

The Lasallian Educational Mission at the Opening of the Twenty-First Century

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Introduction

Before saying anything else, I want, first of all, to say how honored I am to have been invited to address this gathering of academic administrators of our Lasallian institutions of higher education and how happy I am to have this opportunity, as Vicar General, to thank you all most sincerely – in the name of the whole Institute and Lasallian Family – for the pedagogical excellence and innovation & the attention to persons so evident in your fine educational institutions on the tertiary level, the relationships that are so evident and growing among the various Lasallian centers of higher education in the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU), and the increased collaboration that we are observing in more and more sectors of the Institute between the Lasallian institutions of higher education and the network of other Lasallian educational institutions on the District and Regional levels. Be assured of the deep appreciation and gratitude that I have for the significant and essential role that is yours within the Lasallian educational mission in these early years of the twenty-first century.

The following remarks about the "Lasallian educational mission at the opening of the twenty-first century" will unfold within a particular focus of understanding and developed under three main headings: (1) a consideration of the characteristics of Lasallian education from the times of the origins as our "genetic makeup," using an analogy of a family system as the lens for understanding our network; (2) an exploration of how these characteristics continue to be reflected in various and diverse ways around the globe, using six current Lasallian institutions of higher education as examples; and (3) a reflection about the necessary adaptation and evolution of the Lasallian educational mission for our times, using the work of the 43rd General Chapter in 2000 to focus our attention.

A Lens for Understanding Our Network

I would like to suggest to you a "family systems" analogy as the lens for understanding the remarks, which I intend to make today, about the "Lasallian educational network." We often use the metaphor of Lasallian Family when referring to our international Lasallian network of schools and agencies; and yet we seldom reflect on the fact that being a member of a family implies being part of a socio-cultural grouping that is actually the consequence of the joining of two (or more) rather distinct family cultures. There is the mother's side of the family, and there is the father's side of the family; and sometimes these "families of origin" are very similar, but sometimes they are vastly different.³ Therefore, let's acknowledge as we begin that our Lasallian origins – as fundamental as they are to our mission and identity – do not tell the whole story of any one of the institutions represented here at this Cuernavaca Lasallian Conference.

What we will be examining, under the heading of the “Lasallian educational mission,” is that part of our “genetic makeup” . . . the DNA, as it were, of our institutions . . . that we trace back to John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brother-teachers in seventeenth-century France and that has been handed down across the centuries to us. A good part of “the culture” (histories, memories, values, customs, traditions . . .) of each of our institutions comes from our Lasallian Family “genetic makeup;” and yet it is also important to acknowledge that there are other socio-cultural influences helping to form and fashion our institutional identities (the country in which the university is located, the historical epoch in which it is situated,⁴ the educational system of which it is a part, the socio-economic context of the families it serves . . .). This explains why, across our network, we have both so much in common and yet so much that distinguishes us (nationally, culturally, “ecclesially,” and institutionally).⁵ Knowledge about our Lasallian “genetic makeup” should, however, help us to understand better the values, customs, and behaviors that are “the hallmarks” of the schools and agencies all around the world that self-identify as Lasallian.

Also, drawing from a “family systems” approach to looking at things, let’s recall that there are two fundamental principles of all living systems (inclusive of families, churches, schools . . .).⁶ Living systems want to evolve, and they want to remain the same.⁷ We want necessary adaptation and development, and we need stability, coherence, and continuity. The living system we know as the “Lasallian educational mission” (or the “Lasallian educational network”) needs to remain grounded in the charism of the origins, but it also needs to adapt and evolve in bold and creative ways in order to be able to respond audaciously to present-day needs and realities. We cannot depend only on our origins in seventeenth century French primary education for answers or a “road map” for addressing all the questions of twenty-first century international tertiary education.

With regard to this necessary balance between morphogenesis and homeostasis,⁸ I find helpful an image I discovered in a book by M. Scott Peck entitled *The Road Less Traveled*,⁹ where he uses the analogy of coming down a steep hill on a bicycle to explain the need for prudence and caution as one journeys through life and especially when one is faced with uncharted territory or challenging circumstances. If one goes too fast, he asserts, one will fall off the bicycle. If one goes too slowly, one will never get down the hill. We need to continue to move forward both boldly and prudently as our understanding of the Lasallian educational mission evolves in response to present reality. All living systems, including educational systems, need both to change and to remain the same.

“Lasallian Family” Characteristics from the Times of the Origins

The schools of John Baptist de La Salle were a particular kind of school – a response to a particular social, cultural, and religious situation in France at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. One way of enumerating the characteristics¹⁰ of this “educational heritage” – and this is our first main heading – would be:

- an education grounded in excellent teaching and engaged learning . . . a transformational educational environment . . . an educational work of quality, within which interiority

(spiritual living¹¹) is fostered and strengthened and useful skills and knowledge are acquired;

- an education that is practical . . . preparing for work (social and professional advancement), life (making the goodness of God visible by one’s behavior¹²), and civic engagement (becoming “perfect members” of the nation¹³);
- an education available to the poor (for whom the Institute was founded¹⁴) . . . committed to eradicating those conditions that both exclude from and inhibit the realization of the full human dignity of all of the children of God . . . access to which has always required heroic efforts to secure the necessary funding¹⁵ and innovative structures and formulas¹⁶ that assure accessibility;
- an education which is fundamentally relational¹⁷ . . . grounded in a profound positive regard for the student¹⁸ . . . a respect for and knowledge of each¹⁹ individual;
- an education that is community-based . . . conducted together (locally at a particular school) and by association (with those working in the other schools of our larger Lasallian network) . . . a work demanding one’s full energies²⁰ . . . offering students attractive witnesses and accessible role models²¹ who foster student involvement, responsibility, and service of others²²; and
- an education that requires the preparation and ongoing formation of educators for this noble and essential work.²³

What is provided here, as a brief overview, is just one of any number of summaries or listings of what constitutes the characteristics of a Lasallian educator and of the Lasallian educational institution. There are numerous other enumerations readily available elsewhere.²⁴

A Reflection of These “Family” Characteristics Around the Globe

One of the benefits and joys of my role as Vicar General of the Institute and of the Lasallian Family is that I get to visit and know many Lasallian educational establishments in diverse parts of the world. The six stories that will now be shared are intended only as examples; but they will also hopefully invite reflection, understanding, and emulation. Our “family” characteristics – and this is our second main heading – continue to manifest themselves in various and diverse ways around the globe.

Example One: La Salle University

On a visit around the United States of America two years ago, I spent a day in meetings and visits with the faculty and staff of La Salle University in Philadelphia . . . being incredibly impressed by the articulate grasp of Lasallian mission . . . wondering “who are these folks who articulate so well our Lasallian identity?” . . . and only realizing during the luncheon that followed that they were participants and graduates of the Region’s Lasallian Leadership

Institute²⁵ . . . an experience of education and formation that provided a vocabulary and, obviously, fanned to flame a prior gift that was already buried within.

But it was my visit to the La Salle University-sponsored “health clinics,” operated by the school’s nursing program in the poorer sections of Philadelphia . . . where students and graduates of this university put into practice what they learned in the classroom . . . it was in these local community health clinics for at-risk populations – a Lasallian story really worth telling again and again – that I touched the charism . . . the soul of the institution . . . the thread that runs throughout and integrates so many of its excellent programs – pastoral ministry and youth catechesis, teacher preparation, business, communications – preparing students of today with the compassion, the capacity, and the skills to make the world of tomorrow a better place.

Example Two: University of Saint La Salle

In Bacolod City, Philippines, the University of Saint La Salle has what is called “socialized tuitions.” Those who are financially better off pay a higher tuition, and those who are financially more vulnerable pay a lower tuition. The voluntary involvement of students, faculty, and staff in projects on behalf of migrant workers, spiritual formation, and outreach to the poor is nothing short of amazing. The university has recently opened under its sponsorship a center that houses eleven delinquent youngsters at their “Bahay Pag-Asa [House of Hope] Youth Center” . . . an educational and residential treatment facility.

Yes, this work of Bahay Pag-Asa could seem tangential to the core intellectual discipline of a university; but it is itself an example of the “family heritage” of schools that self-identify as Lasallian. The way in which the university understands itself and its relationship to the social environment in which it is situated is formative of the “idea of a university” and of “the learning experience” in this setting. Students have the opportunity to bridge what might be perceived as a gap between the world of learning and the world of work. The core values of the educational learning environment are put into practice. It is but one example of the “flowering” or “fruit” that is indicative of the life of this particular kind of “plant” that we call Lasallian education.

Example Three: De La Salle University System

Another of our higher education centers that I have visited, De La Salle University (DLSU) of the Philippines, has an outstanding reputation, an illustrious list of former students, the highest academic category of accreditation available in the country, and a record of bold and creative responses to urgent needs.

In his inaugural address in 2004, Brother President Armin Luistro observed:

While the DLSU System has grown by leaps and bounds, progressing from one year to another, our nation has been continually wobbling . . . And so we ask ourselves, how much of a resource for Church and nation have we truly become?

He went on to state,

In urging everyone to think of ways that the DLSU System could increase its stake in social transformation, I am not asking our units to drop what they are doing. On the contrary, what we should aspire for is to excel in the things that we do . . . Let me stress that in the pursuit of performing our tasks extraordinarily well – be that of teaching, administrative service, social action, or research – we need to be very conscious of the social dimension and consequence of our actions, how far we have contributed, in meager or in the most significant ways, in transforming others and our nation.²⁶

This concern for the consequences of the Lasallian kind of education on the society of the Philippine Islands cuts to the heart of a Lasallian mission, whose Founder was a theologian of the Catholic Reformation and who believed that “you ought to unite zeal for the good of the Church with zeal for the good of the nation.”²⁷ As the *Epistle to James*, a principal text for Catholic theology of that period, states so clearly, “Faith that does nothing in practice is thoroughly lifeless.”²⁸ Faith in God and love of the human family of my brothers and sisters expresses itself in action.

Example Four: Bethlehem University

For my fourth example, I would like to turn to Bethlehem University. For some thirty years now, the Brothers of the Christian Schools and our Lasallian Partners have conducted this university in the Occupied Territories on the West Bank in Palestine. It was in fulfillment of a promise made by Pope Paul VI²⁹ to the Palestinian people that we began this work in the hope that Christian Arabs of the Holy Land might be able to receive a quality higher education without having to leave their homeland. From its inception, however, both Christian and Muslim Arabs have been welcome at the university.

Were you to visit Palestine you would come to know a reality . . . where Lasallian students and teachers on the way to classes at Bethlehem University are every day subjected to discrimination, humiliation, and harassment as they pass through Israeli checkpoints on their way from home to school . . . where a huge concrete wall is presently being constructed . . . where they are often made to get off the bus . . . to wait on long lines . . . to have their bags and identity cards checked . . . their bodies searched . . . their human dignity violated.

During this past month of September in Italy, a peace Congress was sponsored by the Sant’Egidio Community of Rome in conjunction with the Vatican. More than sixty countries were represented. One of the panel presentations concerned the topic of “Israeli-Palestinian” conflict, and one of the panelists was a former student of Bethlehem University. He has worked for some years in the security forces of his country.

He is highly regarded for his openness of mind and his ability to listen. He based his presentation on the need to by-pass the historical perspective, the questions of rights and wrongs and unpaid debts.

As he sees it, the first need is for Palestinian and Israeli Arabs to get to know Israeli Jews. In the discovery of mutual humanity, they will find mutual interest and ways of coping with the seemingly intractable problems of the right to return the settlements and

Jerusalem. He has . . . spent two periods of three years in Israeli prisons. He now has friends among Jewish Israelis; his children play with their children when they visit in Tel Aviv.³⁰

Would it be too much to hope that – among the many and myriad influences on the formation of the mental and moral map of this one individual – education at one of our universities helped fashion his world view? I would like to believe that one’s intellectual formation and exposure to ideas and to persons changes the way one perceives reality and interacts with others and invites to “fullness of life.”

Example Five: Saint Mary’s University

During a five-year period (1996-2001), I served as a member of the Board of Trustees of Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota in the USA. It was then that I came to have a better appreciation of the kinds of issues facing universities today – curriculum, student development, academic research and ongoing faculty education, financial aid, fundraising

This institution has an extraordinary university pastoral [campus] ministry program in which students are invited to grow in interiority, to develop their faith life, and to be witnesses of Christian values in a variety of volunteer activities. In fact, I might be inclined to say that “volunteerism” was a hallmark of the young people at this university.

I remember hearing one young graduate, who was then in his second year as a full-time Lasallian Volunteer³¹ living in a community of Brothers and working with the poor, expressing his motivations in this way.

My grandparents and my parents wanted a better life for their children, and they succeeded. Given their success and the good education that I have received, I know that my child will have at least as good as I had. Therefore, it is my time and my obligation to do something to assure that the children of less fortunate families might also have their opportunity for a more full and satisfying life.

But the second point that I want to make here, in discussing Saint Mary’s University, is to acknowledge how difficult the work and how important the commitment of those men and women in Lasallian universities to whom the tasks of the balancing of the budget and of the raising of funds has been entrusted. Without sufficient funding (from the State, from benefactors, or from families), teachers will not receive living wages; new educational technologies will not be readily available; students with fewer financial resources will not be able to afford to matriculate³² at a Lasallian institution; and schools will not be able to remain open and welcoming centers that prepare tomorrow’s leaders. At Saint Mary’s University, I really grew to appreciate the people that do this hard work; and my present connection with the Board of Regents of Bethlehem University, a school that is almost entirely dependent on outside financial assistance, has only strengthened my appreciation for the difficult but necessary role of those whose job it is to “find the funding” to keep schools open and relevant in so many parts of the world.

If it is any consolation to those who do this challenging work, the Founder himself spent more time and energy doing the work that you do than he ever spent as a teacher in the classroom!

Example Six: Instituto Superior de Educación Público “La Salle”

Flown into the interior of Peru in November 2001 . . . driven by car over mountains and through valleys . . . arriving at a K-to-12 school and teacher training college in Abancay, Peru, called La Salle . . . a school serving simple, peasant farmer folk of many small villages . . . a joy-filled communion of Brothers, teachers, students, parents . . . There was a nursery attached to the training college for the babies of the unmarried young mothers who were studying to be teachers . . . a nursery that was opened by the decision of the faculty and Brothers and in respect of local custom . . . a nursery that kept these vulnerable women in school . . . assuring a better future for these women and their babies . . . advancing the possibilities for their families and communities.

Sitting on the floor in that nursery with babies and their mothers, I could feel the presence of John Baptist de La Salle, who let no obstacle hinder him in his efforts to be Good News for the children of the artisans and the poor . . . for whom no one should be denied access to a fully human and Christian education.

De La Salle and the first Brother-teachers were bold and creative in their heroic efforts to make a quality education accessible and sustainable in a variety of circumstances. This is a hallmark of the Lasallian heritage; and our Lasallian educational mission – as the preceding examples illustrate – remains vibrant, vital, and varied.³³ It is, I hope you will agree, a worldwide network with an easily identifiable “family resemblance” and with an interior dynamism toward innovation and adaptation in service of the needs of the people being served.

The Adaptation & Evolution of These “Family Characteristics” for Our Times

The 43rd General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was held in Rome during the months of May and June of 2000; and while a General Chapter has a canonical status in Church law,³⁴ it might also, for our purposes here and without intending to trivialize its importance, be understood as a kind of “Lasallian Family” gathering. From the times of the origins, the “principal Brothers” gathered periodically with De La Salle to assure the unity of those engaged in this ministry and the evolution and adaptation, based on current realities, of the program of the schools.³⁵ The “principal Brothers” who were again gathered at the General Chapter of 2000 reached out, in a rather unprecedented way, to “Lasallians working in universities” – and this is the third main heading – to ask your help in assisting the Lasallian global network to better understand the new needs and urgent issues that confront us in these opening years of the twenty-first century.

Urgent Issues

The General Chapter encouraged “Lasallian centers of higher education” to “bring their own specific strengths to bear on” the “urgent issues [needing particular attention] through their programs of research and professional training.”³⁶ And what were the issues with which the whole of the Lasallian network requested your help? They are: (1) the rights of the child in a

world in which the abuse of those rights is all too real; (2) educational renewal at a time when the very understanding of the nature and the means of learning is developing rapidly; (3) the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, where possible, in an increasingly secularized and complex culture; and (4) a strengthening of our Lasallian presence and dialogue within the reality of cultural and religious pluralism.³⁷ The Institute looks to you, in these opening years of the twenty-first century, to help us be better able to respond in an informed and audacious manner to present-day needs and realities.

Faith Development, Secularism, & Religious Pluralism

Proposition 12 of the 43rd General Chapter³⁸ called for progress in advancing our efforts with regard to the educational service of the poor,³⁹ and the response around the world to this proposition has been immediate and overwhelmingly positive. Proposition 13 of the 43rd General Chapter⁴⁰ called for Regions, Districts, and Delegations to establish Commissions concerned with the faith development and apostolic commitment of young people; and the response to this proposition has, in my opinion, been “underwhelming” and “disappointing”⁴¹ in so many sectors of the Institute.⁴²

The *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (1987) in article #15 states that the Brothers consider that

Their “principal function” consists in the work of evangelization and catechesis whereby they contribute to the growth in faith of those who have been baptized and to the building up of the ecclesial community.

The faith development⁴³ of students is, without doubt, a key dimension of the Lasallian educational heritage; but how this is to be accomplished in a network that spans some eighty countries and is lived out in an extraordinary diversity of educational institutions remains a great challenge. Hence, we have the proposal of the General Chapter that this question be returned to the various sectors of the Institute for further reflection and local implementation.

One example, however, of how this question is already being researched at the university level would be the following. In 1994, when Brother Frederick Mueller, a member of Manhattan College’s Board of Trustees, was completing his doctoral dissertation⁴⁴ at Boston College, he observed that, while there was strong consensus on the level of secondary schools around the articulated characteristics of a Lasallian school in the USA/Toronto Region, there was confusion or lack of consensus among teachers and administrators around the Catholic institutional connection or identity of these schools.

And then, in 2004, when Brother Michael Sanderl of Saint Mary’s College of California was completing his doctoral dissertation⁴⁵ at the University of San Francisco, he observed that, while young collegians at Lasallian colleges and universities in the USA-Toronto Region saw the significant contribution of campus ministry programs (pastoral activities) to Lasallian culture on the seven campuses, the Catholic connection or identity remained unclear to many of the students.

The General Chapter realized that the preparation and accompaniment of those entrusted with the challenging task of sharing the Good News in an increasingly secularized and multi-religious context⁴⁶ is – in many parts of the world – a matter of both importance and complexity. However, the General Chapter never could have imagined the rapidity with which religion and culture – the context of faith development efforts – would move to “center stage” in a post-September 2001 world. What has become increasingly clear is that taking “cultural and religious pluralism seriously may be the most important issue at the beginning of this century.”⁴⁷

Our Institute has a long history and a great tradition⁴⁸ of taking “cultural and religious pluralism seriously”; and it is precisely the wisdom of such rich and varied institutional realities (the country in which the university is located, the educational system of which it is a part, the socio-economic context of the families it serves, its multi-religious and cultural reality . . .) that need to be brought to bear in the examination and analysis of the Lasallian educational mission, and faith development, in light of local and current situations.

The research done by Mueller and Sanderl – admittedly in only one Region of our international network – is helping us to understand our reality better.⁴⁹ Universities – more than Districts, Regions, and International Secretariats in Rome – are better able to address, in a scholarly fashion, these kinds of questions. This is precisely the kind of work the General Chapter has asked institutions of higher education to do within the network.

Catholic Identity

We really cannot talk about “the explicit proclamation of the Gospel” – one of the aforementioned “urgent issues” identified by the General Chapter of 2000 – without giving some consideration to the issue of strengthening the Catholic identity of universities that identify as Lasallian.⁵⁰ While this is certainly an issue already under consideration and discussion in the USA, I have also observed some confusion or discomfort around the ties of Lasallian institutions to their Catholic identity and to Church structures in other sectors of the Institute. Dr. John Wilcox,⁵¹ the vice president for mission at Manhattan College, has helped to focus my attention along these lines.

Personally, I find the following remarks taken from a lecture by James Heft, SM,⁵² to be quite relevant for institutions of Lasallian higher education today. In the past, Heft writes, for many

Catholic families seeking a Catholic college education for their sons and daughters, religious and priests were visible signs that the institution was Catholic. While the presence of religious and priests on the faculty and staff may not have consistently ensured a vital intellectual life, their presence did ensure parents that their children would interact with people who had dedicated their entire lives to Christ, the Church, and the gospel. Now that there are fewer priests and religious, and now that we are moving to more and more lay leadership, what will be the visible signs that the college and university is Catholic? How will the research agendas, the curricula, the campus and liturgical life, art and music make that clear in the new era that we are entering, an era that I am confident is led by the Holy Spirit?⁵³

The evolving sense of “shared mission” and the emerging reality of association and committed Lasallian associates within the Lasallian educational mission⁵⁴ is, Lasallians increasingly believe,⁵⁵ the working of the Spirit in this regard.⁵⁶ The more dynamic and responsible role embraced by the laity⁵⁷ in the educational mission, the emerging reality of which has given birth to new programs of formation for mission, is viewed by the General Chapter of 2000 as a grace-filled moment in the Institute’s history and a clear way in which new protagonists of our heritage and identity are becoming more and more apparent.

However, I want to highlight here one additional point; and it is the “need to have Catholic intellectuals” on the faculties of tertiary institutions of Lasallian education.⁵⁸ This will be imperative if students at Lasallian institutions of higher learning are going to be exposed to the richness of the Catholic intellectual tradition and “guided by certain habits of thought.”⁵⁹ After all, the schools of De La Salle and the first Brother-teachers were spaces where knowledge and religion were viewed as mutually enriching.

The main point that I am trying to make here is that tertiary institutions in the Lasallian Family have much to offer the rest of us . . . not by doing what everyone else (on secondary and primary levels) is already doing or is capable of doing . . . but by embracing their distinctiveness and bringing into the service of the whole Lasallian network precisely that research expertise and those other professional and scholarly gifts and talents which are the particular gifts of university professors.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I would like to refer to *A Statement of the Community of the General Council* that was addressed to the whole Lasallian Family in September 2002 by Brother Superior and General Council. We stated clearly that we “endorse the significant role to be played by our institutions of higher education” – when they are deeply grounded in our Lasallian heritage and responsive to current realities – “within the network of Lasallian ministries.”⁶⁰ I hope that you have already seen that document, and it is my sincere hope that we can be partners together.

May your time here at the Cuernavaca Lasallian Conference support and sustain you in your efforts to grow and evolve our tertiary ministries so as to assure that they remain both identifiably Lasallian and relevant, accessible, and sustainable in response to the needs of our times. Thank you for the invitation to be part of the dialogue and networking that you and your institutions are engaged in these days.

I know that the issues facing you in your work are diverse and challenging; and I know, also, that they are a glorious opportunity. This holy work of God – which we know as the Lasallian educational mission – is both an invitation and an opportunity to contribute to the peace of the world and the wellbeing of the human family.

God bless you. God bless your work. God bless your networking these days together. Thank you.

Endnotes

1. These remarks were delivered to a group of university provosts and academic administrators at the International Association of Lasallian Universities' Cuernavaca Conference on October 29, 2004; and they have been edited and revised some for publication here.

2. Brother William Mann, who holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Colgate Rochester Divinity School (1990), serves as the president of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota since 2008 and as the president of the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU) since 2015. He is a former vicar general of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (2000-2007).

3. For further understanding of this point, please see the fifth chapter of *The Lasallian School: Where Teachers Assist Parents in the Education and Formation of Children* by William Mann (Narragansett, RI: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1991), pages 45-76; and *Peoplemaking* by Virginia Satir (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1972).

4. This is what the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* #4 referred to as “the signs of the times.”

5. Even at the Cuernavaca Lasallian Conference 2004 itself where these remarks were shared, three identifiable sub-groupings of institutions were wrestling with fundamentally different issues. The *European universities* present were wrestling with “the portability of credentials” (how a degree earned in one country of the European Economic Union would be recognized and validated in another country of the EEU); the *Latin American universities* were wrestling with “educational standards and accreditation” (this is the youngest and most rapidly growing sub-grouping of the network); and the *USA universities* were more concerned with “the Catholicity question” (the *Ex Corde Ecclesia* discussions with American bishops provides the context for this concern).

6. Cf. Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Processes in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985).

7. Morphogenesis and homeostasis.

8. Herbert Anderson, *The Family and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pages 42-44; and Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Processes in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985), pages 202-208.

9. Cf. M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978).

10. What is provided here is obviously a 21st-century articulation of core principles or characteristics.

11. The terms “interiority” and “spiritual living” are barely adequate to capture the catechetical and evangelical dimension of the schools of De La Salle and the first Brother-teachers, but I prefer not to isolate this as a characteristic separate from that of these schools being “an educational work of quality.” In the 1694 preface of *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1990), De La Salle speaks of educating the young to live in the world under the guidance of “the Spirit of Jesus Christ (*Galatians 5:10*)” . . . the Spirit who alone . . . “ought to inspire all our actions, making them holy and agreeable to God” . . . inspiring children so that their behavior should be “motivated by purely Christian motives, which concern the glory of God and one’s own salvation.”

12. A worldwide network of Lasallian schools and child care agencies in some eighty countries and embracing approximately nine hundred thousand students – if the network remains true to the inspiration of the times of the origins – makes the vision and the kingdom of Jesus both visible and tangible. By way of explaining what I mean here, I would like to make reference to a 1901 painting by Giovanni Gagliardi that hangs in the Motherhouse of the Institute in Rome entitled “De La Salle Distributing Bread” [cf. iconographie photo #17 of 41 at www.lasalle.org/en/galeria-de-imagines]. This painting is, for me, a kind of icon, or visual metaphor, of the core of the Lasallian educational mission. De La Salle stands at the door of his family house in Rheims, in a time of famine, distributing his wealth as bread to the poor in the streets. A young boy to the right of De La Salle watches attentively. At the same time that his hunger is satisfied, a lively curiosity is awakened. A young girl watches from behind a mother who is drawing the attention of an infant in her lap to the selfless humanity of one who gives living expression to the Gospel . . . in whom it is possible to reach out and touch Jesus, who holds nothing back for himself. “When I was hungry, you gave me food . . .” (*Matthew 25:35*). De La Salle’s teaching on the vocation of a Lasallian educator finds, I suggest, expression in this painting: “Your actions must . . . be a lively expression of what is written in the Gospel” (*Meditation #84.3*). The too often hidden wisdom of the Good News is, in the deeds that accompany the words of the teacher, represented and made accessible to students. And so, in your work with adults and young adults in a university setting, how do you live and share this message and encourage learners to share their riches and blessings with one another (and the world), to make a “fullness of life” (*John 10:10*) possible for all (in the present, in the future, and for all eternity), and to make “the goodness of God visible by one’s behavior?”

13. “In your work you ought to unite zeal for the good of the Church with zeal for the good of the nation of which your disciples are beginning to be and one day ought to be perfect members,” *Meditation #160.3*.

14. “The necessity of the Institute is very great because the working class and the poor . . .,” *Rule of 1705 #4 and Rule of 1718 #4* [cf. *Rule and Foundational Documents* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002)].

15. De La Salle was constantly engaged in the difficult job of finding the funds so that the teachers could live. The initial schools were primarily supported by benefactors; and from then on, De La Salle was constantly negotiating contracts with Church and city officials.

16. For those working adolescents who were a bit older and for whom the schools of De La Salle had arrived on the scene too late, the Sunday Academies were opened. No one should be deprived of the possibility of education. The center for delinquents at Saint Yon met the local unmet needs of families. Innovation and adaptability were hallmarks of the origins.

17. The key to Lasallian education for De La Salle was the relationship of teacher and student. Teachers invited students into a new way of seeing and understanding themselves, others, God, and the world around them (*teachers ↔ students*). This was intended to be a relationship that served as an invitation for students to enter into a new way of being in relationship with one another (*students ↔ students*), and there were many occasions in the educational system of De La Salle where teachers deliberately stepped back and fostered learning to happen on a student-to-student level. However, the real wisdom of De La Salle, I believe, was his insight that this kind of shift within the educational community – and hopefully in the larger society also – would only occur if the invitation of teachers to students . . . if the encouragement of students to be in a more humane and Christian relationship with one another . . . was modeled in the way that the teachers interacted with one another (*teachers ↔ teachers*). As he wrote on numerous occasions, “example makes a much greater impression on the mind and heart than words” (*Meditation #202.3*).

18. “By the care you have for them, show how dear they are to you,” *Meditation #80.3*; and “Recognize Jesus beneath the poor rags of the children whom you have to instruct; adore him in them,” *Meditation #96.3*.

19. “One quality . . . is to know each one of them individually,” *Meditation #33.1*.

20. This is one of the fundamental reasons the early Brother-teachers were not to be clerics [cf. “Memorandum of the Habit” #10 in *Rule and Foundational Documents*, page 183 (Landover, MD; Lasallian Publications, 2002)]. Also see, “The Brother . . . having the children under his guidance from morning until evening,” *Rule of 1705 #3* and *Rule of 1718 #3*; and “To reward so great a good work and a service that he regards so highly, God . . . gives them a more extended ministry and a greater ability to procure the conversion of souls,” *Meditation #207.1*

21. “Example makes a much greater impression on the mind and heart than words,” *Meditation #202.3*; and “Your actions must not give the lie to the faith you profess but, instead, be a lively expression of what is written in the Gospel,” *Meditation #84.3*.

22. Cf. *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 170-178, 206, and 235-256 [concerning the role of student officers, the assignment of seats in the classroom, and the collection and distribution of bread].

23. We tend to forget that De La Salle’s own involvement in this educational project was primarily focused on the professional and spiritual preparation and accompaniment of the teachers [cf. *An Introduction to the History of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Origins, 1651-1726* by Brother Henri Bedel and translated by Brother Allen Geppert (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1996), pages 32-80].

24. **Brother Léon Lauraire**, *Conduct of School: An Overall Plan of Human and Christian Education* (Rome: MEL Bulletin #12, 2004). In it, he identifies six characteristics of the schools of De La Salle: a school for young people; a school that is relational; a school for life in society; a school for the poor but that is open to all; a school that promotes interiority; a school in which the formation of teachers is of the utmost importance. On the other hand, **Brother John Johnston**, our former Superior General, identified seven hallmarks of a Lasallian school: respect for each student as a unique person; a spirit of community; a school of quality; a school that is Christian (in its relations, its promotion of justice, its prayer, its dialogue . . .); solidarity with the poor; teachers who are men and women of faith and zeal; organized around the story of De La Salle [now available in *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 2, #2 (2011)]. **Brother Luke Salm**, in *The Brothers' School*, "The Seven Christian Brothers' Colleges in the United States, 1983-1984" (New York: Manhattan College, 1983) lists six characteristics: sensitivity to social issues, the importance of religious education, commitment to excellence in teaching, accent on quality education, an education emphasizing the practical, and independent distance from church authority.

25. The Lasallian Leadership Institute (LLI), which was begun in 1997, is a three-year cohort-based formation program that meets three times each year and provides training in the Lasallian heritage to those who have the potential to exercise a leadership role in the educational mission.

26. Brother Armin Luistro, FSC, "De La Salle University System Presidential Investiture Ceremony Inaugural Address," August 13, 2004.

27. *Meditation* #160.3.

28. *James* 2:17.

29. Pope Paul VI was an Affiliated member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

30. Brother Anton de Roeper, "Report of the Institute's Director of Justice and Peace to Brother Superior and General Council," September 16, 2004.

31. Since the early 1990s, the Lasallian Volunteer Program of the USA-Toronto Region is a long-term (1 to 3 years) service program for university graduates. The Lasallian Volunteers live in community, usually with Brothers, and serve high-need populations across the USA.

32. In some countries (like the USA and Italy), Lasallian education is not funded by the State. Rather, students and their families are responsible for its funding; and what they are able to pay is often supplemented by the contributions of generous benefactors or agencies.

33. Hopefully, this brief survey of the principal hallmarks (or "family resemblances") of our mission will serve to explain why – within this kind of education that is called Lasallian – we

see, among other traits, in the field of Lasallian higher education such things as: teacher training programs that are concerned with the education and formation of educators for this work; strong pastoral, catechetical, and campus ministry programs; business management, engineering, nursing, agricultural, technology programs; and hotel management and culinary arts programs; all of which ensure that knowledge and useful practical skills are acquired; the concern for the individual person – the key to Lasallian education; a commitment to excellence in teaching – De La Salle, in his concern that the schools run well and that learning was adapted to the level and need of the learner, elevated “the despised function of schoolteacher . . . to the status of a vocation worthy of the dedication of a lifetime” [cf. Brother Luke Salm in *The Brothers’ School, “The Seven Christian Brothers’ Colleges in the United States, 1983-1984”* (New York: Manhattan College, 1983), page 11]; the preferential option for the poor – the social category whose material, educational, and spiritual abandonment in seventeenth-century France called into association De La Salle and his first companions; and vibrant pastoral ministry programs, volunteerism and service opportunities – both the present path toward interiority and its most concrete expression (spiritual living).

34. Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, #631.

35. Cf. Brother Timothée’s preface to De La Salle’s *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 43. “You can bear witness, and God knows it, with what attention and what charity he [De La Salle] sought, together with the principal and most experienced Brothers of the Institute, suitable means of maintaining among you a holy uniformity in your manner of educating youth.”

36. Brothers of the Christian Schools, *Circular 447: The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter*, October 1, 2000, page 25.

37. Brothers of the Christian Schools, *Circular 447*, page 25.

38. Brothers of the Christian Schools, *Circular 447*, pages 21-22.

39. In the light of post-2001 international terrorism, war, and political and economic instability, it seems very meaningful, and perhaps even prophetic, that the 43rd General Chapter re-identified and re-affirmed the following characteristics that should be visible in educational establishments that self-identify as Lasallian: “the sense of community and fraternity as a response to individualism and loss of identity; the fight against poverty and situations of injustice; education for justice and peace, tolerance and solidarity; and formation of persons who are both just and free” (Brothers of the Christian Schools, *Circular 447*, page 27).

40. Brothers of the Christian Schools, *Circular 447*, page 24.

41. As the person who chaired the Chapter Commission on Evangelization that brought this proposition forward, this is my perspective.

42. I do not believe that is indicative of a lack of good will. Rather, I think that in many parts of the world we are overwhelmed by the task that faces us and unsure of what to do in the face of a growing secularism and the privatization of religion. The religious questions of some Lasallians and a growing discomfort with institutional religious structures compounds the problem.

43. The *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (1987) states in article #3 that the “purpose of this Institute is to provide a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor, according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to it.” Furthermore, it also states in article #13 that the “educational policies of Lasallian institutions are centered on the young, adapted to the times in which they live, and designed to prepare them to take their place in society. These institutions are characterized by the determination to make the means of salvation available to young people through a quality education and by an explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ. When the Brothers [and we might add “our Lasallian Partners”] work in the area of adult education, they put the same emphasis on the importance of persons, adapting their methods accordingly.”

44. Cf. Brother Frederick Charles Mueller, “The Perceived and Preferred Goals of Principals, De La Salle Christian Brother Teachers, and Lay Teachers in Lasallian Schools.”

45. Cf. Brother Michael Eamon Sanderl, “Catholic Identity and Lasallian Culture in Higher Education: The Contribution of Campus Ministry.”

46. Brothers of the Christian Schools, *Circular 447*, page 23.

47. Chrys McVey, OP, “The Dying That Is Mission” in *Acts of the General Chapter of Diffinitors of the Friars of the Order of Preachers* (Dublin: Rollebon Press), page 212.

48. Brothers of the Christian Schools have a long tradition of running excellent schools around the globe in a multi-religious context: Turkey (1841), Egypt (1847), Singapore and Malaysia (1852), Algiers (1854), Burma/Myanmar (1860), Ceylon/Sri Lanka (1867), Palestine (1874), and Hong Kong/China (1875).

49. In addition, there is presently statistical research being done in Paris by university professors, at the invitation of Brother Nicolas Capelle, the Institute’s Secretary of Education, to help us analyze the trends of the past thirty years in Lasallian education around the world; and this research should help us better understand our reality in the context of “educational renewal at a time when the very understanding of the nature and the means of learning is developing rapidly.”

50. “I urge them, above all else, always to show entire submission to the Church, especially in these evil times, and to give proof of this by never separating themselves in anything from our Holy Father the Pope and from the Church of Rome, always remembering that I sent two Brothers to Rome to ask God for the grace that their Society might always be entirely submissive

thereto” [“Testament” in *Rule and Foundational Documents*, page 205 (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002)].

51. John R. Wilcox, “Charism in Association: Structuring the Lasallian Education Movement in Catholic Higher Education” (Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies, July 2004). [Quite coincidentally the text of Wilcox is reproduced in this current issue of *AXIS; Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 8, #2 (2017).]

52. Heft is the university professor of faith and culture and chancellor of the University of Dayton.

53. James Heft, SM, “Secularization and Catholic Higher Education,” *Annual Faith and Culture Lecture at the University of Dayton*, September 19, 2003.

54. In August 2004, Brother Lorenzo González Kipper completed his doctoral dissertation at Universidad de Montemorelos, Mexico; and he observed that, at least in the Regions of Latin America and Spain/Portugal, it appears that educators (including Brothers) associate with the educational mission primarily around three areas – work, relationships, and charism. His research is helping us to understand better the evolution toward inclusion and partnership . . . for the sake of the mission . . . that is another of the mandates of the 43rd General Chapter.

55. The Brother delegates and Lasallian Partner consultants at the two most recent General Chapters – 1993 and 2000 – attempted to understand more deeply the way in which Brothers and Partners share a role in serving as “heart, memory, and guarantor” of the Lasallian educational mission.

56. Many other Religious Congregations, Evangelic Families, and institutions are also growing in their understanding of this new ecclesial reality. For example, see “Reviving the Gifts of Our Founders: The Charisms of Religious in the Pastoral Life of the Church” by Paul J. Philibert, OP, in *New Theology Review* 10, #1 (1997) and *Relationship Revisited: Catholic Institutions and Their Founding Congregations* by Dennis Holtschneider, CM, and Melanie Morey (Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 2000).

57. Cf. *Christifideles Laici* (Vatican, 1988).

58. Having engaged and committed Lasallian Partners in mission is not necessarily the same as assuring the presence of university professors, who by education and training, possess a deep understanding of and appreciation for the richness of the Catholic intellectual tradition.

59. In an equally insightful lecture, Heft states: “For our Catholic universities to have a future, we need to have Catholic intellectuals on our faculties. If knowledge and religion remain separated, it is impossible for a Catholic to be an intellectual. And indeed, there are those . . . who believe that not only is a Catholic university an oxymoron, but so also is a Catholic intellectual. Without Catholic intellectuals, we will have no Catholic universities. Catholic intellectuals, however, are guided by certain habits of thought. For example, they know that the

more deeply one gets into what it means to be human, the more inescapable are ethical and religious questions; the more deeply one gets into any form of knowledge, the more necessary it is to make connections with other areas of knowledge; the more intellectually vibrant a religious culture is, the more it will learn from and shape the wider culture. The Catholic intellectual is a believer, one who is nourished by the Word and the Sacrament. Without Catholic intellectuals, we have no distinctive academic experience to offer in our universities” [“The Culture of Catholic Universities” in *Australian e-Journal of Education* (February 2004), page 11].

60. Brothers of the Christian Schools, *A Statement of the Community of the General Council*, September 2002.