

Together for Mission¹

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The topic I have been asked to address this morning is "Together for Mission." I understand that this is the fifth in a five year-series devoted to the distinctive values that guide your university in fulfilling its mission. The particular value that we address today is that of association, hence the word "together" in the title. Association is what the media might call a "hot topic" at the present time in Lasallian educational institutions throughout the world. In 1987 the revised *Rule* of the De La Salle Brothers affirmed the concept of a shared Lasallian mission. Ever since the discussion has centered on what "association" might mean in an educational mission that is shared among religious Brothers, Sisters, priests and lay persons of varied religious affiliations, ethnic backgrounds, and gender. It would be impossible in a presentation such as this to exhaust the topic, but not impossible perhaps to exhaust the patience of the audience. But since I am told that you have the rest of the day, and indeed the rest of the academic year, to probe the meaning, the possibilities, and the problems that are associated with association, I will try to suggest some aspects, both theoretical and practical, to serve as the basis for discussion.

The topic divides itself naturally into two distinct but integrated parts, association and mission. I would like to begin with mission in the conviction that association cannot be understood without its link to mission. We do not associate just to associate, to rub elbows, to find friends, for ego trips or to trip egos, not even to form community. Association is for something, in this case for mission. We are all in this together, and the "this" is the mission. In the many discussions on this topic in which I have participated, it has been my impression that the focus tends to deal with association and sharing, but the "what for" part, the mission, is either neglected or taken for granted. For that reason I should like to offer a few thoughts about what mission means in an institution that is Lasallian and Catholic.

In contemporary usage, the word mission has become devaluated and secularized. Mission statements abound. General Motors and IBM have a mission and mission statements. So do scientific, historical, and recreational institutions of every persuasion and ideology. But for a university that calls itself Catholic, mission has a profoundly theological dimension. It means that God becomes central to the educational enterprise. The reality of God is conceived of in many ways in different cultures, by Jews, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, sectarians, and even atheists. That is not to say there are as many gods as there are ways of relating to the deity. Ultimately the reality that goes by the name of God is one transcendent Being, not a Supreme being among many beings, but Being itself, the source of the existence of everything that "be"s. Access to that reality is through faith or the search for faith. That faith takes on specificity in a particular religious tradition. For this institution, God is the loving God revealed in Jesus Christ and worshiped in the Catholic tradition.

The idea of mission begins with God and is deeply rooted in Christian scriptural language and theology. Saint John tells us in his Gospel that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son

so that we may have life and have it in abundance. Jesus Christ, in his turn, said to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so also I send you." Jesus promised, as follow up, to send the Spirit who would teach them all the truth. Mission, then, or being sent, is an extension of the overflow of the dynamism in the divine life. Christ and his Spirit are spoken of as being sent on a mission into the world to accomplish God's will that everyone be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. The mission then, is a mission of salvation. Mission comes as a gift from above, salvation arises in a need from below.

When we speak of salvation as the mission of an educational community, we must remember that salvation means more than avoiding hell and going to heaven. Salvation does not begin as a religious concept; it is in the first place a human reality and a human problem. We might even say that it is the human problem, from which the religious hope for salvation derives its meaning. Implicit in the hope for salvation are two elements:

- one negative, what we need to be saved from;
- the other positive, what we want to be saved for.

Every human being needs to be saved from failure and disintegration of every kind: the physical failure that goes with disease, catastrophe, suffering and most obviously death. More subtly but no less urgently we come to realize that we also fail precisely as human beings: by ignorance and error, by animal behavior, through betrayal of others and ourselves, by resistance and outrage against God. We also fail as societies by tolerating unjust political structures, unequal distribution of the world's resources, the various forms of discrimination, indifference to the environment, and that ultimate social disaster we call war. These are things we all have to be saved from.

The other side of salvation is what we long to be saved for. If failure in its various forms is the negative side of salvation, surely the positive side comes through fulfillment and reconciliation. Human fulfillment first of all: health instead of sickness, knowledge instead of ignorance, happiness instead of grief, relationship instead of loneliness, wholeness in place of fragmentation, justice instead of injustice, peace instead of war, love instead of hate, and life instead of death; then ultimate fulfillment in eternal life with God.

As we observe and reflect on this universal human need for salvation, even in this world, we cannot presume that God is indifferent to salvation in the human sense. God's concern for the salvation of everyone is not limited to the promise of a reward in our post-terrestrial existence, pie in the sky by and by, as it were. God sent his Son into this world. Jesus immersed himself in every possible aspect of human failure: poverty and its consequences, hunger, grief, disappointment, social and religious discrimination, opposition, abandonment, intense physical suffering and a disgraceful death. The point of his miracles and his preaching is to demonstrate that God's power works against sickness and even death, that God is on the side of the poor, the meek, those who mourn, and those who suffer persecution. In the prayer he taught us, Jesus tells us to pray that God's will, what God wants, be done on earth as it is already done in heaven. Not only are we to pray for that kind of kingdom on earth, but Jesus implies we should be doing something to bring it about. The gift that Jesus brings is Shalom, not just peace, but reconciliation: reconciliation between human beings and their Creator, human beings reconciled

with one another, human beings reconciled with their world and environment. It is for such a mission of salvation and reconciliation that Lasallians are associated.

John Baptist de La Salle discovered and understood his mission in this sense. As the section in the Brothers' *Rule* on mission describes it, De La Salle experienced in his prayer a double contemplation. On the one hand, he contemplated the goodness and awesome power of the divine will that everyone should be saved; on the other, he contemplated at first hand the situation of the neglected children of the poor, "far from salvation" as he perceived them to be. Their poverty and ignorance were a barrier to their salvation as children of God in this world; their street vices a barrier to eternal life with God in the next world.

Out of that double contemplation, De La Salle became aware that he had a mission from God to be a Founder. He knew that it would not be enough to lead the neglected children of the poor to hope for salvation in the next world if something wasn't done to give them some hope of fulfillment in this world. He envisioned the school as an ideal context for them to acquire the skills they would need to be saved from the hopelessness of their human condition, to grow in human dignity as children of God, to experience the love of God in the love of the Christian teacher. De La Salle wanted the Christian school to be engaged in the struggle against human ignorance and injustice as well as the struggle against unbelief and sin. It was for that reason he formed a community of teachers whose mission it would be to provide the disadvantaged young with a human and a Christian education in the Christian Schools.

De La Salle called his schools Christian Schools to affirm their religious character. When De La Salle speaks of the teacher in one of his schools as engaged in a ministry and mission, he means more than the teaching of religion. He wanted the schools to be penetrated with the religious spirit all day long. Important as formal religious instruction is, De La Salle knew that it is not the only way, or even the best way, for an educator to bring an experience of God's love to the students. He wanted the teaching of religion to go side by side with the teaching of the other subjects. He was not interested in isolated catechetical centers or Sunday Schools for religious instruction. He realized that the school provides a unique opportunity to integrate religion and life, to develop in unison the full human and spiritual potential of young people in the school, the center of their life experience.

Out of that vision the Lasallian mission receives its specificity: through education and the school, to free young people from the bonds of ignorance and deprivation in all its forms, and to open to them the possibility for a full human life in this world and union with God in the next. Eventually, the mission entrusted to the Lasallian Institute would be incarnated and shared in a variety of cultures all over the world.

One such culture in which the Lasallian mission has been firmly and fruitfully established is the religiously pluralistic culture that characterizes much of the contemporary world. Especially in this country this pluralism has brought Catholics and non-Catholics together for a common mission. This is something that would have been unthinkable in De La Salle's day. He did not live in an ecumenical age. For him and his contemporaries the religious aspect of the mission would have been exclusively Roman Catholic in its expression. But now, breaking out of the religious culture of seventeenth-century Catholic France, the Lasallian mission has proven

adaptable to cultures that are religious but non-Christian, as in Asia, or secularized, as in the United States.

At this point, therefore, a word of reassurance might be appropriate for those who become nervous when they learn that the university is expected to fulfill a religious mission. In this country we have become used to the separation of church and state, relegating religion to a matter of personal choice. In the university particularly we are on our guard against the threat that religious authority could pose to institutional autonomy and academic freedom. It is not surprising then that commitment to the religious mission of the university creates special difficulties for those who are not Catholics, not practicing Catholics, not Christians, or not believers of any kind. Nevertheless, in every institution its mission enjoys an objectivity that is independent of any individual person's attitude toward it. Everyone associated with the educational enterprise of this institution, for example, contributes to its smooth functioning, and so to the efficacy of its mission, including its religious mission. It would be unthinkable to engage a person in a university such as this who would be totally opposed to the mission as it is so defined. By definition the mission of any Catholic institution is a religious mission.

That does not mean, however, that the religious mission has to be narrowly Catholic in every facet of its exercise. To be Catholic is to be religious, but to be religious it is not necessary to be a Catholic or even a Christian. Religion in all of its forms takes the reality of God seriously, no matter how conceived. Catholics should know that the adjective Catholic is rooted in the Greek word that means universal. In a Catholic university, therefore, there certainly can be no question of forcing people into accepting religious tenets that they cannot understand or assimilate as their own.

Above all, we realize that before a university can make any contribution to its religious mission it must first be a university. John Baptist de La Salle understood that instinctively. He insisted that his schools be quality schools, a person-centered learning environment providing opportunities for a smooth entry into the larger society through productive careers. But it is equally true that De La Salle also wanted the advancement in human knowledge to be integrated with a knowledge and a respect for the value of religious faith.

In the university setting today, to integrate human knowledge with an appreciation for the value of religious faith is not the same thing as proselytizing for, much less against, any particular religion. A Catholic university does, however, have the obligation to provide the opportunity to pursue higher education in a religiously sensitive environment; to offer a curriculum that helps students become religiously informed and accurate; to provide Catholics and other interested students the opportunity to grapple with the history, the practices, the teachings and documents that have characterized the Catholic tradition. This is done initially and most effectively through solid academic courses in religious studies and a vibrant and widely supported campus ministry program.

Yet the university cannot limit the religious aspect of its mission to the religion department or campus ministry, indispensable though they be if the institution is to call itself Catholic. For many young people today the university is their last chance formally to address the major questions concerning the meaning of their existence, to recognize the seeds of destruction in

society and themselves, to become aware of the major inequities in social and political life, to appreciate the futility of a life centered on pleasure, wealth, and power. To lead students to address these concerns is the responsibility of every segment of the educational community. Each person in it, whatever one's personal religious convictions, has a contribution to make to the religious mission in this sense. For some this may mean nothing more than doing their job and doing it well. That is especially true of anyone on campus who deals with students in a highly personal way, knowing their name, empathizing with their problems, sorting out their confusion, and offering a glimmer of hope.

It is in the classroom setting above all that values are most appropriately examined in a formal way in a wide range of academic disciplines. Teachers in every academic department, therefore, have a special opportunity and responsibility to contribute to the mission in this sense. This does not mean that the teacher of literature, history, psychology or accounting is expected to drag religion in by the heels, so to speak, or even to use specifically religious language, much less to put a Catholic "spin" on every discussable question. Today's theology recognizes that all genuine human values have their origin in God and are therefore in some sense religious; that value-centered education, however imparted and by whomever, is therefore a way open to everyone to be in association for a religious mission.

At the Brothers' General Chapter held in Rome in 1993, the question arose as to how persons who are not Catholics or not even Christians can associate themselves with the religious mission of the Lasallian schools. The results of the discussion were incorporated into the Chapter's "Message on Shared Mission":

When Christians or persons of other religions live together in harmony, love, and the service of others, they reveal those human and spiritual values typical of the Lasallian spirit: values such as the interior life, respect for the family, the dignity of women, the rights of children, and care for the poor. Whether we are Christians, members of another religion, or humanists, we are called to take our place in the mission that the Institute receives from God whose Spirit is at work in every culture and in every religious tradition.

This rosy picture of Catholics and non-Catholics associated together as one happy family is tempered somewhat when questions are raised about the threat to our Catholic identity. For almost ten years now the Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde ecclesiae* has raised the level and perhaps the temperature of the discussion on the Catholic identity of institutions of higher learning. In almost all the colleges and universities in this country that call themselves Catholic, non-Catholics are welcome in every constituency that constitutes the academic community, academic freedom is guaranteed for the professors, and a relative autonomy is presumed in the governance of the institution. Hence, the legitimate concern that Catholic institutions will go the way of the oldest American universities, originally Protestant, that have lost all trace of their religious origins. Apart from reflecting this somewhat negative concern, the papal document does have some positive things to say about the pursuit of truth, the integration of knowledge, the legitimate autonomy of human culture, and the promotion of social justice. It is the juridical norms, presently under discussion and designed to shore up Catholic identity, that give equally legitimate cause to worry about external control and limits to academic and religious freedom.

Fortunately, in the present state of affairs, there is fruitful dialogue between Catholic college presidents and the American bishops that one hopes will assure the authorities in Rome that our institutions of higher learning can meet the standards of the American university without compromising fundamental Catholic and religious principles on the one hand, and without becoming an agency for enforced Catholic doctrine and practice on the other.

Consciousness of mission, therefore, in all of its aspects, human and religious, and all of its modalities, direct and indirect, is an indispensable prerequisite to understanding what association means in the Catholic and Lasallian tradition. With that in mind, we can turn now to some considerations of association, the “together” aspect of our togetherness for mission.

Like the word “mission,” the word association is applied to so many groupings that it needs an adjective. Even in the university context there are professional associations, student associations and, God help us, athletic associations. The association that is the focus of our discussion here is association for mission, association in the Lasallian sense, that is, the association that characterized the educational vision and achievement of John Baptist de La Salle, an association that is alive today as an elusive but distinctive source of energy for Lasallian schools everywhere, including this one.

In a document that contains reflections on your mission statement,³ you have already defined what you mean by association: “the process of forming a community of mutual respect, collegiality, collaboration and service.” The document has phrases such as “shared efforts,” “bonding among persons,” “shared values and common visions.” It extends the notion of association to “faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, students, alumni, family members, benefactors and others.” Those are fine expressions of the ideal of association in general, and it would be difficult to disagree with them in any way. But they pose some question that I should like to reflect on.

1. Is the list of those associated so all-inclusive as to be meaningless in relating association to mission?
2. Does the emphasis on community building diminish or obscure the relationship between association and mission?
3. How do these generally accepted ideals relate to the specific Lasallian tradition of association?

First, with regard to the list. It is true, of course, that anyone who has or has had contact with the Lasallian school in some way can be thought of as associated. But when we talk about association for mission, association to bring some kind of salvation to the young, that association has its full meaning only to those who are actively engaged in the educational enterprise. Students, present and past, are not associated for mission; they are the beneficiaries. Parents and benefactors support the mission and sometimes collaborate with it, but they are not associated for that purpose. One of the gains in the Brothers’ General Chapter of 1993 was to recognize that the expression “Lasallian family” was so broad and so variously applied as to defy definition. That is why the Chapter decided to narrow the focus and concentrate on shared mission. For that reason, I should like to do the same and limit our discussion of association to the personnel of the

university who are associated on a day to day basis to carry out its mission: faculty, staff, and administrators.

As to your definition of association, I note that the emphasis is on forming community, with service in the last place and no mention of mission. In expressions such as “bonding among persons” and “authentic community” the emphasis is on community rather than association for mission. In the language of sociology, you seem to define the university as a relational community, one where the bonds are personal and interpersonal, rather than an intentional community, one where the bonds are forged by a common purpose.

There is certainly nothing wrong with wanting to have the university take on some of the aspects of a relational community where close personal bonds characterize the relationships among its members. Based on my forty years as a faculty member, eight years as a trustee, and no experience whatever in administration, unless you count department chair, I am inclined, frankly, to wonder how realistic is such a goal. By the very nature of the structure of a modern American university, the cards seem stacked against any kind of authentic community relationship between administration and faculty, especially in these days when higher education is forced to take on the strategies and trappings of big business. Driven by the economic reality, the administration begins to speak and perhaps think in terms of the product, productivity, marketing, cost effectiveness and customer satisfaction in the academic institution. That is the world in which administration is forced to live and operate. In that kind of climate, it is certainly not easy to prioritize personal relationships or to make decisions based on them.

Faculty, for their part have their own priorities and concerns, among them personal professional development, academic freedom and autonomy, salary scales, intellectual and theoretical ideals, high quality for student admissions and low quantity in the size of classes. The faculty model for the university is less related to the modern corporation and more to the structure of the medieval university, Cardinal Newman, or perhaps even Saint Paul, who, in his list of charisms in 1 Corinthians 12, puts teachers in second place and administrators at the bottom of the list. To complicate matters further, faculty tend to become compartmentalized within their own departments and subject fields. How do we, how do you, overcome the barriers to community that exist between humanists and scientists, between theoreticians and practitioners of applied studies, between teachers and researchers, between tenured and non-tenured faculty?

One wonders, then, if anything can be done to develop an authentic community in the midst of all this divisiveness that is built into the university structure. I hope you have more answers to the question than I do. Fortunately, I have no idea how relationships among faculty, staff, and administrators work on this campus. I have the impression that here at Lewis University there is a better sense of community than in many other similar institutions. But that is an area you will have to work out in your own discussions.

However that may be, my fundamental difficulty concerns the way your documents confuse association with community. Association is for mission, especially in the Catholic and Lasallian understanding of mission. Community strengthens association and so can contribute to the efficacy of the mission, but community and association are not the same thing. For that reason, I think it would be better if your definition of association could distinguish between association

and community. Then you could reflect more clearly on the interaction between the two: what an interpersonal community contributes to the association for mission, and how the association for an educational and religious mission helps build community.

My third comment relating to your description of association is to question whether it is specifically Lasallian, to what extent the prototype for this distinctive value derives from the association that John Baptist de La Salle engendered and fostered among the first members of his community more than 300 years ago. For that reason, my final comments will be addressed to the origins of association in the experience of De La Salle and the development that it has since undergone and as it continues to evolve.

We need to recall that it was a major innovation on the part of John Baptist de La Salle to introduce the concept of association as a way of imparting an education to young people. The association among the Brothers in the schools was an outgrowth of their early experience in the classroom that put an end to the traditional pattern of the isolated schoolmaster in elementary education. In the Founder's day, whatever elementary education there was for the common people was entrusted to individual teachers in what were known as the "Little Schools." Given a franchise by the diocesan superintendent, the schoolteacher made his living by opening up shop, usually in his own home, where the pupils would assemble and come up one by one, as called, to recite their lessons. It was something like a dentist's office today and probably just as painful for the children, especially if they failed to recite correctly.

To break with the traditional structure, De La Salle made it a rule never to conduct a school with less than two Brothers. His preference was for four or five, covering two schools perhaps, but always in continual dialogue with one another and with the wider Lasallian Institute. Today association at every level of the educational enterprise is so taken for granted that it is easy to forget how innovative the concept was when De La Salle made it work and become the general norm. When it comes to association, the Lasallians were there first.

The association of the early Brothers for mission was strengthened by a corresponding association in a close-knit community and religious life. The Brothers were together all day long:

- they prayed together,
- studied and did their reading in a common room,
- took meals and recreation together, and
- although they didn't exactly sleep together, they did have common dormitories.

The Founder did not set out to found a religious order in the traditional and canonical sense. In the beginning the Brothers took three vows: not the traditional three, but vows focused on the mission:

- a vow of association to conduct gratuitous schools,
- a vow of obedience to insure availability for mission,
- a vow of stability to assure the future of the mission.

For De La Salle, the intense community life, the vows, the religious practices, including separation from the world and, incidentally, the exclusion of the priesthood for the Brothers, were all intended to bolster the association for the efficacy of the mission in the schools.

The price that had to be paid for the intensity of this association of the Brothers for mission was a rigid exclusivity, understandable enough for its time. Powerful as this association was in the success story of the Christian Schools, it meant that all the schools were staffed exclusively by Brothers and their communities were closed to outsiders of any kind. What is more, separation from the world and restriction of association to the Brothers remained the official attitude and practice well into the twentieth century. To appreciate how far we have evolved in association for mission, it is enough to cite the General Chapter of 1946 which decided “to suppress as quickly as possible the hiring of women and to reduce the lay male element to be tolerated only as a “necessary evil.”⁴

Forty years later, in the *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* of 1987, the Institute used for the first time in an official document the term “shared mission,” going so far as to say that the apostolic activity of the Brothers “takes place in an educational community in which all the functions, including positions of responsibility are shared” (article 17a). Especially in the post-Vatican Council II Church, the recognition by the Brothers’ Institute that it is a grace to share the Lasallian mission with our partners does not come in an historical or ecclesiological vacuum. Sharing the mission is simply one aspect of the evolving recognition in the Catholic Church that lay persons, by virtue of their baptism and their incorporation into Christ’s priesthood, have already been called to share actively in the Church’s mission and ministry. All the more reason for the De La Salle Brothers to share their mission with their partners living in the secular world, with whom they already share a common status in the Church as lay persons.

Nevertheless, when the General Chapter of 1986 affirmed the concept of shared mission, it did so from the Brothers’ perspective within the Institute. The perspective from the side of the laity would be brought into the discussion in 1993 when twenty persons who were not Brothers, “consultants” as they were called, were invited to participate in the General Chapter held in that year. They made plain to the Brothers what were their expectations of shared mission, seen from the outside. These men and women were explicit in their desire to belong to an international, cross-cultural movement in which they would be equal partners, a mission in which they already constitute the majority, a mission that cannot be realized fully without them. They wanted to own the mission as something integral to their personal and professional lives. They wanted to feel free to participate in all levels of leadership and administration in matters concerning shared mission. They envisioned shared mission as a providential grace from God for the Brothers and themselves as partners in mission, a movement they described as inevitable, irresistible and irreversible.

Fortunately, the consciousness of a shared mission seems to have awakened a bit of curiosity at first and then genuine enthusiasm on the part of so many Lasallians, lay persons and Brothers alike, to know and to assimilate more fully the achievement and vision of John Baptist de La Salle. It is enough to cite the hundreds who have followed the Buttimer Institute over the last 14 years, the excitement engendered in the first group now completing the Lasallian Leadership Institute, as well as the multiplication of workshops and seminars on Lasallian themes – mini-

Buttimers, I like to call them – all over the country and all over the world. One of the striking things about these programs is the way the participants come to realize the spiritual dimension of the vocation to be a Lasallian teacher. They discover in De La Salle his vivid sense of the presence of God, his openness to the actions of divine Providence, his integration of spirituality and apostolic life, and the implications for their own lives as Lasallian educators. Whereas the first attraction to De La Salle for most of the lay partners is the Lasallian mission, it is his spirituality or, more accurately, the spirituality experienced in a Lasallian community, that becomes an important and integral element in the association for mission.

It is not yet clear how these more intensified forms of Lasallian association will develop. For many years now, in other parts of the world, there has been a movement known as *Signum Fidei*, organized groups of lay Lasallians who commit themselves to seek a Lasallian spirituality based on that of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. They strive to embrace a Lasallian style of living to become better signs of faith in their respective walks of life. They make this commitment in a formal ceremony of consecration in which each one promises, in union with the members, “to promote ... an integrated education founded on the person of Christ, in favor of young people and especially those farthest from salvation in the spirit of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.” Such a program is certainly not for everyone, not even for every committed Lasallian educator. But it has had notable success in many parts of the world and is being considered now in some quarters as a possible model for introduction into this country.

Another approach along similar lines is to follow the lead of many congregations of religious Sisters that have introduced programs of associate membership for lay persons. This is leading some prominent Lasallian educators here and there to begin to seek a more permanent way of relating to the Institute of the Brothers through some kind of formal structure. There are many details and problems that will have to be worked out both at the local level and the General Chapter that will be held next year before such a possibility can become a reality. But it does demonstrate how eroded have become the barriers that once impeded full association between the Brothers and their lay partners in the mission.

There is an area of worry, however, as the move to associate Brothers and lay persons moves forward. It is inevitable that when disparate unities are associated, there is a risk that the identity of one or another, or perhaps both, will be threatened or lost. One of the reasons for the resistance on the part of some Brothers to the idea of shared mission and extending the Lasallian concept of association to the lay partners is the fear that their identity will be swallowed up in the larger association, that the meaning of their vow of association will be diluted, and that it will become that much more difficult to attract vocations to the Institute. These concerns become intensified when the association goes beyond the Lasallian mission to open to lay persons the experience of Lasallian formation, Lasallian spirituality, and Lasallian community living, and now even the possibility of associate membership. From the side of the lay person, similar concerns about identity might be expressed, particularly by those who are married, when commitment to Lasallian association at these various levels begins to intrude on family life, financial responsibilities, social relationships, and community involvement.

In this dilemma between association and identity it is easier for the lay person to be selective in the commitment to association, to draw lines between what is shared and what is not. The

problem is more difficult for the Brothers. Simply to say “I have vows,” especially when the lifestyle is not characterized by real poverty or frequent demands on obedience, is not sufficient. Even the struggle to live in Christian chastity is not confined to celibate religious alone. From now on, the Brother associated for mission can no longer hide his inadequacies under the corporate and comfortable cover of being “one of the Brothers.” Each Brother will be forced, either alone or with a smaller number of confreres, to bear witness to the reality of his total consecration, his commitment to his students and colleagues in the educational mission, and his positive contribution to the quality of the academic community. Identity will depend more on intrinsic factors rather than on juridical status. And that could be a good thing, a gain rather than a loss of identity.

One final dimension of association that should at least be mentioned is the association that Lewis University has with other Lasallian institutions in over 80 countries worldwide. Lewis University is part of a vast Lasallian network that includes other institutions of higher learning, elementary and secondary schools, welfare institutions, and centers for direct service of the poor. While retaining its own identity, Lewis University is part of a reality larger than itself and makes its distinctive contribution to the global effectiveness of the Lasallian mission.

At the conclusion of what I hope has been a symphony and not a cacophony of Lasallian themes, it is time now for the recapitulation. As a theologian of sorts I have tried to develop the theme of mission, as a Lasallian historian of sorts I have tried to develop the theme of association. The over-riding theme, the leitmotif if you will, has been togetherness: Lewis University together with Lasallian institutions all over the world, faculty and staff together with administration, Catholics together with non-Catholics, lay persons and clerics together with [De La Salle] Christian Brothers, and most of all association together in mission to bring a human and religious education to the young, especially those farthest from salvation.

Endnotes

1. This address was delivered at Lewis University on 25 August 1999.
2. Brother Luke Salm, FSC (1921-2009) was a theology professor at Manhattan College for more than half a century. He was the first religious Brother and non-cleric to earn a Doctorate in Theology (STD) from The Catholic University of America (1955). He was an elected delegate of the District of New York to the 39th, 40th, 41st, and 42nd General Chapters.
3. The reference here is to the mission statement of Lewis University, the educational community to which these remarks were being addressed in 1999.
4. Cited in *Circular 435*, page 36.