persons, with a clear Catholic identity.

5.4 *The Importance of Teaching Religious Culture. The European Example*

Europe, a deeply secularized society, has turned its attention to religious education, recognizing the importance that religion plays in shaping a society and integrating the person. The European Union urges the governments of the member States to ensure that they teach religious studies at the primary and secondary levels of State education. At present in 16 countries, religion classes are compulsory and taught in official schools as one more subject of the curriculum, while in 11 other countries this class is taught, but as an option. Only in two countries is the class an extracurricular activity. In 16 countries the subject is Catholic content (for Catholics), in seven it is Christian and only in five the content is about religions in general. In all states, the teacher must have university studies (theology or religious sciences), in eight countries the minimum requirement is a diploma and in 19 they must have a bachelor's or master's degree. Moreover, in many nations, the Catholic Church certifies the suitability of the teachers who teach the Catholic religion class in State schools (cf. Pajer, 2015).

Religious education in the public school is mandatory because religion is a historical root and an ethical component of the national culture. Its cultural potential is recognized as bearer of possible meaning for personal and social life. It has a cognitive and critical function. Freedom of religion and conscience is a personal right and a guarantee of coexistence (cf. Pajer, 2015).

It is not intended to promote faith, but the value of the doctrinal content is an example for countries where religious education is accepted and even expected by the families. The same reasons why the Catholic religion is taught as a subject in Europe are perfectly valid in other regions, especially when the school is confessional and most of the students are Catholic. The Mexican political context makes something similar in the public schools impossible, but the solid teaching of the doctrinal, liturgical and biblical principles in the Christian school must be clear.

5.5 *The Importance in Higher Education of Forming for Dialogue in the Midst of Different Beliefs*

The current educational challenges go beyond a solid religious academic formation. In the first years of school it is important to consolidate a base, possibly more doctrinal and emotional of the faith that are manifested in behaviors according to religious belief; but, as the adolescent develops, a special emphasis will have to be placed on developing the skills of dialogue between different beliefs.

5.5.1 *A Society Easily Polarized by the Difference of Ideologies.*

Among conservative and sometimes closed religious ideologies there is social activism that builds associations and undertakes social service and welfare actions. On the other hand, there are strong liberal currents that penetrate politics and have achieved social or legal changes. In addition, they, too, are often very closed to other opinions. In this panorama, before some issues, agilely spread by the new media, society easily becomes polarized taking sides that are attacked, negatively impacting social cohesion. Issues such as family, marriage equality, abortion, education, the use of public spaces, the legalization of drugs, the pronouncement of the clergy on social justice, and many other issues tend to generate disqualifications and exacerbate mutual aggressive expressions. Also, the conflicts that confront the believers of different religions produce even more serious consequences in many parts of the world: displaced people, attacks, wars and discrimination.

Generating the capacity for dialogue, capable of reconciling common concerns, is a task that can and should work in the school in a privileged way; the university, especially, is the natural space to do it, precisely because it receives a wider diversity of opinions and because it is the areopagus of the confrontation of different thinking in order to build knowledge.

Faced in a world of contrasts, where violence and peace between people and nations coexist; where the promotion of human rights and attention to migrants coexist with ideologies that create barriers; where individual freedom tears the dignity of the other; where education and technological advancement serve at the same time to increase the social gap between groups and nations: this Institute is of great necessity. We remain convinced that education is the instrument of human growth and cohesion among the people; a space even to strengthen the family; the place where individuals develop as people to be better Christians; in short, a place of salvation.

5.6 *The Christian Message in Interreligious Dialogue*

The Magisterium of the Church urges us after the Second Vatican Council to review the methods and to seek by all means to bring to modern society the Christian message (EN 3). When evangelization ceases to be based on the person in their context, what they express as the "rupture between the Gospel and culture, the drama of our time" (EN 20) is produced. In the current age, the diversity of religious thought is a characteristic of our culture, so we should not speak of exclusive schools for certain social groups such as Catholics. The school or university of Christian inspiration is not because it is intended for the members of a particular church, but because of the spirituality that inspires them, a proposal open to all.

Why engage in a dialogue between different beliefs?

- because we are all creatures of God, and therefore brothers and sisters;
- because God acts in each person, who through the use of reason can feel the existence of God's mystery and recognize universal values; and,
- to discover in the different religious traditions the heritage of common ethical values that allow believers to contribute to the affirmation of justice, peace and harmony in society (cf. García, 2013).

The coexistence of several religious traditions represents a challenge and an opportunity: the disorientation and temptation of relativism may grow, but together they increase the possibilities of fruitful debate and reciprocal enrichment. In the light of faith this is seen as a sign of our time that requires growth in the culture of listening, respect and dialogue (cf. Synod of Bishops, *Preparatory Document 2017*).

5.7 *Faith -Culture Dialogue in Higher Education*

For many people, including many young people, religion is perceived as something alien to themselves, because they have the image of it being something historical, ritualistic, moralistic, from a hierarchical institution that does not say or contribute anything to their life. Many of them come to universities of Christian inspiration without having lived any significant experience of faith, or even having it, they did not assume faith from a framework of reflection within an experience of a fraternal, ecclesial community. There are others, even educated in a more or less believing environment, who seek to create their personal identity away from dogmas or traditional structures of beliefs and morals of imposed norms. More than a few identify as agnostic. Young people seek a human-scientific professional preparation with experiences that allow them to develop successfully in the workplace; the formation in values, in religion, is not within their interests. Even when they assume that it is something included in an educational proposal, it is not their priority.

The task of religious teaching is no longer exclusively the transmission of faith within the Church, but rather to make people aware of and understand, in a radically worldly world, the religious problem as inherent to human existence, to awaken attention to religious experiences in general and to enable

these experiences. It is to open the language by which the profound and transcendent dimension of life is made accessible to people; to promote the capacity and willingness of adolescents and young people to decide in order to have a fundamental conviction about the meaning of existence; to show the unconditional responsibility of social behaviour (*German Episcopal Conference, 2.5.1*).

In the universities, religious teaching is a process of critical confrontation with the models of the interpretation of the world and the meaning of life that are found in religious traditions. In the end, the goal achieved in each student may be different: for some it will be to understand religion as an enriching element of life; for others, respect for the religious ideas of others; even for some others it will be to reach a deeper experience of the person of Christ. In general, it will help young people to increase their capacity to accept differences and understand them as an enriching element of society.

5.8 *The Formation of Religion Teachers. Proposal*

It is necessary to train teachers of religion and pastoral ministers in the process of professionalization, to strengthen all the formative areas of catechesis and religious education. This professionalization of teachers of religion, in basic educational levels and media, will achieve a better graduation profile in religious matters, and in the universities, it will be possible to form communities of dialogue between different beliefs that will strengthen social cohesion and enrich a more open view to oneself and to the others.

Principles in which we must train teachers of religion and pastoral coordinators:

- a. *An inclusive and creative pastoral ministry.* Pastoral activity cannot be thought only for Catholic students. Everyone has something to say, and to listen is the basis of dialogue between beliefs, and evangelization must be incarnated in life; life must not adapt itself - in this case to the thinking of students of other beliefs - to evangelization.
- b. *Every culture is capable of God.* The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* begins with a formidable sentence that contains the best dialogue between faith and culture: "Man is capable of God". The desire of God is inscribed in the heart of humanity, because people have been created by God and for God; and God does not cease to attract people to himself, and only in God will people find truth and happiness that they never cease to seek (CIC, 27). In no way can we say that only Christianity possesses the capacity of God, not even to be the possessor of the whole truth. In every human group, in every culture, in every religion, God manifests himself and in it man can find God and find the truth. Even in non-believing cultures, because they also bring the legitimate desire to meet as people and find the meaning of their lives. Everyone, therefore, as humanity, walks together and the more we collaborate, the more we share the wealth of each one.
- c. *Pastoral Ministry should work on interiority.* The superficiality, the materialism, the care for the image, the practicality of the decisions, the large amount of information that runs through their hands and even the requirement of professional training, leave little time to deepen, to meditate, to get in touch with oneself. One of the challenges of modern man is to get familiar with interiority. The pastoral work in the university must look for the spaces to confront, beyond the ideas, to confront oneself. Regardless of belief, one can be educated under clear Christian principles, in an atmosphere of dialogue and reflection from one's own beliefs, so that everyone can grow as a person.
- d. *Encounter with Jesus Christ, (live the paschal event) center of evangelization.* The personal encounter with Jesus Christ is the origin, center and goal of all evangelization, even when it

is not intended to change the faith of non-believers or those who profess other religions. Easter is not a simple memory. The grace of God is alive and is there, but it needs a "moment" to confront the life of each person. God comes to meet, does not wait for the initiative of people, and manifests in many different ways. All evangelizing action is very aware of this personal experience of the Passover: "at all times and in all places, God becomes close to people: he calls them and helps them to seek him, to know him and to love him with all their strength" (CIC 1). It is appropriate for a pastoral action to accompany the reflection of the strong experiences of life to interiorize them, so that they are moments of grace, paschal moments. Religious teaching will keep that encounter as an ideal to favor, as a consequence of a path whose goal may be different for each one.

- e. *The Dignity of the Person in the Center.* Regardless of religion or belief, the dignity of the person is at the center of every human process. That is the basis of human rights. The person has a value in themselves and in transcendence; the development of knowledge, skills and competencies must be in response to the solution of basic needs of society and the individual: dialogue, belonging, recognition, peace and justice, well-being ...
- f. *A God Connected to Life.* The human being cannot be understood outside the context that configures them and gives them the scenario where he defines his journey. His first scenario is the natural world that surrounds him: "Nature is a gift ... that calls us to a universal communion" (*Laudato sii*, 76). Being able to return to the very essence of what we are: creatures of the world, allows us to discover ourselves outside accidents that are only expressions, but they are not the nature of what we are. We are part of a creation; our most elemental being harmonizes with the other creatures. The human being needs nature to understand its own nature; we are "connected" with the earth, with the universe (*Laudato sii*, 79). The theology of creation, recalled by Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato sii*, emphasizes the call to recognize that other living beings have their own value before God. Religious teaching must give meaning to what happens in the world in the person's life and help to discover that their own life is the one that builds the world. It is an existential ecological vision. God who speaks to me through the world around me and the response I must give God in my actions in the world.
- g. *In higher levels (university), rather than forming a religion, it is important to initiate the religion,* where the religious phenomenon is studied and understood as a necessary element to understand the current culture. Thus, with an opening of the horizon, what Gadamer calls hermeneutical consciousness, we can enter a deepening dynamic enriched with religious knowledge, which would otherwise be rejected. From faith, we are favouring the action of the Spirit to go further. (Pajer, 2017).
- h. *Religious education must go beyond a pragmatic knowledge of the religious phenomenon.* The vision of knowledge in the university goes beyond the pragmatic, you cannot stay learning certain content because it will be useful for something. The challenge is to find the global sense of knowledge; only that gives fullness to a person. Religious knowledge goes beyond rationalist knowledge: it seeks the meaning of one's existence. Religious knowledge helps to understand art, modern, ethical, cultural, behavioral thinking; nevertheless, the scientific culture of the university cannot be limited to having a rational conscience. Pastoral dynamics must favour going beyond that frontier, to be able to go beyond their own scientific certainties, to overcome the scientific positivist vision of religious phenomena and to open themselves to transcendence.

- i. *The school should encourage Christian leadership:* The Church today is more participatory. Vertical pastoral ministry - where reflection and activity are born only from the hierarchy and where the laity was the object of the pastoral ministry and not the protagonist - has been overcome. Because of their capacity, active presence in society, commitment and innovation, lay Catholics must continue to be empowered. The school, and in it the religious formation, should favor responsible leadership by means of a deep reflection of its environment, creating spaces of participation that help in the end to the construction of a better society.
- j. *The Prophetic Voice of Christian education.* As the baptized we are a people of priests, prophets and kings. The prophetic voice of the Church continues to announce and denounce in the world. This voice has to be pronounced also by the Christian school. If the evangelizing task of the Church belongs to the school, it also shares its prophetic mission. Today traditional institutions have felt their moral influence in society diminished and, still, society remains thirsty and open to listen when controversy, doubt and disorientation hit it. The Lasallian school and university also have something to proclaim to their community. It does so in situations that require words of action, such as natural catastrophes or situations of vulnerability. It must also pronounce itself before ideologies that generate social clashes. Of course, prudence requires reflection, but that same is a form of response, a capacity for dialogue, listening and reflection. But it cannot be indifferent or mute when there are events that generate social unrest. It cannot miss the opportunity to be heard, because others will take the floor. It is not about prophesying as dogma but prophesying that dialogue can always exist and there will always be the possibility of finding bonds that unite ideas no matter how antagonistic they may be. These principles of respect for human dignity, of dialogue and solidarity for the construction of a new, more just society are the voice that must rise.

5.9 *Three Lines for the Formation of Teachers of Religion: Content, Processes, Skills.*

In the first place an initial formation is needed, which is formed by two large blocks: theological preparation in basic content, and the pedagogical and didactic preparation, which makes possible an adequate teaching in procedures and methods at the age of the students. The need for theological formation of the professor of Catholic religion and morality is required by these three inescapable coordinates: fidelity to the faith of the Church, the doctrinal content present in the curriculum of the students for each stage and the proposal of faith in dialogue with the culture of his time. (See Episcopal Commission for Teaching and Catechesis, 2017).

5.9.1 The Academic Formation of Religion Teachers. Content

The doctrinal preparation leads in an indispensable way to the study of *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*; naturally, it requires a sufficiently solid foundation of the History of Salvation contained in the Bible. The ecclesial content opens to the fruitful participation in the Church, to the study of the history of the Church, to the understanding of the liturgy, of the current structure and its challenges, and of course to understand its mission. In addition to creating identity, this content provides for active participation within the Church and the participation of the society.

Sacramental life can find the proper response of man to the grace that is received from God, when the true meaning of each sacrament is understood and deepened. Having Jesus Christ as the center of evangelization, Christological formation is indispensable:

Catechesis pursues the double objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple through a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and message of Our Lord Jesus Christ (District Mexico-North, 2017).

5.9.2 The Teaching-Learning Process

In addition to the knowledge of the subject, of course the formation of religious teachers takes into account the sources of the curriculum: psychological, pedagogical, socio-cultural and epistemological. Therefore, the content of the Religion curriculum also requires a prior knowledge of evolutionary psychology and the procedures that make gradual learning possible (cf. *Spanish Episcopal Conference*, 1989).

Since the latest studies and new discoveries in the sciences, history and philosophy raise new problems that bring with them practical consequences and even call for new theological researches [...] theologians, also the professors, are invited to always seek a more appropriate way to communicate the doctrine to the people of their time ... We must recognize and employ in pastoral work not only the theological principles but also the discoveries of the profane sciences, especially in psychology and sociology, thus leading the faithful to a more pure and mature life of faith (GS 21).

It should be exercised by the capacity for fruitful discussion in a special way on the new topics -some of them quite classic but not finished - that raise questions within and outside the Church (migration, marriage equality, bioethics, legalization of drugs, among others). By a participative attitude, with solid foundations and an open mind, it is discerned to let the Holy Spirit speak and find the appropriate way to discuss these issues later in the class.

5.9.3 Ongoing Formation: The Ability to Read the Culture and Listen to the Word that God Pronounces in 'Other Languages'.

The formation of teachers belongs to the founding mission of the Institute. The ability to read the culture and listen to the revelation stands out among all the knowledge and skills to possess.

If every culture must be evangelized, it must develop the ability to penetrate, know, value and live the different cultures in which it is immersed in order to read the values, the questions of life, the origins and desires, the concept of man and God that each culture expresses many times in its own language. The same applies to the subculture of some particular groups, especially in the context of the universities: knowing how to read the culture of those far from their religion, the agnostics, the educated without religious formation... All of them enunciate something and it is indispensable to read their concerns and expressions to accompany them in their search process.

Listen to the revelation. God has spoken and his living word is in the Sacred Scripture, in Jesus, the center of revelation. Also, the word of God is in the Magisterium of the Church. But God manifests himself equally through the events of life. God speaks and manifests himself in vulnerable groups, in young people who seek meaning in their lives, in different cultures and religions. If we want to engage in an evangelizing dialogue with different cultures, we have to know how to listen to what God expresses through them. This requires opening and possibly breaking paradigms, "listening and learning" of other beliefs, as indicated in the Rule (14.1).

5.9.4 Personal Experience of the Faith

The person, by deepening his relationship with God through thinking, in some way influences his faith. Therefore, even when the personal experience of faith is not explicit among the formative content proposed for teachers of religion, sharing one's experience among equals favors the maturity and transmission to which one is called as a teacher.

5.10 Conclusion

The global trend seems to indicate that the secularization of religious education in the schools will soon reach the countries where today there is openness and even a desire for catechesis. This will not prevent evangelization, but it will always demand the initiative and updating of religious educational practices. Today the opening to different beliefs should break the paradigms in order to achieve a plural religious education that is open to all, especially in the middle and upper educational levels.

Once again, the most important action will be in the facilitators who accompany the students. The formation of the teachers will no longer be just an inheritance, but a global demand that will require the professionalization of teachers of religious teaching.

The innovative capacity of the Lasallian educational community in the whole world keeps the wisdom that makes us the apostles of the catechism. We must cultivate faith and strengthen reasoning. Catechesis is like a lake of faith, whose shore is the doctrine, not because it limits it, but because water is what gives meaning and existence to the shore. The earth does not create the lake, nor does it limit it, it is the water that forms the shore and expands it.

The Holy Spirit will have to blow softly within the community that engages in dialogue and acts. The new way of evangelizing will continue to deliver for the world, for the Church, adults in the faith, prophets in the voice, apostles in action.

Annex

Actions to start the professionalization of the teachers in the North Mexico District:

1. Training of the teachers of religion and staff of the Pastoral Department:
 - a. Colloquium "Existential Dialogue and Christian Formation". Intended for those responsible for human and Christian formation departments and pastoral and religious education teachers, high schools and universities, to begin the reflection on how to teach and do pastoral care in institutions of higher education.
 - b. Open the diploma in Christian formation online, through one of the Universities, for primary school teachers and teachers of religious education in secondary, high school and university. Set the goal of training all teachers in 6 years.
 - c. Form the heads of the pastoral departments in the ordinary district meeting, on the accompaniment of religious teaching
 - d. For primary and secondary, implementation of a doctrinal content evaluation system coordinated by each pastoral department within the institutions.
2. Supports for Teachers:
 - a. Editing of an Annex to each book of the teacher from the third year of primary school to high school, where the doctrinal content that must be taught in each bimester is presented - in primary and secondary - and in each unit monthly in high school.
 - b. Offer guidance to catechetical teachers for the use of this annex.
 - c. Consider the implementation of a Lasallian examination of catechesis, as a diagnostic tool to the primary and secondary final groups and to three years for all the groups.
 - d. Exchange of successful experiences in the implementation of dynamics of work dialogue between faith and culture generated from the colloquium.

CONCLUSION TO PART ONE PUTTING DOWN THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR REFLECTION

The Fundamental Concepts

The drafting of a foundational document as expected in the *Declaration of Lasallian Pedagogy in the 21st Century* involves the handling of a specific vocabulary that supports, without any doubt, the clarification of concrete processes within the Lasallian school.

Within the subject that concerns us, we need to work on both a personal and community level in clarifying what we understand by: evangelization, religious education, catechesis and pastoral ministry. The five works that make up this first part have given us some insights from the historical journey of the Institute, the secular reality of the 21st century and the vision of religious education and pastoral care from two regions of the Institute; nevertheless, we must enrich this picture with our more local and concrete perspectives. By doing this exercise we can continue to strengthen the common mission from the diversity that we are.

We invite you, then, to reflect on what we understand from the experience we live as a Lasallian school by:

- a. Evangelization
- b. Religious education
- c. Catechesis
- d. Pastoral ministry

Suggested Methodology for the Reflection

Who coordinates the process of receiving the Notes?

The International Council of the Lasallian Educational Association and Mission (CIAMEL) invites the entire Lasallian Family to participate in this process of reflection and educational discernment.

To this end, CIAMEL has organized, during the period from May to December 2018 and with the support of the Secretary of Mission, a process of receiving Notes via e-mail to: declaration@lasalle.org.

What is a Note?

A Note is a contribution from a Lasallian group or community to the *ad hoc* Commission that will draft the *Declaration*.

It is about receiving Notes about the suggested topics or others that you want to suggest, preferably in English, Spanish, French or Italian.

For a Note to be taken into account you need:

- a. A title that helps to identify the core-theme.

- b. A brief description of the content, as an executive summary, no longer than five lines.
- c. The identification of the community or group author of the note, specifying the community or educational work, the District and the Region.
- d. An e-mail address to favour questions and clarifications, in case the revising group considers it necessary.
- e. The body of the Note with the proposed content. In a special way, concepts, characteristics and criteria that can give consistency to the draft of the *Declaration* are suggested.

What processes do we suggest for the preparation of Notes?

- At the Regional level:

We invite the coordinating bodies of the Lasallian Educational Mission to promote the reading of this publication and the work of reflection in all the Districts, communities of Brothers and Lasallian educational works.

The notes emanating from regional events will be highly appreciated, especially when they help to understand regional and global trends.

- At the District level:

The Councils of the Educational Mission of the Districts can coordinate district events to favour the dialogue and reflection of the animators of educational centers.

- At the local community level:

We are interested in knowing the reflections that arise from the local communities and centers. We value especially the notes elaborated in group.

So, who can send Notes?

All Lasallians who participate in the processes of reflection and discernment at the local, district and regional levels, especially if those Notes represent the opinion of a group and bear their authorship. Anonymous notes will not be accepted.

Reception time

The Notes will be received from May 15 to December 15, 2018.

PART TWO

EDUCATIONAL URGENCIES

PART TWO EDUCATIONAL URGENCIES

Presentation

The second part of this publication proposes to study the educational urgencies related to education in the faith that have arisen in this period since the close of the Second Vatican Council. Three years ago, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the closing of this event that has marked a milestone in the history of the Church, that is still in the process of being understood. Likewise, last year we remembered the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of the 39th General Chapter of the Institute. Both events have laid out a path of reflection and educational-pastoral action, and all Lasallians - in keeping with the itinerary lived for more than three hundred years - are called to continue in a spirit of creative fidelity.

What are the urgencies that from the education in the faith are challenging our current itinerary?

We hope that both a personal and community reading and reflection will help us, not only to understand these global ecclesial processes, but also to communicate with other cultural perspectives. The authors of this second part offer their particular experience from Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. Three different visions to address the meaning of the inculturation of catechesis and pastoral animation, the cultivation of the interior life, the accompaniment in the educational community and the educational-pastoral sense of the Lasallian expression of "moving hearts".

Each article offers a particular proposal. We hope that the careful reading of this material will generate, on a personal and community level, a process of reflection on the pastoral urgencies that are knocking at our doors and the possible answers we could give as a Lasallian educational community. We are convinced that, rather than planning actions, we need to be able to formulate questions that provoke in us the encounter with the risen Lord, as experienced by the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

FIVE URGENCIES IN FAITH EDUCATION TODAY

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6.1 Introduction

From the history of faith education over this last half of a century, I wish to propose five urgencies. They can be considered as an epilogue to the reflection of mid-October on the paths of Faith Education since the days of the Second Vatican Council.

This issue concerns the needs rather than realities, absences, areas of faith education that we have to colonize, humanize, or explore. They are the logical inheritance of times like ours of cultural change. Considering that faith education has covered the period from St. Pius X to today, one hundred years later and with the Council and globalization in between, it is logical to find important spaces that we need to attend to. These are due to the effect of the expansion in dimensions we thought that we were able to dominate but that in reality possess inertias that surpass us or that we ourselves are part of.

First of all, we need to identify them, to find their roots and consequences. From there we will be able to figure out ways to correct them. This is the case of all areas of life, which deny us from rushing to fight any symptoms without knowing their causes, even basically. This reflection aims primarily at identification. The consequent programming is much neater and probably has to be done in different teams, according to cultural areas.

In my formulation I examined the evolution of the different documents or official positions of the Church. I have considered their dynamics, different highlights, alarms and proposals. They lead me to work out presences or absences that the documents do not express, but that can be seen behind them. Complementarily, I have been comparing this process with my own experience over the same period. In fact, after fifty years of efforts in these areas, one necessarily finds topics that are accurately cultivated, wrong topics, and absences. These pages deal with the latter.

Several tasks or approaches appear today, based on this two-fold consideration. Here are five proposals that I formulate mainly starting from my own memory. These are tasks which I feel are still pending or maybe they might seem like this to more than one person. I express myself like this, at the risk of appearing very subjective in my exposition, but at least I will be honest.

I also indicate the closeness or even the coincidence with the fundamental highlights of the Council. In reflecting on the shortcomings or the urgencies that I feel, I have noticed their similarity to the thought or proposals of Vatican II. Many times, I was surprised by their coincidence or their proximity. Surely the same can happen to anyone who reflects on any theological issue today: given its magnificent fecundity it is inevitable that we feel surprised when we find ourselves walking in the light of what that Assembly proposed to us. For that reason, I will deal with it at the end of the two parts classifying these five urgencies.

Finally, allow me to point out that in proposing them, I do not start from catechesis in general but from the relationship between catechesis and education, that is, between faith education and school. I understand that the set of what we call education is the most appropriate framework to always interpret the specific processes of faith education. This, among other things, opens up great possibilities for faith education itself, both from the institutional perspective and from methodology.

6.2 The Personal Encounter with the Lord

"... I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ... "(Phil 3:8)

We understand this first emphasis well if we recall a well-known situation, namely: we know from experience that when we love someone we know them better than anyone else. Loving / Knowing. Experience tells us that there is no personal knowledge like that between two people who love each other. What does this mean for our subject?

It is clear that we all know something and maybe quite a lot about other people, even if our contacts with them are not as personal or intimate as those we have with our loved ones. However, we all soon learn that the knowledge we have of people is different when we have truly met them, rather than when we merely come close to them. When we talk about loving someone, we are talking about the encounter with someone. When that encounter is mutual, then knowledge reaches its climax. Therefore, when two people love each other, when some people love each other, they come to a knowledge of themselves and reality that is inaccessible to all others.

We could say that reality itself reaches their consciousness and overwhelms them. This is what the encounter that turns us into people is all about: in it life itself unites us in a single reality and allows us to interpret everything in a new, unique and fundamental way. Then we reach true knowledge.

When people live this kind of encounter they elaborate a very special language, their own language. It happens that the knowledge of reality is manifested in a type of communication, vocabulary, words, even reasoning, which are completely original, and this not because they are different from all other expressions, but because they are personal.

When we look at the last half century of evangelization or faith education from this standpoint, we find something enormously significant. In these fifty years, from the days of the Council or even a little before, from the renewal movements of catechesis and evangelization of the 1940's and 1950's, we have made a very special journey. We walked the path leading from repetition of Christian formulas to the incarnation of these formulas in the lives of people. This, at least, is what we have tried to do: to experiment, to make our own, the words in which we expressed the Christian message.

Long before the days of the Council we had rediscovered the importance of the Incarnation to understand the revealed Word. Biblical studies taught us to look in a new way at all our Christian expressions, our ways of systematizing it, all its institutional, organizational, hierarchical forms. We found that we had to relate the Word of God to the history of peoples.

All this had to reach its maximum consciousness in the days immediately before the Council and would be reflected in the conciliar Constitution *Dei Verbum*, on the Divine Revelation.

When we read and interpreted it in the context of euphoria and creativity of those days, we embarked on a catechesis or faith education renewal, which we have been calling catechesis of experience. That

catechesis renewal, inspired by the *Dei Verbum* Constitution, meant that we simultaneously looked at our consciousness of life and our reading of the Word of God.

In that way, and since we lived in a time of cultural change (without being much aware of it), we underlined in catechesis something that we had not done in the previous decades: pre-catechesis or pre-evangelization or preparation to receiving one day a clearer presentation of the Word of God. This meant that in our introduction to faith we would consider the human conditioning of evangelization as never before.

It was a huge change for all of us, for the whole Church, for all the experts in these issues. It was actually the result of living in a time of new evangelization, we were not even aware of at that time. We began to realize it with *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, ten years after the Council. Thirty or forty years later, on the other hand, it was already very clear. In reality, our society needed a New Evangelization because the previous one resulted largely exhausted or dissolved, converted into something closer to social forms of religion than in a truly Christian faith. That is why the task has been very long, almost endless, during the last half of the century.

Today we have realized that it was not enough to look at people in a different way or to teach people to look at the Gospel and their own life in a different way. Today, we realize that it is all about returning to the first evangelization.

This is how we have arrived, quite surprisingly, to discover something that was not that present in our efforts to update faith education. This was indicated by the simile or the evocation of knowledge and love of the other, the simile of the importance of personal encounter in the knowledge we have of each other. In fact, we can say that, in the last fifty years, the evocation of the source of Christianity, the Paschal Encounter with the Risen One, has somehow lost some importance, even if we have not completely forgotten it.

Some more or less charismatic movements or situations marked by a Christian community renewal have come to realize it clearly and they have been announcing it for at least twenty years. They have reminded us all that the Gospels or the first evangelization, are not a chronicle of events that took place over two or three years, during what we call the public life of Jesus. The Gospels are the narrative of what happened at that time, but from a very specific point of view: they evoke memories of someone we have met again after His death. The Gospels are a compilation of memories of our relationship with Someone who has risen and lives, continues to live in another way. They are not a chronicle of something that has happened, but rather the portrait of someone the community has met with, someone that the community believes is alive.

The result is that we become aware of what was missing in our effort to update catechesis: we needed to keep in mind that everything starts in the encounter and everything leads to it. More than once we have confused pre-existing conditions with the starting point of evangelization, thus ending up more than once without knowing where we were.

The 'pre-existing' conditions are not really so. They warn us about something that we must constantly keep in mind. We must never forget that if the Word of God does not resonate in our daily experience, if we, in our daily experience, are not ready or willing to receive the Word of God, then it will not work. The so-called pre-conditions are like a precaution that we must constantly keep in mind and remind us of the need to speak in the vernacular, that is to say in the everyday language we use to express everything else. They continually remind us that one goal of the presentation of the Word of God is to awaken the hunger for God, that was perhaps dormant in the people we are catechizing.

That wonderful example of the first catechesis known as the apparition to the disciples of Emmaus can serve as a constant reminder of all this. Those two apostles who had left Jerusalem in discouragement, on their way to Emmaus knew everything there was to know about what happened. They knew everything about Jesus, about His word, about what He did in his village, about His death. They knew everything, and at the same time they knew nothing. When Jesus arrives at their side and forces them to reconsider everything they think they know, little by little they find in themselves a truth that they had not perceived before. The starting point of that change is that they were making that recollection of memories hand in hand with Someone with whom they would meet upon arrival at their house, at dinner.

In reality, that parable or that catechesis was telling the early believers that their only catechist was Jesus, that the only catechesis was the encounter with Jesus, alive in them and before them. In the parable they find Him, they progressively find Him, thus rearranging all the memories in a different way. They will no longer write the Gospels to tell what happened, but to express their faith, that is, to tell what happened in their encounter with the One they are talking about.

The new community will be constituted when its members learn to listen to the Gospel, to read it in the same way. The new community will be made when its members discover that Jesus is alive with them and in their midst, so that in reality what they hear or read about the Gospel transmitted will be read and heard starting from their own experience of the encounter with the one they are talking about. Those are the Gospels. They are the expression or chronicle of how different communities were being formed throughout that process of the first evangelization. These first communities did not express in our Gospels everything that had happened, rather what was happening every day in them, leading them to read in another way what had happened. Because the Spirit of Jesus inhabited them.

All this clearly creates a problem with a difficult solution, or at least this is how it seems to us: how is the Paschal Encounter happening today? Because all this is very good and very clear, but it is not clear how it takes place. It only says that.

And yet there is a very clear answer: "everything you do for one of these poorest and most helpless people you do to me; because I am them." Those who lived the first evangelization made it very clear to us: to live love is to open the door to Jesus, it already means to live the encounter. And that love or charity is lived in a very special way when it is addressed to those who have nothing, those who cannot do anything, those who are in need, those who almost do not exist. They are not the only possible recipients of Christian love, as is logical, but its fairest measure.

From there, from attention and love to those who are not so easy to love, the Encounter with the Risen One is taking place in us, little by little. It does not fail, and it cannot fail because it is not fueled by us but by His Spirit in us. His Spirit acts in us before we even realize it, much more than we are aware of, so that we are able to make gestures and have attitudes that we did not believe were within our reach.

From there, from that self-offering to those who have nothing to thank us with, we become able to express the Gospel in a faithful way, that maybe we were living without knowing it. The expression of the Gospel is born in us when we receive the word of the poor. In fact, when we receive the word of the poor we are receiving the word of Jesus, as the Gospel tells us in the parable of the last judgment: "You did it to me".

In catechesis, in faith education, it is a matter of helping the recipients in their encounter with human needs: on that occasion they should dare to offer themselves, to be grateful for the possibility of self-

offering that others give them, to recognize the deep respect and love that are born in them when they respond to needs through self-offering.

We must educate our catechists in this way, convinced of their own value for the needs of others. We need to help them become gradually convinced that they are able to help others live better. This means that we, as catechists, lead them to become aware of their own ability and their own disability, and to realize that finally this ability is not theirs, but His. In this way we will teach them to consider their own experience as a place where God gradually shows up and tells them His personal and particular version of the Gospel.

It is not a matter of forgetting the help we must offer them when it comes to knowing themselves. It is about understanding our help as something referred not only to their self-knowledge, but to the knowledge of Jesus in them. This is what the pedagogy of Encounter with Him is about.

In practical terms:

- catechesis of prayer.
- the category of fidelity highlighted as a guideline to personal development.
- teaching to read the Gospel starting from Easter.

6.3 The Community

"... All who believed were together
and had all things in common. "(Ac 2:44)

It is rightly said that in the early days of Christianity the aim was not to establish a new religion, but rather to live in a spiritual and universal way the faith inherited from the Old Testament. It is important to take this into account, in order to appreciate the genesis, birth and development of all forms of the Christian community and its institutions.

The first Christian generations perceived themselves in continuity with the faith of Abraham, perhaps even with faith in the Temple. Of course, they lived in continuity with the faith of the prophets, the last of whom had been John the Baptist, but they did not intend – at least not at the beginning - to establish a new religion as we understand this today. They wanted to establish a new way of living the inherited faith and that new way would be embodied in a specific way of living the community.

We can thus say that the community was born - and is born – out of faith and that, simultaneously, faith was born and is born out of the community. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that faith and community are born together, one with the other. If faith consisted in one's relationship with the Risen One, if faith was the hope that this Encounter would give meaning to one's life, if faith consisted in the encounter with Him, with His Spirit, in daily life, in everyday people, in the events, then a very specific way of being a community or group emerged.

The community or the "Christian" group was built around the Encounter with Jesus and with neighbor, especially with those unassisted and hopeless. As days went by, as faith was shared, that is, the encounter, the group assumed its own, very specific characteristics. It was not a "church" as we understand this term today, nor was there a hierarchy within it, as we conceive it today. There was a common faith and soon an organization at the service of that common faith. As soon as the various local groups wanted to maintain some relationship with each other, there was even another type of organization, that had not been foreseen at the beginning. We cannot, however, then also speak of

hierarchy / guidance, but rather of ministries, that is, services, nor of similar customs in the sense that we give to that term today. There were local communities that lived in networks.

What does this mean when it comes to thinking about the urgencies that affect faith education today?

It means much more than we dared to think a long time ago. Fifty years ago, at the end of the Council, we still believed that faith and community should be refounded and reformed. Our thought or our feeling started from what was already established, what had existed for centuries, and understood that the task of the Council was to renew all the internal forms of the community we then called the Church.

Thirty or forty years later, it has become evident that the Church of that time, like almost all community forms inherited from previous centuries, had ceased to be meaningful for a large part of our society. This does not mean that the Church as such has ceased to be so. What had certainly become blurred were its institutional forms as a whole. We must accept it in seriousness, radicalism and fidelity.

It is evident that the organizational aspect of Christian institutions is still alive. In the Christian institution, as in any other one, there must be these two aspects: community and organization. These always exist. Of these two, the soul belongs to the community; the form is the organization. When the soul is slowly moving away from organization, the latter is still maintained. It may give the impression that it is internally still alive, but this is not the case in our times, at least as regards traditional forms of Christian life. Let us consider, for example, the relevance of what we continue to call parish or diocese in European Christianity. It is possible that in other parts of the world these terms last longer. What is indisputable is that they have almost all been lost in societies of Europe in which parishes or dioceses are institutions with organizational aims and usefulness, but which have little effect on the meaning of life or human relationship little.

In the area that is relevant to us, we then find ourselves today in the terrible situation in which our initiatives of faith education seldom turn into community forms of Christian life. There is an unquestionable percentage of participants in our catechesis thus turning to certain forms of Christian life. No doubt, however, if we add to this percentage, which in itself is already significant, the number of those who are not participating in faith education processes while being officially Christian and not relating throughout their life with Christian institutions, we need to admit that these Church or Christian community forms mean very little in European societies.

The fact is that our faith education processes lack or urgently need to attend with full awareness to the need for the creation of new forms of faith community. We can certainly admit that in the last forty years we have made a greater effort to renew formulas and context, i.e. the Christian system (as well as the ways or methods of faith education) than to aim with all our actions to the restoration or strengthening of existing or possible Christian community forms.

That is why we say that for faith education today the community is paramount, at least in European culture societies, and we must assume it clearly and with energy, so that our goal will not primarily be to renew anything established or known, rather to identify ways of living the encounter with the Risen One in the community, always referring to the Church, and letting these new forms of community generate their own institutional structures. This may certainly seem very ambitious and perhaps even utopian, but evidence from statistics makes us think today that these claims only appear exaggerated but are not at all so.

On the other hand, it is amazing that all the proposals offered by society to live meaningfully in any sort of group, have, at least initially, guaranteed success. It is true that it may not be greatly successful, but everything that interests or even excites people in our societies, absolutely everything, somehow has a strong reference in the community.

This fact is directly related to the studies carried out about our society, qualifying its relationships as "liquid", that is to say fluid, inconsistent, changeable, verified very little. It is true that today our people, our societies, are characterized by a myriad of relationships and knowledge that do not entail a necessary or equivalent commitment of people to each other. As experts claim, there is an overabundance of bonds which are meaningless in terms of meaning. For this reason, all proposals that have some communitarian feature, initially give rise at least to a great hope.

Proposing forms of community, as long as they are faithful to this new time and are not revivals of the previous ones, is an offer that is truly meaningful. It is probable that this is today's shape of our original fidelity to the Church.

It is also possible that, even when full of meaning, such forms of community do not have the great stability that we could expect from the past. It is possible and it is probable. What we do not know is how far this initial lack of stability can imply falsehood in those same formulas: if they are not stable after three or four years, it does not mean that they were void from the beginning. Perhaps it means that these formulas, which are not very stable in themselves, may take on another aspect if they are seen within a universe of similar forms. Perhaps what is stable is the network of groups that are unstable. Was the reality of the Church very different at the end of the first century? And this is much more than a joke in the form of a paradox. We cannot know what the future will bring us; on the other hand, we do know that the need to form meaningful communities belongs to the human being, and that therefore, this has meaning and future.

It can and must undoubtedly be done. Faith education can and must be oriented towards the creation of living communities. At the same time, however, we must be aware of the difficulties that this entails, in very simple terms, of what is recalled in the metaphor of the new wine in the old wineskins or the new patches on the old dress. Our current Church structures must have difficulties in entering into dialogue with new institutional forms. As in any other area of peoples' lives, it is a matter of a difficult coexistence.

For example, let us point out an area in which this is going to confront with reality: that of ministries. Today, we surely do not have to worry much about the renewal of ministries, rather for community renewal. There is little sense in endeavoring to renew the ministries for community animation if that community does not also want to be renewed. And, nevertheless, sooner or later the renewal of ministries as a consequence of the community renewal has to clash with the previously established ministries. It may not be a true conflict in itself, but the difficulties that arise are far from insignificant, and this is both a practical and theoretical reality: an issue is the sacramental consecration of a minister and an issue is his theological definition.

Anyway, right now, this possible conflict or difficulty should not worry us much. What should concern us in order to make it possible and to do it as soon as possible are the circumstances in which those communities are going to be born. We must be concerned with the establishment of living communities, not so much with problems that may arise from them.

Therefore, using the previous theme (the personal encounter with the Risen One), we must point out the true assurance of overcoming those impending problems: the strengthening of faith within new forms of community. As has always happened - and this is the law of life - only the deep conviction

of faith can make us capable of overcoming the difficulties involved in its practice. It has to be noted that "deep conviction" does not mean obstinacy or stubbornness. This deep conviction is something that can get along with the loving fidelity to the Church and with the most excellent common sense (that makes us recognize things as true but inconvenient, and that may therefore be temporarily put aside without this seeming to be a conspiracy). What will always be necessary, which will overcome difficulties and provide formulas, is the faith within that community, that is, the Paschal encounter that is lived within it.

We must also attend to today's faith education with urgency.

In practical terms:

- knowledge of formation processes of Christian institutions.
- knowledge of different forms of new Christian communities.
- within the processes of faith education, creation of small communities / groups as a bridge towards others already formed by adults.

6.4 The Celebration

"Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people..." (Acts 2:46ff)

Five years after *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, by 1970, something amazing had happened.

On the one hand, by that time, the timid approach of the operational proposals of the Council's Constitution had become evident. Thus, after only five years, its indications on the adaptation of liturgy to the vernacular, in language and rites, had already been surpassed and the liturgical authority, who followed the process with expectation, was well aware of the situation.

What is surprising is this expectant monitoring, not the fact of overcoming the proposals of the Constitution, which five years later we all watched with attention and surprise. Actions, almost always full of goodwill and intelligence, were more inspired by the first numbers of the Constitution and the spirit of the rest of the Council documents, than in concrete proposals. Today, we would define it as an interdisciplinary reading.

The Constitution on Liturgy had been a wonderful opportunity of confluence for the different currents within the Council session; in the same way, its implementation was also guided by a generous widespread consensus (which clear, restorationist tensions did not succeed in hindering).

In the Constitution itself, the renewal of liturgical life was inspired by its powerful and simple beginning paragraphs. There everything was rooted in the Paschal Mystery, showing its relationship with any celebration, rite or idea of the sacraments. It was a fruitful approach, something that should not be surprising considering its origin, verification, experimentation, careful dissemination and foundation for half a century during what was called the Liturgical Movement.

This is the reason why this Constitution was the vanguard of the Council and being at the forefront and because it came from a movement that was more monastic than secular, it was also the one that suffered most from the attack from the change of epoch and the different elements of secularization that would follow the Council. So very soon that thrust would recede, and its potential in the future

appeared to be more in need of consolidation than innovation. We can say that if the liturgy was renewed it was not so much for the Council but for the pre-Council.

The post-Council profoundly secularized the liturgical renewal.

On the one hand, it accepted, fixed and stopped the innovative movement. On the other, it intellectualized or rationalized all its results, fostering another ritualism which took catechesis more into account than renewal of sacramental theology. There was more concern that the celebration be understood and not so much that it was an occasion of faith. This process was unfortunately confronted with what was not secularized and was rather ritualized even more, i.e. the picturesque rejection movement of the Council's liturgical renewal.

What happened was a disconnection between the Paschal theology of the sacraments and the liturgical celebration. Thus, while the progress of sacraments advanced as a whole in terms of consideration, both specific and integral, liturgy was rather enlivened and rationalized. In addition, as the social context was passing from secularity to secularism and from belonging to trivialization of relationships, liturgy was shrinking on itself without a precise community reference and with a more theological than ritual foundation.

The result is very simple as far as we are concerned: we ended up by taking care of the catechesis but not the celebration. Now, since the Celebration is the place for the encounter with the Paschal Mystery, catechesis itself tends to intellectualize itself in an intimacy that is more rational than Christian.

Maybe all this can be an exercise of nostalgia, or maybe not. To elucidate it we might recall the double and common origin of the liturgy and the liturgical movement.

The liturgy was born with the Christian Community that needed to celebrate the renewed remembrance of the Paschal encounter. That is why it recalled the present, conceiving it as a manifestation of the spirit of Jesus and celebrated it by updating the memory of the first Easter. Thus, little by little, always aside from every other ritual (although accepting symbols and traditions), it defined liturgy and community life at the same time.

The same happened with the Liturgical Movement, only almost twenty centuries later. First of all, within several monastic communities, desiring to re-establish a strong connection between their celebrations and their lives, and then, surprisingly, in social movements of Christian inspiration, wanting on their part to integrate the Eucharist and its social commitment into one way of life. These two cases offered the Council an experience and a doctrinal density that everyone accepted, even in the midst of truly turbulent months.

This recollection enables us to understand better what is the matter today in Faith Education as far as Celebration is concerned. We can see it very well from its great reference, the Eucharist.

The prototype of celebration – *de facto* the only Christian celebration- is the Eucharist. For twenty centuries, the Christian community has done two things in the Eucharist: evoke the presence of the Risen One in the midst of concrete people and give thanks for that presence or that encounter. All celebrations are conceived as different articulations of those two axes. Therefore, when we talk about the urgency of living the Celebration, we talk about these two dimensions.

Thus, first of all, in faith education we need that our recipients learn to detect the presence of Jesus in their lives and in addition to the fact that they learn to give thanks for this daily discovery. We need

to educate them to look at life as the place where the mystery of Jesus' Spirit is shown. (Let us recall that "mystery" in Christian terms has the same meaning as "sacrament," so that all sacramental catechesis is a catechesis of a sacrament celebration). The Eucharist begins long before the bells ring.

Putting it all together, it is comprehensible why we may consider celebration as the main context for evangelization today. It is sufficient enough to look at the life of our peoples to recognize that there is no other situation with an evangelizing potential as the celebration. None. This is why taking care of it is paramount.

We therefore understand the importance of the two dimensions of faith education: first of all, formation in order to be able to see the presence and encounter with Jesus in one's life; and secondly, the ability to share with others the thanksgiving for that shared meeting.

In practical terms:

- very detailed knowledge of the Anaphora or Canon.
- knowledge of the history of the sacraments and their theology, without leaving Trento aside (as if everything began there).
- Cultivation of aesthetics in the liturgy, in its spaces and rites.

It is not difficult to witness unity where these three urgencies converge. All three take us to the core of Vatican II: the Encounter with the Risen One.

In fact, this encounter is expressed in what we call the Word of God; in what we define as liturgy; we celebrate and give thanks and it constitutes us in the community of Jesus' Spirit, that is to say as those who live in the sacramental time encompassing Resurrection and Pentecost. These are internal urgencies, affecting the configuration of the identity of both the message as well as of the Christian community.

If we now look outwards, analyzing the task of evangelization or the meaning of the presence of that community in the world, we will also find two other urgencies. They refer to realities that have always existed, as is explained below, but that have become urgent due to the scope or dimensions they have acquired in our globalized world.

And in this case, it will not be hard for us to renew the echo of the great Vatican II Constitution on the Church in the World Today.

6.5 Sustainability

"... this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others. " (GS 69)

In adequately placing us before our present, in this case we must also recall the last half century. In this span of time we find two essential presences: the so-called political theologies and global ecology.

From what was called "political theology" we need to mention first of all that it was born in a postwar and decolonization period. It represented the theological understanding of a social time marked by injustice and inequality. Thus, it tried to obtain from the Gospel the justice of the winners and the

bitterness of peace, pointing out that perhaps after war victories social misery and injustice were still alive. That is the reason why its tendency was towards militancy and commitment, a way of analyzing reality marked by an economic vision and towards Christian structures and institutions marked by participation and dialogue with the poorest.

It deeply marked the Christian thought and the configuration of Church institutions. It by-passed the appeal and temptation for materialistic and inconsequential approaches to life as much as possible. At times, it fostered hyperbolic personal gestures and some sort of peace. Political theology was misunderstood on many occasions by pastors who should have supported it, and in this way they exposed it to orientations interested by the media.

For the sake of our reflection, we need to recall that it was ending by the 1980's, exhausted from its own mistakes, persecutions and most of all the fertile inheritance that it had left to the Church. From those times it disappeared from Christian life. Today, without it, theological thought and faith education may feel they are deprived of realism and commitment, without valid evaluation criteria for their positions towards the new dimensions of the world.

In the days of political theology, what we would identify as the process of globalization was already appearing. It made us see how the lives and history of people are plural and diversified realities, always within shared dynamics. Progressively we have been repeating to ourselves that we are part of others, of many, of all, living in our own way what everyone else is living. So today we feel, as never before, that our ways of expressing it are related to many others and we are aware of the common roots of all cultures.

In this way, globalization has made us see in a different way our connection to the world. It has shown us that nothing that happens in one place is indifferent to what happens in any other, and that everything that we do with our world, nature, and society has consequences in all areas.

We have seen the flow of resources that surrounds us with renewed sharpness, as well as our responsibility towards it. One would say that the times of globalization force us to overcome the ostrich syndrome every day, that fairy-tale creature who flees from problems, convincing itself that they do not exist, just as if *Populorum Progressio* had never been written.

The path is very clear and we all know it: globalization, appropriation and exploitation of resources, limited resources and well-being. This is where we gauge the extension of the loss of that sensibility developed in the days of political theologies. Something very important may be happening while we think it does not go with us.

At first, globalization could lead us to giving up the commitment to flee to places where justice and peace were easier. We, therefore, valued aesthetics over justice, interiority over commitment. This was the predictable theological consequence of the separation between ecology and economy, or nature and development.

Little by little, seeing us as part of everything, we have been perceiving the challenge of justice and development in relationship to our faith. Today, through the knowledge of global economic dynamics, we are perceiving the meaning and range of commitment to justice. We have become much more attentive than before to the relationship between welfare, resources and their economic relevance.

We are open to the inexorable and anonymous dimensions of the forces governing us. Their horizon overwhelms us and, as some authors have pointed out, we tend to turn our impotence into

innocence. We then blur that presumed innocence into oblivion and we end up in no man's land, entertained by chatters which are filled with good will, yet totally inoperative.

In the area of faith education, this is more frequent than we think. If we analyze our programs we will notice that they are often located in the schizophrenia of a spirituality that sounds evangelical and in a purely sociological consideration of the roots and remedies of sustainable development. Our 'god' has nothing to do with the meaning of development.

Probably the way to overcome this schizophrenia and overcome this challenge opens up inside us, in what we are. It is necessary not to look so much at what the teacher proposes, but rather at the meaning of his life and faith. Because in faith education one should not deal with sustainability and development models. No. But in faith education one cannot talk about anything, if it is not from the standpoint of global sustainability of the human being and from the model of life and development that the catechist offers.

This distinction, which is not at all new, although often forgotten, reminds us that our words, our programs, are developed in a specific social or human context and tend to be converted into an invitation to faith.

This is why we maintain that sustainability belongs to other areas, not the religious one, within an integral educational project. The recipient has to be aware of its range before and after the explicit catechesis, which should help him in the interpretation of what he already knows.

And it is clear why we believe that catechesis is a hermeneutical project, aiming at showing the reality of God in the midst of life, his Word, his proposal of salvation and community life. In this context, it is also necessary to talk about economy and trade, but we all certainly realize if we do not talk about this or from this. In the first case, we lose our time; in the latter, we open up a possibility for God and our students, of course, to perceive it. This is why they accept our discourse on these issues if they see in us a reference that can both transcend and animate any social project.

This is why the issue of sustainability does include a very specific invitation to interiority. Obviously we must understand that this invitation does not imply evasion rather commitment. And it necessary to mention that old principle of Freinet about politics and school: the school is not a place for political action, but in school only the teacher who has a political belief survives.

Of course, we can also refer to the promise of the Lord in the Gospel: "When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." (Mt 10: 19-20)

In practical terms:

- fostering the sense of responsibility.
- need to train in the interdisciplinary vision of education.
- frequent attention to the migratory movements of our times.
- Going back to studying directly the GS text.

6.6 Interculturality

"... But at the same time, the Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, any particular way of life or any customary way of life recent or ancient. Faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission, she can enter into communion with the various civilizations, to their enrichment and the enrichment of the Church herself."
(GS 58)

One hundred years ago, Tillich left us his principle about the religion / culture relationship: culture is the form of religion and religion is the content of culture. We understand it better if we recall the principle of Wittgenstein at the end of his *Tractatus*, (written in the same days of Tillich's essay) when talking about the transcendence of logic and mystery: Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.

Remembering both principles at the same time helps us to understand the extent of each one of them in our subject. Both offer an interdisciplinary insight to our subject. We can examine both propositions if we overcome the obstacles of a specialization imprisoning us many times in terms and concepts that are absolutely rigid, sterile despite their brilliance or wit, incapable of flexibility or contact with other orders of concept and terms.

Indeed, in Tillich's formula, if we do not stop at the echo of scholastic distinctions (form / substance) but rather listen to words referring to our lives (what we feel / what we are), we will better accept its validity and we will use it to understand our historical times in terms of interculturality. The same happens with Wittgenstein's principle, which at the same time enriches and is enriched by its relationship with the theological vocabulary. We will not therefore speak of scholastic metaphysics nor of the perplexities of mathematical logic: we will examine our own experiences of mystery, emptiness, meaning, beauty, and knowledge.

These two principles help us understand the seriousness of the intercultural dialogue or simply the reach that foreign culture has over ours. Because in our days, since dimensions of globalization have become evident to all, interculturality has become an unprecedented challenge.

The catechist may think that it is a little matter, because he comes from a specific formation, with a presumed stability, stability or invariability derived from a tradition of centuries, culture, or at least of the Council and its consequences. Perhaps, then, the catechist tends to see the challenge as something somewhat external to his person and to his ministry, a space for learned data rather than a place where the meaning of life is lived daily, as if it did not affect his program so much. He feels comfortable while he is more dogmatic than he believes.

The recipient is something else, as we see daily. He does live today in a context of plurality that ends up being imposed as a discredit on all cultural or religious systems. This is the case with most of our students, shipwrecked in an absolutely flat ocean, without references. It does not take long for them to learn to belittle all our creeds, rites or institutions. They live in other ones, of course, of which they are normally unaware of. For them the arrival of other worlds, systems, traditions, cultures makes all of them lose consistency, value, significance.

It is the great crisis of our times in terms of social models or life meaning. Almost everything that until recent times expressed it is over. An appearance is saved, which now becomes a subject for the

new spaces where we find what until now was sacred: museums, commercial campaigns or new crusades.

That is why we say that the memory of those two principles of a hundred years ago, like two voices of the same melody, can be very useful for the task that challenges us today with interculturality: the exhaustion of all principles. It is worthwhile to read them again.

Wittgenstein reminds us of the importance of silence in our words, and he shows us that silence and emptiness are not the same. He indicates the spaces of our life in which the awe is imposed over any compulsive speech. Tillich, on the other hand, offers us the great lesson that all religious talk is a cultural speech. It helps us to understand that at the heart of every culture there is a place for mystery, before which, none of its expressions has a definitive character, even though they are all valid. He goes on to say, in Wittgenstein's words, that culture becomes religion when silence resonates within it.

In short, the two tell us that intercultural dialogue is possible and that for this reason it requires a difference existing between its interlocutors. If there has to be dialogue, it must take place between two, there must be two different ones, and we have to conceive their difference as complementarity.

If we do not want to fall, as is unfortunately already happening, in the ridicule of the new reactionaries, we are forced to look towards the substance of all religious forms and understand it as the visible trace of a God unattainable in itself.

This does not imply that the apology of anything is valid, because the same thing could be said in reverse: if everything is valid, it is because nothing is worth anything. On the other hand, anything is valid, yes, but nothing is absolute. None of the principles of the great creeds or Councils is absolute, in the sense that we are proposing: all are an inspired effort to render in human words the name of God, which is an impossible pretension, as the verses of Genesis remind us, from the original garden to Babel and its tower.

In order to have interculturality there must be culture, cultures. In order to meet and share, we must all have something of our own, something to show. That is why the challenge of interculturality is above all the urgency of knowledge and personal stability. Thus, interculturality today imposes on the world a new deepening and foundation of one's own heritage, one's own identity and one's own history.

But this is imposed, not to build walls rather bridges. This entails that the foundation of what is proper has to be done precisely in the perspective of one's encounter with another, helping to understand what is proper beyond all the traps of power and ideological masks. This process has to be rooted in faith, in the manifestation of a God who is always new, always greater and always more profound, always faithful and always surprising. It must be shown and expressed in rites where mystery and silence dominate, where whatever is done or said has the character of a sacrament, that is, a call beyond the form that we receive, reproduce or teach.

A good guide for this project is the reference to the days of the first evangelization. Rightly - and we understand it better if we interpret it from the standpoint of interculturality - the Church speaks today of the New Evangelization: it is aware that, like the first community, it is not willing to install a new creed among others - although in fact it should do it - but to discover a more faithful way of living the inherited faith. It does not want to establish a new 'religion' - although in fact it must do so - rather to show the presence of God and His Son Jesus in everyday life, in the encounters with people, in the rhythms of life and nature.

Well, none of this can be done without considering our faith and our message in a purified, wise, fundamental way. It is not possible if we do not understand everything from the standpoint of the Paschal Meeting, in a personal and community dimension, and from the key perspective of the Christian faith: God's Incarnation. *Evangelii Gaudium* recalled it very recently.

In addition, nothing can be done without knowing other cultures, and it will not be achieved if we do not consider them in the same way as ours, that is, from their founding categories. On the other hand, when we confine ourselves to a purely scholarly knowledge, of a dictionary or even worse, of a tourist guide for lands and notes, then dialogue is impossible. We have only the alternative of universal discredit or reactionary militancy.

The new evangelization is something else, and those who work at school or deal with education as an integral project know it very well. The new evangelization, such as interculturality and sustainability, live within the school or through the whole formation of a student. The catechist's task is to render explicit the Seeds of the Word sown in the culture of our historical times, the 'interculture'.

This is our challenge, in faith education. We can assume that within a generation we will have stopped talking about many things that now seem essential to us. Instead, we will explain its meaning with other issues, difficult to imagine or accept today. In one more generation's time we will realize that today as well, we are living times like those of the Apostles or like those of those first Councils, whose feature is the faith in the God of Jesus and the creation of a new language.

In practical terms:

- fleeing from clichés and simplifications when studying other cultures.
- leaning on the contributions of all social areas.
- orienting oneself on harmony and not on uniformity.
- going back to studying directly the GS texts.

Now, in order to conclude the formulation of these other two urgencies, let us go back to Vatican II: we can clearly see that we are talking about *Gaudium et Spes*, the 'pastoral' Constitution about the Church in today's world.

In it we find, above all, the attitude to tackle the challenges of today: it is its first part, splendid and very fruitful, of impressive theological riches and social realism. In the second part, we find the way towards the great areas where the Word of God is shown today. In it, these two last urgencies would undoubtedly find a renewed space (because they already have it, since those days).

Gaudium et Spes, in particular, is a perfectly current guide for us in our task of accompanying education processes in the great context of what today we call education.

THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE OF CATECHESIS AND PASTORAL ANIMATION

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7.1 Intent of Religious Pedagogy

Pathway of an Educator-Researcher in the Field of Inculturation

Historically, the term "inculturation" was first used around 1975 as part of a Congress of studies of the vocabulary of the Human Sciences with relation to Theology. Pope John Paul II had repeatedly reiterated it afterwards in the Magisterium, particularly in the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, No. 53 of October 16, 1979, to refer to a new Evangelization in both the expression and the methods taking place in the current context of the encounter of the Christian faith with cultures. Strictly speaking, inculturation is the insertion of faith and Christian life into a culture, or further it is the theoretical and practical Evangelization of culture and cultures. It aims to make the faith an endogenous factor specific to human development. As such, reality has far surpassed the word, for the Church's main mission from the beginning of Evangelization refers to the command of Christ to the Apostles: "Go out to the whole world, make disciples of all nations " (Mt. 28: 19).

- Roots of motivations: what contributed to my initial formation.
- An educator's journey: How I was led to get involved in religious pedagogy, the major stages of my apostolic and professional journey, my discoveries through these stages.
- The catechetical experience lived within various contexts: how I lived the evolution of Malagasy society, of the Church and of the Institute in view of my catechetical functions and of the Malagasy social context, my reception of the documents of the Magisterium concerning Catechesis.
- My masters of thought and their influences in my catechetical and religious pedagogy itinerary: the intellectual references that have marked me: authors, intellectual currents, scientific options.
- "Let all be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth" (1 Tim 2.4); Cf. MR 193, 1.1; MR. 193, 3.1: my fundamental beliefs at the catechetical and pastoral level, my personal suggestions, the impact on the school: "privileged instrument" of the Lasallian mission.

7.2 The African Context of Catechesis

- The conception of the world and of existence: Understanding an inter-relational cosmovision.
- The "weight" of the word: Living orality, the art of oratory, talking as a mode of expression and identity.
- Imagining thought: when to speak is to express reality through image, proverbs, allegories, tales and legends...
- The value of the symbol: the art of delivering a message of a linguistic, literary or artistic nature, a sign of wisdom.
- The importance of the sacred: to give a foundation to values and beliefs.

- Traditional African religions: marked by transcendence, the world of spirits and ancestors.
- An oriented educational system: to learn the meaning of being, of relationship and of life by means of initiation, and of the family, in search of integration and well-being.

7.3 *The main lines of thought for deepening the theme, investigate and conduct research on catechesis and pastoral animation in the African context:*

7.3.1 The view of the world and of life

The world view in the cultures lived in the African context refers to an understanding of the world to the extent of a great totality of beings and things, ordained to a common origin, dependent on each other and for whom the person remains the chief agent of association. The African *Homo sapiens* conceives an eminently relational rather than rational logic that presides over the existence of a universe where everything holds together, where everything is connected. It is a universe marked by an anthropocentrism from which derives a whole system of multiple relations: relations with the biological universe, the physical universe, the mental and religious universe, with the Supreme Being. In short, he sees the world as a complex set of more or less hierarchical convergent relations of which he is the centre, in which he evolves and in which he believes to the point of assuming in the same way the benefits and constraints, and which endures - at the end of the day, a permanent source of his vitality and his own life.

Talking or hearing today about a "common home" (cf. *Laudato si'*) evokes in African thought a specific world, one's world of origin, family, ethnicity and clan or lineage that is one's own. The challenge presents itself as the passage from this conception to that of planet Earth, the world created by God in the Bible and the new world of a planetary village created by globalization. To live together within such a conception of the world that continues to evolve invites one to adapt, while maintaining common sense and reason for living and to have the desire to preserve the vital potential, so that it can be passed on to the coming generations. It is in this way that there arise the African issues of being man/woman and being in the world.

7.3.2 African Thoughts and Religions

There is an intimate connection between African religions and social life because the whole life of the community is imbued with religion. Approaching African religions therefore requires a very thorough knowledge of the social life of the groups. On the one hand, the organization of human society is a reflection of the invisible society. Visible universe and invisible universe are considered to be two aspects of a single universe. That is why religious beliefs and social structures must be mutually enlightening. In this period of transition, it is interesting to see that beliefs are evolving at the same time as structures and to ask the question at the level of African thoughts and religions.

7.3.3 God Language, Human Language and Interpretation

Between the "God said" of the Old Testament and the "but I tell you" of Jesus in the Gospel with a type of teaching that the parables are, there is need to distinguish in the word uttered and heard in the African context what responds to tradition and that leads to the faith - and that saves - according to the criteria or the life-projects which it conveys: the condition of adherence to the faith. Is not religious language, including the name of "God", expressed in the words of a culture? The African pedagogy of the faith remains dependent on religious language and its worldview.

7.3.4 Faith and Culture Dialogue in the African Context

“Inculturation is precisely the insertion of the gospel message in cultures. Indeed, because it was integral and concrete, the incarnation of the Son of God was also an embodiment in a given culture”. This is the requirement of a catechesis which must take into account the authentic cultural values lived in Africa and a pastoral animation that can transform the African human being. The challenge of inculturation in Africa is to ensure that the disciples of Christ can always better assimilate the gospel message, but still remain true to all authentic African values (cf. EIA 78). This challenge of the African Christian is an important task which must respect and affirm its specific cultural identity and seek to bridge the gap that separates culture from faith.

7.3.5. The Church: “Family of God with Humanity” in Africa

Not only did the Synod speak about inculturation, but it applied it by taking, for the evangelization of Africa, the key idea of the Church-Family of God. The Fathers saw a particularly appropriate expression of the nature of the Church for Africa. The image, in fact, focuses on attention to the other, solidarity, warmth of relations, reception, dialogue and trust. The family is the sanctuary of life and a vital cell of society and of the Church. It is in her that this model in a primordial way the face of a people: this is where members learn to know the face of God by receiving first the revelation of a father and a mother filled with attention (cf. EIA 63). The new evangelization will therefore aim at building the Church-Family, excluding any ethnocentrism and excessive distinctive identity, advocating reconciliation and a true communion between different ethnic groups (cf. EIA 63, AM 42).

7.3.6 The Christian School: An Entity as Church-Family of God in Africa?

Evangelisation through the learning of life, culture, knowledge, combined with catechesis and pastoral animation is a task of permanent inculturation, where it must be taken into account that, like all education, inculturation takes in all areas of life, Church and evangelisation: theology, liturgy, life and structure of the Church. All this highlights the need for research in the field of African cultures in all their complexity (cf. EIA 62). The Christian school, in this sense, is called to play the role of a laboratory which combines theory and practice of knowledge, but also a workshop for a true dialogue of faith and culture. “In this century of religious indifference, do we have the right to passively undergo the counter-blows of this disturbing development? We - the Apostles of the Catechism? ... we need an adaptation, a new way of presenting the doctrine of Christ; perhaps a truce with the expositive and theoretical method only. Let us insert the Catechism into life". (Br. Léonard Grégoire, "Religious Studies in our Madagascar schools", in *Laetentur insulae*, monthly Bulletin of the District of Réunion – Madagascar, N° 40, October 1959, p. 10).

7.4 Some Key-Questions

7.4.1 Basic catechesis

- The Creed, "I Believe": beyond mere translation, how to promote an African reading, understanding and expression of the Church's profession of faith based on the text of the Apostles Creed? With what method can reception and proclamation be assured?

7.4.2 Biblical and Creedal catechesis

- Go therefore: make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have

commanded you. And I am with you all days until the end of time (Mt 28: 19-20). What practical implications does this order of the Lord have for the catechist and Lasallian institutions today?

- "Whoever does the will of my Father who is heaven, he is my brother, sister and mother" (Mt 12:49-50; Mk 3: 34-35; Lk 8: 21). A declaration for a creation of a new family: that of God with people: this is something new that is not of the cultural order: on what basis and in what ways is this new thing explained?
- "Do you really understand what you're reading? – And how can I if I don't have a guide? ... I beg you, of whom is the Prophet speaking thus, himself or someone else? (Acts 8: 30-31, 34). Reading the Word of God and the Scriptures requires a guide, another that leads to a wholly Other. More than a mission, is not catechesis a mode of accompaniment engaging in dialogue, a pastoral responsibility of itself?
- "Have you understood all this? Yes, they answered him." (Mt 13: 51). Are not the teachers, and the catechist who I am, called not only to explain, but above all to ensure the reception of the message and to seek the response to it in their mission, so that young people are educated in every sense of the word: progress in wisdom and in stature and favour with God and with people (cf. Lk 2: 52)?
- "Was not our heart burning in us as he spoke to us along the way and opened the scriptures?" (Lk 24: 32). What particular atmosphere and what particular consequences does this produce in the heart of the students' lives, and throughout their young and later adult journeys, the explicit proclamation of faith through the Word of God proposed at each celebration?
- "At many moments in the past and by many means God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets, but in our time, the final days, he has spoken to us in the person of his Son whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the ages." (Heb 1: 1-2). From the beginning, God spoke with a pedagogy adapted to time, to people, and then by the presence of his Son. What place do I make in catechesis for the written Word of God so that it can be heard whatever the mnemonic means in use and the context?

7.4.3 Explicit Catechesis

- The recent experience (1992-2017) of the African Lasallian Centre (CELAF) of Abidjan as Higher Institute of Pedagogical and Religious Sciences (ISSPR), which houses a Centre for Religious and Pedagogical Studies (CERP) for the training of Consecrated persons in Africa: what reflections can be expressed in terms of achievements, limits and challenges for local Churches? Learning so as to know, practise and teach in the field of catechesis and pastoral animation in and by an African academic community: what objectives and method for what contribution in the construction of a Church-Family in French-speaking Africa?

7.4.4 Lasallian Catechesis

- Discover, as set within his time, the example of a Lasallian catechist, pioneer of inculturation in Madagascar: Brother Raphaël-Louis Rafiringa.

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7.5 What is Inculturing and how to Inculturate?

It is a matter of helping the catechist or pastoral animator to base his proclamation of the Gospel on the salient base of a given culture, recognized and respected as a permanent and inalienable value, to ensure the effectiveness of his catechetical mission:

- Look for a value of the cultural environment where you are working: what do you call it and then clarify the main features.
- What elements of this cultural value allow for reading, understanding and welcoming the Word of God in the Gospel?
- Is a new expression of the Christian faith possible from this dialogue in your institution or in the Church? How and in what terms?

7.5.1 Faith-culture(s) Dialogue in Question

It is situated in a historical and complex context of encounter of cultures which results in sociological effects in terms of shock (acculturation, deculturation, enculturation...) which can influence the initiation to the faith, either for its appropriation or for rejection - not to be confused with inculturation.

Inculturation belongs to the theological order based on the mystery of the Incarnation; It brings together God and man in a reciprocal dynamic formed by the call of God and the response of man - a fruitful encounter of the Divine and the human:

God – Man	The Christian mystery of the Incarnation	Basis
Gospel - Culture	Evangelisation	<i>Catechesis, Pastoral, Sacrament, Liturgy</i>
Faith - ?	Inculturation	An expression proper to the Christian faith

The question mark placed at the end of the dialogue is the point of anchoring and signifies that the faith received from the proclamation of the Gospel as good news on the part of God must reach the heart of the culture of man to be effective. Everything has its basis in the God-man relationship that is sealed in the Mystery of the Incarnation. In Evangelization, God reveals himself in a Word that only culture can grasp, it is the Gospel-Culture relationship. Finally, the gospel arouses the faith that must be rooted in the heart of culture. And when faith becomes culture, in a reciprocal requirement, there is inculturation.

An example of an answer to be deepened would be the meeting of faith with the Ubuntu in East Africa, in the Swahili cultural milieu, or even with the Fihavanana in Madagascar. For which face of the Church: that of a local Church that has assimilated evangelical values into its cultural setting to express them to the universal Church.

7.6 Reflections for a Catechesis and a Pastoral Animation Linked to the Environmental Culture of Education, in Africa Today

7.6.1 In your Lasallian Institution

- You work as a catechist, Christian educator, teacher or volunteer in a particular context of a country. Characterize the essentials of the cultural environment and its manifestations in the environment through expressions of personal, family, social, religious and political lifestyle.
- What elements of this culture can welcome - or reject - the values advocated by the Gospel and promoted in the pastoral animation of the Church? Why and how would you react in both cases?
- Choose a type of application of Lasallian pedagogy that you consider important, necessary or most appropriate in your context, for an accepted and harmonious development of the faith of your students, young people and teachers. How, for example, to utilise in a catechetical or pastoral act the exhortation to "touch the hearts" so much advocated by John-Baptist de La Salle (7 times in MD, MF)?
- Does your educational centre participate as a priority in interreligious, ecumenical or Islamic-Christian dialogue... in its educational plan? What conception of the person, society, culture and religions does it have to understand to permit such dialogue in a changing world?

7.6.2 Within Church

- To feel within Church, and to make Church, implies a real appropriation of the Gospel and its message of faith. What guidelines do the students and young people you train, they too "deeply linked to a culture" (cf. EN 20), have to assume to feel, not foreign but at home, in the house, family and community of believers what is the Church?
- How can you assume and live your choice of being a Christian, without dilemma or dichotomy, in the face of respect for cultural values, the Christian morality of the Church and the onslaught of digital technology?
- Evangelizing, catechizing, inculturating are they not acts proper to making every human being "capable of God", not by a process imposed from outside, foreign and external, but by the implementation of a subtle and mysterious impulse born from what is most intimate? It is the condition of every proclamation of faith to every person in his/her natural environment. What type of capability is in question? How are you to awaken and develop it?

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LASALLIAN EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF CULTIVATING THE INNER LIFE

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8.1 Introduction

The Brothers of the Christian Schools have continued the instruction and the orientation of their Founder, so they built schools all over the world; they spread out the mission of their Founder. They desired that their schools meet the Founder's desire that the schools would be the tools of salvation of the children by touching their heart and guiding them into a spiritual relationship with God. The world in which the Founder lived has changed a lot and these changes present new challenges to 21st century education.

The world in the 21st century is presenting many challenges to the human being. There are changes occurring in the world which affect them. The human being is living in a world which is on its "death-bed" because it has lost the truth which for every Christian is elementary (Lagrange-Garrigou, 1984). The 21st century presents a new world where many old assumptions and many ideas have been turned around and many other upheavals are on the way. This is the world in which kids are growing up today (Prensky, 2010).

The counsel of Catholic Schools is wondering how the school will fill up the emptiness of the spiritual life of its students and its teachers. The counsel adds that the new civilisation is suffering from the absence of the spiritual dimension; the world propagates a scientific, a technological and modern humanism (P. Leemans, P. Gauthy, P. Nazareth, 1986).

The report of the UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice. In addition to that, the Commission affirms its belief that education has a fundamental role to play in the personal and social development of young people (UNESCO, 1996).

It seems that the educational system has to do something in developing young people. Teaching knowledge is not enough in this world where the students are living in this big chaos. Teaching the spiritual dimension of life in all educational institutions will empower the students to face these changes and challenges and it will help them to build their spiritual life that they need. Education is a human process, it has no limits and it includes the holistic dimension of the persons. The spiritual construction and development and the acquirement of the value system are at the heart of education along with the instruction which limits itself to knowledge only.

The UNESCO Commission for Education names three pillars of education which provide the bases for learning: learning to know, learning to do and learning to be. The Report mention in the third pillar that learning needs to be is relevant for the 21st century and the bases of learning to be is self-knowledge. So, teaching the students self-knowledge will help them to live with dignity (UNESCO, 1996). Self-knowledge helps the persons to become more conscious as individuals, to endure the

spiritual journey which will allow them to explore the unconscious part of their personality. It helps also in questioning oneself, “who am I?” In answering this question, they become much deeper as persons, much more thoughtful and intentional about ordinary life and their relationship to oneself, to God and to one another (Gilliam, 2014).

The educational system has to be responsible for the growth of the student not only in knowledge but also in self-awareness. These two concepts are the basic elements for success of youth in their lives. The school's role in our day is more than teaching knowledge but also helping students to be in touch with themselves, to know themselves. They can grow in full happiness toward a life which permits them to live with responsibility and accountability. Cultivating the inner life in the mission of the school has to be a core element in the Lasallian Mission. The inner life can be developed and guided by many means in the schools, especially in the schools which identify themselves as Lasallian Schools. One major characteristic of the Lasallian schools in the 21st century has to be teaching and cultivating the inner life.

8.2 The Objectives of this Study

This study aimed at knowing the definition of the inner life and knowing its origin, knowing the importance of the inner life and writing the practical orientation for teaching inner life in the 21st century.

8.2.1 The Question of this Study

This study has a main question: How the Lasallian Mission in the 21st century will meet the challenge of teaching the Inner Life? The sub-questions of this study are: What is the inner life? What is the origin of the inner life? What is the importance of the inner life? What are the principals of the inner life? What are the Lasallian thoughts about the Inner Life?

8.2.2 Definitions of Vocabulary

The researcher defines the inner life or interiority as a path of personal growth, a path toward self-achievement and self-realization. It is a process of touching the depth of one-self in order to become the best person you can be. While reading this study, the reader is asked to keep in mind the author's definition.

8.2.3 Methodology of this Study

The methodology of this study is a textual criticism which consists of the literature written on the inner life. The researcher examined these writings in order to find answer to the research's questions. Then, the researcher collected some necessary information about the subject. Finally, the researcher wrote the summary of his recommendations to be implemented in the Lasallian Mission which could meet the challenges of 21st century.

8.3 The Literature of this Study

In this part of the study, the researcher presents the main arguments and ideas about the inner life; its definition, its origin, its importance and its principals.

8.3.1 First Section

In this part of the study, the researcher will explore the inner life by giving its definitions and origin. Then the researcher will explore what the Christian tradition spoke of this topic in studying the writing of Saint Augustine and Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

- The inner life

The inner life has many definitions because it depends on the human reflection and understanding which are related with the culture of those who write the definition. The site of the pastoral ministers for youth and for vocation gives much definition: www.jeune-vocation.fr, 2014.

- Inner life is awakening the conscience where the youth discover themselves, and find a meaning to their life. The youth explore their own inner world, their feelings, their emotions, their ideas, their beliefs, and their actions. Then they enter in dialogue with themselves by giving themselves silent time. With time, they will be able to be conscious with themselves and with others.
- Living an inner life is using silence, to empty oneself to read the event of life, and to release the meaning. Also, it is a reflection on fundamental values which shape them. For the believers, it is discovering their spiritual dimension and relationship with God.
- Teaching the inner life is permitting the youth to be open to the other. Teaching the youth to have time for asking themselves some questions about their life and their meaning.
- The inner life is a work of the youth on getting to know themselves, and a dynamic process which gives the youth hope of being much more conscious of who they are.

Chantal Poissant gives a new aspect of the inner life. She defines it as developing a self-awareness that does not confuse between who I am and what I have” (Poissant, 2009). Father Baker defines the inner life for a Catholic as finding God in all things, leading to a life of contemplation in action. Since God made everything that exists, and since every effect has a relationship to its cause and reflects the cause in some way, it follows that the fingerprints of God are on all things (Baker, 2012). The Muslim teaching about inner life is a transformation process of the person so they can radiate the divine. Hazrat Inayat Khan, a Muslim philosopher describes the inner life as a portrait of the person whose life is a radiant reflection of the Divine (Khan, 2008).

From the definitions cited above, we may say that the inner life is a principal way to have a relationship with oneself, with others and with God. It is a way that a man can know himself, his feelings and his sentiments, a way where a man can go deeper in his depth to find the treasure. It is a way which leads a man to be a new creation to become participant in the divine nature. It is a way which leads to know God who is dwelling in our hearts. The kingdom of God is part of inner self (Luke 17: 21).

- The Origin of the Inner Life

The Christian tradition attributes the origin of the inner life to Saint Augustine. The inner life is a central topic in the writing of Saint Augustine. In the fifth century, he introduced a new doctrine and showed the particular way which leads from the exterior to the inner and from the inner to the superior (Guillebaud, 1999). Some authors found doubts on this saying. Charles Taylor says that there is an exaggeration on saying that Saint Augustine introduced the inner life (Taylor, 1998).

This doctrine is based on the writings of many Catholic spiritual writers through the centuries, of which the best known is the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas Kempis. He wrote: "The kingdom of God

is within you, says the Lord. Turn, then, to God with all your heart. Forsake this wretched world and your soul shall find rest". This book encourages people to devote themselves to God, and to prepare a dwelling for him in their hearts. Then people will experience communion with God of consolation, great joy and wonderful intimacy (Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*).

The appropriate question now is, did John Baptist de La Salle write on the inner life? The Founder of the Christian School wrote many books on Spirituality and Schools Administration. In the *Meditation for the Time of Retreat*, De La Salle writes to his Brothers: "All the fruit you can produce in the children entrusted to you in your employment will be genuine and efficacious only to the extent that Jesus gives it his blessing and that you remain attached to him as a branch to the vine" (MR 195, 3). That means De La Salle urges his Brothers to have this inner life, and to be contacted to him as the branch to the vine. Also, he urges them to be filled with the Spirit of God "when a person who is called to an apostolic mission first fills himself with God and his Holy Spirit" (MR 196, 1). That means De La Salle wishes that his Brothers acquire this relationship with God through the inner life by acquiring the spirit of prayer. De La Salle desired that the teachers become inner men, capable of capturing the profound meaning of their ministry and of their vocation (Sauvage & Campos, Jean Baptiste de la Salle: *Annoncer l'Évangile aux pauvres*, 1977). In modern time, James Fowler defines the stages of growing in faith, as a means for full achievement and full realization.

8.3.2 Second Section

- The Importance of the Inner Life

When human being embraces the inner life and makes it his own way to find God, he will experience a development in his soul which permits to him to appreciate the gifts of God, he will receive inestimable advantages (Lagrange-Garrigou, 1984).

- Knowing the richness of the spirit

It seems that in our time so many men and women are neglecting their true identity. They are acquiring only earthly possessions. They fail to realize how inferior these are to the everlasting riches of the spirit.

- Sharing the experience of being loved by God

When a man lives his inner life fully, he will feel the love of God for him. He becomes more aware that this virtue which he loves has to be known to all people.

- Knowing the truth

The Gospel put this necessity in a very simple way. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mat 6: 33).

- Knowing one self

The inner life permits each one to know themselves, their desires. Also, it gives them insights to go further into their depth to encounter the Lord. It is a way to touch the reality of the Paschal mystery, to know the risen Lord, who is alive in our hearts.

- Touching the essential

Saint Augustine reminds us that living fully the inner life, we will touch the essential, the treasure which is in our heart, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, the dwelling of the Lord.

- The Principle of the Inner Life from the Christian Perspective

Jesus came to teach us the truth and to reveal God to us. He presented God as our Father who cares, loves and nourishes each one of us. The principles of the inner life come from our faith. They are the understanding of our faith in the light of Jesus's teaching and resurrection. The principles: (Shenouda II, 1987):

- a. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. "God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 John 4:16). Jesus said "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" which means meaningful (John 10:10).
- b. Man is sinful and separated from the Holy God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The Lord said: you shall be holy, for I am Holy (1 Peter 1:16).
- c. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life. God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).
- d. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives. "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

8.3.3 Third Section

- The Inner life in Lasallian Thoughts

De la Salle taught the practice of the mental prayer which is an inner activity which places the desire of man into God. In mental prayer, we can encounter God in the depth of the mind and heart. In his explanation for the practice of the mental prayer, the Founder evokes stages in this prayer and links these stages to those of the spiritual life. The objective of the Founder was to teach his masters as trainers for their students (Sauvage & Campos, *Encountering God in the Depths of the Mind and Heart*, 1995).

The intention of the Founder was to create educators or teachers with interiority. In his writing, De La Salle returns often to the word "interior". To build this interiority, De La Salle urges the teachers to practice the spiritual exercises which are the ways to awaken this inner life. Also, he insists on the fact that the educators have to do everything in this inner spirit.

The interiority perspective of the Founder is not a monologue with oneself. Rather, it is a dialogue with God in union with the spirit. The interiority according to De La Salle is a kind of relationship with God who dwells in the depths of our hearts. De La Salle wrote: "the Holy Spirit who dwells in you should penetrate the depths of your souls; it is in them that his Holy Spirit should especially dwell. It is in the inner soul that this spirit communicates himself and unites himself to the soul and makes known what God asks in order to belong entirely to him (*Meditations* by John Baptist de la Salle, 1994).

The inner life for De La Salle is an acceptance of a gift, an awakening to a presence, an awareness of an “indwelling”. For De La Salle, interiority means the new self created in the presence of God, “Grant that I may become in you a new creature... that I may be in You and You may be in me” (cf. TOB, Note K on Eph3:16). De La Salle’s concept of interiority belongs to the psychological and to theological. It helps the person to become more relational and dialogical rather than becoming individualistic.

De la Salle understands interiority as entering with the presence of God through a sentiment of faith. God is presents where we are and inside ourselves to preserve our being. For John Baptist De La Salle, remembering the presence of God is absolutely essential if teachers are to perform their educational duties well. He fills his writings with exhortations to remember God’s presence. In the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, he indicates that the recollection of the presence of God is the first step in preparation for prayer. In a *Letter* written to a Brother dated May 15, 1701, De La Salle says: “The remembrance of God’s presence will be a great advantage in helping you and in inspiring you to do all your actions well” (Goussin, 2005). Acknowledging a presence of God will lead the person to be in touch with his Creator and will help him to create a relationship of trust and dialogue.

8.4 The Orientation of Cultivating the Inner Life in the Lasallian Mission

At the 21st century, the Lasallian Mission which takes its origin and its foundation from its Founder John Baptist De La Salle has to educate children and youth according to his teaching. In his writings De La Salle insisted on education (37 times in his writing) and the importance of developing young people to become adults (40 times in his writing). In the 21st century what does it mean to educate the children and develop them as adults? It is necessary that the Lasallian Schools give responses to this question. It is the duty of the school to explain its vision in education and developing student’s value. It seems that in the 21st century the Lasallian Schools are called to renew their strategies and their methodologies in order to reach out to students, and to prepare them for the future. Christian education is a lifelong process that cannot be dissociated from the person who imparts it. To start with, it is not a science to be taught, but a life to be lived, a life experience to be carried out (Schneider, 1992).

It is necessary that the Lasallian Schools teach skills and competencies in order that the students can use them in their lives. Also, it is necessary that the Lasallian Schools teach what is required by the educational ministries or other global association. The Lasallian Schools have to adapt their methods and strategies in accordance with the development of this century, as well as the teaching methods and strategies. The Lasallian Schools have to be updated all the time in order to be competitive; otherwise the Lasallian Schools will lose their reputation.

With these skills, competencies, and requirements of the ministries or other association, the Lasallian Schools have to be place where children, youth and all people encounter God. It has to be a place where each human being can start a personal journey with the Lord. The human being has to be in touch with his Creator. This is the specific mission of Lasallian Schools. So, teaching the inner life has to be the core of the Lasallian Mission in this time, where there are many challenges facing this mission. In this sense, there are Lasallian Schools that are carrying out a very interesting program called “education for interiority” under the name “Hara Project”. In the program they are trying to develop a new kind of language and spiritual pedagogy leading students to non-dual consciousness. It is a matter of experiencing what lies beyond experience, it entails destruction of the ego, which in an illusory sense of separated identity based on the operations of mind – fixed characteristics, feelings and aspirations. Only then our true self can emerge (Clark, 2016).

School is an important part of our society. For many, the purpose of education is to simply prepare a person for a career. The focus is on self and individual success. Often success is defined by worldly standards and not according to Scripture. Lasallian Schools should ask a very important question, “What is the purpose of education in the 21st century? The end of education is not simply knowledge or a good-paying job. It has to be filled with wisdom in making right choices, and being fruitful in every good work in serving others. Lasallian Education has to be a link between “what is” and “what might be” which means Lasallian Education has the service to offer assistance to everyone entrusted to our care by setting a vision for themselves, by increasing the hunger of a deeper sense of meaning and purpose, and by enkindling in others the awareness of themselves (Mann, 2017).

Remembering and recognizing the presence of God is a distinguishing mark of a Lasallian school. In an age in which so many young people struggle with the poverty of low self-esteem, one of the greatest gifts we can give our students is to see their goodness before they even see it in themselves, to name their goodness, and to love them so effectively that they begin to believe in their own goodness. Remembering the presence of God reminds us of the limitless goodness and potential in each person we encounter. It keeps us focused on the good (Goussin, 2005).

Lasallian education is called to inspire students toward becoming spiritual and putting their religion in practice. These activities can lead to a sense of empowerment, of not only having certain strengths but also of being invited to develop and use those strengths for self-improvement and for the well-being of others. This kind of empowerment is rooted in ultimate or sacred contexts; the divine or transcendent is supportive to self-actualization (Fallot, 2008)

The formation of inner life is a process by which one moves and is moved from self-worship to a condition of life in God’s presence (See Annex 1). It is a process of transformation of the inmost dimension of the human being, the heart, which is the same spirit or will into self-realization. In other words, it is a process of development toward God’s image. It is a journey of the spirit that begins with the gift of forgiveness and progresses through faith and obedience. It is an intentional transformation of the inner person. John Paul II urges educators to form the Christian life of their students, “Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others” (Message of John Paul II to the National Catholic Educational Association of the United States, 1979).

The Lasallian Mission has to take these orientations into consideration in order to be effective and efficient in teaching the inner life in the 21st century which will meet its challenges:

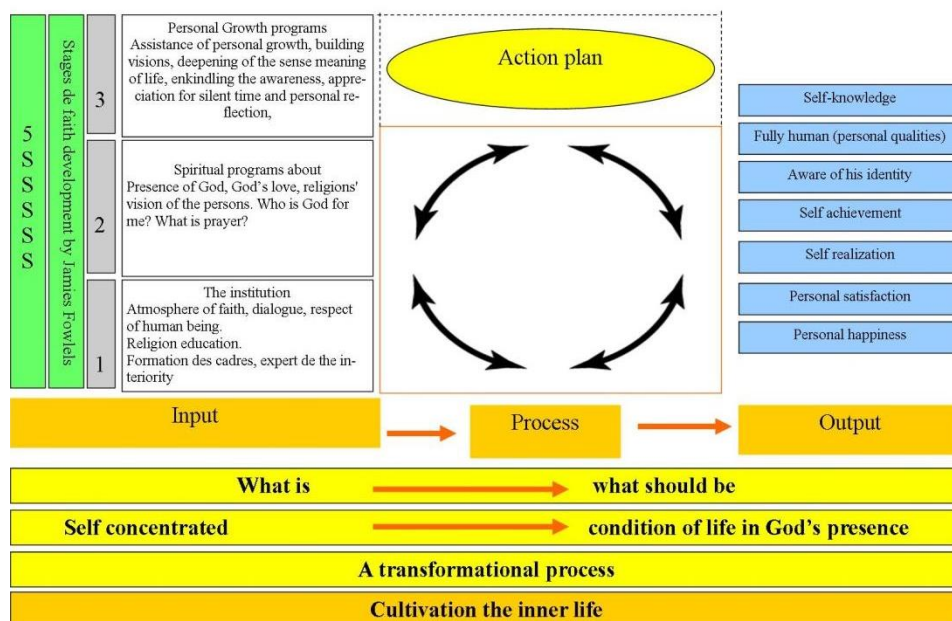
- The Lasallian School has to be school of faith, where everybody can build a strong relationship with God. A keen sensitivity to the requirements of religious freedom obliges us not to impose indiscriminately the same catechesis on all our students, especially when they are more mature (Salm, 2017). It is necessary to implement programs for developing faith.
- The quality of the educator is important in the Lasallian Schools. If Lasallian Schools are to touch the hearts of their pupils, they need to form the teachers and the educators. The Lasallian Schools have to adapt to the changes in the 21st century by forming their teachers in order to face these challenges. We cannot have the same approach as the 20th century. Pope Francis urges us to do this formation. He insisted on the “quality preparation of formators. The education of today has to be directed at a changing generation and, therefore, every educator is called ‘to change’, or know how to communicate with the young people before them” (Address of Pope Francis to participants in the Plenary session of the Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014).

- The Lasallian Schools have the obligation to help each student to consider his value as a full human being, his uniqueness, his freedom and his responsibility. Education in the 21st century consists on knowing themselves, appreciation of silent time, acknowledging the importance to reflections, awakening the meaning of service, of sharing, of praying, of giving and the power of having a relationship with God. Each student needs to learn how to express his feeling, his sentiments, his failures and his positive talents. In the Lasallian Schools, the students have to learn to appreciate the invisible world. They are encouraged to ask questions about their lives, the meaning of their lives, the mystery of life, the mystery of vocation and the mystery of the world.
- In the Lasallian Schools, the students have to be aware of the importance of reading sacred books in order to nourish their spiritual life. They need to learn how to meditate the word of God, how to become conscious about the presence of God, and how to talk to God in prayer.
- In the Lasallian Education system, it is necessary to implement the output of an Indonesian Assembly about cultivating the inner life. These are the 5 S elements: search, struggle, surrender, service and significance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMvuAdxfbQg>).
- The Lasallian Education has the necessity to help students to find their hidden treasure which is in their heart, by expanding their potential and deepening their thought. They have jewels that are buried so by discovering themselves they will reach this treasure. When we engage in introspective activities that allow us to capitalize on our enriching experience, we'll easily be able to unearth those jewels within us (Shenoy, 2014).

At the end of this study the researcher recommends:

- Lasallian Education has to implement appropriate programs of teaching faith.
- The agent of Lasallian Education has to be qualified for teaching students the inner life, so they need constant formation.
- Lasallian Education has to emphasise programs which help students discover themselves, their achievement and their-realization.

Annex 1



THE EXPERIENCE OF LASALLIAN ACCOMPANIMENT

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9.1 The Experience of Lasallian Accompaniment

In the 45th General Chapter (2014), one of the major items on the agenda is the fostering of a culture of accompaniment as an essential component in the animation of institutions and communities. The chapter rallied teachers and researchers in creating new modules, pedagogies, and strategies to create and sustain a culture of accompaniment in all Lasallian communities. In fact, Lasallian Accompaniment was already identified in the 44th General Chapter (2007) as a priority. Consequently, the Brothers launched an awareness campaign to awaken vocations through accompaniment. The vision was to have groups in our various communities who live the values of faith, fraternity and service within the structures of accompaniment. Both General Chapters strongly encouraged the establishment of teams of Brothers and Lasallian partners for accompaniment in all Lasallian communities and institutions.

9.1.1 Accompaniment in Scriptures, Church Documents, and Pastoral Ministry

At the very heart of accompaniment is the mystery of the Incarnation. God took the form of humanity and lived among us. The centrality of this mystery to the Christian faith cannot be underestimated for it defines the nature of the love of God for humanity. “For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to redeem us” (John 3:16). There is no better way of illustrating what it means to be in the shoes of another person than through the doctrine of the Incarnation. Accompaniment is emanating from a deep love of the companion to be fully present to another. In the Incarnation, God lived among us and willingly shared our humanity.

To accompany means to be a companion. Companion comes from two Latin words *cum* (with) and *pane* (bread) freely translated as “to break bread with”. This meaning reflects deeply its connection to the Eucharist which was known among early Christians as the breaking of the bread (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11; 27:35). A companion therefore shares in the daily struggle and achievements of another. The experience of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus further emphasizes this experience of walking with another and helping him or her discover God’s mystery amidst the many worries and confusion of this world (Luke 24:13-35).

In the Old Testament, we find the journey of the Israelites in the desert as 40 years of accompaniment for God had not abandoned them at any single moment. It is only human judgment that sees God's absence, but God is always with them as seen in the fulfillment of God's promise of the Promised Land and the coming of the Messiah.

The relationship of Ruth and Naomi is another important illustration of accompaniment in the Scriptures. Ruth and Naomi have both lost their husbands and Ruth has decided to accompany Naomi, her mother-in-law, despite the latter's protestations. This decision to share their grief and be a companion to one another further intensifies our appreciation of the origins of Jesus, for Obed, the son of Ruth, and whose father was Boaz, will be the father of Jesse, and thus the grandfather of David (Matthew 1:2-16).

This same relationship will be replicated in the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. The tenderness of this visit was so powerful to the early Christians that Mary's Canticum became part of the Christian prayer that we continue to recite to this day. Mary, while dealing with her own confusion of the recent announcement of her conception, gave up all inhibitions and fears, and proceeded to be a companion to Elizabeth.

In the history of the Church, this tender accompaniment will be revealed in the relationship Paul had with Timothy and Titus, as well as in the relationships of St. Francis and St. Clare, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine and with many other saints and martyrs.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola represent one important tradition in Church history that we can reference regarding accompaniment. In the Ignatian tradition, the companion journeys with another in discovering the many paths God is opening to the person. The companion helps the other person to see God's signs in both the most important and the most mundane activities or things in his or her life. The goal is a deeper intimacy with God.

The See-Judge-Act method in pastoral action as popularized by the social teachings of the Church is a good starting point in looking at accompaniment in active pastoral ministry. The Catholic Social Teachings express a spirituality and ministry that is aimed at social transformation. In the method, "seeing" is understood as immersing in the life of the poor as an essential component of pastoral action and initiatives. This seeing resonates well with the understanding of the Incarnation because it desires to "experience" and not just "see". It was a ministry of being with the people in their struggle for justice. This style of accompaniment of the people resulted in the martyrdom of hundreds of church workers, including Bishop Oscar Romero.

Pope Francis has dedicated a huge section on accompaniment in his exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). This section on accompaniment falls within the chapter of evangelization, indicating that the Pope sees accompaniment as a strategy for evangelization in the present time (EG 169-173). He views personal accompaniment within the process of the integral growth of a person (EG 169). To encourage growth in the Christian life, the Pope believes that accompaniment should be steady and reassuring, close and compassionate, healing and liberating (EG 169). Accompaniment is an important bridge to God (EG 170) so there is a need to have more men and women trained in accompaniment (EG 171). This message was also reiterated in *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), the Pope's controversial exhortation on the family and marriage. In this document, he revealed his desire for Christians to be accompanied in the various stages of their spiritual life including marriage, divorce, and separation. The Pope sincerely hopes that priests be trained in the art of accompaniment to ensure that couples do not feel abandoned or rejected in the Church (AL 243).

9.1.2 Accompaniment in the Lasallian Documents

In the *Meditations* (John Baptist de La Salle, ed. 1994), we find the Founder highlighting two important qualities of a Brother in the accompaniment of students: gentleness and prudence. He sees these two as qualities that would help bring students to the joy of being children of God. All efforts in teaching and correcting must be characterized by patience and the ability to create an environment where they will be less likely to misbehave.

The Conduct of Christian Schools (ed. 1994) reiterated the patient and gentle correction of students by making the students realize their own mistakes. This resonates with Br Gerard Rummery's reminder that one of the duties of a teacher is to touch the hearts of the youth entrusted to their care. Indeed, the relationship between a teacher and his students is a life of love, forgiveness, and mercy.

Br Agathon's work (1785) on vigilance is also a good reference for the Institute's idea of accompaniment. Vigilance mean watching over students diligently and without missing anything essential that can contribute to their whole being. This is closely associated with the image of the Guardian Angels. The idea of the Guardian Angel as a companion to children is probably the very first reference that the Founder must have used in describing the role of the teacher. For him, the Guardian Angels illuminate the minds and inspire their charges (La Salle, *Meditations* by John Baptist de La Salle, ed. 1994).

It is also interesting to note that De La Salle created structures by which the students could accompany each other. He assigned fast learners to accompany those who could not keep up. The student companion sits beside another student so that they could hold the book on one side and both would read together (La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, ed. 1994).

9.2 Objectives

This paper desires to contribute to the body of Lasallian studies and research on Formation and Accompaniment as well as the *Declaration of Lasallian Education for the 21st Century*. The researchers hope to define, describe, identify, evaluate, and narrate stories of Lasallian accompaniment in the Philippines. For this pilot study, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is Lasallian accompaniment? How different or similar is it from spiritual direction, mentoring, coaching, and counseling?
2. What are the characteristics of Lasallian accompaniment?
3. Can educators/formators be more present to the Lasallian community through accompaniment? Is being a companion a way of being more effectively available to those entrusted to us?

9.3 Hypotheses

Given the agenda set by the two General Chapters with reference to accompaniment and the direction of our Institute in 2021, the researchers want to prove the following hypotheses:

1. Lasallian accompaniment is help given by one Lasallian to another that enables that person

to recognize God's presence and movements through the joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties of one's life that will ultimately lead to living out one's vocation/life in the best way possible.

2. Lasallian Accompaniment is characterized as meaningful presence and "walking with" the person. The one who accompanies is neither someone above nor below the person being accompanied.
3. Educators/Formators can be meaningfully present and effectively available to the Lasallian community through Lasallian Accompaniment.

9.4 Methodology

The proposed research on Lasallian accompaniment is divided into 2 parts (i.e., Study 1 and 2). A multi-method approach will be employed to test the hypotheses and provide a substantial support on the link between the quantitative and qualitative data. This paper is limited to Study 1 Phase 1 which is a pilot exploring the experiences of some university students. A brief description of Study 2 method is also included in this paper. Data gathered is analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages.

9.4.1 Study 1: The Experiences of Lasallian Accompaniment among Students

Study 1 focuses on exploring Lasallian accompaniment as experienced by higher education students. It is divided into 2 phases. Phase 1, which is the focus of the current paper, is a Pilot run that utilized an online survey questionnaire to gather data from students who underwent Lasallian formation. A critical review and analysis on pertinent Church and Lasallian documents was also done.

The Phase 1 pilot run respondents are a mix of higher education students and alumni of a higher education institutions who underwent Lasallian formation. They have had 2 years of volunteering experience in a university office. They graduated from a student Lasallian formation module called *Lasallian Leadership Journey* (L2J). L2J is a four days and three nights student Lasallian Formation module that aims to deepen the appreciation of students about the life of the Founder and the Lasallian core values. It also aims to develop student formators who will replicate and run formation modules in their respective offices and groups.

Phase 2 is divided further into two parts: (a) final run of the online survey and (b) focus group discussions. Phase 2 (a) is Final Run of the online survey of students' experiences on accompaniment. Insights from the pilot run will be integrated into this phase. The target participants of the final online survey will be 10 percent of the population of students from the same higher education institution, which will be randomly selected. Data gathered will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means.

Phase 2(b) is a Focus Group Discussion, which will further explore the experiences of students and substantiate the quantitative data from the online survey. Target participants of this phase will be randomly selected from the final online respondents.

9.4.2 Study 2: The Lasallian Accompaniment Experiences of Associates

Study 2 aims to explore Lasallian accompaniment from the lens of Lasallian adults/associates' experiences. It is divided into 2 phases. Phase 1 is a Pilot Run of online survey for the adult or

associate respondents from another higher education institution within the same locality. Phase 2 will be further divided into two parts: (a) final run of the online survey and (b) focus group discussions among the adult members of the second higher education institution.

The Phase 1, which is a pilot run of the online survey will be administered to randomly selected adults or associate respondents from the second higher education institution. The target number of respondents is 10 percent of the adults/associates' population in the College. Phase 2 (a) is the final run of the online survey. Insights from the pilot run of Study 2 will be integrated into the final run of the online survey. Phase 2 (b) is focus group discussion that aims to enrich the data gathered from the online survey and provide exemplars. The target respondents for the second phase of Study 2 focus group discussions will be randomly selected from the adult members or associates of the second higher education institution who participated in the final run of the online survey. Their formation experience and length of service in the College will also be considered in the analysis. Will the amount of formation experience or length of service of the respondents be factored in?

9.5 Theoretical Framework

Formation happens in our daily activities and work. It happens in our day-to-day routines and in mundane things. Building a culture of accompaniment as a strategy in formation for all Lasallians must begin with a common understanding of what Lasallian accompaniment is and how it forms part of our identity as Lasallians. Our Lasallian identity will help inform our formation work of accompaniment towards holistic human development.

There are reciprocal links between and among our shared Lasallian mission, formation and accompaniment. When we speak about Lasallian accompaniment, it automatically links with formation and Lasallian mission. If we consider accompaniment as a form of learning, then, it is a strategy for formation. Considering that accompaniment is a strategy for learning and formation towards a holistic human development, then, there are many possible theoretical frameworks that will help guide the research on Lasallian Accompaniment. The human-educational dimension for example, could be guided by theories on learning, while the human-spiritual dimension, by the theories on human-spiritual dimension.

This pilot study utilizes the *Transformative Learning Theory* proposed by Jack Mezirow in 1997. According to Mezirow (1997), understanding the meaning of our experience is a “defining condition of being human”. He also asserts that individuals in contemporary societies must learn to make their “own interpretations rather than act on the purposes, beliefs, judgments, and feelings of others” (Mezirow J. &, 1979).

In Mezirow's (1997) *Transformative Learning Theory*, transformative learning refers to “the process of effecting change in a frame of reference.” “Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings.” Also, frames of reference set an individual person's “line of action” (Mezirow J, 1997). Once set, individual persons “automatically move from one specific activity (mental or behavioral) to another”. Moreover, “when circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience” (Mezirow J., 1997).

Further, transformative learning can take several forms, according to Mezirow (1997). He posits that it “is rooted in the way human beings communicate and is a common learning experience not exclusively concerned with significant personal transformations.”

An educational theory, Mezirow's (1997) work highlights the vital role of educators in facilitating transformative learning and helping learners become aware and critical of their own and others' assumptions. In addition, educators need to allow learners to practice recognizing frames of reference and using their imaginations to redefine problems from a different perspective. An equally important role of educators in a transformative learning environment is to assist learners to participate in discourse. These arguments position learning as a social process that makes the discourse central to meaning making.

In a transformative learning environment, Mezirow (1997) emphasized, "... the ideal conditions of discourse are also ideal conditions of adult learning and of education." What are these ideal conditions? According to Mezirow (1997), an effective discourse is dependent on how well educators create a situation where the learners (a) have full information; (b) are free from coercion; (c) have equal opportunity to assume the various roles of discourse [to advance beliefs, challenge, defend, explain, assess evidence, and judge arguments]; (d) become critically reflective of assumptions; (e) are empathetic and open to other perspectives; (f) are willing to listen and to search for common ground or a synthesis of different points of view; and (g) can make a tentative best judgment to guide action.

Moreover, Mezirow (1997) asserts that educators have the responsibility to set objectives that "explicitly include autonomous thinking and recognize that this requires experiences that foster critical reflectivity and experience in discourse." Hence, transformative learning is learner-centered and participatory in nature. It allows interaction and deliberation to arrive at a solution to a problem or concern.

Operationalizing this theoretical framework and integrating the Lasallian dimensions of formation and transformation would clarify Lasallian accompaniment on a community level, one that is not limited to the accompaniment that is practiced among the De La Salle Brothers.

Rodriguez-Mancini (2017) considers accompaniment as a structural mediation. It is defined as "a mediation that personalizes formation processes." In his paper, personalization implies that individual persons experience reality in a unique way and become agents of their own transformation. He also mentioned that it is an ethical process. It allows individuals to realize that they have non-transferable responsibility in terms of who they are and what they become as persons. He distinguished between accompaniment culture and 'companionship culture'. He defined 'companionship culture' in his paper, "as a day-to-day living together that involves being present to each other in a simple and meaningful way, becoming companions to one another when it comes to coping with daily joys and sorrows, and helping each group member to recognize oneself as a person... sharing love through small things." On the other hand, accompaniment, according to him refers to "a more technical activity, usually carried out by a qualified person – endowed with social, hierarchical or charismatic authority – at the service of a group or a person. Within the range of possibilities in this field, we prefer non-directive forms of accompaniment like 'coaching' or solution-focused interventions."

Among the important points he highlighted on accompaniment and fellowship cultures in the initial formation journeys is the provision of tools for fostering self-transcendence and allowing individuals to develop the habit of reflection and the ability to dialogue with their community.

9.6 Results of the Online Survey

Graduates of a student Lasallian formation module were selected for the pilot study. More than 70 students and alumni received the invitation to respond to the online survey. However, due to time

constraints, there was a low retrieval rate. This study was able to obtain 17% of the target respondents (n=12). Treece (1984), Hertzog (2008), and Isaac (1997) affirm that the pilot study sample size is acceptable at 10-30 percent of the projected population.

Of the 12 respondents, 7 (58.3 percent) fall under the age range of 15- 20 years old. These are higher education students while the 21- 25 years old are either graduate students or alumni. On gender, 8 out of the 12 respondents (66.7 percent) are females. 100 percent (n=12) of those who answered the online survey are Filipinos. 8 of 12 (66.7 percent) respondents are undergraduate students. The rest graduated from the programs and have either been working in the university or are alumni working elsewhere. 75 percent (n=9) of the respondents are Roman Catholics while 16.7 percent (n=2) belong to evangelical Christian groups.

In terms of the way they identified the companion, 100 percent (n=12) of the respondents consider a De La Salle brother, a teacher, staff or administrator a mentor. While 83.3 percent (n=10) see the companion as a close friend, a confidant (n=7, 58.3 percent), and spiritual director (n=7, 58.3 percent).

In terms of the characteristics of accompaniment, the top three characteristics are the following: (1) advice giving and listening are both essential at 100 percent (n=12), (2) presence is also important at 91. 7 percent (n=11), and (3) “constructive criticism and praying for me” are equally significant at 66.7 percent (n=8). Of the 12, 11 (91.7 percent) respondents indicated that they have been accompanied in faith, 8 (66.7 percent) in career guidance, 7 (58.3 percent) in relationships with friends as well as academic concerns (n=7, 58.3 percent).

Respondents also reported that they would have appreciated it had they been more accompanied in the following areas: vocational discernment, family issues, and relationship with friends. These three areas appear as highest at 33.3 percent each (n=4). However, 33.3 percent (n=4) of the respondents also indicated at the last question is “not applicable” to them which may be interpreted that they have received ample accompaniment.

9.7 Discussion:

9.7.1 A Glimpse of the Experience of Accompaniment

The intent of the current paper is to explore the definition and characteristics of Lasallian accompaniment as perceived and experienced by some university students of a Lasallian institution in Manila. At this stage of the research, the authors can neither make conclusions nor recommendations. The initial findings, however, can give the researchers and the readers a glimpse of Lasallian Accompaniment as experienced by students.

9.7.2 The Identification of the Companion/s

In the survey, the companion has been identified as mentor, close friend, confidante, and spiritual director. Rodriguez-Mancini (2017) has reiterated that accompaniment is a fellowship that involves “sharing of experience, which helps human and spiritual growth to build a fraternal community and allow the Brother to know that he is listened to, understood, appreciated and loved.” In the reflections of Kilty (2003), Lasallian accompaniment is a professional relationship that “enables or empowers someone to do something”. This relationship hopes to lead students to discover whatever is best for them. Mezirow (1997) affirms this view: “When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience.”

9.7.3 The Characteristics of Accompaniment Received

On the characteristics of Lasallian accompaniment, advice-giving, listening and presence have taken the center stage. This is consistent with Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory, which states that learners have a vital active role to play in their own personal transformation. Similarly, Badura's (2001) social cognitive theory highlights that individuals can be agents who are capable of "intentionally making things happen." In addition, MEL 51, 5.7 emphasizes that accompaniment is both personal and communal where presence, reflection, and spiritual direction can take place.

9.7.4 The Expressed Need in Accompaniment

The survey revealed that the students feel the need to be accompanied more in the areas of vocational discernment, family issues, and relationship with friends. This is consistent with the findings of Erikson (1993) and Fowler (2001) in terms of the expected area of growth of our respondents based on their age. This implies the requisite skill of the companion to be in the know on the psychosocial and psycho-spiritual development of those being accompanied.

9.7.5 Future Directions

The results have given the researchers a mere glimpse of the whole picture of the experience of Lasallian Accompaniment. Initial review of this paper has revealed a need to revise the questionnaire and consider other aspects of the accompaniment experience such as negative experiences of those that received accompaniment. The research also needs to explain further the basis of the different aspects or expressions of accompaniment. The Church and Lasallian documents could be articulated better to serve as the basis for different expressions of accompaniment. There is also an expressed need to augment the list of Lasallian resources presently cited in our references.

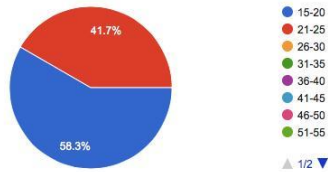
Accompaniment is meeting individuals where they are, in whatever stage in life or context they are in. Each person carries unique experiences, wisdom, and learnings from life. Accompaniment is a journey, a dialogue, an encounter, and a "walking with" experience like what the apostles experienced on the road to Emmaus. Accompaniment is a meeting with Christ. He is the third person present in that Lasallian encounter.

Appendix

Results of Online Survey (Phase 1: Pilot Run)

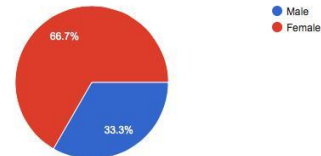
Age

12 responses



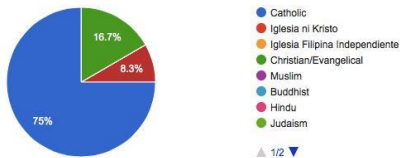
Gender

12 responses



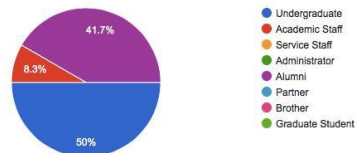
Religion:

12 responses



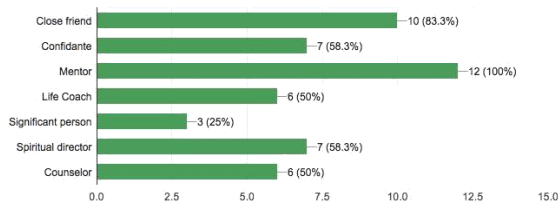
Classification

12 responses



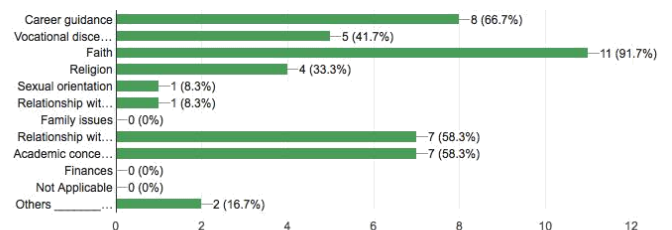
Is there a person (De La Salle Brother, teacher, staff, administrator) in the Lasallian community that you can consider as ...(check all that applies)

12 responses



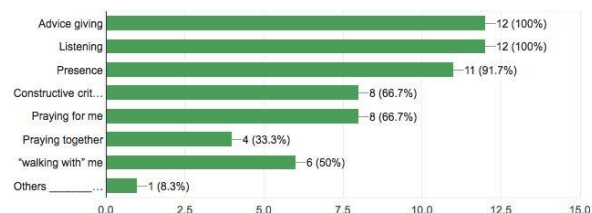
In what general area/s have you been accompanied? (Check all that applies).

12 responses



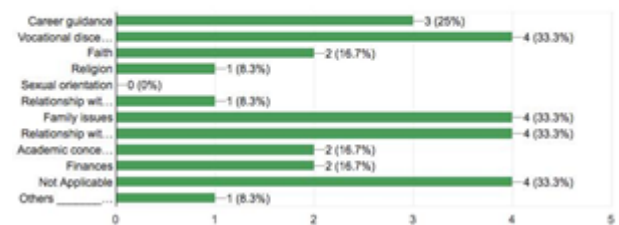
How would you characterize the accompaniment that you received? (Check all that applies)

12 responses



I would have appreciated if I had been more accompanied in the following area/s (Check all that applies).

12 responses



**THE GOSPEL MEANING OF
SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE'S
EXPRESSION "TOUCHING HEARTS"
AND ITS POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS
IN THE DIALOGUE OF FAITH AND CULTURE
WITHIN A LASALLIAN SCHOOL**

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"I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh" (Ez11,19)

10.1 Introduction

The change of epoch in which we are living has an impact on every individual and institution. The world we are familiar with today is diversified, highly connected, technological, etc. While it is true that big advances have certainly been made in various areas of human life, there are still marked differences evident between the few who possess much and those who lack even the essentials. We are experiencing a situation in which the fundamental paradigms have shifted. Belief systems, institutions, personal relations and the economic order are clearly all in crisis.

In this situation, we as individuals are searching for better conditions in life. As a result, our society, far from being exhausted and fragile, is a society which is on the march and a school based on the gospel is a privileged place to develop projects for a more inclusive and just society.

The Lasallian school does not stand apart from this global symphony, because in addition to formalising, generating and transmitting the knowledge which people need in order to solve their problems, the school offers gospel meaning to the contemporary world, facing the challenges and ready to dialogue with the world and so find answers to people's needs.

The Lasallian school has in fact developed in response to the needs of the present, and we can see that the contexts of our educational centres are very diverse. Individuals of many faiths and ideologies come together within them. We cannot deny that the vast majority of those who come to our establishments do so in order to get a good professional education, and not all of them want a religious education. Consequently, the situation raises questions and calls on us to update the Lasallian tradition in our schools.

It is in this context that we must reformulate the "how" by which we will reach the finality of the Institute which has its basis in the message of Jesus. We believe that it is in this sense that St. John Baptist de La Salle saw the school as a space for achieving that goal. Therefore, answers need to be found to the following questions. How can today's school fulfill its mission and establish a dialogue between the faith which it is trying to transmit and the culture in which it is immersed? How can we

respond to the present world? How can we update our tradition? How can we respond as Christians to the needs of the children and young people in our educational centres?

With this in mind, the present work seeks to provide a basis for reflection starting from an interpretation of the expression “touching hearts” which St. John Baptist de La Salle used in order to help the Brothers understand the mission entrusted to them, a mission which is understood today to be an act of evangelisation within educational centres and which responds to a situation which is quite different from the Founder’s context.

Certainly, the expression ‘touching hearts’ is used symbolically to describe the mission of the Lasallian school, namely to form good Christians, which implies educating individuals so as to transform the world. As such, the expression represents the deeper intentionality of Lasallian educational activity, which involves an encounter between individuals and their situation.

10.2 Touching Hearts

St. John Baptist de La Salle was attentive of the needs of his time, and he responded by creating schools which would enable the sons of artisans and the poor to receive an education which would benefit them for life. His schools would also be a means for evangelisation, and this would take the shape of teaching the doctrines of faith as laid down by the Council of Trent: “Profession of the ten articles of faith which a Christian is obliged to believe and to know.” (E 13,11; GA 0,32). “It is necessary to be instructed in all these things, so as to deserve and obtain eternal salvation.” (Houry, 2017).

In the 17th century, the Church was experiencing the decisions of the Council of Trent, and in response to the Lutheran Reformation it tried to educate and catechise the believers. Consequently, a great number of catechisms were published. Similarly, the work of catechising was essential in pastoral life. Although it was true that this role was a priority for parishes and parish priests, Monsieur de La Salle realised that the work was not being fully covered by them. For that reason, he took the decision to teach catechism in his schools, but that was not to be their only mission, “The Brothers were not the Brothers of Christian Doctrine (CL 11,273); the other subjects were not to be neglected, although catechism was their principal obligation (cf. RC 1,1-3; MF 91 y 92; Houry, 2017). This was one of the Holy Founder’s intuitions regarding the work he was beginning. He saw in it a need of and a call by the Church of his time, and he decided to approach the problem through education, always keeping in mind the salvation of children.

St. John Baptist de La Salle considered the school to be a privileged place where a child could be taught how to live as a Christian. Consequently, the catechism was an integral part of the school environment, and in the language of the day catechising and evangelising were the same thing. This became a key element of the Lasallian school and was manifest in the relationship that existed between gospel living and teaching the catechism. They were not separate things, because the former included the latter and gave it meaning.

We find that, for St. John Baptist de La Salle, the school was a place where people were educated in the spirit of the gospel, and where everything was designed to provide an education that was social, moral, religious and related to the salvation of the individual. Brother León Lauraire confirms this observation.

This Christian orientation does not prevent the Lasallian school from offering a solid education in profane subjects, or having institutional, organisational goals that are social and professionally rigorous. Christian formation must be built upon a solid human formation and personal equilibrium.

But as is said repeatedly, a Christian school is, before all else, ambitious and anxious to form “true Christians”, “disciples of Jesus” whom it helps to bring about “their salvation”. (Lauraire, 2006).

It was clear to the Founder that it was not possible to separate a Christian education from a profane one. Indeed, in the Meditation for the Feast of St. Louis King of France, he invites the Brothers to form good subjects for the Church and for the State.

If this is the goal of the Institute of the Christian Schools, how can this be achieved? And what implications does this have for school life? In order to respond to these questions, we are proposing to reflect on the meaning of the phrase “touching hearts” in the educational thinking of John Baptist de La Salle in relation to the finality and charism of his Institute.

In analysing the language of the Founder, we can say that when he uses a word it is as a *locutoria* (saying something), seeking to symbolise his meaning as an *ilocutoria* (the intention) so as to elicit a response as a *perlocutoria* (a transforming response) in his Brothers. In other words, the richness of an expression does not reside in the fact of its being said but in the meaning that it entails.

In that sense, we need to understand that every expression we use contains symbolic language which enables what we are saying to be understood in such a way that it does not just communicate something but also generates links between individuals and enables them to locate themselves in their world. In other words, the expression “touching hearts” as used by John Baptist de la Salle led the Brothers of the time to an interpretation and line of action that delineated the Lasallian educational mission.

To understand the significance and meaning of this expression, we must point out that Monsieur de La Salle was adopting a phrase already in use at the time and employed by other spiritual writers. Brother Jacques Goussin¹ affirms that it is part of the religious heritage of the Church, used by many others such as St. Louis Grignon de Montfort, St. Jean Eudes and St. Vincent de Paul. The term was used to indicate an action directed to somebody with the intention of making them change their life, especially their Christian life.

For that reason, the expression acquires a religious connotation which is also personal. “Touching” goes beyond the idea of reaching, touching and making contact. It carries the meaning of ‘penetrating’, as when it is used in the vocabulary for fencing. As for the word “heart”, it refers to all that is most intimate and deeply personal in a human being, especially in the core of the individual will, intentionality, resolution and transformation into action. (Goussin, 2006)

The expression *toucher les cœurs* in French carries the idea of touching a heart with a wound which transforms a person’s life in its entirety. We can view the meaning of the expression from two angles: from that of the action which transforms and from that of the recipient. Both of the words in the expression bear a connotation which has special reference to the finality of the Institute and is full of symbolic meaning.

To touch means to cut into in the way a sword does, making a wound that penetrates and can destroy. The word “heart” goes beyond the mere biological connotation, and John Baptist de La Salle uses it to refer to the whole human person comprising thought, body and mind. Consequently, education from the Lasallian point of view not only transmits knowledge but also transforms the whole individual person, and in the last analysis leads to their salvation.

¹ For further references consult Lasallian Themes Vol 1, under “heart – touching hearts”.

I believe the use of the word “heart” is very important and significant, when our understanding of it is not restricted simply to feelings or expressions of affectivity, otherwise the result would be that gospel living would be reduced to one’s feelings and not to the whole person. For John Baptist de La Salle the symbolic meaning of the word “heart” has a holistic implication. It does not deny feelings and affectivity, but neither does it deny the mind which it takes for granted as part of the individual. Consequently, the use of the term ‘heart’ sums up in a certain way the role of the Institute, since the heart that is touched includes the human mind and spirit which are not separate but are brought into a harmonised unity.

This view of things seems to me to be pertinent for the role of evangelisation today, given that we often fall into the error of thinking that evangelising means just awakening feelings, but where it really means moving the whole person in their entirety and their transformation must be seen as occurring at the deepest level.

We cannot ignore the fact that the expression “touching hearts” includes the idea of a goal and purpose, namely to produce good Christians, and that implies the salvation of the pupils. This was a very significant step for the time of John Baptist de La Salle because he discovered and saw clearly that the goal of his work would be for individuals to encounter Jesus and so be saved. To achieve this goal, therefore, he proceeded to construct an educational environment which would facilitate education in secular and religious knowledge and skills. In other words, he generated a whole structure which would stimulate evangelisation.

The Founder was a very practical person who gave life to his ideas and put in place the means to accomplish what he was trying to do. So, he organised certain activities to ensure the evangelising work of “touching hearts”, and these activities are mentioned in his *Meditations*. For example, in MR 204 he talks about the correction or admonishing of the pupils when they make any mistakes; in MF 139 he exhorts the Brothers to be examples of faith so as to inspire their pupils to act in the same spirit. Other elements introduced by the Founder include the love for poverty and humility as a way of life (MF 180), the spirit of prayer, and naturally the spirit of zeal which he repeats in the phrase “ministers of God and of the Church” occupied in “touching hearts” (MR 201); the Brothers fulfill their mission with “the ardent zeal called for in the work of the Lord”.

However, this could not happen by itself. Monsieur de La Salle realised that this action of “touching hearts,” in the end, came down to Christ and to His Spirit. That means that the activity of education was directed to people’s salvation, but in a plain, down-to-earth manner, based on the keen conviction of the educator that achieving the goal is done through God. It is in this sense that Brother Léon Lauraire affirms that for this to be realised there needs to be an intense, personal relationship with the pupils on the part of the Brothers, because “it is this educational activity which makes it possible to acquire convictions, desires and the spirit of Christian living” (Lauraire, 2006).

The school is the ideal environment for the personal encounter which produces the transformation of children and young people. Thus, the example and lives of the Brothers prompt the action of God so that children will be saved. We can affirm that the meaning of the phrase “touching hearts” includes the idea of evangelising, which translates as producing good citizens and good Christians. And the Lasallian school is a good place to encourage people to seek an encounter with Jesus.

10.3 “Touching Hearts” in the World Today

We spoke earlier about the world of today, and we know that currently Lasallian activity is present in many countries, with varying situations and needs that are more and more pressing. We are aware

that people flock to our educational centres because they need to be educated so as to be better able to face the world. It is obvious that our centres are part of a secularised world in which religions of various forms coexist. We know that religion itself has gone through a profound change² in which classic beliefs have been questioned and, in many cases, left aside. As a result, religious practice has been demoted to secondary ranking, and in many of our educational centres people are no longer seeking to be evangelised.

The question still remains as to how we are to fulfill the purpose of the Institute in the world of the 21st century. The answer is not a simple one. Nor is there one answer which is applicable to each and every one of the different situations throughout the Institute. Consequently, rather than providing a textbook, we can aim to give a glimpse of some criteria inspired by John Baptist de La Salle, which will help to give an answer to the question one way or another.

Let us review what we have set out above so as to reach a proposal. First of all, it is pertinent to say that the schools envisaged by the Founder were Christian, which implies a certain identity and a way of viewing the world based on the gospel. This means there was a purpose for them, namely the Christian education of children and young people, which would result in them becoming good citizens and good Christians at the same time. For this to happen, it was necessary to generate an appropriate school environment which would lead to the “touching of hearts”, that is to say to a gospel change in people’s ways of being and behaving. A school is a place where one goes out to meet the other, and that explains why the Founder was so concerned that the Brothers should develop a serious, personal relationship with the pupils, which meant meeting the neediest in all solidarity so as to bring them to an encounter with the Risen Jesus.

The touching of the heart takes place to the extent that the pupils are capable of encountering the Other, so as to work with Him for the transformation of the world. The Lasallian school teaches that Christianity is able to have a dialogue with the world starting from its suffering and needs. That is the way we currently understand the idea of producing good citizens and good Christians. Everything starts with an encounter with the paschal event which transforms people interiorly and becomes explicit in improved living conditions.

Seen in this way, “the touching of hearts” will take place in all the activities of an educational centre, whether pastoral or academic, to the extent that they become spaces for inclusion and dialogue, open to diversity. At the same time, a solid academic education must be imparted to meet present and future needs. This happens in those places where the principal consideration is given to academic work, but also in those places where education is done differently, and personal formation seeks to be deep, actualised and innovative. In all places, however, the message of salvation must be presented. In some cases, this can be done through catechesis, in others through action of a pastoral nature. In other places still, where Christians are in the minority, it can be done through open dialogue with other religious faiths.

Certainly, the mission of the Institute in the 21st century is a shared one, given that many lay people, men and women, are called by God to carry out this work. So, the legacy of St. John Baptist de la Salle which impacted the Brothers is now influencing the lay Lasallians who are taking on the role of fulfilling the purpose of the Institute.

And so, we can say in the words of Brother León Lauraire: a Lasallian school endeavors to develop its pupils in all dimensions of a truly Christian faith (Lauraire, 2006). This comes about through the following features:

² cfr. *Metamorfosis de lo sagrado y futuro del cristianismo*. Juan Martín Velasco. Published in “Selecciones de Teología” 150 (1999) 127-146.

1. Direct contact with God in mental prayer and contemplation.
2. Knowledge of God acquired through study.
3. The community dimension through insertion into the local Church.
4. Commitment to society and the world through citizenship and civility.

Obviously, educational centres have found different ways to fulfill the mission entrusted to them, and in each country appropriate forms of evangelisation have been developed. But the goal remains the same, as does the sense of our activity. All the same, what Brother Léon Lauraire says about the purpose of a Lasallian school can be thought of as a life-journey of education. It is a journey of encounter born of necessity, and it reshapes the social order so that all of us - students, parents, teachers and others – are called on to collaborate in the work of God.

The call continues to be to “touch hearts”, and so the presentation of the gospel message requires boldness and creativity. Catechesis should respond to people’s needs and educate them accordingly rather than by indoctrination. Knowledge of the faith should be acquired in an environment of dialogue not of imposition. People should have the experience of living in a community which seeks a better future. Academic knowledge should be imparted to promote the growth of individuals in search of a better social standing.

Our big challenge in the 21st century is to bring about the “touching of hearts” through personal and institutional example. Today, there is a need for a fairer society, more concerned for people’s dignity, where individuals can understand one another through dialogue, where we can all come to the point where we change our hearts of stone to hearts of flesh (cf. Ez 11: 19) so as to manifest the presence of the Risen Jesus who calls us and sends us to an encounter which is aimed at our salvation.

CONCLUSIONS TO PART TWO CHALLENGES FROM OUR SITUATION

Community Discernment, in Fidelity to the Lasallian Itinerary

Having become aware of the developments in the scope of Lasallian schools since their origins, we realise that education in the faith makes serious demands on us as educators in the context of the 21st century. The texts we have read call our attention especially to the following points.

- *The challenges of our situation*, which are due to political, social and religious complexities. The Lasallian school is immersed in a web of tensions and conflicts which require us to have a faith that is in constant discernment. We need to give a gospel sense to politics, to return the school to the social position it should occupy as the place for reflection and for constructing possibilities for the future. All this must be based on the power of God's Word, which calls on us to touch the hearts of those whom God has entrusted to us, in view of the Kingdom of God and following in the footsteps of Jesus.
- *The Challenges of Life in Community*. There is no educational experience that is not rooted in a community with its own particular history and life journey. There is a call to review the cultural criteria which support and give life to our shared faith, and this is indispensable if we are to strengthen our provision of an education in the faith with meaning and transcendence. Hence our values are not just 'extras' but are the means for energising an experience which is transcendent and open to the future.
- *The Challenges that Come from the Encounter with Jesus*, who is living and present in our community. We know that without Him the educational experience we are offering will have no meaning. It is he who gives us our goal as children of God and brothers and sisters to one another. With Him, we walk forward to full human development. Cultivation of an interior life is not an extra but a fundamental axis in education for men and women who are capable of living their vocation to be fully human authentically through their faith.
- *The Challenges that Come from Accompaniment*. The educational relationship involves the commitment of an educator as a witness and a disciple of Jesus, as an older brother/sister in faith. Right from the start, our Holy Founder called on us to be ministers of the gospel. The needs of the children, young people and adults whom we educate require us to have new tools so as to be able to walk beside them, to understand them in their particular situations and to know how to share with them the Word of salvation that is Jesus Himself who speaks to them through us in the school.

Just as we did for the *Conclusion of Part One*, we would like to receive *Notes* on the topics presented here and on all the challenging questions that come to us in educating for the faith. Your contributions will continue to be important for the work of drawing up the *Declaration*.

Please refer back to the *Methodology suggested for the work of reflection* in Part One.

PART THREE

DIALOGUE IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

PART THREE

DIALOGUE IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

Presentation

The third part of this publication focuses on the reflection on the faith-culture dialogue seen from the complexity of the Lasallian world of the 21st century. It unveils the product of a *Symposium on Lasallian Pedagogy and Interfaith Dialogue in the Lasallian Region of Asia-Pacific* (PARC) and four reflections that provide a particular reading from diverse Lasallian educational experiences: from Lasallian higher education of the United States of America and in Mexico, from Lasallian formal education in India and from non-formal Lasallian education in Cuba.

We start from the fact that more than three hundred years ago the world of John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers of the Christian Schools had broken up violently because of the Protestant Reformation. In France of the time of Louis XIV a respectful dialogue between different religious confessions was unthinkable: the choices were extreme and the survival of some represented the disappearance of the others. In this context our Founder, as a Catholic priest, lived his vocation determined to maintain and promote fidelity to the Church of Rome and the Holy Father. He worked tirelessly to form his Brothers in the truths of faith sustained by the Magisterium of the Church. He wrote and promoted the use of lucid catechisms adapted to the mentality of Christians of all ages - children, parents and teachers - who needed to nurture their faith in order to attain salvation. Our schools were present in communities of deep Christian-Catholic tradition and conviction.

Today we are in a totally different context. The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools continues promoting educational works that serve a population increasingly heterogeneous in their religious convictions and practices. Some educational experiences even occur in contexts where the presence of Christians is a minority or almost nil. What questions do Lasallians who exercise their educational ministry raise in such different contexts? What are their challenges and proposals? Some works of this third part try to situate themselves within this new reality. Even within the Western world, historically marked by a Christian culture, today we ask ourselves as educators to what extent this proposal is echoed in the new secularized generations of children, youth and adults. Is it possible to think of values, peace and commitment to the poor from these contexts where faith plays a secondary, unwanted or non-existent role?

We hope that the reading of these works will encourage the search for new questions from each particular context. What do we have to realize in order to promote a sincere dialogue between our expectations as Lasallian educators and those whom God has entrusted to our service in the school?

THE LASALLIAN EXPERIENCE OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN PARC

*Symposium on Lasallian Pedagogy and Inter-Religious Dialogue
La Salle College, Bangna, Bangkok, Thailand
July 25-29, 2017*

*“God wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge
of the truth”*

MTR 1.1, SJBDLS

11.1 Lasallians in Pacific-Asia

The life of John Baptist de La Salle speaks of ongoing participation in God’s salvation story of love, compassion, and mercy towards all, especially those who are poor. By the time of his death in 1719, the foundation established by the Founder and his companions was present in many cities throughout the predominantly Catholic country of France. Three centuries later the Brothers and their educational communities are in eighty plus countries, serving the youth in contexts that differ radically from its foundation years.

Since 1852, we have countless men and women in many countries in Pacific-Asia that followed in the footsteps of St. La Salle. Not only are they from countries that are not Christian, many are also from predominantly Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim nations, with Catholics as a tiny minority. We, men and women are now called Lasallians. We come from different backgrounds and of varied religious traditions, and some of us not even practice any religion at all. In spite of the diversity, we have shown that we can work together towards the common good, as well as collective intentions and goals.

The most recent *Rule* of the Brothers acknowledges this: “The Lasallian mission, at both the national and international level, is expanding in secularized, pluri-religious, and multi-cultural contexts.” It then advises: “In these contexts, the Brothers strive to enter into a respectful dialogue with the persons they are called to serve” (*Rule* 2015, 14.1). This brief document attempts to elaborate on what the *Rule* prescribes and will be guided by the experience and reflections of Lasallians in Pacific-Asia. It will also identify ways in which the Gospel can be preached through respectful dialogue and presence with those who adhere to different religious traditions or to no religion at all.

11.2 Lasallian Theology of Dialogue

We, Lasallians, have always been working in religiously plural and secular contexts across the 16 countries in Pacific-Asia. We strive to provide quality education and formation that helps people become better persons, respectful of the variety of cultural-ethnic backgrounds and religious traditions. In fact, our Lasallian educational communities, by tradition, have been spaces where inclusive fraternity and communion are experienced. There is a deliberate effort on our part to help build relationships that cut across faith traditions and other belief systems that are more secular in nature.

In a sense, our Lasallian educational communities are laboratories of communion. Apart from imparting a quality holistic education, we acknowledge how varied religious traditions and other belief systems that are secular, if it's ever to live up to their potential good, can educate and empower people to generate action and witness that promotes peace, justice, genuine human development, communion, and unity in diversity that makes a society better for the good of the future generations. One can say that Lasallians *with-ness* to the values of the Gospel primarily through the promotion of witness among all persons, irrespective of culture, creed or religion.

This is in keeping with Catholic teachings, as clearly spelled out in the 2013 Vatican document *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love (EID)*, which insists that Catholic schools “must give voice and reality to an education truly based around the human person, in line with Christian humanist culture and tradition. There must be new commitment to the individual seen as ‘person in communion’ and a new sense of his or her belonging to society” (*EID*, 46). Thus, altruistic values in harmony with the Gospel are the basis for collaboration.

Moreover, the document stresses, Catholic schools “are to be open to encountering other cultures. They have the task of supporting individuals so that each person develops his or her own identity in an awareness of its richness and cultural tradition” (*EID*, 50). Thus, rather than seeking to convert persons to Catholicism, our Lasallian educational communities aim at helping persons of different faith traditions live up to the most humanizing and positive elements of their own faith traditions or other means by which they find ultimate meaning and transcendence in life. In this sense, our Lasallian educational communities help Buddhists become better Buddhists, Muslims better Muslims, and Hindus, better Hindus. The theological basis for this is the teachings of the Second Vatican Council which asserts that:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men... The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men (*Nostra Aetate*, 2).

11.3 Lasallian Practice in Pacific-Asia

It is in view of this theology of inclusiveness and communion that our Lasallian educational communities have been welcoming of all persons regardless of religious affiliation or secular attitudes. For those who practice and live the Catholic faith, they are called to ongoing growth and renewal. For those who are nominal in their practice, they are called to renew and deepen their commitment. For those who have stopped practicing their faith, they are called to a deeper understanding of their differences or conflicts with Catholicism.

For all persons, it is a call to be formed into being good persons, developing through one's own faith life and religious background. Thus, Lasallians of other Christian denominations or faith traditions or of no religion at all are invited to appreciate the fullness of the Gospel message and knowledge of Christ Jesus without necessarily becoming Catholic. This has been the prevailing practice in our Lasallian educational communities throughout Pacific-Asia ever since its beginnings. One is reminded that the French priest Fr. Jean-Marie Beurel, MEP, who had invited the Brothers to establish a mission in Singapore in 1852 had made the following announcement in anticipation of the Brothers' arrival:

The principles upon which the Brothers' school is based will be as liberal as possibly can be: thus, it will be open to everyone, whatever his creed may be; and should, for instance, a boy of a persuasion different from that of Roman Catholics wish to attend it, no interference whatever will take place with his religion, unless his parents or guardians express their wishes to have him instructed in the Catholic religion. (*A Shared Mission*, 1997, p.14)

The 1966-1967 Institute document *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration* affirms this as a reality applicable to the entire Institute: "Not all those who come to the Christian school are looking for an education that is explicitly Christian. A contemporary sensitivity to the demands of religious freedom obliges us not to impose indiscriminately the same catechesis on all of our students, especially when dealing with adolescents" (*Declaration*, 39.2). Elaborating on how the Good News can then be preached in an increasingly secularized, pluri-religious, and multi-cultural context, the 2015 *Rule* of the Brothers advises:

In their contact with people with different religious traditions, or in highly pluralistic or secularized countries, the Brothers seek inventive ways to announce the Gospel; the witness of a Christian presence and fraternal relations, gratuitous service, the experience of prayer in common, interreligious dialogue, and sharing with one another the story of Jesus Christ. (*Rule* 2015, 17.2)

11.4 Announcing the Gospel through Dialogue

Thus, we Lasallians, announce the Gospel, firstly, by witnessing to God's love through the ministry of presence and by promoting fraternal relations. This ministry is often referred to as the interfaith "dialogue of life" where Lasallians who come from very diverse religious and secular backgrounds relate to one another and live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. In simple terms it means reaching out to one's religious or secular neighbor to be with them, talk to them, and just get to know them as fellow human beings. These are occasions where bridges are built between persons who adhere to different religions and secularist views and, in the process, prejudices and misconceptions about the religious/secular other are reduced, if not altogether removed. This is greatly facilitated when our Lasallian educational communities actively enroll students or employ teachers who adhere to other religions and secularist views not because there are not enough Catholics taking up those positions but because they are convinced that inclusiveness and having the diversity of faith traditions/secular views within our communities is integral to what it means to be Christian.

Secondly, Lasallian institutions announce the Gospel through providing gratuitous service. When persons of different religions and secular backgrounds engage in this together it is also referred to as the interfaith "dialogue of works". The *Rule* establishes this as very much in line with the Institute's mission: "When they work with Partners with different beliefs and religious traditions, the Brothers seek to establish common ground for cooperation on the basis of the promotion of human dignity, solidarity among all human beings, and the integral development of the individual, in line with the Lasallian tradition" (*Rule* 2015, 17.2). Many of our educational communities do provide avenues for the students to be of service to the community, especially since the virtue of service is one of the cardinal traits of the Lasallian charism. In the context of pluralist societies, our Lasallian educational communities explore opportunities where we can engage in these acts on behalf of society in partnership with institutions belonging to another religion. Such opportunities of collaborative action are then seen not only as occasions for rendering community service but also as occasions for interfaith cooperation, bringing persons of different religions and secularist backgrounds together for the sake of the common good.

Thirdly, our Lasallian educational communities announce the Gospel through the formal activity of inter-religious dialogue, which includes the telling of the story of Jesus. This is often regarded as the interfaith “dialogue of theological exchange”. They are occasions for the honest and authentic sharing and exchange of one’s faith. This, of course, is a reciprocal process where both parties share and both parties also learn. The *Rule* points out that this dialogue “presupposes openness and a willingness to listen, to learn, to witness to Gospel values and, as far as possible, to announce the Word of God” (*Rule* 2015, 14.1). The study of the world’s religions assists this dialogue tremendously as it helps the various parties understand and appreciate the beliefs and practices of their religious, as well as, secular neighbors. A necessary dimension of this dialogue for Christians is the telling of the story of Jesus of Nazareth, with a similar invitation to one’s dialogue partner to tell the story of their religious founder or other saintly figures.

Important elements in the Gospel story would be how Jesus reached out to the suffering, lepers, Gentiles, and sinners, how he was concerned about the widow and the sick, and the way he responded to and taught about people who were outcasts. For Jesus, being inclusive of all persons was a priority and so, for him, salvation was understood as the ability for the outcast and downtrodden to be accepted in love and be able to live again and, indeed, have life and have it to the fullest (John 10:10). This is the story that has to be communicated to one’s dialogue partner, in view of inviting them to appreciating Christianity’s respect for their religious traditions or secularist views.

Fourthly, as Lasallians, we announce the Gospel by facilitating the experience of prayer in common between persons of different religions. This is often called the interfaith “dialogue of religious experience”. There are occasions where the community worships together by participating in prayer services where no one feels excluded. We witness to a Christian faith which is respectful of the other religious traditions, valuing them as contributing to the spirituality of the world and holiness of all beings. Our Lasallian schools introduce this dialogue by engaging in little steps such as encouraging their students to visit the places of worship of their religious neighbors. Or, we encourage our Christian students to participate in the fast along with our Muslim friends during the month of Ramadan so we can experience our neighbor’s religion. Our educational communities also conscientiously adapt school policies and requirements so that our students and staff of the different religions are able to practice their faith authentically and give witness to them. We also educate our students on specific religious observances of their Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu students the same way we make announcements about Christian observances such as Lent, All Souls Day, Advent, or Easter. Of course, where these feasts can be celebrated together they are the perfect occasions for facilitating the experience of common prayer and celebrate our unity in diversity.

These are the four kinds of dialogue that the *Rule* and the *Federation of Asian Bishops Conference* (FABC) invite the Lasallians to be conscious of and to employ as the method for announcing the Gospel in pluralistic contexts. Many of our Lasallian educational communities in Pacific-Asia are engaged in the first and second kinds of dialogue. This is the dialogue of shared life and the dialogue of shared works. The third kind of dialogue which involves theological exchange or shared discourse may not be seen as something immediately felt in the primary and secondary schools, yet dialogue does take place at age appropriate levels.

Furthermore, a higher level of shared discourse does happen in tertiary educational communities where the demand for greater appreciation and understanding goes through a more rigorous academic processes and standards. In some instances, such as youth gatherings involving students of different faith traditions, there are also some experiences of shared worship and prayer characteristic of the fourth kind of dialogue. Where feasible, all our Lasallian educational communities do strive towards making all four kinds of dialogue a living reality. At all levels, mutual respect is a condition, and at the same time, our aim is to build a culture of dialogue as a way of life based on universal rights:

right to life; physical integrity; and fundamental freedoms, namely freedom of conscience, of thought, of expression, and of religion. They can be read as symbolizing our readiness to fully accept and respect the faiths and religious practices of our students and teachers who are not Christians or the secularist views and attitudes of some students and teachers who have no religion at all. Such meaningful gestures can go a long way in enabling them to feel a sense of belonging to the Lasallian educational community.

At the end of the day, as Lasallians, we believe in promoting the Gospel by living the spirituality and charism of St. La Salle in today's world. We believe in discovering and arriving to "the knowledge of truth" by being a humble presence (*with-ness*) and witness (good example) coupled with a simplicity of life and communion with the poor, other cultures, religions, and other belief systems that are secular in nature.

WHERE ARE THE COLLEGE STUDENTS? SERVING THE POOR THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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12.1 Introduction

In 2016, the chapel at Manhattan College installed a collection of historic windows depicting the life and mission of the Founder. On a visit to the chapel with a course, one student asked why De La Salle was only seen with children. “Where are the college students?” she inquired. With a seemingly straightforward inquiry, this student touched upon a very important set of questions that many in the Lasallian world have asked: What is the significance of higher education for the Lasallian movement? In other words, where are college and university students in the Lasallian story?

As many have pointed out, the emergence of Lasallian higher education is somewhat perplexing given the passionate focus of Saint John Baptist de La Salle on the education of poor *children*. Looking back today, of course, we can see precursors in training programs established by the Founder for teachers, but the development of formal institutes of higher learning in the nineteenth century was a notable development of the Lasallian mission.¹

The formal development of institutes of higher learning by the Brothers of the Christian Schools represents one of the greatest experiments within the Lasallian movement. The Brothers in the United States, in many ways, took the lead in this educational laboratory founding some of the first Lasallian Colleges and universities in the world. Manhattan College was founded in 1853, followed by La Salle College in Philadelphia in 1863.

The emergence of these experiments did not come from a grand strategic plan by a general chapter to make inroads into higher education. Rather, the establishment of the six Lasallian colleges in the United States was a direct response to specific social and ecclesial context in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Over the past century, the charism has guided these institutions through several distinct periods.

a. Founding the Colleges (1850s-1930s): The mid to late nineteenth century was marked by a number of factors that called for and demanded the establishment of a range of Catholic institutions, including schools, colleges, hospitals, and social service agencies staffed by a growing number of congregations of vowed religious women and men. For instance, Manhattan College was one of forty-two Catholic

¹ See Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, “The Lasallian Mission at the Tertiary Level Address to IALU Encuentro IX,” in *Lasallian Centers of Higher Education*, Bulletin no. 252 (Rome: Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2010), 23–40.

colleges founded in the US in the 1850s.² The contours that defined this moment of institutional growth included:

- an exploding population of Catholics (from 663,000 in 1849 to more than four million in 1870) as a result of massive flows of poor, mostly rural, European immigrants;³
- the impact of the US Civil War (1861- 1865) and the end of slavery;
- anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant sentiments;
- great social and economic disparities accompanying the industrial revolution;
- official mandates by bishops for the establishment of parochial schools in each parish; and
- an anti-modern and anti-democratic ecclesial position (Syllabus of Errors -1864).

This context deeply shaped the founding mission and vision of the first Lasallian Colleges in the United States. They were serving a community of students, almost exclusively sons of Catholic European immigrants who faced a social context that was largely hostile. Providing Catholic higher education was critical to alleviate the suffering of a poor underclass. Unfortunately, despite a strong attention to poor European immigrants, the needs of many Hispanics and African Americans were largely ignored by most of the institutional Church at the time.

b. Rapid Growth (1930s – 1960s): Like other intuitions of higher education, the six Lasallian colleges in the United States experienced a tremendous growth following the Second World War. Here again, the Lasallian colleges adapted to the changing context. White Catholics were increasingly seen as “American” and they rose to the ranks of the middle class. Returning veterans, supported by government grants, filled colleges and demanded more specialized education. Lasallian colleges responded with more opportunities and degree programs.

c. Post-Conciliar Context (1960s-1990s): The children of the war generation, the “baby boomers,” saw the greatest change in Lasallian education in the 1960s and 1970s. A rising economic and social position of Catholics in the United States (consider the election of President Kennedy in 1960) raised the bar for Catholic colleges, with many seeking to be recognized as research universities.

At the same time, the social changes of the civil rights movement, women’s movement, and post-conciliar reform movements, had a profound impact on Catholic higher education. Many colleges merged, some smaller ones dissolved. And nearly all that had been single sex became co-educational. For the Lasallian colleges, that meant accepting women. Saint Mary’s of Minnesota accepted women in 1969. St. Mary’s of California, Christian Brothers in Memphis, and La Salle in Philadelphia in 1970. Manhattan College became co-educational in 1973.

Following the historic meeting of a few Catholic college administrators in 1967, which called for “institutional autonomy and academic freedom,” most Catholic colleges, including the six Lasallian ones, took the monumental step of incorporating as separate entities run by boards of trustees composed of lay and religious members.⁴ At the same time, the faculty, staff and students were becoming increasingly diverse in terms of religion and race. High schools linked to the colleges closed or became separate entities. The study of Catholic theology, moved from a top down catechetical approach to a more academic approach inclusive of multiple religious perspectives. The active visibility of Brothers decreased with an increased role of lay partners and changes in the Institute’s demographics. And the size and scope of the colleges grew. For example, in this period,

² Doris Gottemoeller, “History of Catholic Institutions in the United States,” *New Theology Review* 14, no. 2 (2001): 20.

³ Ibid., 19.

⁴ John I. Jenkins, “The Document That Changed Catholic Education Forever,” *America Magazine*, July 11, 2017, www.americamagazine.org.

four of the six became universities: Lewis in 1973; La Salle in 1984; Christian Brothers in 1990; and St. Mary's of Minnesota in 1995.

d. Post-Modern Context (1990s- today): Today, the context of the six Lasallian colleges and universities in the United States looks very different from its mid-nineteenth century origins. At the beginning, the colleges were serving almost an exclusively undergraduate Catholic male population of European ethnicity. Today, the student population looks very different. In addition to 17,678 undergraduates, Lasallian colleges in the United States serve over 9,000 graduate students.⁵ Self-identified Catholics represent only 46 percent of the students. Also, the student population is much more ethnically diverse. The founding generation was almost exclusively “white.” Today, white students make up 52 percent of population. Hispanic and Latinos comprise about 14% of the student body.⁶

The faculty and staff also look very different from when the colleges had many Brothers in the classroom a century ago. Out of more than 3,000 faculty members only thirty-four Brothers serve as full-time faculty in the six colleges and universities.⁷ Among the most visible of these changes have been the appointments of the first generation of college presidents who are not Brothers at five of the six institutes. St. Mary's California appointed the first non-Brother president in 2003; Manhattan College and Christian Brothers University in 2009; La Salle in 2015; and Lewis University in 2016.

12.2 Fundamental Challenges

These changes, while largely positive, raise two fundamental challenges concerning the future and mission of Lasallian Catholic Higher Education:

- How can we maintain a Catholic Lasallian identity in a pluralistic context?

In contrast to the mid-nineteenth century, our institutions are no longer operating within a thick Catholic subculture. What is more, the defensive walls of Catholicism have opened up, especially with Pope Francis, to a missionary and dialogical community. Large percentages of students and faculty are of another or no faith tradition.⁸ Yet, this does not mean they are not interested in spirituality, religion, or even theology. In response to these changes across Catholic higher educations, scholars have begun to highlight the value of what they are describing as the “Catholic intellectual tradition.” In order to remain true to our identity, Lasallian Colleges and universities must find ways to communicate to their students and faculty—of all and no faiths—the richness of this tradition which includes: the integration of faith and reason; a respect for the cumulative wisdom of the past; an anti-elitist bent; attention to the communal dimension of all human behavior; concern for integration of knowledge; and the sacramental principle.⁹

A very important way to do this is by mandating that all students take a certain number of courses in religion/theology, philosophy, and the humanities, what are often called course programs. Campus

⁵ Jonathon L. Wiggins, Michal Kramarek, and Jonathon Holland, *Schools, Educational Centers, Youth and Family Services, and Support Ministries: A Report for the Brothers of the Christian Schools Lasallian Region of North America (RELAN) 2016-2017 Statistical Report* (Washington, DC: Christian Brothers Conference, 2017), 75.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 100

⁸ See the excellent new study on this trend by the (Lasallian) St. Mary's Press: Robert J. McCarty and John M. Vitek, *Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics* (Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 2018).

⁹ Monika Hellwig, “The Catholic Intellectual Tradition in the Catholic University,” in *Examining the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*, ed. Anthony Cenera and Oliver Morgan (Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University Press, 2000), 1–18. In his 2009 address to IALU, Br. Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, cited this document and affirmed the importance of these six dimensions for Lasallian education.

ministry also plays a key role in sharing the spirituality, practices, and values of the tradition; as do high-level administrative positions (e.g., vice president) empowered to address concerns of mission and identity.

Equally important, however, is the formation of faculty and staff in the Lasallian Catholic tradition. Programs like the *IALU University Leadership Program* in Rome, the *Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies*, and the *John Johnston Institute* are all important tools. But we must also, as Br. Craig Franz has pointed out, “hire for mission. Faculty must be brought to our institutions who not only demonstrate competence in their specific areas of expertise, but also bond with us emotionally and spiritually.”¹⁰ Whether Catholic or not, they must be open to the fullness of the Lasallian tradition and they must be given the support to explore what this tradition means. Making use of the Lasallian network to develop more collaboration across the universities is an important way for our faculty to see that our shared identity is a resource and not a liability.

- How can our colleges embody the Lasallian mission of serving the poor through education?

For colleges and universities today, there is a serious temptation, as Pope Francis recently warned, that we see “a university degree as synonymous with higher status, with more money or social prestige.”¹¹ Indeed, the pressures facing the six Lasallian colleges in the United States to fit into a corporate and consumerist model are enormous.

Serving the poor through education, as we know, has several dimensions. First and foremost, there is the direct task of offering the poor education. Our students today, are far more privileged than the first generation of immigrant students. Like all private colleges in the United States, our institutions are expensive. The average tuition at the six colleges is \$35,347 with an additional \$11,448 for accommodation. While our institutions offer 19,082 students some form of assistance, the fact remains that education is an enormous cost and many students graduate tens of thousands of dollars in debt.¹²

Second, attending to the needs of the poor also must mean that we take a special concern for students who are marginalized. In today’s US context, Hispanics and Latinos make up a large percentage of young adult Americans, yet they are only 14 percent of students and 6 percent of faculty and staff. Serving the needs of the poor must include a greater outreach to Hispanics and Latinos, including those who are undocumented, and to African Americans. We must also attend to the realities of young women, Muslims, and LGBTQ students and make clear that discrimination or violence against any of these groups has no place on a Lasallian Catholic campus.

A third dimension of serving the poor is to form our students with a sense of responsibility in the face of human suffering and environmental exploitation. Our colleges and universities are doing that through thought community-based learning programs, solidarity and immersion trips, and degree programs related to social justice. More, however, can be done to integrate Catholic social teaching into all our area of study, including business, science, engineering, and health programs.

¹⁰ Craig J. Franz, “True to a Vision, Steadfast to a Dream,” in *Reflections on Lasallian Higher Education: Current Opportunities and Future Visions* (Moraga, CA: International Association of Lasallian Universities, 2006), 35.

¹¹ “Pope Francis Address to the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador” (Quito, Ecuador, July 7, 2015).

¹² Wiggins, Kramarek, and Holland, *Schools, Educational Centers, Youth and Family Services, and Support Ministries: A Report for the Brothers of the Christian Schools Lasallian Region of North America (RELAN) 2016-2017 Statistical Report*, 90–94.

Finally, our institutions can better serve the poor if we come to realize that they are, as Ignacio Ellacuría, SJ pointed out, “social forces” in society.¹³ In other words, we must ask ourselves if and how our institutions function in their communities in relation to the marginalized? How do we use our investments? How do we treat our employees, including part time faculty? What policies do we have in terms of caring for creation? All of these require discernment in relation to our mission.

12.3 Looking to the Future with Hope

Lasallian colleges and universities stand at the intersection of two major institutions: The Catholic Church and higher education. Given the many transformations taking place within both these institutions today, it is no wonder that Lasallian colleges and universities are asking questions about mission and identity. In this present postmodern context, there is indeed, as Br. José Cervantes, FSC has pointed out, “no guarantee that the university as a [Lasallian] Catholic university will continue to survive.”¹⁴ While it is unclear what the future holds for our individual colleges, I am confident that as we move forward with continued openness to where God is calling us and with an eye to the needs of the poor, the answer to my student’s question will be clear. Where are the college students? They are at the heart of the heart of the Lasallian mission.

¹³ Ignacio Ellacuría, “Commencement Address” (Santa Clara University, June 1982), www.scu.edu.

¹⁴ José Cervantes, “The Future of the Catholic University Facing Postmodern Times,” in *Reflections on Lasallian Higher Education: Current Opportunities and Future Visions*, 15.

13

**FRATERNAL DIALOGUE:
A PEDAGOGICAL ALTERNATIVE
TO PROMOTE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENTS
FOR PEACE CONSTRUCTION.
THE LASALLIAN PEDAGOGY VIEWPOINT**

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Dialogue is what makes peace.
You cannot have peace without dialogue.
Pope Francis

13.1 Introduction

This study presents a vision of the university as a context in which the construction of peace is favored by the integration of fraternal dialogue as a pedagogical alternative in community coexistence and in the educational process. Texts related to these topics are cited from Church, educational, international organizations and, of course, Lasallian thinking. The different elements that intercede in the construction of peace environments are analyzed. In addition, the main elements of the hypothesis are addressed in the study: the construction of peace environments, university education and fraternal dialogue.

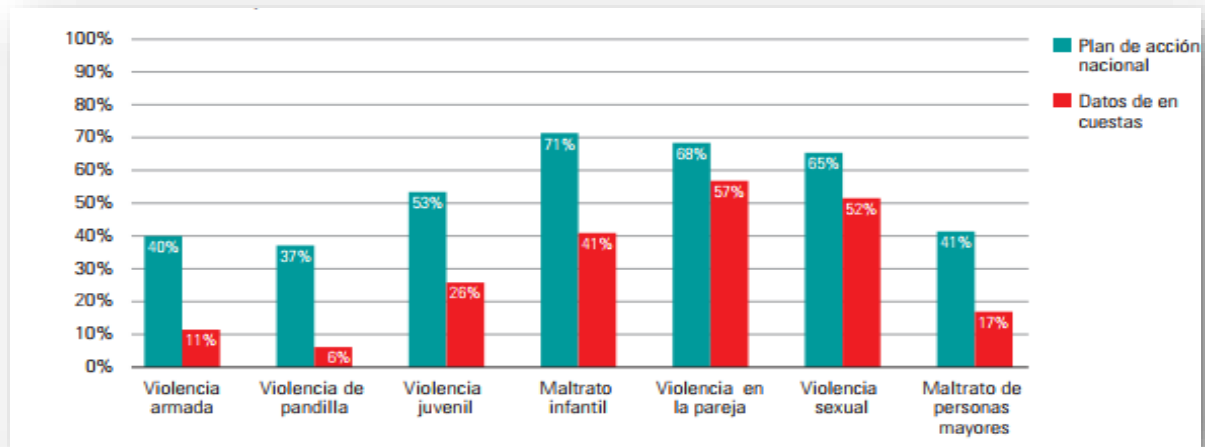
13.2 University environments for Peace Construction. Contextualization of the Study.

The report of the World Health Organization (WHO) states data on violence from 133 countries that include 6.1 billion people; these data represent 88% of the world population. The response comes from: 63% of the population of the Eastern Mediterranean Region; 70% of the African Region; 83% of the European Region; 88% of the Region of the Americas, and 97% of the Regions of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific¹.

In Figure No. 1, the WHO describes the various forms of violence in the regions of the world and the action plans to stop them. However, these are figures that call one's attention towards and challenge the search for assertive, concrete, and realistic alternatives of solutions that focus on vulnerable populations and that are accessible to all contexts.

¹ World Health Organization (WHO), 2014, p. 12

Figure # 1: The percentage of countries with survey data and national action plans, by type of violence (n = 133 countries). Source: WHO (2014), p. 12



An important point to consider are the consequences of these violent actions on people, such as, among others:

- physical consequences: injuries, burns, fractures, disfigurements.
- mental health and behavioral problems: depression, stress, problems of addiction, eating disorders, suicidal behavior.
- sexual and reproductive health: involuntary pregnancies, abortions, infections.
- chronic diseases: cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disorders.

The above are just some examples of the consequences of actions of violence; surely there will be many more that we do not observe and that hurt people, leaving in them feelings that, if not properly channeled, are very likely to turn into violence as well, thus continuing in the development of undesirable environments.

The study that is presented does not attempt to generalize its affirmations to the whole Lasallian reality. Its perspective is based on the reality of Mexico in the field of higher education, although some coincidences with other global environments are found, according to the bibliography used and the interviews conducted.

Unfortunately, at present, young people in Mexico City are living in environments with little dialogue, due to the movement of a city with more than 20 million people, coupled with the inadequate use of technologies that use an increasingly compact and less clear language. Young people can have a large number of followers in social networks, but in reality, they do not have a friend or interlocutor with whom to talk and develop dialogue in an appropriate manner. For this reason, leading them to fraternal dialogue for the solution of their conflicts is a task that we must carry out every day and within an environment that encourages it. Hence, this is the importance of the University in its entirety, for this purpose.

On the other hand, in some sectors of our country there persist cultural practices that foment violent attitudes, such as the resolution of problems in an aggressive way, the exaltation of the superiority of men over women, the inheritance of conflicts between families from generation to generation, etc. This affects the behavior of university students when they try to respond to difficult situations.

- For the development of this investigation, the conflict or the handling of different points of view against the same fact is not denied; what it suggests is that this reality is addressed from the dialogue to agree on a fraternal solution that does not involve violent actions.
- Research problem: Does the systematized integration of fraternal dialogue, as a pedagogical alternative from the perspective of Lasallian pedagogy, propitiate the construction of peace environments in the university community?
- General objective: Explain how fraternal dialogue, from the perspective of Lasallian pedagogy, can be systematically integrated as a pedagogical alternative that contributes to the construction of peaceful environments in the university community.
- Research questions: What does fraternal dialogue mean from the perspective of Lasallian Pedagogy? What is meant by pedagogical alternative? How is the concept of building peace environments explained? How is the systematized integration of fraternal dialogue explained as a pedagogical alternative?
- Hypothesis: The construction of peace environments in the university community will be promoted through the systematized integration of fraternal dialogue as a pedagogical alternative.

13.3 Methodology

This document presents a general vision of the role of fraternal dialogue as a value that can lead to the construction of peaceful environments. This responds to the current situation that occurs in Mexico and that we live in many parts of the world, which manifests itself in many different ways, some explicit and many more implicit, but which ultimately cause the destruction of people, communities and societies.

The 45th General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools invites us to share the criteria of the vitality of the Lasallian mission, as is the case of the quality of human relations in all areas: "the struggle against all forms of violence, whether physical, emotional or sexual, towards children"². In the same way, the United Nations Organization in the 2030 goals expresses in this regard, the need to:

Build and adapt educational facilities that take into account the needs of children and people with disabilities and gender differences, and that offer safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. The quality of human relations in all areas is another challenge and the fight against all forms of violence, whether physical, emotional or sexual, towards children.³

The *Lasallian Regional Pact for children and youth*, among other points, defends the need to strengthen - within the educational processes we encourage - a culture of recognition, compassion,

²cf. Circular 469, *Documents of the 45th General Chapter*. Source: http://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Circ469_Actas45CG_eng.pdf, p. 23.

³ UNESCO (2017), p. 7

inclusion, dialogue and deep respect for life.⁴ On the other hand, the *Lasallian Latin American Regional Educational Project* conceives the educational community as a place for reflection and dialogue, which recognizes diversity and encourages observation and critical study of reality. It is also perceived as a place for encountering God through the integration of dialogue faith and culture in the formative process⁵. The aforementioned documents make up, among others, a framework of reference for the study that is presented below.

In addition to the bibliography and digital information reviewed, the study was enriched with interviews with Brothers from different Districts of the Lasallian world⁶; all provided very interesting information about their countries of origin in the construction of peace environments, as well as the actions and values that animate these environments in their educational realities. The coinciding elements commented by the Brothers were very revealing for this study, since they point to common values that guide towards a sense of commitment, coherence and testimony that mark the difference between those of peace environments and those that are not. These coincidences have to do with work in favor of justice, respect, non-discrimination and equity. Also for this study six Mexican professionals were consulted⁷, who provided very valuable opinions on the subject, as well as a bibliography to review. This allowed the construction of a frame of reference for the document presented.

13.4 Fundamental concepts

- Peace:

It is the process for the realization of justice at different levels of the human relationship. It is a dynamic concept that leads us to bring out, face and resolve conflicts in a non-violent way and the goal is to achieve the harmony of the person with himself, with nature and with other people.

- Construction of peace environments:

"Educating for peace, without a doubt, involves educating about conflict, which should not be confused with violence. We should devote more time to learn from our own conflicts, because peace is nothing but the 'higher phase of conflict', i.e. the stage where conflicts are transformed by the people and communities positive, creative and non-violent way"⁸.

"In the words of Lederach, the transformation of conflicts means anticipating the ebbs and flows of social conflicts and responding to them as life-giving opportunities for creating processes towards a constructive change that reduces violence, increases justice in direct interactions and social structures

⁴ PERLA (2012).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Five interviews were held with Brothers: Daoud Kassabry, of the Brotherhood College of Jerusalem, Palestine; John Xavier Raja, of the High School of St. James in India; Ramiro Velastegui, from the Pastoral Center La Salle Habana Cuba; Alexander Zapata, District Director Pastoral JV, Medellín, Colombia; and Manuel Pajarillo, from the DLSU University of the Philippines.

⁷ The professionals consulted were: Dr. Ramsés Sánchez Soberano. Director of Academic Processes of Doctorate of the La Salle University Mexico, specialist in social subjects, of Education and Politics; Mtra Ma. Teresa Rabell Villamil, teacher of the International Center for Distance Education in subjects of Catechesis, Pastoral and Religious Sciences, Academic Director of the Federation of Private Schools, author of textbooks of Mathematics, Spanish and topics of Catechesis and Pastoral, Trainer of Young Lasallian Brothers; Lic. Oscar Gutiérrez Navas, Theologian, Philosopher, Specialist in Missiology, Teacher in the Cuba Project, Trainer of young Lasallian Brothers; Dr. Eduardo Gómez Ramírez, Director of Postgraduate and Research at the Universidad La Salle México, expert in Computer Engineering, Control Systems Engineering, Mechatronics and experimental research; and Mtro. Luis Díaz, pastoralist expert, responsible for projects in University Pastoral of the La Salle University Mexico.

⁸ Galtung, J. (2003). *Peace by peaceful means*. Quoted by: Fisas, V (2011), p. 5.

and respond to the real problems of human relationships. So, nothing closer, than to the path of building a culture of peace. Education is, without a doubt, an instrument for social transformation."⁹

▪ Pedagogical alternative:

Group of strategies planned deliberately and specifically for the achievement of the objectives set in the educational field.

▪ Promotion:

Encourage something to happen or for it to be done. In relation to the subject studied, it is desired that the pedagogical alternatives be the right way to build peace environments.

▪ Violence:

"The deliberate use of physical force or power, whether in a threatening or effective manner, against oneself, against another person, group or community, which causes or has a high probability of causing injury, death, psychological damage, development or deprivation."¹⁰

"... violence is a learned behavior from family and social models, using force, resorted to solve interpersonal conflicts. So you learn to use violence in the family, at school, in sports, in the media"¹¹.

Bruno Bettelheim points out that: "violence is the behavior of someone unable to imagine another solution to a problem that torments him,"¹²

Violent environments constitute a much more serious problem than we might think, since there are non-explicit aspects that profoundly affect the lives of people and societies, such as, for example, the patterns acquired in the family, in the community and in the cultures that sustain traditions that sometimes threaten the dignity of the person and the construction of peace. To this we would have to add the information that is not registered and what the study calls "gaps", understood as data that are not found. In the case of sexual assault, it would be data such as age, sex and kinship with the victim. Also, generally speaking, aggression towards women, children and the elderly are not officially registered and, thus, a good amount of information that is not reflected in the official statistics that are recorded and disseminated. One more aspect to take into account is the violence that is generated in cases such as family breakup and violence, drug addiction, trafficking in persons, kidnapping, robbery, child labor, corruption, abuse, cartels and countless other unworthy and unfair deals to people, regardless of their age, sex or social level. Unfortunately, all this is being witnessed, lived and learned by children and young people on a daily basis and every day it seems to be more natural or everyday this scenario, so they learn to live and coexist with him.

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the change of these schemes and provide new and different scenarios that show young people other ways of life and coexistence. In this way, competences can be developed in them to promote the construction of peace environments, as well as new forms of dialogue in favor of mutual understanding. These competences do not suppose the definitive

⁹ Sampere, M. (2005) p. 6

¹⁰ Pan American Health Organization (2002), p. 5.

¹¹ World Health Organization (2014), p. 14

¹² Sampere, M. (2005), *quoted above*, p. 4.

resignation of personal positions and beliefs, nor the numbness of the consciences, but a way for the dialogue and the handling of the conflict, formulating agreements that allow, from an integral and fraternal point of view, to approach an assertive, consensual and constructive decision making, that encourages the construction of peaceful environments.

The *School of Peace*, in his notebook no. 20, he mentions that education has one more challenge, which is to favor the culture of peace. This means making people responsible for their story, as well as developing instruments of transformation that do not imply destruction, or oppression or intransigence towards others, hatred and exclusion, since this would mean canceling the project of one's own freedom and development. The culture of peace, therefore:

... is a culture that promotes pacification. A culture that includes lifestyles, patterns of beliefs, values and behaviors that favor the construction of peace and accompany institutional changes, in order to promote well-being, equality, equitable administration of resources, security for individuals, families and the identity of groups or nations, without the need to resort to violence.¹³

In the *Declaration of Santiago de Compostela*, it is stated that all people have their own right to peace, which is described as fair, sustainable and lasting in the human rights and freedoms that it promotes. It is stated in this document that only peace is just; moreover, peace arises from justice.¹⁴

▪ Justice:

May people learn to fight for justice without violence, renouncing class struggle in their internal disputes and war in international ones.¹⁵

13.5 Analysis of experts in the face of peace and education environments

Next, some specialists of the subject that present their main ideas about violence and propose elements that can be applied to education are presented¹⁶:

1) Marta Lamas (Mexican anthropologist): Doctrines of peace that aim at visualizing new violence that, in general, seems habitual and has been naturalized.

- Attempts to detect violent phenomena such as: domestic violence, violence of men against women, the violence of the media over minority groups and violence in the dominant categories of thoughts about categories of other cultures or social circles.
- He has discovered that gender studies are based on biological principles rather than on social functions.

2) Axel Honneth (German philosopher and sociologist): Proposal of dialogue not only as a promoter of peace but as a device to preserve the latent state of confrontation.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8

¹⁴ Declaration of Santiago de Compostela (2010).

¹⁵ cf. Message of Pope Francis for the celebration of the 50th World Day of Peace 1 January 2014 Recuperada de: file:///C:/Users/Carmen/Desktop/ROMA%20ESTANCIA/INVESTIGACIÓN/LECTURAS/nueva/papa-francesco_PAZ%20Y%20JUSTICIA.pdf.

¹⁶ Reference is made to authors described by Dr. Ramsés Sánchez Soberano, Director of Doctorate Academic Processes of the Universidad La Salle, México.

- His philosophy operates on the basis of three forms of recognition: family, civil society and solidarity.

He points out that it is necessary to carry out moral theories capable of giving the marginalized the right of recognition without having to obtain them from social movements and confrontations.

- He points out that the university should help build the democratic regime and that students and teachers should watch over the construction of justice.

3) Werner Jaeger (German philosopher, historian of philosophy): The teacher as an educator in front of the *paideia* (education), observes it as a training for the problems of life, rather than as a mere trainer for work:

- He points out that we must recover classical education for the edification of man in society.
- It shows that a technical education produces uncritical students.
- He points out that the university is a teaching temple that is based on universal ethical and moral principles.
- Criticizes the technical-economic conception of the current university.

4) Bonaventura de Sousa Santos (Portuguese sociologist):

- Develops the so-called "southern epistemology" in which contextualized problems are considered as guiding problems of education.
- Thinks that it is necessary to do an education directed to the solution of problems of the environment before merely theoretical problems.
- Points out that the democratization of the territory, the respect for ecology and the general ways of life generate the democratization of space, that is, a dignified life and a space for personal development.
- States that his thinking is designed to be attractive to young students.

13.6 The value of fraternal dialogue from the Lasallian pedagogy

In Lasallian terms: "Pedagogy is the art of helping students to learn. Pedagogy is the process of helping students achieve their salvation, discovering their potential and their mission in the world."¹⁷

Brother Pedro Álvarez, Visitor to the Antilles-South Mexico District, explains the expression "fraternal dialogue" in the following way: when we use it we understand a process that occurs between equals, in both directions; This process brings us closer, since it takes place in a climate of respect, empathy, tolerance, a search for the common good and, ultimately, it is our sister.

- Dialogue as a Value :

In the book *Vayan y Enseñen* (CELAM, 2011), the concept of value is highlighted:

... value is a property of objective, ideal or possible realities; a quality of a certain way of being and acting, by which some are more or less appreciated, desired, realized, preferred or postponed ...

¹⁷ Documents of the 45th General Chapter, " This work is the Lord's and it is also our work". General advice. Brothers of the Christian Schools. General House, Via Aurelia, 476, 00165 Rome, Italy. November 2014, p. 20.

The values insofar as they are duly clarified and hierarchized are principles that allow us to orient our behavior in order to fulfill ourselves as people. They are fundamental beliefs that help us to prefer, appreciate and choose some things instead of others, or a behavior instead, and are a source of satisfaction and fulfillment ... Only in the dialogue between youth cultures and school culture, will it be possible to make true education.¹⁸

In the case of Lasallianism, as mentioned in the book, *That the School Runs Well* (2013), the reading of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* shows that, for the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and behavior, good manners and urbanity, interpersonal relationships, the practice of virtues and the way of praying, the first model was the teacher. Analysis or more recent studies in pedagogy have shown the impact of interpersonal relationships in class on the good progress of learning. Of course, St. John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers were fully convinced that teacher-student relations played an important role in the effectiveness of the method. That is the reason why what is relational has always been at the center of the Lasallian school.

From the beginning the Lasallian educational relationship has been affectionate and fraternal, trusting and stimulating, and that has saturated the work method. Without saying that it is unique to Lasallians, there is a consensus that this type of relationship is essential for a harmonious and integral growth of people.

▪ Dialogue as a Humanizing Strategy

Dialogue is a human element by nature, historically present in the pedagogical and social act from ancient cultures. The pedagogical technique of asking and responding was used in millenary cultures for moral formation and the search for truth. In the process of interaction of the subjects in the world, the dialogue is used for interpretation and understanding, in a bidirectional exercise. Generally, this results in the possibility of a joint reflection on different topics and situations.

In education, we promote pedagogical dialogue with the purpose of promoting understanding, training and learning. Fraternity is the Lasallian option to providing education to young people, from coexistence in fraternal environments (communities) and dialogue. The Lasallian option for fraternity and dialogue embraces the attitudes of the historical Jesus portrayed in the Gospels. Jesus is always attentive to the other. He constantly dialogues, asks, listens, establishes relationships that transcend the epistemological level and questions the ways of being and existing, beliefs, values and, above all, the meaning of life built by its interlocutors. Besides that, Jesus forms a community with his disciples. Together they proclaim and live the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

Contributing to the construction of dialogue and fraternity requires from all those involved a sincere mutual respect, prudence and charity and, at the same time, an effort to find, through dialogue and sharing, the human and evangelical values that unite all men in the construction of a universal fraternity and a better world.¹⁹

▪ Pedagogy of Dialogue

Conceiving educational action as a pedagogy of dialogue presupposes a firm conviction that we live in a dynamic of communication, in which interaction and dialogue constitute socializing and individualizing instances. This allows us to think that the pedagogy seen from humanism explains

¹⁸ CELAM. (2011), p. 33.

¹⁹ Alpago et.al. (2013), p. 258.

that human beings are dependent on each other, as beings naturally related. This is how we understand then that teaching is about helping each person learn to write his own life, to write his own story. Therefore, the educator understands and organizes a pedagogy of dialogue in which the different forms of relationship between the people involved in learning are specified. "The Lasallian educational community is conceived" as a space for reflection and dialogue, which recognizes diversity and encourages observation and critical study of reality.²⁰ The Lasallian school seeks to be the "meeting place of culture and faith for all the members of the school educational community." Dialogue in this aspect plays a very important role, as well as participation and collaboration. The integration of groups into educational processes is encouraged in a climate of acceptance, dialogue, freedom and responsibility, and in this sense, the Lasallian school considers education for the promotion of justice and peace essential for young people; and to turn young people into people with critical thinking about situations of inequality and violence, into agents of change, which is why the university is the meeting place to promote meaningful and dialogical interpersonal relationships.²¹

Pope Francis commented that:

Dialogue shows great respect because it places people in a position of reciprocal openness to welcome the best aspects of the interlocutor and has added that it is an expression of charity, because it can help to share paths towards the common good. Dialogue helps people to humanize the relationship and overcome misunderstandings; if there were more true dialogue in families, in work environments, in politics, many issues would be solved more easily.²²

Returning to the above, students are called to have an important role in the Catholic school. It must be a space in which the young person expresses his ideas, where he can dialogue and thus form a true education inserted in the realities of the young, in such a way that everything they learn is in function of being formed integrally with values and elements that help discover the truth. Throughout this process, the Catholic university must ensure that education is of quality, equity and inclusion in favor of student development.²³

▪ Social Dialogue as a Contribution to Peace

According to the challenges that we currently have in society and in education, it is very important to form a culture that privileges dialogue as a way of meeting, of consensus and agreement, recalling the need to contribute to a fair and sustainable society, without exclusions, without making fractions, groups or elites. Benedict XVI mentions that it is an agreement to live together, a social and cultural pact.²⁴

▪ The dialogue Between Faith, Reason and Science

²⁰ PERLA, 2011, p. 11. Quoted in Alpago, *et. al.* (2013), *quoted above*, P. 263

²¹ Pedagogía y Filosofía Lasallista [Pedagogy and Lasallian Philosophy]. (2009). Source: (in Spanish) http://lasalle.org.bo/v01/edu_pedagogia_filosofia

²² 'La Gente' digital newspaper, Radio Primera Primer 91.7-105.5 FM, 680 AM. Francis highlights the value of dialogue to achieve a better world, Rome. PL. | March 11, 2017 at 15:43 2017 (6);

<http://www.radiolaprimera.com/noticias/general/218720/francisco-destaca-valor-del-dialogo-para-lograr-un-mundo-mejor/>

²³ CELAM. (2011).

²⁴ Speech by Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia on the occasion of Christmas greetings. (December 21, 2012). Source: http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121221_auguri-curia.html

John Paul II, in his Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* mentions that the dialogue between science and faith is very important and forms part of the evangelizing action. He states that he trusts science and that faith is not afraid of reason, since both come from God, so they cannot contradict each other. Evangelization is always attentive to the advances of science to enlighten them with faith, as such so that they focus on the supreme value of the human person in all phases of their existence. In this way society is enriched with this dialogue between faith, reason and science that opens new alternatives to thinking and extends the possibilities of reason. This dialogue also becomes a path of harmony and pacification ²⁵.

▪ The Dialogue for Peace, an Urgency for our Time

In the virtues of true dialogue John Paul II at the XVI World Day of Peace commented, "Dialogue is a central and essential element of ethical thinking among people, whoever they may be. Under the aspect of an exchange, of communication between human beings that language makes possible, it is in fact a common quest." ²⁶

▪ The Characteristics of True Dialogue

- ✓ It involves the search for what is true, good and just for every man, for every group and society.
- ✓ It requires, above all, openness and acceptance, that is, each person expresses his/her position in front of the other and then he/she listens to the proposal of the others, considering both parties the conditions of existence of the other party even with the risks of tensions that may arise from this, without reducing the differences to the acceptance by not causing problems or reducing the position of the other person as not valid.
- ✓ Dialogue is to make the other a neighbor, accepting collaboration and sharing responsibility towards truth and justice, seeking the common good.
- ✓ Finally, true dialogue is the search for good through peaceful means. It is essential to find the best forms of negotiation and mediation to seek rapprochement and agreement before division and hatred. It will have to be an acknowledgment of the dignity, obstinate will to resort to all possible formulas of negotiation, mediation and arbitration, always striving so that the factors of rapprochement prevail over those of division and hatred. It is a recognition of the dignity of the person, making the world a space of true community and dignity.

▪ Obstacles to Dialogue. False Dialogues

In the same message, John Paul II states, "On the other hand it seems to me salutary also to condemn particular obstacles to the dialogue for peace." ²⁷

²⁵ Carta Encíclica *Fides et ratio*. Del sumo pontífice Juan Pablo II a los Obispos de la Iglesia católica sobre las relaciones entre fe y razón. Recuperado de:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.pdf.

²⁶ Message of His Holiness John Paul II for the celebration of the XVI World Day of Peace, January 1, 1983, p. 4.

²⁷ John Paul II. (January 1, 1983). The dialogue for peace, an urgency for our time [Message of His Holiness]. XVI World Day of Peace. Source:

https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19821208_xvi-world-day-for-peace.html, p. 5.

- ✓ Lack of listening: caused by the inability to understand that the other person may also be right and not grant anything for lack of listening. This speaks only of selfishness and desire for power. He also mentions the tactical or deliberate lie that abuses language, thwarts dialogue and promotes aggressiveness.
- ✓ Different forms of violence: "Peace is not reduced to an absence of war, fruit of the always precarious balance of forces." Peace must be built day by day in the order that God wants for us that is based on justice among all people.

Definitely, peace must emerge from the integral development of each person and its whole so that it may bear fruit and be the seed of peaceful environments.

- There are four principles for the development of social coexistence as a path to peace
 - Time is greater than space.
 - Unity prevails over conflict.
 - Reality is more important than the idea.
 - The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Recalling the words of Pope Francis, "The message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity."²⁸

13.7 Education in Catholic Universities

Which Catholic university? The University is a space in which education for life, based on cultural development and the search for the common good. The learning experience is nourished by research, thought and life. Universities educate from the contexts of life and the educational environments that make up students and teachers. The organization of interpersonal and community relationships is very important; they should observe:

- respect for the dignity of each person and their individuality;
- the wealth of opportunities for the development of young people;
- the attention in the integrity of the person;
- the encouragement for each student to develop their talents; and,
- the promotion of dialogue and collaboration in a spirit of freedom and attention for the person.

At present, the way of teaching seems more important than what is being taught. It is important that teachers select appropriate learning content focused on the development of the person; these contents must be worked on in an educational relationship of reciprocal esteem, trust, respect, cordiality and a sense of belonging. Centering education in the person allows to provide the tools for their performance in working life through the development of appropriate skills. However, this is not enough. You have to work to favor the development of an integrated personal and community person, capable of accepting diversity, taking responsibility and exercising active citizenship. The integration of its students into new cultural contexts is a challenge of Catholic university education.

What is mentioned above is part of the challenge of fraternal dialogue. In a world of plurality, it is necessary to orient the person toward the great values of truth, good and beautiful. Dialogue, with

²⁸ *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Francis: On the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world (The common good and social peace, 230).

respect to others, must be a central element of learning for young people, from an open and peaceful environment. At present, there is greater closeness between teachers and students. However, adults cannot renounce to representing a point of reference or authority, the latter being a result of the credibility of their testimony.

13.8 Conclusions and Proposals

Responding to the research problem, the objective and the questions posed at the beginning of this document, according to what was analyzed in the bibliography and the experiences gathered with the interviewed and participating experts, it has been concluded that:

- In order to achieve the systematic integration of fraternal dialogue, it is necessary to permanently create room for safe coexistence, favoring interaction through respectful and inclusive communication and, in addition, promoting consensus and/or respect for other options as of dialogue, this being the most assertive option.
- Fraternal dialogue can start from the conflict, which should not be refused as long as it is based on ideas, fraternal dialogue and the search for truth, even if the result is not homogeneous for everyone.
- Lasallianism rescues the integral care of the values of the person as a basis for the exercise of dialogue.
- The environments of peace are environments that are constructed from the selection of the best educational elements - that is, pedagogical strategies and educational actions, among others - that propitiate the integral development of the people, from their convictions in a fraternal dialogue that leads to the knowledge of the truth.

Returning to the Lasallian elements, it is clear that the practice of fraternal dialogue is an action that will be carried out in an integral way in all the activities of the university contexts, in such a way that the students and collaborators make this experience a permanent environment of construction, of peace. The classroom can be privileged as a place for strengthening this dialogue, since it fosters a closer, interactive and personal relationship. The teacher and the administrators that are related to the school activities will take advantage of all the contacts with the students to strengthen the dialogue as a means for a better human understanding.

One can also be strengthened from discipline, based on a methodology that causes cognitive conflict, leading students to research and then dialogue, attending to the different intellectual positions of their peers and trying to reach a valid conclusion, based on methodologies that encourage participatory collaboration.

It does not seek to "silence consciences" but to train well-educated university students who can, through informed dialogue and fraternal attitude, reach the objectives that have been foreseen, accepting the differences and discrepancies of others, in an agreement that evidences the true but that includes diversity.

The practice of fraternal dialogue contributes to the construction of peaceful environments. Effectively this is achieved when people develop in environments of acceptance, collaboration and dialogue; these are the substantial elements to promote spaces of peace. Care must be taken that these environments impact in the external contexts and in the daily life of the university students, since it is not about making the university a bubble where everything flows well inside,

while outside violent attitudes persist. It would also be dangerous to train people who are do not adapt to other environments. The goal is that from the experience you receive within the university you have enough elements to be people who can collaborate in forming peaceful environments in the place where they operate.

THE MINISTRY OF DIALOGUE IN THE LIGHT OF LASALLIAN EDUCATION

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From the unreal lead me to the Real.
From darkness lead me to light.
From death lead me to immortality

*Brihadaranyaka 1:3,28
Hindu Scripture*

14.1 Introduction

The 43rd General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian School convened in the year 2000 at the De La Salle Generalate had brought out some important themes that need to be addressed in the current situation. One of them was about interreligious dialogue. The Chapter prioritized it as follows:

...for Lasallian establishments to be the living expression of the Good News, they must be places for dialogue in truth, freedom and hope. In this way, the Brothers and Lasallian Partners can enter into the culture of the young to announce the Good News, and feel the need themselves for continual conversion. (Circular 447, p. 23)

We are in the 21st century in which we witness enormous growth in the area of science and technology which demand that we change our way to more sophisticated living. The concept of globalization in the present scenario makes our world more pluralistic and complicated. People cross beyond borders for various reasons, especially in Asia, whenever they move from one place to another and settle down with their families. They never fail to carry with them their noblest culture and religious traditions in order to practice them faithfully in the midst of new people in the unknown land. Witnessing the practice of the newly arrived religions and culture in to the area, the indigenous people of that area are directly affected by developing a sense of suspicion over them. Thus, they start to feel enormous threats and tensions among themselves which brings conflict to their fundamental interests. It hits at both their peaceful and harmonious living. Any sort of division in human living by any means creates an immense sense of insecurity and helplessness which cripples the growth and progress of humanity. Fear, mistrust and suspicion are the negative factors of our well-being which cannot be overcome through discussion alone.

Being full of prejudice within our heart, we can't achieve goodness simply by words but we can conquer it by gestures of love. Dialogue needs a capacity for love which has a genuine, patient and persevering quality. It is a work of Spirit before which every person may experience many positive aspects and shortcomings. Thus, dialogue becomes a labour of love when it is done with mutual respect and understanding in an authentic manner. It becomes possible to create a new heaven and earth.

Dialogue, which “presupposes openness and a willingness to listen, to learn, to witness to Gospel values as far as possible, to announce the word of God,” (*Rule, 2015, 14.1*), is one of the relevant means of confronting such an issue in life. It invites us to heal the wounds of human misery and despair encountered in various aspects of our life. It is the way of Christian living which calls us to embrace everything as the image and likeness of God. It is a way of Lasallian living which motivates us to bring salvation to the life of youth in union with the Creator from all sorts of caste, creed and religious backgrounds particularly those who are entrusted to our care. It is also a ministry of God done for His greater glory towards humanity. Thus, it is very much essential for us to have peaceful and harmonious living in communion with in our societies where we are called to make our life more meaningful. God wills the same and He desires that all should be in union with one another as the Father is in union with the Son and the Spirit.

14.2 Lasallian Education Promotes Dialogue by Witness

The school is an ideal place for me to exercise inter- religious/cultural dialogue where students gather together with multi-religious and cultural differences. This provides space for bearing witness to the values of all forms of faith. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, states that “through education we give our children a grammar, a method of dialogue which will help them create a synthesis between faith, culture and life.” (EC 132)

Lasallians, by our teaching ministry, need to witness to the values of the gospel primarily through the promotion of togetherness among all persons irrespective of culture, creed or religion and race. We need to help our students of various faith traditions in living up to the most humanizing and positive elements of their own faith traditions. The following Lasallian article proposes the above intention that we need in order to: “prepare our students to learn how to respect other persons with different cultures and faith and enter responsibly in the world of work with greater appreciation of what diversity can offer in realizing the common good and universal human values”. (PARC, 2017)

Lasallian Education recommends us to engage in inter-religious dialogue as part of our pedagogical and civic duty to adults and youth. We need to contribute to a more peaceful co-existence of people in religiously pluralist and secularist societies”. (PARC, 2017) It should be one of our primary duties to prepare them towards the creation of a new generation in future where they could have accessibility of enjoying sustainable peace and harmony in living.

14.3 Seeing and judging the reality

Religion supposes to be a way of meeting God with human experiences rather than a way of separating people as belonging to different Gods. It has to promote communion and brotherhood which should lead to the realization by its followers as sons and daughters of the same God. But sometimes we might have noticed that religious fanatical attitudes pull down the entire attempt of associating ourselves together with one heart and one mind in the midst of differences. Some people’s religious and cultural fanatical mind-set destroys many innocent lives and causes an unceasing conflict among us over longer periods of time. Witnessing such an evil side of the religion and culture, the present Holy Father Francis encourages us to have dialogue with one another by followings words:

We who are here together and in peace believe and hope in a fraternal world. We desire that men and women of different religions may everywhere gather and promote harmony, especially where there is conflict. Our future consists in living together. For this reason, we are called to free ourselves from the heavy burdens of distrust, fundamentalism and hate. Believers should be artisans of peace in their

prayers to God and in their actions for humanity! As religious leaders, we are duty bound to be strong bridges of dialogue, creative mediators of peace. (Assisi, Sep. 20, 2016)

By realizing today's situation in our societies, we must jointly work in dialogue for the promotion of healthy ways of living which should be one of our major social concerns. The process of our dialogue needs to build a "community of conversation", a community of the heart and mind across racial, ethnic and religious obstacles where everyone should be educated to see differences among them not as threatening force but as natural and normal. It should thus be an attempt to aid everyone to understand and accept the other in their otherness.

14.4 Ministering the Dialogue for Togetherness at Suranam

The countries in Pacific Asia have myriads of religious and cultural backgrounds. People always cherish their own identity and amicably live in union with diversity. However, this diversity leads sometimes toward unnecessary restlessness among the ordinary people. It portrays its evil side within religion and its culture by causing enormous damages to our harmonious living. This should be dealt with prudently.

As for me, if I will share my situation in south India where I live. There are various religious and cultural traditions observed by native people. I am currently involved in the educational ministry in my area called Suranam which is located in the remotest rural area at Sivagangai District in the State of Tamilnadu. We have our Lasallian School for the most disadvantaged kids in the area. At our school campus 76% of students are Hindus, 12% of students belong to the Christian tradition, 8% of students embrace Islam, and 5% of students practice other religious faiths. The same ratio is applicable to our staff and the people around us. So, it is clear that the religion at my school campus is pluralistic one.

Living among the multi religious/ cultural groups we need lots of time for developing better understanding of the way each religious community lives. We generally sense that here it seems each religious group feels more comfortable with their ways and are sensitive about crossing others' boundaries. But in reality, whenever students tend to cross their boundary by debating religious matters among themselves in the classroom with comparison it is clearly seen that the strong energy of violent behaviours emerges from them because the religious communities in which they belong to are fundamentalists who try to preserve and promote their own interests. Many times, the conflict among students is in injecting forcefully their own religious interest on others which leads them to unending meaningless debate.

Many of our students' religious quarrelling has been contained through respectful dialogue. In villages when the interest of two religious communities negatively face with each other, emotions and sentiments run high culminating in devastation and destruction of properties and life. Many situations have proven to us that in our area, each group carries its religious fanatical feelings within them throughout their walk of life. Much inter-religious violence has demonstrated tension and restlessness among us and put the innocents in completely helpless situations. Our students are well aware of what would happen if such an issue arose up in their society. However, this type of attitude has been deeply planted in the blood of ordinary people by religious fundamentalism. The reason is simply that the majority of people in my area are financially marginalized and illiterate and are less informed about their own or other religions and are easily susceptible to any sort of information that comes from their respectful elders. These people's innocence is thus taken advantage of by religious leaders for their own benefit. These people fall into a trap purely by elements of misguidance, false beliefs and trusting superstition. Politicians have often tried to win favour with the minorities at the

cost of another community. Populist measures are often used to gain political mileage or advantage in elections. Criminalization of politics has added a new dimension and accelerated communal conflict in our area. The electronic media and religious press have often added fuel to the fire. The press provokes sensation by providing irresponsible reporting and visuals which are provocative and contribute their mite to rouse communal feelings.

The religious fanaticism is indeed an evil force in our society which cripples the attempt of bringing every one under one umbrella towards development. It leads people to the road of communal and religious separation. This situation creates enormous confusion and threatens our adults. This unpleasant issue affects our students at our campus deeply, especially their unity, and causes much damage in communal harmonious living. An authentic way of dialogue would heal this issue.

As educators it is our responsibility to educate such ordinary people properly on how to build up healthy community living in the midst of differences. We must strive to remove their ignorance and prejudice that comes from fake ideas of religious/ cultural tradition. We do this by providing appropriate education. Courses on quality dialogue and negotiation would provide students with the right knowledge about the goodness of religions and their cultural traditions which would be helpful in introducing tolerance and understanding. The Catholic Bishops Conference in India has frequently appealed religious and communal harmony whenever the problem arises against it. Bishop Mascarenhas, CBCI Secretary General of the Bishops' Conference in India writes as:

Our beloved country has been known for its traditional peace and harmony and though there have been times when we have seen unimaginable violence, death and bloodshed, our society has bounced back to peace and brotherhood.

And then he writes,

Lynching, killings, terrorist attacks in recent times, he says, is frightening and worrying. We appeal to all our brother and sister Indians to rise above religion, caste, language or region and to unite in promoting peace, harmony and brotherhood (Bishop Mascarenhas Conference).

14.5 Dialoguing with Caste-oriented Culture

The caste system is another major problem which I experience in our area. It causes much trouble in the life of students. The people in Europe and other countries cannot understand its ideology or tolerate its system of operation. It is our cultural evil affecting the unity of people which has been deeply rooted in the blood of every Indian youth for centuries.

Caste is the word used to describe the complex system of our Indian social separations that pervades through all parts of life in India. It is an ancient hereditary system that developed alongside and became intertwined with Hinduism. It determines whom a person can marry, specifies what kind of work one can engage in, social and economic divides he/she can do and even controls what he/she can eat or touch [it still exists in certain part of India]. As the majority of Indians observe Hinduism, the caste system has played a strong role in the history of our country and it continues to exert tremendous influence on modern Indian culture and politics.

The caste system is designed based on occupation. People who did the same job belonged to the same caste and their descendants come under the same caste. Today the total number of castes in India may exceed 2000. Caste rules also become more rigid. For centuries people were born into a caste and could not leave it. They could marry only members of their own caste and they had to work and eat among their caste members and all social events took place within once caste.

The caste system is considered to be the ideology of life by Hindus. Inevitably, some group of people failed to come under the duty of any specific job. They were classified as out castes from Hindu society. They were treated as “Untouchables” because people believed that their touch or even the sight of them would compromise their purity. They were not admitted into Hindu temples and instead formed religious sects of their own. They had to live apart from other castes and were given the job that no one else wanted to perform. Because of their contact with things considered unclean or polluted, the outcasts were believed to be deeply tainted.

After independence, the Indian Government took a strong step in eradicating the practice of untouchability. Though it doesn’t exist nowadays within societies; its stigma is still alive in the midst of people. The out castes people are today known by a different term as “Dalits” which means the suppressed one. Mahatma Gandhi addressed them as Harijans which means the people of God! The caste system puts these people under serious discrimination.

The continuity of the caste system depends on two central Hindu ideas: caste dharma [law] and karma [duty]. In Hindu society, caste dharma is considered to be a divine law. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, caste dharma is “the duty one has to perform” and “the law of ones being”. Many Hindus believe that this obligation tends to enhance the spiritual development of the individual. Because of it, each person learns from an early age to overcome selfish desires and instead focus on group goals and ideas. Thus, the caste system vehemently divides the people into separate pieces from total communion of living. It causes extreme discrimination among people from all sorts of religious backgrounds in India and becomes a barrier in the development of the society.

The missionaries converted people into Christianity from other religions but they were not able to remove the caste system from their mind. Eradicating castes is not an easy job and we need to work a lot on it. For me, a respectful and authentic continuous dialogue could bring changes into the minds of people. We need to sit honestly and discuss these issues with ardent concern for humanity. We need to confront fundamentalism which sows in us the seeds of distrust and hatred for our neighbours. When our former Holy Father John Paul II visited India on February 2, 1986, in his homily in Indra Gandhi Stadium at New Delhi he said:

...therefore, customs or traditions that perpetuate or reinforce caste division should be sensitively reformed so that they may become an expression of the solidarity of the whole Christian community. It is the Church’s obligation to work unceasingly to change hearts, helping all people to see every human being as a child of God, a brother or sister of Christ, and therefore a member of our own family (Pope John Paul II, Feb. 2, 1986).

Caste thwarts our attempt to see our neighbours as the sons of daughters of same God. It hinders us in treating everyone as equal particularly the Dalits community. Caste makes us more stubborn to accept such a marginalized people as our own brothers and sisters. Caste forbids us to give them their rights and cherish their dignity as the image and likeness of the same God. They need our compassion.

The 44-paged document titled *Policy of Dalit Empowerment in the Catholic Church in India* asks the 171 dioceses to submit long and short-term plans within a year to end all kinds of discrimination against Christian Dalits. The document states its appeal as if there are dual practices based on caste discrimination, such practices should be stopped at once. In case of failure to do so, stringent measures should be taken by the Church authority concerned.

Though after its independence, the Government of India outlawed many discriminative practices against caste and establish affirmative action programme to ensure the most backward classes’ improvement in the status by providing accessibility for higher education and better jobs, still the

caste system continues to be the main form of Government in rural areas throughout India. All of our government welfare schemes are today designed on the basis of caste-oriented reservations. The government scholarship for education is also provided for students only on the caste basis. On the one hand the government policies have uplifted the livelihood of the backward class. Our Indian politics, on the other hand, takes advantage by accumulating desirable votes from the various caste groups in order to form the government. It generates caste system as an inseparable factor for gain.

At our school almost all of our students, staff and Brothers are coming from various caste-oriented communities gathering there for the purpose of educational services. There are 60% of the students coming from backward class and 25% of students coming from lower class and 15% of the students belongs to the “Dalits” class [most backward] which sometimes creates restlessness and insensitivity in getting along with each other. Practicing this system is not at all a healthy sign for togetherness. Sometimes division arises on the caste basis and can be clearly seen among ourselves.

Our caste-oriented society always tries to suppress the “Dalits”, the marginalized students who are always treated as unfavourable ones in joining other groups. There are quite a number of students from the lowest caste studying in our school. They are always under threat in mixing with other students. The students in the upper caste community would always claim their superiority/first priority from the students in the most backward class in terms of participating in any event in the school. Caste-oriented group conflict would spark out sometimes as flame among them by leading them to violence. It is common phenomena that this type of discriminative attitude emerges out even among our staff.

When a staff from a lower caste is sometimes being appraised or promoted for his/her excellent performance, firm disagreement comes out from the upper-class staff at our staff meetings and ends with their non-cooperation with the administration until their opinion prevails. Reflecting the continuity of strong fundamentalism in religion and destructive caste system is in no way helpful to building up a meaningful/harmonious living among the people in our area. These two social evils need to be confronted only by having respectful dialogue.

Our Lasallian Education calls us to be strong bridges of dialogue, creative mediators of peace. Since children are confided to our care, it should be our primary duty to educate our students about the glory of human life and its dignity as God’s finest gift to the planet which is revealed through mutual respect and understanding of the uniqueness of each person we encounter.

14.6 Acting out: Strategies for harmonious living

The *Rule* of the Brothers very much emphasizes the importance of interreligious/cultural dialogue with in our school campus: “The Lasallian mission, at both the national and international level, is expanding in secularized, pluri-religious and multi-cultural contexts”. It then advises, the Brothers to strive to enter into a respectful dialogue with the persons they are called to serve” (*Rule*, 2015, 14:1). As a De La Salle Brother, I feel that it is my primary responsibility to confront the wrong sides in multi-religious/cultural background at my school campus and around the area by remaining as a strong bridge of dialogue and promoter of peace.

The mission of schools should be to develop an understanding of all that is true, good and beautiful. It should be a privileged place for having authentic dialogue and clarifying values with our students in order to build up their future towards sustainable peace and harmonious living. I indicate some of key elements below that nowadays help the climate of togetherness within and around of our school campus. For many years, the Brothers and some lay staff together strive to uproot the attitude towards

religious fundamentalism and caste-orientation among our students and the public in the area by various strategies. It has benefited us a lot and still we continue to work on it for further improvement. Response from the Brothers in their living place: “They should never be segregated from other members of society. Any semblance of a caste-based prejudice in relations between Christians is a countersign to authentic human solidarity, a threat to genuine spirituality, and a serious hindrance to the Church’s mission of evangelization” (Pope John Paul II, Feb. 2, 1986). Reflecting over the inspiring words of Pope John Paul II, we, the De La Salle Brothers at Suranam wish to play a vital role in modeling to our staff/ students/ people around us for the eradication of the caste oriented groupism by believing for ourselves in the vow of together by association.

- As the Brothers coming from different caste-oriented groups within their societies by all means we erase out our caste identity and any form of its expression from our mind and heart.
- The Brothers discourage talking about conversion and reconversion among our students /staff/ common people of the area which is the violation of constitution of the nation.
- The Brothers promote by setting right role model and appropriate example among the staff and students for harmonious livelihood.
- The students/staff and common persons from all sorts of caste/religion/creed/racial background are welcomed into the Brothers’ Community.
- The Brothers make initiative to visit all sorts of students’ houses and take part in their family functions and attending all religious festivals celebrated at their villages.
- The Brothers wear secular dress “Jippa” [a common religious dress] as uniform at their teaching ministry.
- The Brothers give much importance to the welfare of the Dalit students particularly in education and other necessary aspects of their upliftment.

14.7 Response from the Institution

- a. Celebrate all religious festivals with in the campus and remember important religious leaders and use all religious scripture in the school assembly.
- b. Contact value clarification classes for students at least once in a month to initiate in service classes on religious/ cultural values for all the staff.
- c. Promote values and identify/appraise students practicing good values in the weekly school Assembly.
- d. Invite all the religious leaders to school for sharing the knowledge of richness in religions/culture.
- e. Initiate activities of debate, panel discussion, public lectures, rally, sports, renewal programme and celebration of inter religious festival on religious/cultural harmony.
- f. Organize activities on the propagation of religious harmony for the lower-class students like paragraph writings, painting, slogan and quiz. Use audio-visual media like films.

- g. Insist among the staff and students about the stopping of proselytism and of positive mind set on various religious traditions in the area.
- h. Prohibit within the campus all form of negative expressive materials which directly or indirectly assault religions such as bit notices, handouts, pictures, images etc.
- i. Organize frequent training and awareness programme about religions and its harmony for students and staff at all levels.
- j. Invite law enforcement agencies to give their opinion on religious harmony for sustainable peace and order.
- k. Paying specific attention to development of vulnerable groups as tribals and other weaker sections and those who suffer discrimination on different grounds...

By applying the above-mentioned strategies for the last several years in our school campus in our area, we have gained desirable outcomes to a certain extent. Our students have learned how to accept and respect the differences in their midst. The religious and castes-based conflict has become only an occasional one among them. Many like to participate in all the religious celebrations taking place in the villages as we, the Brothers, do in order to extend our joy of brotherhood among other religious faiths. Many Hindu and Muslim students make freely visit the chapel located in the Brothers' house. We could witness that some have developed their friendship with backward class students which is a good sign of change. Many of our awareness activities in relation with the government programme have transformed our people's mentality and created tolerance towards differences with in their society.

14.8 Conclusion

“Faith is not born through an ethical decision or grand ideas, but by an encounter with an event, a person which gives a new goal and a decisive orientation to life” (Pope Francis, DCEL). The Gospel calls us to experience Jesus's strong faith with His Loving Father by his way of life. His sense of dialogue deeply united Him with his *Abba* as God the Father and the Holy Spirit. He was able to encounter people's personal issues in his time only through having authentic dialogue. His dialogue with the Samaritan woman brought transformation to her life. His dialogue with Mary Magdalene swept up all of her sins. His dialogue with the disciples converted them as his ardent followers to give their entire life for the proclamation of the kingdom of God. A fruitful dialogue changed the life of prodigal son, Zacchaeus and Nicodemus.

Jesus sets the right model for how to have respectful dialogue with the persons who come with their issues to us. We, the Lasallian Educators, must educate our students in the requirement to learn how to live together with tolerance in the midst of differences. We must patiently and prudently confront some of our students' wrong attitudes towards religious traditions and caste-oriented community living. We must take initial steps in correcting persons who come to us with a religious/caste-oriented stigma. Our classrooms must provide awareness to students about the richness of unity in diversity; we must learn the art of treating everyone with a sense of respect and importance. Realizing today the ideology of secularisation as the sign of time, we must encourage our students to take freely their own choice in the membership of religions or not. We must restore many core values to be exercised by the members at our institutions through various activities. We must teach them how to work against some of the social evils against our livelihood.

As we have taken Christ our Head teacher and role model, we must become a responsible agent of God by striving for holistic development of persons in communion and to create new heaven and earth within our society by providing Lasallian Education.

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. [Psalm 37:3-6 (NIV)]

RECOGNISING THE VALUES MANIFESTED BY NON-BELIEVERS AND BY THOSE DISILLUSIONED IN THE MARXIST CAMP IN ORDER TO FACILITATE A FAITH-CULTURE DIALOGUE.

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*Anyone can teach,
Only someone who is a living gospel can educate.*

José de la Luz y Caballero (1800-1862)
Cuban educator, philosopher and writer.

15.1 Introduction

After my long experience of living with non-believers and people who want to return to the Church now that the storm has passed and the waters are calm, I note that this sociological phenomenon, which has been accentuated in Cuba after the revolution, is also present in other areas, each with its own specific nuances. Faced with this fact, it is inevitable that we will ask ourselves the question as to how we can initiate a constructive dialogue of *faith and culture* with these two groups.

It is a characteristic of our human nature that we should feel flattered when we see in others positive signs of our own manner of being and acting, and even more if we recognise them in people outside our close circle of friends and those who share our ideas. When we see these non-believers showing signs of solidarity, especially in times of natural disasters like hurricanes, floods or drought, and how they are able to keep up their good humour in the midst of their calamity, accepting their limitations and respecting different beliefs, we are reminded of Aristotelian ethics which maintain that happiness consists in the habit of 'the good', which comes from the practice of virtue, indicating that the objective virtues are truth, good humour and fairness. Accepting limitations and respecting beliefs are the same as fairness, so the values of these groups fall within Aristotelian ethics.

These positive signs (values), perceived and cultivated, can be a most effective, if not the only, point of departure for a dialogue culminating in mutual understanding and a complementarity between faith and culture.

15.2 Value and Virtue

It is worthwhile starting by differentiating between the concepts of value and virtue. A *value* is a quality perceived in or attributed to individuals, social groups or objects, and for which they are appreciated or highly esteemed. However, well beyond the qualitative values perceived or attributed,

there is the individual person as an entitive value which takes precedence over all other values and is accepted as such by believers and non-believers.

The idea of personalisation presented by Emmanuel Mounier in his *Revolution Personalista y Comunitaria*, sets out the essential characteristics of the person as distinct from the mere individual. They include making choices, being in relationship, located in one's time and place, plus the transcendent dimension. In all social systems, from a slave society to liberal capitalism, a value has been put on the person, as the sophist Protagoras asserts in his *Antilogías*. After demonstrating that a single circumstance may produce contrary effects and that each truth belongs to each individual and to each moment, he concludes, "Man is the measure of all things".

On the basis of this sophism, he calmly reduces the person's value in relation to their *being* and *doing* and he magnifies the importance of *possessing*. Marx denounced the devaluation of the proletariat's labour, when it is converted into a simple commodity and subjected to the laws of buying, selling and bargaining. When the value of persons and their capacities is reduced to an arbitrary price, they have become objectified and turned into things. The commercial value ascribed to an object is the price which is put on it, and this has a very subjective aspect to it. This is the cause of the differences in the market prices which may be put on the same object, depending on the criteria and interests of the merchant.

Virtue is the capacity to know how to reach the goals that have been set, even when that means rowing against the current. Perhaps this connotation is related directly to the word's etymology of *vir/man*. However, it also includes the philosophical idea which presents virtue as the pathway to wisdom in the sense of knowing how to put into practice what I know and communicate.

Once we see that virtues exist among non-believers and disillusioned communists, we conclude that really both types are striving to reach the goals they have set, even though they have to row against the current to do so. In ancient philosophy, a man was considered to be virtuous when he acted according to reason and advocated the practice of the four fundamental virtues.

- Prudence: respecting the liberty and the feelings of other people.
- Justice: giving one's neighbour what is his due, maintaining fairness with regard to others and to the public good.
- Fortitude: showing firmness in difficulties and constancy in seeking the good.
- Temperance: having the willpower to control one's instincts and to keep one's desires within the limits of honesty.

We cannot deny that there are in these people, sometimes permanently sometimes intermittently, manifestations of attitudes which correspond to these four fundamental virtues.

15.3 Formation in Values or Philosophy of Values

One very interesting teaching activity that can be carried out with groups of young people, both believers and non-believers, consists in asking them to do a graphic presentation of their hierarchy of values and their aspirations for the future. The idea is to give them in advance a list of essential values, present, lost, recovered or desirable. Frequently, we found that for some the primary value was that of money, for others it was being a foreigner. They discussed calmly the basis for their selections, some saying for example that money enabled you to travel, have a house, a car, studies, medicines, friends, but others saying that these were privileges that foreigners had. It was also very useful to get some historical feedback by identifying the values of illustrious people of the past and to note any

values which have disappeared and should be recovered, values which were valid in their time but which no longer have the same relevance today.

Obviously, both the listing of the hierarchy of values and the historical feedback are exercises that are very useful in terms of the Church and an educational community, because they are an incentive to dialogue and self-correction, and they demand an openness to change.

15.4 Human Values

Human values are "the ones which enable human beings to live together in freedom; they increase by being practised, because they promote improvements in the style of relationships." They are *universal*, because they go beyond the boundaries of cultures and beliefs. Consequently, they may be found deeply rooted even in the Marxist atheist world. They serve to defend human dignity, improve it, complete it and perfect it.

- Loss of values

When the State gratuitously assumes authority over the whole system of education from nursery school to the postgraduate level, when the disintegration of families is promoted by the suppression of the patriarchal father figure and of the strong regulatory role of the mother, when the family is turned into a "nucleus" and the educational or workplace community becomes a "collective", the result is a general collapse of the symbolic order and of traditional values. The new generation develops new logos for itself and a new *hierarchy of values*, some of them "outside the lines of good and bad " as Nietzsche proposed.

Some values perish, while others flourish, just because they are different and perhaps more convincing. New convictions are adopted and are kept to because the social framework prohibits their violation. The ethic of duty for the sake of duty is replaced by the ethic of short-term, one-off success, of victory for the sake of victory.

- Was there once a better time?

Some questions inevitably surface when we meet together with young people and adults who feel free, ecologically responsible and if not exactly happy at least aware of and calmly resigned to their situation and their convictions. Were we once better? Do we feel more free and responsible?

Without elaborating on the answer, we have to admit the existence of good and evil, truth and error, and this fact cannot be denied without falling into a flagrant contradiction, because history presents us with examples of people and civilisations which build things up and of those which destroy them, and it also tells us about great errors maintained over long periods of time, even by the Church, such as the belief in an earth-centred universe or the legitimacy of slavery.

- Revaluation

An intercultural dialogue is possible, and it can take place at the level of faith and culture, depending on the room for openness among the participants and the existence of explicit or implicit values in non-believers, which will facilitate people's readiness to listen and express opinions without trying to re-examine everything from scratch or to bracket it all out. In clarifying points of view, one must proceed without haste but also without pause.

15.5 Thinkers Who Confirm the Effectiveness of Recognising Values in Order to Initiate Dialogue

- Aristotle

Aristotelian ethics already presented good humour (directly) and solidarity (indirectly) as universal values which enable human beings to live together; and there are various modern thinkers who say the same thing when speaking of the person as an agent in a dialogue which is based on these values.

- Herbert Marcuse (+1979)

In his work *The Uni-dimensional Man*, after analysing the political structures of western society, he states that: "the solution to the exploitation of man by man is to stimulate solidarity and to organise it." (Marcuse, 1979, p. 86).

- Erick Fromm (+1980)

In his work *Marx and his Idea of Man*, he maintains that, when completely free, man overcomes the difficulties imposed by capitalism and reaches full realisation of the self as a person. (cf. Fromm, 1970).

- Jean-Paul Sartre (+1980)

In *Les mains sales* [Dirty Hands] (1948) he reflects on the disappointment that came about for Marxism on the occasion of the Stalin-Hitler pact. However, during the 1960s, he published four essays in defense of the socialist ideology of the Cuban revolution, the only revolution destined to continue on the strength of its solidarity, rationality and radicality, the lack of which was the cause of the downfall of previous movements.

- Unamuno

In the first half of the 20th century, when Unamuno was Rector of the University of Salamanca, he was in touch with the young writers of the generation 1898 and was a member of the Spanish socialist party (the PSOE). He regarded himself as a religious person, though not Catholic or Christian and not even a believer. Working from this position, he contrasted the exterior force of reason with the interior force of life. For him, believing meant creating. Human beings need to believe in immortality and in God as a prolongation of the self to infinity, and so they create the ideas of God and of personal immortality. A belief is true, if it produces results that lead to a more intense life. The latter two affirmations are in effect a rational-vitalist interpretation of the Marxist principles which maintain that the individual is mortal but is immortalised in the Party, and that what is useful and necessary is not bound by the rational and the moral.

- Fray Beto

A Brazilian Dominican theologian, who is very close to and admires the socialist system; he examines the parables and their Christian principles.

- Jesús Espeja

A Spanish Dominican theologian, who participates every year (in February) in a philosophical and theological panel discussion with the Marxist-Leninist philosopher Jorge Luis Acanda in the Aula Magna of the Centro de Estudios Humanísticos, Letrán. Their first joint publication was entitled

Humanism, Atheism and Religion, a Mirror, and it contains Marxist and Christian contributions which demonstrate the possibility of Christianising the principle of scientific socialism “each to its own capacity and each to its own work”, which matches Pauline teaching (cf. 2Thess. 6-12).

These seeds of values and virtues in socialist discourse are impressive and exceed our expectations, to the extent that they show how the life style in some groups of non-believers is more admirable and more imitable than that of some groups of practising Christians.

Solidarity, good humour, the capacity to accept one’s limitations and respect for different beliefs are things that can open the way to a process of evangelisation, catechesis and pastoral ministry. The four self-evident values indicated above can be experiential instruments for an initial proclamation (*kerygma*), to be followed up by the presentation of Christianised human values (*catechesis*), transmitted through a *pastoral ministry* with Lasallian overtones.

15.6 Evangelisation, Catechesis and Pastoral Ministry

In the first part of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, there are some profound reflections on the person and on personal dignity. The final part is devoted to the relationship (dialogue) between the Church and the world. Vatican II issues a call to dialogue “within the Church, with other Christian Churches, with non-Christian believers and with all people, including those who do not believe in God.” The Council invites us, therefore, to initiate a dialogue with non-believers. Matching this, we see a corresponding real desire, that is more than a mere readiness, in the world of non-believers to see this dialogue implemented.

This is not an invitation to tolerance, which starts with the conviction that the other is wrong. It is a question of sharing and accepting that the other has a different way of approaching the truth. When John XXIII asked us to speak about what unites us rather than about what separates us, he was defining the subtle difference between dialogue and discussion.

The four values we have discussed previously as being self-evident for non-believers and disillusioned Marxists, give rise almost spontaneously to mutual understanding and a healthy competence in the area of solidarity, good humour, acceptance of limitations and respect for different beliefs and practices. Is this not a true *kerygma*, a primary proclamation that we can both rely on in our search for the truth, without starting conflicts between the different camps?

In Lasallian Centres which cater mostly for these groups of the non-believers and the disillusioned, various activities, such as lessons, conversations for cultural support, the library and sports, fulfill the role of primary proclamation, and they match what Brother Pedro Gil has said, “To evangelise is to teach the art of living happily”.

The pedagogical process of transmitting the faith, i.e. *catechesis*, can be stimulated providentially by unexpected helpers. We have experienced the way children have received the rudiments of the faith from their grandparents, who took them to catechism classes behind the backs or against the wishes of the parents. Then these same children were the ones who arranged for their parents to come to or return to the Church and join in the catechesis for adults.

Brother Pedro Gil stressed the importance of context. The contextual attitude of these groups is expressed in the readiness and the desire to have an encounter in the hope that the *faith-culture* dialogue will culminate in a paschal encounter.

CONCLUSION TO PART THREE KNOWING HOW TO ASK STARTING WITH REALITY

Daring to Question Reality

More than fifty years after the conclusion of Vatican Council II, Pope Francis, in his pastoral ministry, is insisting that we Christians of today should be living a renewed existential discernment. This means that we cannot continue to be closed in on ourselves, limited to living self-referenced, utilitarian, functional relationships, exclusive of and dominating others. Pope Francis invites us to build bridges to others, to let ourselves be touched by the particular situation of the other. Only then can we truly experience the demand of the Gospel of Jesus, which makes fraternal dialogue its most transformative instrument.

After reading the work we have presented in this third part, we want to invite you to think about questions that have to do with this exercise of looking beyond the borders of the everyday of our school lives. As Lasallian educational communities we need to begin a listening process that will allow us to discern the signs of the time for school of the 21st century and, above all, to help us make practical decisions about how to remain Lasallian with a horizon of faith and culture.

- a. What is the *centrality of the people* in our school life?
- b. What are the *strategies of dialogue* that we live in the daily life of our school work?
- c. What *perspectives* are our educational projects aiming at?
- d. In what way are we nurturing a *Lasallian identity* that fosters our common mission?
- e. What is the *existential place of the poor and of poverty* in our educational community?
- f. How are we resolving the *conflicts* that happen within our schools?
- g. Do we take on the challenge of working on the *cultural barriers* present inside and outside our educational communities?
- h. What are the *values* that unite us in the local Lasallian school?

As we did at the *Conclusion of Part One*, we would like to receive *notes* from the questions here proposed. Your contributions will continue to be important for the work of drafting the Declaration.

Please review the *suggested Methodology for the reflection work* of the First Part.

PART FOUR BEST PRACTICES

FOURTH PART GOOD PRACTICES Presentation

In this last part we present three articles that should be read in order. By doing so we intend to promote the following considerations in each of our local communities:

- The pastoral journey that we have lived in the Lasallian community during the last eighteen years, as an Institute in research.
- The pastoral practices we have developed to foster dialogue between faith and culture in our local Lasallian community.
- Criteria or keys that will help us continue to answer to new pastoral challenges of the 21st century.

The issue is to analyze the past, present and future of our practices. We hope that this local reflection can be shared at a District level and presented as notes, in order to enrich the common reflection.

TWENTY YEARS INTO THE 21ST CENTURY. LOOKING AT BEST PRACTICES OF LASALLIAN PASTORAL MINISTRY QUO VADIS? (WHERE TO NEXT?)

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16.1 Introduction

Lasallian pastoral ministry is intrinsic to the Lasallian charism and continues to be a top priority concern of the Institute especially in the varied and continuously changing landscape of the 21st century. This became more pressing as the variety and complexity of contexts from around the globe and the Lasallian world became much more easily and almost instantly accessible through digital technology. And the unfolding panorama of the 21st century, demands of us all more than ever, critical analysis, reflection, direction-setting and strategic planning for the immediate future.

This present paper is thus a historical overview of the Institute efforts concerning Lasallian pastoral ministry over the last twenty years. The General Council will receive the paper and present possible further directions for the immediate future.

In particular this document reviews the last two decades of Pastoral Ministry, thereby furnishing a historical frame of evangelical announcement. The review is an analytical and documental approach attending Institutional publishing in several collections.

16.2 Three General Chapters

The opening of the third Millennium coincided with the 43rd *General Chapter*, and already in it, within the section *The Mission Today: Urgent needs and Hope*, and under the heading of evangelization, the Institute observed the difficulty that young people have “in accepting the Good News that we announce,”¹ against a backdrop of “global youth culture,” and multi-religious, multi-cultural, and increasingly secularized societies.

Yet, the Institute felt all the more the call to dialogue especially with the world of the youth, and the need to give witness to the mission, in education and implicit proclamation of the Good News, as well as “public expressions of faith, the catechesis and pastoral care of young people....”² Further, it boldly declared, “Young people from all cultures and all traditions have the right and freedom to benefit from, and to live according to the Lasallian charism.”³

¹ Brothers of the Christian Schools, October 1st, 2000, *Circular 447: The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter. Associated for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21st century*, Rome. p. 22-24.

² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³ *Ibid.*

Following the pattern of *reflection on experience* that has come from the time of the Founder and the founding Brothers, the Brothers in that 43rd General Chapter also declared: “Many experiences around the world suggest that a good formula for faith development is one that integrates religious education, service and community.”⁴

The document saw the importance of evangelization especially in areas beyond religious education. Accordingly, it recommended to Lasallians – individuals and groups, as well as all Lasallian programs of renewal and formation, to follow the guiding principles of 1) FAITH sharing; 2) SERVICE of the poor; and 3) COMMUNITY building.⁵

In line with the Recommendation was Proposition 13 that immediately followed it, which called for the *creation* of a Commission at the level of the Region, District, and Delegation, tasked “to provide reflection, leadership and coordination for organizations, which in our institutions, work with and for young people.”⁶

The Commissions⁷ were to 1) direct and coordinate structures responsible for the pastoral ministry of the youth; 2) create and run Lasallian youth groups; and 3) provide initial and continuing formation for those accompanying youth groups.⁸ The said Commissions were also to report on their progress 3 years after the General Chapter, i.e., in 2003.⁹ The MEL Standing Committee produced MEL 1 in 2002.¹⁰ The programs of CIL, MEL, and SIEL between 2000 and 2003 can be reviewed for activities related to Pastoral Ministry.

In the same MEL 1, 11 studies to be undertaken were reported, 8 of which were directly related to pastoral ministry.¹¹ There was also the first International Assembly in 2006, the results of which were reported in *Report of the International Assembly 2006. Document 4. Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission*. Various documents can be referred to in order to have a fuller picture of what happened between the 44th General Chapter in 2007 to the 45th General Chapter in 2014.

In a related proposition,¹² the Institute called on the Institute Secretariat for the Educational Mission to include in its task (through networking and using modern means of communication) of sharing “information, ideas and research”, the area of “pedagogical innovation, schemes for educating and evangelizing.”¹³ In this task, the Secretariat was supposed to take all the appropriate means for the dissemination of the information and research gathered.¹⁴

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵ Cf. Recommendation 9, in *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷ From September 2017 onwards, the Commission at the Institute level was headed by Br. Nestor Anaya FSC and based at the Generalate.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ In 2002, Bulletin 247 entitled, *The Rights of the Child*, was published. Cf. Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Bulletin No. 247 – 2002. *The Rights of the Child*.

¹⁰ We still need to gather information between 2003 and 2007, when the 44th General Chapter was held.

¹¹ MEL 1, pp. 8-9.

¹² Proposition 15.

¹³ Brothers of the Christian Schools, October 1st, 2000, *Circular 447: The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter. Associated for the educational service of the poor as the Lasallian response to the challenges of the 21st century*. Cf. Section III, “Urgent educational needs”, Rome. Pp. 25-32, p. 28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* The MEL and SEM files may detail how the task given to it by the 43rd General Chapter was carried out, and the evaluation reports and information dissemination programs that it may have issued.

The proposition that followed,¹⁵ while mainly directed at establishing yet another Commission with a view to the stimulation and education of faith, was also notable in relation to pastoral ministry concerns in that it called for sharing “information about existing projects as well as available resources” to help in faith education. The Commission was viewed as a more long-term project in that it was expected to evaluate its work and report to Regional Coordinators and Visitors, periodically, and “at least every three years.”¹⁶

The 44th General Chapter’s main preoccupation, the Brothers, can be gleaned from its theme, *Being Brothers Today: Open Eyes, Burning Hearts*.¹⁷ Notable though, with reference to pastoral ministry, is Section 4, entitled *Educational Service of the Poor*. In it, the General Chapter reiterated the Institute’s commitment to “the transformation of our educational works as instruments of education for the poor, the defense of the rights of children and education for social justice.”¹⁸

Further, it proclaimed, “We dream of the renewal of our existing educational works so that they become islands of creativity and agents of social transformation.”¹⁹ Hence, in the subsequent section entitled “2.3 Lines of Action”, the 44th General Chapter declared, “We encourage Lasallian universities to promote policies and actions that are in line with an effective option for the poor and for education for justice.”²⁰ And elsewhere, as a line of action, “Promote the exchange of Brothers and Lasallian partners to take advantage of the educational experiences and formation programs of the different Regions and Districts.”²¹

Under the banner of *Commitment to Solidarity*, the General Chapter also called for the establishment, promotion, adaption or creation of “pedagogical, pastoral and catechetical projects that are realistic responses to the situations of poverty today.”²²

A lot of these have reference to the International Assembly of 2006, including a call to a second International Assembly (Circular 455, 44th GC, p. 54), which was carried out in May 2013.²³

The 45th General Chapter was no less enthusiastic about pastoral ministry, in both direct and indirect ways. Even as it started off once more with the first section being on the life of the Brother in the 21st century,²⁴ it also immediately trained its lenses toward the other protagonists and the arena: first, to the partners and the collaborative work of mission carried out with them,²⁵ and second, to the apostolates and shared mission themselves.²⁶

¹⁵ Proposition 16, in *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Reports of the Superior General or the Council may be consulted as to the name of this new Commission, how it was related to MEL, and any updates – sharing of information about projects and resources – that this Commission issued from this Commission, particularly in relation to new projects and research materials pertaining to pastoral ministry.

¹⁷ Brothers of the Christian Schools, September 15, 2007, *Circular 455: The Documents of the 44th General Chapter. Being Brothers Today: Open Eyes, Burning Hearts*. Rome.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Section 2.1 entitled, “Challenge: renovation of our educational works”, p. 31.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, in Section 3.3 entitled, *Lines of Action*.

²² *Ibid.*, in Section 5.1 entitled, *Challenge: a commitment in solidarity*.

²³ The proceeds of that second International Assembly are recorded in *Report of the International Assembly 2013. Document 6. One Family. One Mission: Lasallians Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor*. Rome. September, 2013.

²⁴ Brothers of the Christian Schools, November 30, 2014, *Circular 469: The Documents of the 45th General Chapter. This work of God is also our work*. Rome. Cf. Section 1. *Life of the Brother in the 21st Century*. p. 7-14.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, Section 2. *Association for the Educational Service of the Poor*. p. 15-19.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, Section 3. *One family, one mission*. p. 20-31.

Following up on the propositions of the International Assembly for the Lasallian Educational Mission (AIMEL) of 2013, to which they explicitly committed,²⁷ the General Chapter called for the creation of the International Council of the Lasallian Association and Educational Mission (CIAMEL) whose members were to be appointed by the first half of 2015,²⁸ “for the animation and direction of the Lasallian educational mission.”²⁹

Most importantly, that call was followed by Proposition 15, which tasked CIAMEL to put up an *ad hoc* commission³⁰ between 2014 and 2017 “to carry out a study of the activity of pastoral ministry in the network of Lasallian educational works....” Further, said *ad hoc* commission was to bring together “Lasallians on the diverse sectors of the Institute, especially those from multi-religious contexts, in order to share experiences, challenges and best practices in the area of pastoral ministry.”³¹ (Emphasis ours.)

The documents from three General Chapters are clear and provided incentive for the present Commission to work on gathering, reflecting on, and disseminating *Best Practices*.

Aiming to respond that requirement, Lasallian Research and Resources Service alongside the Association and Mission Secretariat have organized an International Lasallian Studies Session (SIEL 2017) which resulted in the present document thereby attending the Chapter proposal.

Before proceeding into the next section however, we would like to round off this historical backgrounder by referencing several other outputs from a variety of sources.

16.3 MEL Bulletins and other publications

▪ Seven Mel Bulletins

Two years after the 43rd General Chapter, the first MEL Bulletin came out. (November 2002). Entitled, “In view of 2006: The International Lasallian Educational Mission Assembly”. As stated in its foreword, “The MEL Standing Committee and the Commission for Association for the Educational service of the poor received a mandate to organize this Assembly (Circ. 447, prop. 8; Cir. 448 p. 41).”³² It also saw that its work was to a) diffuse information about the present educational situation in the Institute (networks) as well as examples of Association; b) provide high quality information about situations which the Institute, with all its diversity, has had to face (short studies); c) promote the holding of discussions and debates (educational forums).³³ It also noted that “Some work has already been done in these areas in the last two years” (i.e., since the 43rd General Chapter).³⁴

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Proposition 11, p. 20.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Par. 3.4, p. 21

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Proposition 12, p. 20.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³¹ *Ibid.* Shortly after the crucial Proposition 15, there is also Proposition 17 which declares that “the Superior General and his Council will work with the CIMEL to draft the *Declaration on Lasallian Education* that will reflect on the particular traits of our educational practices in the 21st century.”

³² Cf. MEL 1, p. 3.

³³ Cf. MEL 1, p. 7.

³⁴ The following are some examples:

06 Flavio PAJER, School based education and religious culture October 2003

17 Jose Maria PEREZ NAVARRO The teaching of catechism in Lasallian history April 2005

28 Educational Pastoral Care in school

29 DLS at the heart of contemporary multi-cultural and multi-religious society

33 The biblical animation of our pastoral ministry

34 Herman LOMBAERTS, Lasallian Education grappling w/ the European Union March 2007

Commissioners and Chairs, and General Councilors: There were several Brothers who were asked to be involved in this particular concern, for instance, the General Councilor, Br. Nicolas Capelle (2000-2007), and the MEL Director and Lasallian Association Chair Jorge Fonseca FSC (2007-2014), and Dr. Carmelita Quebengco, his Co-Chair in the Commission. General Councilor assigned to this matter.

- Other Institute Documents

- ✓ Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Bulletin No. 247 – 2002. The Rights of the Child
- ✓ Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Bulletin No. 248 – 2003. Educational Innovations
- ✓ Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Bulletin No. 249 – 2004. Educating in Justice
- ✓ Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Bulletin No. 250 – 2005. Associated for the Educational Mission.
- ✓ Report of the International Assembly 2006. Document 4. Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission
- ✓ Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Bulletin No. 251. 44th General Chapter Rome, April 30th – June 2nd, 2007.
- ✓ Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Toward the 45th General Chapter. Report of the Br. Superior General
- ✓ Report of the International Assembly 2013. Document 6. One Family. One Mission: Lasallians Associated for the Educational Service of the Poor.

This sums up, in broad strokes, salient developments in the area of Lasallian pastoral ministry over the last twenty years. Hopefully, the present historical backgrounder will help the Institute to move towards the future in general and the 46th General Chapter in particular.

16.4 Conclusion

The announcement of the Good News has been a constant concern during the last 20 years, appreciated from the General Chapters, International Mission Assemblies as well as the Institute's documents which let an answer be seen to the explicit desire of the Universal Church that invites to realize a new evangelization updating the ways Jesus Christ and the Gospel are announced.

Those organisms and documents recognize the tight relationship between catechesis and fraternal and solidary service, faith development and justice empowerment, attending the poorest and defending children's rights, personal attestation and communitarian collaboration, creativity and social transformation, apostolate and mission... mentioning some of them. Ergo, the Gospel announcement

cannot be isolated from people's interests, given to the situation that the first one lives within the person it fulfills.

That is why beyond giving ecclesiastic orientation, every single Lasallian has been hardly pressed by seeing the growing requirement of thousands of youngsters wandering without a sense in life, spiritually eager, being this why we confirm the urge to start evangelizing with new methods, new ways significant for today's youth.

Capitular proposals have resulted in a huge wealth all along the Lasallian world. They mark off the course of pastoral action in which creativity, communion and commitment with God's kingdom is overriding. This is why it's worth the effort of being gathered, valued and replicated with the final purpose of taking advantage of the experience and favoring then that evangelic holdings' incarnation within each person and each society.

In the same manner we enforce every single Lasallian to meditate about ministerial praxis and reinforce the Institute's collections. This will empower other Lasallian in their ministry, reinforcing the desire of bearing a part of their practices, favoring as well creativity by adapting strategies and updated methods in the labour. Likewise, systematic meditation can be nourished from the practice, inspiring new approaches that prompt us to keep on walking in the path of the First Apostle.

THE FAITH-CULTURE RELATIONSHIP IN PASTORAL PRACTICES

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17.1 Starting Point

In the relationship between culture and pastoral practice, the Lasallian experience is varied and heterogeneous, depending on the cultural contexts in which it develops. However, we can ask ourselves if we can show, within these initiatives, some significant elements that are common or similar. That is to say: Is there a pastoral channel that goes through pastoral work?

From this first observation comes the idea that the analysis of certain pastoral practices¹ with openness, sensitivity and dialogue with cultural contexts, in an innovative and inspiring way, can help to understand that relationship between Lasallian pastoral activity and culture.

If we understand that the pastoral practices in the Institute are aimed at evangelization that comes to respond to the realities of the historical-cultural context where they are developed, we can establish several objectives in the study of some of them. In fact, the first objective is aimed at identifying the areas of Lasallian pastoral practice. We focus on the subjects to whom this practice is directed and for whom it is carried out. On the other hand, these practices are developed in different fields of activity, from school to social volunteering.

The analysis provides us, as a second objective, the understanding of the pedagogical-pastoral resources of the different pastoral initiatives that are presented. It helps us to discover strategies of action, human and material resources used, developed contents, etc.

A third objective of this study is to determine analogous elements of pastoral practices oriented towards the relationship with the cultural context. In fact, pastoral practices are directed towards the person as understood from his unity. They bring together the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of the person, as well as their relational world with the social and natural environment (their ethical and political being). Although this is from different degrees and approaches, even sometimes partial, a vision as a whole gives us an integral conception of the person.

In summary, the analysis of Lasallian initiatives reveals the needs to which they respond, needs arising from the socio-historical cultural context itself, as detected in it thanks to the sensitivity towards that same environment.

¹ We refer from now on, to the different reports that describe pastoral and catechetical practices in the third section: "Some pastoral initiatives" (see below). We are aware, too, that the pastoral reality is richer than those same reports of their explanation that we understand.

17.2 The Method: A Parallel Reading

The criteria followed for the understanding and analysis of pastoral practices are the characteristics defined by UNESCO² in its MOST program (*Management of Social Transformations* 2003): innovative (develops new or creative solutions), effective³ (demonstrates a positive and tangible impact on the improvement), sustainable (due to its social, economic and environmental demands can be maintained over time and produce lasting effects), and replicable (it serves as a model to develop policies, initiatives and actions in other places)⁴.

Together with these criteria, which are global and applicable to any practice in general, it is also important to highlight some criteria specific to pastoral practices with reference to the fact that they participate in evangelization. These criteria have been set forth in the exhortation of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG). Among all those who appear in it, we have chosen four, which we believe to be suggestive and encompassing. The first is the creative renewal that seeks proximity and witness⁵. A second pastoral criterion is that it is a process that enables accompaniment, mutual listening and the initiation⁶ and / or maturation of the faith⁷. The third criterion, identified as the key to authenticity, is the social inclusion of the poor⁸. Finally, the criterion of inclusive dialogue⁹ and transforming the context in which it is inserted.

Likewise, the presentation formats of these pastoral practices have been prepared in accordance with a common¹⁰ scheme proposed for comparison and transfer of knowledge.

The *Title* should be concise but meaningful of the content of the Best Practice. The *Summary* will extract, in a few lines, the essence of the experience in such a way as to provide the reader with a first and quick approximation of its content. A *Description* of the problem that describes the context, the starting problem and the objectives. *Strategies and actions* will outline the way in which, starting from the problem, progress has been made toward the objectives. In short, the path of change and its rational keys. The *Results* trace the final effects of the actions in terms of objective improvements. Finally, the *Conclusions* summarize the essence of good practice and the lessons derived from experience so that it can be useful for others.

² <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/most-programme/>

³ This efficiency is not understood in a positivist sense but as efficiency, that is, the possibility of a favorable environment for action and its continuation. In this way the conditions of possibility of pastoral practice can be created according to the pastoral criteria described below. According to cf. EG. 224: "more than to obtain immediate results that produce an easy, fast and ephemeral political return, but that do not build human fulfillment" and (225) "This criterion is also very characteristic of evangelization, which requires keeping in mind the horizon, take on the possible processes and the long way."

⁴ <http://www.mecd.gob.es/dctm/cee/encuentros/buenapractica.pdf.documentId=0901e72b815f9789>

⁵ "Pastoral care in the key of mission seeks to abandon the comfortable pastoral criterion of" it has always been done that way ". I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the objectives, structures, style and evangelizing methods of the communities themselves ... an adequate community search for the means to achieve them "and (42)" all indoctrination must be placed in the evangelizing attitude that awakens the adherence of the heart to closeness, love and witness." (EG 33).

⁶ On a kerygmatic and mystagogical catechesis see EG 166.

⁷ "Accompany with mercy and patience the possible stages of growth of the people who are being built day by day." See, above all, the numbers 169 to 173 on the spiritual accompaniment in evangelization (EG 44).

⁸ cf. EG chapter IV.

⁹ EG 250: "the duty to serve justice and peace, which must become a basic criterion of all exchange. A dialogue in which social peace and justice are sought is in itself, beyond the merely pragmatic, an ethical commitment that creates new social conditions." See also chapter IV (n° 11 - 15) on the culture of dialogue in "Educar al humanismo solidario" (2017).

¹⁰ Ministry of Education page, above note 3.6.

Thanks to this model it has been possible to reach different conclusions about the common elements of Lasallian practices, the resources used in them and the areas in which they have been developed.

The following steps are structured in two parts. The first describes the objectives and results of pastoral practices; it presents the main aspects of the practices including the objectives, strategies and elements that distinguish them as innovative. As a last step, we reflect on common elements. These promote new types of initiatives and promote the elaboration of new proposals for improvement in our educational, pastoral and catechetical work. The practices presented here show the day to day work of educators and catechists and their continuous search to improve their work, effort that we want to promote and recognize.

17.3 *Some Pastoral Initiatives*

We present below some of the pastoral practices. Our intention is not to make a complete list of the pastoral practices of the Institute, but rather to offer a broad view of the innovative wealth as a response to the different contexts of that pastoral work.

- "HARA", a proposal to educate in interiority. ARLEP District:

A program for education in interiority. This program covers three areas or dimensions of the person: towards oneself, towards others and towards transcendence. It is not a matter of working each one separately, but in an integral way, starting from the image of the spiral line (deepening from diverse situations and from varied environments).

- "Lasallian Formation Program". Coordination of The Teacher Formation. La Salle University, Mexico Mexico-South Antilles District:

The project belongs to the Academic Area of the University. The first program is the Diploma in Lasallian Formation that covers contents related to Lasallian contexts in a first module. The second is properly Lasallian, the figure of Saint John Baptist de La Salle (life, work and spirituality), the Institute, the Brother and the Lasallian layman. A third module deepens Lasallian pedagogy from the management and educational processes. A second program is the Diploma in pedagogical intervention, as a level of deepening and strategies to apply in the classroom.

- ESFORLIJ: Lasallista Youth Leadership Formation School. Norandino District:

The Youth Leadership Formation School is an experience that, from the beginning of the school year, opens up to include all the institutional youth groups in a meaningful way, guaranteeing at least one weekly formation and support space. It is about envisioning from there the leaders who will participate in the three moments of concentration of the School, as it is called to the Levels of participation and encounter.

- District Campaigns - Central America District - Panama:

The General Council, through Circular 470, provided a general theme for the period of animation 2014-2021: "Living Together the Joy of our Mission". This general theme is broken down into sub-themes for each year with the aim of delving into the main theme. It is tradition in the District to promote mottos that motivate school courses every year. The District Animation Community decided to welcome the initiative of the General Council on this issue and the sub-themes and turn them into campaigns.

- Lasallian Experiences Program (LEP). De La Salle University Manila. LEAD:

Response to the formation needs of Lasallians as they fulfill their day-to-day duties in the university. Contents: life of the Founder, Lasallian spirituality, Lasallian core values, Lasallian Reflection Framework, method of interior prayer

- Values education in our school in Jerusalem. District of Proche Orient:

We hear much that our students do not have any more values because of the changes in the world or because of the globalization. It seems that there is a conflict between generations about values. Also, the teachers blame students for their behaviour which is not in accordance with teachers' beliefs. We took some feedback from teachers and parents; they have noticed some changes in their behaviour, in their ways of solving their problems, how they build relation, they have a new approach towards the school.

- La Salle Community Centers. University of La Salle Bajio. Mexico-South Antilles District:

The Community Centers of La Salle started the Multidisciplinary Community Development Center "CEMDEC". It started in the Piletas colony 4th section within the facilities of the Parish of San Juan Bautista de La Salle. They are spaces that link the student of La Salle with the vulnerable society to generate transcendent changes through their direct participation in activities and workshops, thus raising the quality of life of people. Its objectives are to provide development alternatives and integral growth to the users of all the services offered.

- The Delegation of Rwanda:

Promoting vocations, the Brothers must lead by example in caring for the quality of their life in community, at school, at work and in youth groups to be role models and witnesses.

- Gulf of Benin District:

Young people belonging to the group of Lomé university aspirants and young people who are looking for their vocation are invited to spend between 2 and 4 days at the Togoville Postulancy. They live with the Brothers and see from the indoor how they carry out their educational mission. Meetings and interviews take place during these stays. On the other hand, the candidates can exchange with the applicants.

- District of Antananarivo:

It is a question of making oneself known, to make glimpse the beauty of the vocation of the Lasallian Brother / Sister, and to accompany the young people in their approach of vocation. The action of a coordinator of vocations ministry is fundamental as well as the involvement of the district.

17.4 Analysis of Practices

The journey systematized by pastoral practices has helped us to understand the richness and value of the effort that is made in the Institute. At the same time, it has allowed us to observe the plurality of situations in which these practices are developed and the innovative and creative responses that have been given.

In effect, each one of the pastoral practices supposes a response to the concrete context in which they are inserted. These needs are imposed from the reality ("Environmental Education" Delegation of India, "HARA" District ARLEP). That is, the situation itself demands a response to a lack that has social, economic, ethical or political manifestations.

Other practices are the result of a need detected in the context. In these cases, the response is aimed at filling a gap at the level of the person ("Education in Values" Middle East District) or a collective ("Lasallian Formation Program" Antilles Mexico-South District). It is about responding to a need expressed in the pastoral or educational action itself ("Lasallian Experiences Program" LEAD).

In both cases, the importance of education in values in the foundation of pastoral and educational action is highlighted. The recognition and internalization of commonly accepted values, such as those claimed in "Human Rights" or "The Rights of the Children" and along with these, more particular values of the educational-pastoral relationship, such as creativity, coexistence, responsibility, justice and interiority.

This world of values is also manifested in cultures where the religious, and more the institutionalized religion, has lost almost all its meaning. The world of values creates bridges for the acceptance of the other. At the same time, it is closely related to the concern for education in interiority and the development of spiritual intelligence, as a component of multiple intelligences. In this area, the work of emotional intelligence¹¹ is important.

Recognize your own emotions in your relationship with yourself, with the environment and with others. This learning of managing the emotions facilitates self-knowledge, the recognition of the material and social context and the development of social skills in the relationship with others.

However, it should be insisted that education in interiority or in emotions does not replace evangelization or catechesis, as an explicit proclamation of the Gospel. They are privileged platforms for the development of the ability to find oneself, with others and with the mystery that transcends the previous two¹². It allows the recognition of the encounter with the other or Other from the own cultural or religious traditions.

This emphasis on the importance of education in values is not restricted to the purely personal. This world allows the opening to others in their dignity of persons. It makes possible the approach to the other from equality and respect, from interpersonal relationships, to the relational world. The community component of pastoral practices should be highlighted. The community is a space of life for the pastoral agents, for the subjects of pastoral action. Not only in its relational scope but also

¹¹ H. Gardner speaks of transcendent intelligence as the capacity of the person to situate himself with respect to the existential features of the human condition such as the meaning of life and death, and the final destiny of the physical world and the psychological one. This intelligence is manifested in human experiences, lived in a profound way, such as love for another person, immersion in the aesthetic experience of art. J. Ratzinger states: "Human life does not come about by itself. Our life is an open question, a project still incomplete. The fundamental question of each man is: how is this becoming a man? How do you learn the art of living? " "The new evangelization", Joseph Ratzinger (2000). See also: Spanish Federation of Religious of the Teaching of the Community of Madrid (2009).

¹² "Mais pour un chrétien il n'y a pas d'alternative entre évangélisation et humanisation" Moltmann, J. (1992) p. 30. In this context, spirituality is understood as the inner resonance of the Spirit of God in the person. Interiority, understood as spirituality, is the inner echo of the person's relationships with the world, with others and with God. Spirituality, interiority embraces all dimensions of the person: their intelligence, their feelings and emotions and their actions. The interiority or spirituality is integral because it claims the reason (understanding of the existence and the universe), the heart (the way of welcoming the social and natural reality) and the hands (the commitment and responsibility in the construction of the future). Thus, in the human being there is no disembodied spirituality.

celebratory, liturgical. This field is the basis, recognized by all and in mutual recognition, for the opening to the intercultural and interreligious world.

In pastoral experiences in multicultural and multi-religious contexts, the recognition of this dimension of the person is a basic element to establish a dialogue between these cultures and those religions. A common point in order to establish a "dialogue of life" between different religions and cultures¹³.

These pastoral practices favour the opening of new paths of enrichment, not only personal, but also between people, whoever the other may be. From this point of view, education in values leads to critical thinking for the analysis of political reality, social, cultural, economic, in the sense of social commitment, to move towards personal and social emancipation; and understands the person in an integral way, in its multiple dimensions: rational, affective, playful, transcendent.

Education in values and interiority recognizes the other. Moreover, it reaches the threshold of recognition of the other. Education in interiority prepares the person to ask questions beyond the immediate and superficial. It enables contact with society and the ability to admire nature and, therefore, sensitivity and commitment to them, from social commitment and ecology.

This recognition of the other is also openness to the Other. Education in values and in interiority represents an outline of transcendence. It connects with the most "profound" dimension of the human being, with its mystery and, in a religious sense, with the Mystery. This dimension in which the meaning of human life is constructed and is, at the same time, an encounter with the Other. This is the capacity of experience with oneself and of something beyond what constitutes me as I am.

As the practices exposed also show, this reality of values and interiority is closely related to the expressed Lasallian values: fraternity, faith and commitment (ESFORLIJ: Lasallian Youth Leadership Formation School, Norandino District; Lasallian. "Coordination of the Teacher Formation, La Salle University Mexico, Mexico-South Antilles District:" Lasallian Experiences Program "LEAD).

The first value reflected in the practices is that of fraternity. It is about fostering human relationships in depth, from allowing oneself to be affected and being aware of the presence of the one before us. It is powered from the meeting in different environments, every day and special encounters, such as sharing the holiday, formation days or retreat days ...

The second Lasallian value expressed refers to service. This service is understood as an invitation to work together in favour of building a world of justice and peace. Many of the practices tell us about experiences of apostolates with children, families, neighborhoods and towns and social action projects.

The third is faith. Understood as an openness to the Other, to God, who touches our hearts and guides us in the events and people of our lives. This spirituality is centered on the charism, associated with the educational mission and the person of Saint John Baptist de La Salle: his life, his work, his spirituality. Pastoral practices refer to moments of prayer, liturgical celebrations, eucharistic celebrations. At the same time, moments of reflection and sharing of Lasallian spirituality are needed. Moments and processes that strengthen the educational identity of teachers and pastoral agents, more specifically from adherence to a Lasallian educational project, from the association for the educational mission, from the community that brings together (all together) the mission.

¹³ The Lasallian Experience of Inter-Religious Dialogue in PARC (2017).

Within this process, the human and Christian vocation of the people to whom these practices are directed is promoted. In this case, "pastoral" and "vocational" are inseparably linked (District of Antananarivo, Golfe du Bénin, Delegation of Rwanda, or the IPERSEF Program of Manila, PARC) in youth ministry and participation in the life of local churches. They highlight the need for an experience, a community experience that emphasizes the coherence between pastoral work and the testimony of life. These processes and mediations lead to discernment among different Christian vocations, including lay or secular life, priestly life and religious life, both of the Brothers and Sisters of La Salle and others.

All these pastoral practices imply the figure of the educator - catechist. It is the key in pastoral mediation. The pastoral mediator is at the same time companion and witness in the itinerary of the faith. Accompanying a path of initiation in the faith that one goes through in the process of accompaniment. Testimony in the life of faith, in its vital coherence.

This requires formation in their pastoral task, but also in Lasallian spirituality and charisma. For this reason, the need to strengthen and internalize the Lasallian identity of the educator and more of the pastoral agent or catechist is continually highlighted. The pastoral processes of the Lasallian works assume itineraries of formation and accompaniment for children and young people as well as for adults.

17.5 *Comprehension Tracks and Final Reflections*

We return, at the end of the analysis of the most significant elements of the pastoral practices presented, to the initial intention of this study. We were interested in knowing if pastoral practices were a faithful reflection of the relationship between faith and culture. The analysis has confirmed that this mutual relationship is more complex than the practices we perform, always partial and limited (both by its context and by its scope). However, pastoral or catechetical practice requires taking this relationship into account. Evangelization, for its pastoral practices, is inculturated in a social-cultural context in which they adapt ways of doing, languages, symbols, etc. On the other hand, the culture, in constant evolution, influences the continuous process of inculturation of the faith.

The first symptom of this interrelation is the recovery of interiority. On a pedagogical level, this recovery was reflected in the "learning to be" of the Delors¹⁴ report and in the recognition of multiple intelligences¹⁵, among which many authors recognize spiritual intelligence¹⁶. At the philosophical level, and in theological thought, hermeneutics reaches the movement of self-understanding of the reader in front of a text¹⁷.

At the same time, the pastoral reflection highlights the importance of experience, understood as an interior and transforming experience (conversion)¹⁸, in the process of accompaniment and initiation in the faith, in the believing community and in the commitment of life¹⁹. These bases, as recognition of a common ground in religious meditation, are a very important starting point in interreligious dialogue.

¹⁴ Delors, J. (1996).

¹⁵ Gardner, H. (1987).

¹⁶ cfr. supra: nota 11.

¹⁷ Ricoeur, P. (1986).

¹⁸ Tonelli, R. (1995), p. 26-55.

¹⁹ Villepelete, D. (2003). From another point of departure, the pastoral of generating includes birth and accompaniment in the faith, see Bacq P.-Théobald C. (2011).

A second symptom of this dialogue is education in values. The crisis of cultural transmission, and within it is the crisis of the transmission of faith, is a break with the traditional forms of pedagogical and catechetical models²⁰. The education of the person in an integral way calls, nowadays, an education in values so that it can be incorporated in a critical and active way into a plural, technological and "liquid" society²¹. The integral education of the person does not only seek the transmission of some objective knowledge, nor indoctrinate in ideologies of the type that they are, but rather to enhance the personal and social aptitudes to transform the context²². At the pedagogical level, the incorporation of all people to the educational process in an inclusive school is fostered as "the process of identifying and responding to the diversity of the needs of all students through greater participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion in education."²³

This integral education insists on the relational capacity of the person and on one's action on nature and society. This capacity for social transformation, from the pastoral and its practices, is basic. In this way, the influence of pastoral action on the cultural context allows us to consider the testimony of the Kingdom in our pastoral actions of Christian commitment. Moreover, this action is not disinterested, but is aimed especially to the most disadvantaged, the forgotten in a preferential option for the poor.

As a final symptom, we note that any change in the social-cultural and religious contexts implies the need for formation of educational and catechetical agents. We incorporate the concept of lifelong learning as a means of incorporating cultural changes and, at the same time, responding appropriately from the pedagogical and pastoral option. But, at the same time, we recognize the need to strengthen the Lasallian identity of that educator.

If the symptoms mentioned in this relation between faith and culture corresponded above all to the second term of the dialectic, from the first pole of this tension it is necessary to indicate its contributions.

The first is the openness to dialogue from deep convictions of faith. The recognition of a spirituality in culture and in religions allows this dialogue with sincere positions, whether away from the faith or from different religious confessions. This contribution reminds us that there is always a common platform beyond private interests. Pastoral activity always gives an unconditional opening to the truth of the other.

²⁰ « Proposer la foi dans la société actuelle. Lettre aux catholiques de France » (1996).

²¹ Bauman, Z. (1999). The document "Educate solidarity humanism" thus defines the current society in No. 3: "The contemporary world, multifaceted and in constant transformation, crosses multiple crises. These are of different natures: economic, financial, labor crises; political, democratic, participatory crises; environmental and natural crises; demographic and migratory crises, etc."

²² Education "encourages everyone to live, study and act in relation to the reasons of solidarity humanism. It does not program spaces of division and contrast, on the contrary, it offers places of encounter and confrontation to create valid educational projects. It is an education - at the same time - solid and open, that breaks the walls of exclusivity, promoting the wealth and diversity of individual talents and extending the perimeter of the classroom itself in each sector of social experience, where the Education can generate solidarity, communion and leads to sharing". "Educate solidarity humanism" 20.

²³ UNESCO definition in: "Overcoming exclusion through integrative approaches in education" (2003). Inclusivity must also be understood in the sense of historical co-responsibility of the world and society: "Understanding the fruitful relationship between the historical development of a community and its vocation to the common good and the fulfillment of solidarity humanism implies the formation of a historical, in the awareness of the indissoluble unity that leads the ancestors, the contemporaries and posterity to overcome the degrees of kinship in order to recognize each other as sons of the Father, and therefore in a relationship of universal solidarity " (Educate in humanism, 23).

On the other hand, and from a point of view, *ad intra*, there is a serious effort to renew the faith in all its dimensions. In fact, language and experience, celebration and commitment, initiation and formation, community and evangelization are present in the whole. In the words of EG (77):

...we need to create motivating and healing spaces for pastoral agents, "places where we can regenerate our own faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, where we can share our own deepest questions and daily concerns, where we can discern in depth with evangelical criteria about our own existence and experience, with the purpose of orienting individual and social choices to the good and to the beauty.

The analysis of pastoral practices helps in understanding the mutual and dynamic relationship between cultural contexts and Lasallian pastoral activity. These practices have the characteristics of openness, sensitivity and dialogue within them. Even recognizing the inadequacies and limitations of each pastoral practice, even knowing that they are partial and incomplete and, in some occasions, more or less unsuccessful trials, allow us to recognize the approach to the dialogue between faith and culture and the pastoral concern for it. There is no real dialogue between the two if this is not mutual, if the pastoral practice is not affected by social-political and cultural conditions, and if the circumstances are not transformed by pastoral action towards a more human world in justice and peace.

The study that we have presented is incomplete in several aspects. The inspiring and innovative character of the Institute's ministry is not limited to the aspects mentioned here. It is necessary to take a step back to look at the efforts that are carried out in other areas such as pedagogy, service to the poor, identity and association even in the Lasallian community. Moreover, the Lasallian tradition, which encompasses and gives more meaning to our pastoral work, must be incorporated into the analysis of practices carried out. Tradition that is reflected in the concern for catechesis and religious education from the origins of the Institute from the Conduct of the Christian Schools and the Rule, covering the different General Chapters and Circulars of the Superiors General; even official documents of the Districts or Regions could be incorporated.

...while this personal renewal is being carried out, continuous attention must be paid to the present realities of the world and of the Church. Therefore, to renew oneself spiritually is also to intensify the effort to live the problems of today's men: apply to discriminate with sympathy their peculiar characteristics; continuously inform about the human condition in these times. (Declaration, 3.5)

...the desire of the Brothers to participate more effectively in the life of the world and the Church, to adapt more resolutely to the geographic, social, cultural, political and religious environment in which they live (Declaration 9.2).

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS ANSWERING TO THE PROPOSAL OF THE 45TH GENERAL CHAPTER

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18.1 Introduction

The 45th General Chapter, which took place in Rome in May 2014, was well aware of the pastoral calls and the importance to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. It demanded moreover to revise how the proposals from previous General Chapters were carried out, to analyze and share different methods used for catechesis and prepare a public contribution about this issue referring to the Lasallian contribution (cf. C. 469, p. 25).

The Lasallian Research & Resources Service together with the Secretariat for Association and Mission convened the International Session of Lasallian Studies (SIEL 2017), whose theme was “Faith-Culture Dialogue” and which was celebrated at the Generalate in Rome, Italy. Fifteen participants took part in the meeting, coming from 9 Districts who carry out their educational ministry in various institutions and at different animation levels: local, district or international, while always fostering pastoral activities. Each participant prepared a document about his reflection and pastoral experience, which was inspired by experts at the regional level¹.

At the opening of SIEL, Br. Alain Houry offered a picture of the Institute’s catechesis in the 18th and 19th centuries, starting from its origins². Br. Flavio Pajer contributed with the European perspective on how to teach religion in school³, while Br. Pedro Gil shared his reflection on theological perspectives of catechesis and pastoral care after Vatican II. Dr. Kevin Ahern focused on the Catholic intellectual tradition and religious formation in the United States of America⁴, while Br. Santiago Rodríguez developed the issue of catechesis in the context of educational pastoral care⁵. Then Br. Ricky Laguda enlightened the session by sharing the Lasallian experience of inter-religious dialogue within PARC and Br. Hilaire Raharilalao explained the African experience of catechesis and pastoral animation. In addition to these profound reflections, each SIEL participant offered a best practice of his pastoral work. It is important to mention that this issue of the Digital Journal of Lasallian Research gathers the essential content of these speeches.

At the same time, the International Council for Lasallian Association and the Educational Mission (CIAMEL) offered documents about some pastoral care practices in which the meaning of catechesis

¹ In addition to SIEL conference speakers, Bros. Santiago Rodríguez, Mawel Pajarillo and Diego Muñoz provided orientation to participants when they prepared their work.

² Houry, A. *El diálogo entre la fe y la cultura en las instituciones lasalianas*. SIEL 2017 la catequesis en la época del Fundador y los primeros Hermanos. El contexto francés de la catequesis, decisiones tomadas por La Salle. Conference, Rome, 2017.

³ Pajer, F. Un enfoque europeo del problema de la enseñanza de la religión en la escuela. Conference, Rome, 2017.

⁴ Ahern, K. The catholic intellectual tradition and (Lasallian) religious formation. Conference, Rome, 2017.

⁵ Rodríguez, S. Catequesis en el contexto de la pastoral educativa. Interpretaciones del Papa Francisco y pistas para una conversión pastoral. Conference, Rome, 2017.

in present times is highlighted starting from praxis, and thus formulating possible guidelines for the future.

Due to the fact that the 45th General Chapter also requested to prepare a public document concerning the Lasallian contribution to the proclamation of the Good News, here below we offer a *Manifest*, whose principles and aims are taken from the SIEL 2017 works, in the hope that this material will be a contribution for the pastoral commitment in Lasallian works.

In this way, the answer to proposition 15 of the 45th General Chapter comes in an approximate form, which will be enriched by specific inputs from each District and Region, that will be shared at the beginning of the International Assembly for the Lasallian Educational Mission in 2020 (AIMEL 2020).

18.2 Proclaiming the Good News. Seven Keys to Evangelization

With the desire to help each one of our pupils who are searching for meaning in their lives, we Lasallian educators commit to continue carrying out our educational task⁶ aware of the fact that it is evangelizing *per se*.

This is the reason why we wish to draw attention upon some “*Keys to Evangelization*”⁷ which were paramount for the Gospel proclamation⁸:

1. Encountering Jesus of Nazareth

Encountering Jesus of Nazareth was always a turning point. This encounter is what transformed the life of Zacchaeus, enlightened the Samaritan at the well, and enabled Peter to say “He is the Lord”. In the same way, in history, many men and women happened to recognize Jesus under different circumstances. This is what encouraged them to commit to the proclamation and experience of the Kingdom of God, this Kingdom of justice, freedom, brotherhood which was announced by Jesus⁹.

This is the reason why in all Lasallian education centers, as well as all pastoral activities, must be rooted in this Encounter with Jesus¹⁰, helping children and young people to discover Jesus who came to give life and give it abundantly.

2. Personal and Group Accompaniment¹¹.

Lasallian accompaniment is inspired by the example of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and his writings. Even if he did not use this word¹² he did employ the concept when he spoke of *vigilance*¹³

⁶ Bernardo, Henry. Education, Evangelization, Extension: The meaning, purpose and role of religious education in the Lasallian Mission. Internal document, SIEL, 2017.

⁷ Bazaco A. La relación fe-cultura en prácticas pastorales. Internal document. SIEL, Roma, 2017.

⁸ The following “Keys for evangelization” do not follow a one-direction path, even if they could be considered in this way. However, it is convenient to interpret them in their context, where each one is related to the others and strengthened by them.

⁹ Sobrino J., Jesús y el Reino de Dios. Significado y objetivos últimos de su vida y misión, en: Jesús en América Latina. Sal Terrae. Santander 1982.

¹⁰ Gil, Pedro. Perspectivas teológicas en catequesis y pastoral después del Vaticano II.

¹¹ Cristina J.R. The experience of Lasallian accompaniment: a pilot study among De La Salle University Manila students. Internal document. SIEL, Rome, 2017.

¹² Govea, Andrés. *Acompañamiento Personal*. Un Aspecto de la Pedagogía de San Juan Bautista De La Salle. Tesis de grado. Ediciones de la Universidad de la Salle, Mexico. 1989

¹³ MTR 5,3; 6,2; 14,3; 114,1;115,2. RC VIII,1.

and when he broadly oriented his Brothers with his writings and specifically with personal letters addressed every month to each one of the Brothers.

Following his example, Lasallians try to offer a personal and group accompaniment to their students, strengthening them in their academic, spiritual and human life. This is the reason why Lasallian educators are concerned in knowing their pupils¹⁴, they prepare themselves¹⁵, from a professional and spiritual point of view¹⁶, thus implementing pedagogical strategies based on discerning how to act with all and each one of their students¹⁷.

3. Fraternal Attitude: At the Personal and Community Levels

In addition to the spirit of faith and zeal, De La Salle's legacy was also a fraternal spirit¹⁸. This is what one can read in the name of the Institution that he founded: *Brothers of the Christian Schools*¹⁹. The fraternal relationship²⁰ develops horizontally in proximity, thus enabling to mutually see each other, recognizing to be equals and children of the same Father.

This relationship stems from the anthropological Christian principle conceiving humanity in the image and likeness of God, in whom He dwells. Hence the respect for oneself (courtesy) and for others (civility)²¹. In this way, rather than appearing vane, charity stems spontaneously and faith is constantly nourished by recognizing in the other person one's dignity and the presence of God in that human being.

4. From the Educational Dimension to the Educational Aim

The detailed description offered by John Baptist de La Salle about what must exist in a Lasallian school²² is required to inspire students towards the expected aim: becoming good Christians²³, good citizens²⁴. It also highlights how an educator must act²⁵ in so far as it is in the educational

¹⁴ MD 33,1

¹⁵ Novelo D. El reto de formar maestros lasallistas de religión en el diálogo existencial entre creencias y la educación cristiana. Internal document. SIEL, Rome, 2017.

¹⁶ It is necessary to draw attention to the words that the Holy Founder uses in his Meditation 62, 1-2: "...If, then, you do not belong to God, if you do not frequently turn to God in prayer, if you teach only external matters to children, and if you do not put all your care to give them the spirit of religion, must you not be considered by God as a thief who has broken into his house, who remains there without his consent, and who, instead of inspiring students with the Christian spirit as you ought to do, only teaches them things that will be of use to them in this world?"

¹⁷ León Lauraire (2004) comments on spiritual discernment in these terms: "This expression is more original and more profound. Personalised knowledge calls for an effort to understand what is below the surface, for empathy, and therefore, for a real dialogue. It goes beyond purely empirical or scientific data: it comes from intuition, from internal enlightenment which one can request and obtain by prayer." (in *Conduct of Schools*, Mel Bulletin 12, p. 19).

¹⁸ RC 3,1.

¹⁹ RC 1,1

²⁰ Velástegui, R. El reconocimiento de valores manifiestos en los no creyentes y en los alejados de corte marxista, facilita el diálogo fe-cultura. Internal document. SIEL, Rome, 2017

²¹ Lauraire, León. *Conduct of Schools*, Mel Bulletin 12, Rome 2004

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Kassabry D. Lasallian education in the 21st century: meeting the challenge of cultivation the inner life. Internal document. SIEL, Rome, 2017.

²⁴ MF 160, 3, 2

²⁵ Raja, J.X. The ministry of dialogue. In the light of Lasallian Education. Internal document. SIEL, Rome, 2017

relationship²⁶ and in the harmony of teaching and pedagogical elements that the school environment is created, facilitating the educational aim²⁷.

5. Serving: Meeting One's Neighbor, in the Path of Jesus

The sound of the word “neighbor” recalls the beautiful passage in which Jesus tells us about the Good Samaritan, who, witnessing the need of the poor man on the side of the street feels compassion for him and takes care of him in a sweet and responsible way.

Like that good man, Jesus of Nazareth teaches us to serve throughout His life. The most evident example can be found on the occasion of the Last Supper, when He washes the feet of His disciples. His teaching rises above everything when he explains the reason for it: “love one another as I loved you”. It is not a matter of altruistic welfare or moral teaching, its real reason resides in the configuration of other “Christs”, i.e. the full realization of Christians.

In this area, fostering voluntary commitment, as well as all activities teaching to serve, will be privileged actions of the Lasallian educational labor.

6. Faith celebration

Following the teachings of John Baptist de La Salle, Lasallian educators make acts of faith, thank God and offer Him their efforts²⁸ through different pastoral practices²⁹, giving priority to the experience of sacraments. Faith celebrations recall the joy of the first encounter with Jesus, the commitment to give witness to His message (Kingdom of God) and are at the same time a source of grace and communion.

This is the reason why Lasallians pursue the planning and carrying out of all sorts of workshops, meetings, retreats and pastoral activities, because they know that they can become steps of a personal Gospel path.

7. Illustrating faith

Saint John Baptist de La Salle worked out a basic and systematic catechesis, aiming at educating his students to faith and fostering them to achieve a full Christian life³⁰. He knew that, however, in order to fulfill this aim, it was necessary to incorporate several elements, such as the witness of a sacramental, virtuous and prayerful life, as well as the knowledge of the Gospel message. He therefore made use of all means available to achieve this aim. He definitely knew that a good catechesis had to be an integral one and has to be balanced in its components.

In the path of their Founder, today's Lasallians integrate that unity into their apostolic ministry with the aim of illustrating faith by pursuing the knowledge and study of the message of the Kingdom of God through prayer and science and spreading it with the zeal typical of all “apostles of catechism”³¹.

²⁶ De Urquijo, M. El diálogo fraterno una alternativa pedagógica para propiciar ambientes universitarios de construcción de paz. Una visión desde la pedagogía lasaliana. Internal document. SIEL, Rome, 2017

²⁷ Campuzano, A. El sentido evangelizador en la expresión “mover los corazones” de San Juan Bautista de La Salle y sus posibles repercusiones en el diálogo fe y cultura, dentro de la escuela lasaliana. Internal document. SIEL, Rome, 2017

²⁸ EMO 4, 124

²⁹ Cruz, D. y Zapata A., Orientaciones para direccionar las acciones pastorales en las obras lasallistas. Una mirada desde la RELAL. Internal document. SIEL, Rome, 2017

³⁰ CEC 5

³¹ Reference to the name given to the Brothers of the Christian Schools by Pope Pius X during the audience of October 10, 1903.

18.3 Keys for Action, To Conclude

SIEL 2017 offered a large reflection on catechesis, the proclamation of the Gospel, the relationship between faith and culture, in which the starting point was the reality lived in the educational Lasallian mission. This reflection was gathered into this magazine and its summary can be seen in the previously mentioned *7 Keys to Evangelization*. We now have to go back to that reality enlightened by the debate and motivated by the awareness of being members of a larger group, recognizing itself as ambassadors of the Good News.

The debate was challenging in terms of relevance and adequacy of meaning to a specific culture, but it will be even more challenging to incorporate these factors into the lives of those we were sent to. This is why it is up to each one of us to convert these keys to evangelization into *keys for action*, helped by the creativity required by any didactics in order to achieve a meaningful application. This invitation is compulsory for those passionate “apostles” whom we thank for sharing their strategies, methods and programs.

We cannot close this part without mentioning a very important element which was present during all the SIEL: prayer. It is impossible to speak about Jesus without talking to Him. Let us pray that this certainty encourages us to repeat in full awareness that Jesus lives in our hearts. And that in order to talk to Him we only need to enter our inner selves.

EPILOGUE

A CHALLENGING HORIZON

EPILOGUE

AN EDUCATIONAL PASTORAL CARE HORIZON¹

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19.1 Introduction

Some people claim that Catholic institutions specialize in creating ideals which are then hardly put into practice. Maybe this article suggests the same. It nevertheless aims at giving an account of a first step which is required when one wants to foster processes of change within institutions.

Many times, we unilaterally foster bottom-up constructive processes. This is a key step: without participation, agreements and joint revisions, there is no renewal. Institutional pastoral pedagogy planning in terms of participation process is always the best solution to carry out these conversion processes defined as dialogical processes. However, this is not the only step necessary.

The Canadian Philosopher, Bernard Lonergan, identifies two educational processes, according to the tradition of John Dewey. There are bottom-up processes but also top-down processes. He defines the first ones as creation and the latter healing. This article aims at reflecting about some ideas that we, Lasallians of Argentina, found during a healing process (top-down process), of our institutions that we call “Educational Pastoral Care Horizon” (EPCH). Used during 15 years in life-long training processes, planned as different paths for various groups of people, it was extremely useful for the planning of new bottom-up initiatives.

Training processes stemming from EPCH consist in being enthusiastic with the same ideas and being enthusiastic with the mission we are carrying out, i.e. being fond of the same persons who are accompanying us and to whom we address ourselves. It is love which will lead us to choose together this vision, in order to change our ways of judging reality, changing our understanding of things and operating a conversion of our practices.

Both processes are required: healing and creating, creating and healing. These are processes that we all build, while being aware of the tension existing between institutional will and personal freedom. Documents or institutional mechanisms do not guarantee educators’ conversion to the common vision. However, conversion without institutional mediation is difficult to assess and this is a key element in education. It is not a matter of “certifications”, but rather to heal ourselves of our

¹ This text has been published earlier on three occasions. The first, in 2004, in the Buenos Aires review *Vida Pastoral*. A second time was in *MEL Bulletin* 28 in 2005, along with other articles that came from the same Argentine publication. Finally, it was included with some other pieces in 2015 in my book *Pastoral educativa. Dios es la vida de la escuela*. De Editorial Sendero, Buenos Aires. The version we present here has some small variants with respect to the previous ones. Its main theme remains the same: *Horizonte Pedagógico Pastoral de la Asociación Educacionista Argentina*, whose final version we had the joy of producing in association with Javier Castagnola and Patricia Cesca in 2001. The text has its history and has produced its fruits. I thank Br Diego Muñoz for his desire to include it in this publication.

individualism in order to build a common area. It is a matter of abandoning our world to reach that² of ordinary people mediated by significance and value.

19.2 Jesus Christ as the key-person of the Christian school

School is an institution, i.e. a public social space created to preserve cultural communication. The school is therefore a meeting place for a fruitful and creative encounter between generations in the area of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together.

A school that has a Christian inspired project is one whose plan is understood in the person of Jesus Christ, God and man. In a Christian-inspired project, Jesus is the key-person, enabling a different meaning to be given to the things learned, the reorientation of action and opening onto a horizon of transcendent hope. In a school with a Christian inspired project, all the subjects of learning are integrated into the Christian understanding, and this is the ability to discern from the point of view of the poor³.

At school, faith and culture, faith and life, are united in a similar way as the Son of God and humankind in the Mystery of the Incarnation. Following the Christological formulation adopted by the Council of Chalcedon (451), we have to believe that humanity and divinity in Jesus Christ are mutually interconnected without changing – i.e. without one being converted into the other – without confusion – i.e. without one being absorbed by the other – without separation – i.e. without being seen as partial – without division – without conflict between them. The relationship between culture and faith is similarly established at school⁴. Between culture and faith, life and faith, there is a relationship whose features are discontinuity and interruption, but at the same time consumption and fullness. There is a discontinuous wholeness, a difference in communion, collaboration. This is the core of what we define educational pastoral care. In a school with a Christian inspired plan, there is, therefore, a single agenda: the faith-culture-life synthesis of those who partake of the project, developed through the different pedagogical and pastoral processes. Conceiving school in this manner entails:

- Understanding it as a spiritual reality: it is a place where boys and girls, children, adolescents and adults can really experience God, this being at the same time the experience of religious, cognitive and ethical self-transcendence.
- Defining education in terms of initiation, because school can be conceived as an ecclesial community⁵: a community of communities, it is a place where the Gospel becomes incarnated in culture exchanging with popular, child, adolescent and youth cultures.

² For Greeks, “one’s world” is “*idios kosmos*”. It is evident that it shares the same root of “idiocy”. In fact, an idiot lives on his own, without being able to communicate with others. Lonergan states more than once that a person lost in his world is similar to a sleeping person: he is unable to know more than his dreams.

³ The “point of view of the poor” basically includes three interconnected issues. The geographical place of the poor, the social place of the poor and the epistemological place of the of the poor. The point of view of the poor is his fight, his interests and worries, but it is also his district, his environment. The Encyclical *Laudato Sí* reminds us of this necessary path for the Christian-inspired school: the understanding of all interconnected problems and the life of the poor as the key to interpreting this framework.

⁴ What in Jesus Christ is the reality of a perfect relationship from the beginning, in the person and his undertakings, it is always a grace that he receives, which requires us to accept it, strengthen and permanently build in time.

⁵ In secularized or multi-faith contexts, the idea of an “ecclesial community” might seem awkward. Besides, we believe that any Christian-driven project requires being centered around a Christian and ecclesial community from which it draws its meaning. In this way, it will be universally opened and welcome the various spiritual traditions without distorting the founding intentions.

- Conceiving education in an inter-secting way, collaborating with other institutions, men and women who are committed to the same pursuits even if moved by different inspirations.

19.3 The Pedagogical Relationship at the Core of School

Schools as a place for dialogue between generations in the area of learning, is a place for relationships. The relationship between pedagogical stakeholders is in fact the basic framework of school life. This pedagogical relationship has institutionalized and institutionalizing features: it stemmed from the society's need for a known place for development and socialization, and it continues to be created upon this value. This institutionalized connection between generations establishes a sense of belonging, the awareness of the social being. Today, relationships are the social concept for redemption, as is the concept of reason⁶ in modern times.

This pedagogical relationship is particularly rich and complex. It involves teachers and students as people whose relationships bestow their own identities: knowledge and social conflicts, whose awareness and transformation are what fosters this relationship in which a simultaneous relationship among people, times, human and social groups take place, as well as among political and economic interests, and mysteries.

In a Christian-inspired school this same relationship is the religious place *par excellence*. The content of this relationship is both connected to knowledge and its tools, with choices and values required to operate discernment, with methods and expectations of change belonging to those who are involved in the relationship and with cultural interpretations and social conflicts within which understanding takes place.

This relationship aims at transforming people in order to generate social change. People are transformed by the resolution of the different conflicts which the relationship entails: knowledge, relationship, religious conflict, the conflict of values, and social and emotional conflicts. Conceiving this relationship in terms of interwoven conflicts entails seeing it as a place for self-transformation and consciousness, inner transformation and personal awareness, in which everyone ends up transformed by methodical and true conflict resolution.

Conceiving the core of school life in terms of relationship confers the task of managing and animating school life to created communities. The learning community – classroom, department of studies, teachers – that makes up the day to day school life. And it is within this learning community that the discovery of God and His mystery in Jesus Christ takes place. This learning community is the Church which is forming.

This pedagogical relationship as core of school life is the alternative which adult communities are proposing to rethink in both their own and the students' social life, as well as their own economic, political, social and symbolic conflicts. Learning entails entering into a relationship with social life and its conflicts. In evangelical terms, it is impossible to learn away from the poor. The pedagogical relationship is thus converted in memory of social conflicts and their Christian dimension⁷,

⁶ This basic idea of our reflection might be misleading by reducing the "relationship" to a matter of mutual affection. Without denying their importance, the concept of relationship is much more complex, and it includes all the areas of school life, conceived in a multidisciplinary way as already mentioned: cognitive, economic, political, religious relationships, etc.

⁷ Envisaging the existence of a "Christian dimension" of life, together with other ones, entails highlighting the need for a reflection which unveils all of its school contents, an ethical and religious choice aimed at focusing on the Gospel to establish criteria for curriculum development and a commitment to building meaningful communities stemming from this.

accompanying life committed to solving these conflicts and prophecy of a better life, in which clashes are overcome.

19.4 The Classroom as a Place for Relationship

We define the classroom as any place for learning which was intentionally planned. Following Marc Augé, we call the classroom any human place conferring identity when we walk through or inhabit it, where we are able to personally meet others and which enables us to participate in history with a growing awareness. In the classroom, the relationship takes place between the adult and the youth communities, forming learning communities.

The adult community includes principals, teachers, non-teaching personnel and family groups. Within the pedagogical relationship, each of these groups acts in a different way, in a communion of participation.

This community discovers that it is called by God to *establish a democratic environment* in which all conflicts are solved, by referring to values above personal or group interests.

This democratic vocation of the adult community leads it to establish classrooms in which *everyone may feel included* with joy, creativity, happiness and freedom of investigation and thought.

Such a democratic and inclusive vocation by the adult community fosters the creation of classrooms that are *open to society and committed* to gradually changing projects despite and due to all hindrances and setbacks of educational, social and economic policies. For this reason, a Christian-oriented school project makes a clear option for education in and for justice as an alternative way to build society.

This democratic, inclusive, and transforming vocation of the adult community enables it to conceive authority as a service rendered to the common educational and evangelizing mission, looking for participation to the project, decision-making processes, theoretical understanding, organizational criteria and curricular tasks.

This democratic, inclusive, transforming and participatory vocation does not imply hiding differences, but rather *fostering dialogue through differences*, communion in differences aiming at collaboration to the common educational pastoral care project. Conversion of people and groups, conversion of the institution itself to its Christian inspiration, is at the core of the concept of vital planning of the educational project.

This democratic, inclusive, transforming, participatory and dialogical vocation spurs adults in the community to experiencing *their own cultural life as a place to meet God*. God, foundation of the meaning of what is learned, matrix of fruitfulness of all truth, good and beautiful, can be touched in the training effort that is at the center of the educational relationship. This cultural school life consists both in the fabric of people's relationships, as well as in their own conflicting connection to knowledge.

Educational relationships are defined by this effort to gain knowledge. It is according to people's relationship to knowledge that school understands its life of prayer, celebration and sacramental significance. This implies that relationships themselves hold religious dimensions that must be revealed. For this reason, pedagogical relationships have both pastoral care and activity aspects, following the Chalcedonian principles we mentioned at the beginning. In so far that this dimension exists, but is not evident, a school rooted in a Christian-inspired project needs to create curricular

opportunities in which the religious content of the relationship may be explained from the Christian point of view, thus helping all to understand that it implicitly exists in all their lives.

The classroom, i.e. the space of the relationship, is also a place for evaluation, process and conduct assessments, distinction between success and failure. Since the position of the person who is evaluating is imposed as a position of power, the adult community is clearly expressing the values at stake in the pedagogical relationship and in which sense it hopes that they are lived by all parties. Power is the ability to make possibilities come true, which the adult community received from the State, the Church hierarchy and families. Power is at the service of children, adolescents and youth. Community animation – which plays a part in educational management – aims at updating all possibilities of people and groups which are present in the larger community of education.

On the other hand, the community of children and youth is the party requesting a pedagogical relationship. School exists as such because of their presence, their search and social construction as students. The community of children, adolescents and youth brings to the classroom and the pedagogical relationship an enormous baggage of knowledge: they know how to learn, how to act, to be and to live together. They are situated in the culture of the child, the adolescent and youth in which they belong. These forms of knowledge are a starting point and area of work for a dialogical new meaning – always in conflict – due to the adult community's culture. These forms of knowledge and the time in life when they were created are an evangelical preparation for the proclamation of the Mystery which the adult community carries out within its own Church life. Each child, adolescent and young person must be known personally in order to allow for the adult community to answer to his/her deepest needs in the most constructive way for him/her. This is especially the case for pupils with special needs. In this way, Christian-inspired schools try to organize diversified activities which may answer the interests and needs of all. In this way, the adults in the community will be the elderly brothers of the pupils entrusted to them by families.

19.5 The Teacher, the Key-person for Institutional Change

The educational relationship is not a mere function. The school community with a Christian-inspired project is not a mere organization. From a Christian and Lasallian perspective, the educational relationship is a ministry, a Church service, which is permanent and shared. This is the name for the educational relationship seen through the key-person of Jesus Christ, Servant of humankind and God: ministers of God, ambassadors of Christ, ministers of the Church.

The teacher is called to meet God, soul of the world, life mate, transcendent matrix of any culture within their educational relationship. Their own view of life – they knowing how to learn, how to act, to be and to live together – partakes of their narration of culture which the teacher, as a mediator, presents to the learning community in which they carry out their educational task. Their concerned satisfaction for life and culture will bring them to walk in faith living the tension between success and hope. Their own integration of faith-culture-life, which is always developing and fruit of grace, turns them into a sign of the Kingdom within the adult community to which they belong.

However, the teacher as key-person of institutional change is always a social subject of transformation. An important component of educational apostolate, coinciding with the task of leading, is the formation of this social subjectivity within the adult community at school. Faith communities constituted as scientific, pedagogical and pastoral research communities, as well as areas for democratic participation, follow this path. The social subject transforming school and society is always living the tension between achievement and hope, success and wish, understanding and ignorance, accomplished faithfulness and opening to the future, what was instituted and the strength of what is instituting.

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Abbreviations of De La Salle's work used in this publication:

- CT - Collection of Various Short Treatises
- MR - Meditations for the Time of Retreat
- RC - Common Rules

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From Antioquia, Colombia. Brother of the Christian Schools. He did his novitiate in Rionegro (Antioquia), Colombia and his scholasticate in Bello (Antioquia). Bachelor's degree in primary education with a focus on ethics, human values and religious education. Specialist in Organizational Human Development Management. Rector of La Salle College in Pereira (Risaralda), Colombia.

6. Daniel Novelo Huerta, F.S.C.

From Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico. Brother of the Christian Schools. Bachelor of Science in Education by UANL, Master in Planning and Institutional Development by CESLAS, Diploma in Theological Update (ULSA), Diploma in Philosophy for Children (CELAFIN). Psychology Studies (ITESO, GESTALT, PNL, ENSFEP), Studies of Mexican History (INAH, ENSFEP). Member of the Research Coordination Team (FICPES). Deputy Director of the Interdistrict Postulancy of Mexico. He works on the development of catechist training programs, youth ministry, volunteer work and teacher updating courses.

7. Pedro Ma. Gil, F.S.C.

From Bilbao, Spain (1943). Brother of the Christian Schools. He was trained in Irún, San Asensio, Salamanca and Rome. He received the title of teaching and doctorate in theology. Specialized in theology of education and in the history and theology of consecrated life. Professor Emeritus of the Universities of Salamanca and Deusto.

8. Hilaire Raharilalao, F.S.C.

From Ambohimahaso, Madagascar. Doctor in Biblical Theology from the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of West Africa (UCAO), Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Member of the Association of African Theologians (ATA). Member of the Malagasy Committee of Ethics of Science and Technology (CMEST), Antananarivo. Member of the Malagasy National Academy of Arts, Letters and Sciences.

9. Daoud Kassabry, F.S.C.

Born in Nablus (Palestine), D. Kassabry is a Brother of the Christian Schools. After graduating in Chemistry at Bethlehem University, he entered the novitiate in Nairobi, Kenya, and continued his training in Lebanon. He holds a Master's degree in Religious Studies from Saint Joseph University in Beirut, a Master's degree in Educational Administration from Al-Quds University - Jerusalem, and a Ph.D. in School Administration from Amman University, Jordan. Currently, he is director of the Lasallian Pedagogical Center in the Holy Land and responsible for the pastoral mission in the Holy Land, in the Lasallian Near East District.

10. Ma. Roxanne B. Ibalobor, RGC

Born in Talisay City, Negros Occidental, Philippines, Ibalobor is a Licensed Guidance Counselor. She finished her Bachelor in Psychology from the University of Saint La Salle, Bacolod City and her Master of Science in Educational Measurement and Evaluation from De La Salle University, Manila. She is currently in her dissertation stage for a Doctorate degree in Educational Psychology. At present, Ibalobor is the Head of the Office of Program Evaluation and Data Analytics of the Center for Learning and Performance Assessment in De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde.

11. Maria Cristina S.C. Eusebio

Born in Bulacan, Philippines. She completed her Bachelor of Science in Behavioral Science and her MA in Community Counseling at De La Salle University in Manila. Macy is the coordinator of the NSTP training and training office at the Student Affairs Office of De La Salle University in Manila.

12. James B. Laxa

Born in Pampanga, Philippines, he holds a Bachelor's degree in Theology and Philosophy and a Master's degree in Applied Theology. Currently, he is the director of Lasallian Pastoral Office at De La Salle University in Manila.

13. Alejandro Campuzano Vargas

Born in León, Guanajuato, Mexico. Coordinator and Professor of Humanities Department at La Salle University, Bajío, Mexico. Bachelor's degree in Primary Education, Bachelor of Law, Bachelor of Theology and Master's degree in Constitutional and Administrative Law.

14. Kevin Ahern

Kevin Glauber Ahern, PhD grew up in New York. He is a theological ethicist and an assistant professor of religious studies at Manhattan College. He has published several books including *Structures of Grace: Catholic Organizations Serving the Global Common Good* (Orbis: 2015) and *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond*. Kevin presently serves as the International President of the International Catholic

Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (ICMICA-Pax Romana), a global movement of intellectuals and professionals committed to social transformation. [@kevin_ahern](#)

15. Ma. del Carmen de Urquijo Carmona

From Mexico City, Doctor of Education, Master of Education in Innovation, Specialist in Higher Education, Graduate in Education, Management accredited by the CONOCER Group, graduate in Therapeutic Psychomotor, Coordinator of the International Center for Distance Education from La Salle University of Mexico.

16. John Xavier Raja, F.S.C.

Born at Madurai in Tamil Nadu of South India, is a member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Entered novitiate at Mangalagiri in Tamil Nadu and professed his final vows on the 6th Oct 1997. He holds a Master degree in Spiritual formation, a Master degree in South Indian literature and a bachelor degree in Education. He has been assigned as youth minister. Coordinator for various social welfare programs, Teacher in several schools and missionary in Papa New Guinea in the past years. He is currently the principal of St. James Higher secondary school at Suranam in Tamil Nadu of South India.

17. José Ramiro Velástegui Alvear, F.S.C.

Born in Quito, Ecuador. Brother of the Christian Schools. He did all his Lasallian formation in Ecuador. Bachelor of Philosophy - Literature and Education. For the last 15 years, he has been Professor - Coordinator of Philosophy at the Interdiocesan Seminary in Havana, Cuba.

18. Manuel Pajarillo, F.S.C.

From Manila, Philippines (1960). Brother of the Christian Schools. He has a degree in Biology and academic credits in Religious Studies and Education from De La Salle University-Manila. Obtained his Master's and PhD, Civil and Ecclesiastical (PhD and STHD) in Theology; specialized in Dogmatics at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. His interest lies in the philosophical and cultural foundations of a spirituality of liberation, after writing his thesis on the spirituality of the liberation theologian Jon Sobrino and under the influence of the Basque philosopher Xavier Zubiri, particularly by the "Sensible intelligence". He is currently teaching at the Novitiate of the Pacific-Asia Regional Conference (PARC) in Lipa City, Philippines.

19. Alberto Bazaco F.S.C.

From Donostia / San Sebastián, Guipúzcoa, Spain. Brother of the Christian Schools. He did his novitiate in San Asensio, La Rioja (Spain) and the scholasticate in Irún, Guipúzcoa (Spain). Diploma in Education (Human Sciences) from the University of the Basque Country. Graduated in Philosophy and Education Sciences (Philosophy) from the Complutense University of Madrid. Bachelor of Religious Studies (specialty in catechesis) of the Pontifical University of Salamanca; and the canonical license in Theology (Specialty Pastoral Catechetics) at the Catholic Institute of Paris. Currently, professor at La Salle School of Beasain, Guipúzcoa, (Spain).

20. Nestor Anaya, F.S.C.

Native of Mexico. Brother of the Christian Schools. He did his novitiate and scholasticate in Santa Lucia, Mexico. Bachelor's degree in religious sciences, primary education and upper secondary education with a specialty in Spanish. He has a specialization in psychopedagogical strategies and a master's degree in education and management. He has been a teacher and director at all levels of education. He is currently Secretary of the Lasallian Educational Association and Mission in Rome, Italy.

21. Santiago Rodríguez Mancini F.S.C.

Born in Buenos Aires (Argentina). Brother of the Christian Schools. He did his novitiate in Córdoba (Argentina) and his scholasticate in San Martín (Argentina). Professor of primary education. Professor of Religious Studies Specialization in catechesis of adolescents. Graduate in Human Sciences (Orientation in Literature and Philosophy) (UP), Master in Philosophy, Religion and Contemporary Culture (UCC). He was part of the formation teams at the postulancy, the novitiate, the scholasticate and staff member preparing Brothers for their perpetual vows in Argentina. He collaborated with novitiates of other Districts. He was Visitor of the District of Argentina. Currently he is director of the journal *Associés*. Higher level teacher in Buenos Aires and Córdoba (Argentina), and president of La Salle-Argentina Foundation. He has published books and articles on educational pastoral and Lasallian spirituality.

