
Let Us Bear Witness to the Reign of God: Reimagining Lasallian Education in the Name of Justice

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Introduction

The task of building the reign of God, a commitment that Jesus calls us to, never ends. The Holy Spirit moved John Baptist de La Salle (1651-1719), a wealthy French priest, educational innovator, and saintly founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to step into the world to take up this task. Disturbed by the social realities faced by children from economically poor and working class families in late 17th and early 18th century France, De La Salle "came to discern, in faith, what God wanted the mission of the Institute to be."² The Rule of 1705 states: "The end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children"³ Central to De La Salle's spiritual discernment about God's plan was the creation of a community of Brothers to conduct Christian Schools oriented toward "bringing salvation⁴ to the whole world. In their work of education, the Brothers undertake to bring about the coming of that new kind of world . . . begun with the Incarnation and the paschal mystery of [Jesus Christ.]"⁵ Thus, it is in the mission field of Christian education and evangelization that De La Salle's Brothers -- and now all Lasallian educators -- acquit themselves for this apostolic ministry.

Although the founding story and vision of De La Salle and the first Brothers do not change, our interpretation and appropriation of them do. At times, we have to reexamine the communal understanding and application of particular aspects of the story and vision. Álvaro Rodríguez Echerverría, FSC, superior general (2000-2014), affirms this notion of shifting interpretation and appropriation:

If we look at our past and recall our roots, it is not for the purpose of repeating in a mechanical way what the Founder and the first Brothers accomplished during their time, conditioned as it was like all other times by certain situations and limitations. What is important is to keep alive the spirit to build up the Kingdom of God by means of Christian education that guided them in their mission.⁶

Keeping alive the spirit of this fecund tradition is our collective responsibility today. Thus in the remarks that follow, we aver that the Lasallian charism and mission, first and foremost, stands in service of the reign of God, a foundational characteristic of the founding story and vision that does not change. The biblical and historical signposts that frame and shape the founding story and vision can be read as a complementary set of identity markers through which to imagine Lasallian education in a world entirely different from that of De La Salle and his first Brothers.

The intersection of Lasallian education and the promotion of justice creates a dialectic that can generate a heuristic rebound for reshaping a distinctive Lasallian ethic to educate in faith for justice and to participate actively in the Church's mission of social transformation. With these

words, Patricio Bolton, FSC, formulates a proposal in support of shaping such an ethic: “we have to think, discern, and build the curriculum, all curricula, as a contribution to the narrative processes that shape identity”⁷ in the service of solidarity with those disfigured by injustice and by courageously creating justice.

This article urges a dynamic movement to move beyond mere service and engage more robustly in the promotion of justice. For the Lasallian polity, it is important to identify here what this movement envisions; that is, specifically stretching into Lasallian praxis⁸ a deep commitment to human rights advocacy, especially the defense and promotion of the rights of children. I echo the Institute’s lament that the contents and import of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)⁹ remains little known and understood by most Brothers and other Lasallians.¹⁰ Moving forward requires a compelling vision and ethic that unleashes the potential for the justice-oriented action that the Institute desires and that Lasallian numerical power can render.¹¹ If we acknowledge that “Christian faith is not a private faith [but] it is public and political,”¹² then the Brothers and all Lasallians must see engaging in the defense and promotion of children’s rights on a more profound level as a response to Jesus’ summons to build God’s reign. Suzanne Toton observes:

The Gospel challenges the social order ... the social, economic and political arrangements that deny human beings the life and dignity that belong to them ... We are called to build an order that gives priority to meeting basic human needs¹³

This objective entails a level of engagement in the public square that requires collaboration and partnership with civil society organizations on all levels, as well as other religious institutes of men and women, that share in the struggle to create justice.¹⁴

Envisioning Justice: Lasallian Thought in the Post-Vatican Council II Era

In December 1967, the 39th General Chapter (1966-1967) of the Brothers of the Christian Schools adopted *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*. Initiating a challenging period of renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council, this seminal document launched the Brothers and the Lasallian mission into the contemporary age. As Pedro María Gil, FSC, writes, “The *Declaration* offers a reading of the Lasallian present from the viewpoint of the future.”¹⁵ The *Declaration* supplies a philosophical framework for the Institute to examine the intrinsic connection between the pursuit of educating the young, especially those who are poor, and the promotion of a vision of justice. Reading this important Lasallian text, we see that the delegates to the General Chapter clearly grasped the importance of setting a firm foundation for the *Declaration* in the wisdom of the Catholic social tradition. This turn toward connecting Lasallian education with an understanding of the justice of the reign of God is evident in parts of chapters six and seven of the *Declaration*. Here, it draws on two Catholic social teaching documents to shape the Lasallian vision of justice: *Gaudium et spes* [*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*], “which provides the overarching vision of recent Catholic social teaching”¹⁶; and *Populorum Progressio* [*On Promoting the Development of Peoples*], Pope Paul VI’s encyclical decrying the radically unjust economic and social arrangements in the world.

As a pastoral text, the *Declaration* reminds us that the Lasallian vision of justice is “heard also in the hopes and sorrows of [persons] of our day, in the possibilities and deficiencies of our changing world”¹⁷ Aware of the constant threats to human life, dignity, and freedom, the *Declaration* becomes a way of arriving at a holistic theological and pastoral framework for experiencing the reign of God. It sets the stage for Lasallian educators to struggle with finding ways to focus creatively and effectively on the creation of a more just and humane world as a crucial witness of the Lasallian charism and mission.

Early Post-Conciliar Observations concerning Justice

Six years after the close of the great ecumenical Council, the Synod of Bishops wrestled with articulating the vision of justice that Vatican Council II pronounced. On 30 November 1971, the Bishops adopted *Justitia in mundo* [*Justice in the World*], affirming the important link between the advance of faith and the promotion of justice with a profound analysis of the world’s situation. Conscious of the newest developments in the Catholic social teaching canon, Charles Henry Buttimer, FSC, superior general (1966-1976), invited the Brothers in his pastoral letter to “unite” themselves to the Synod and Pope Paul VI, who have asked all Christians to work for peace through the promotion of justice. The Holy Father requested that we all work with special zeal for justice “...each one working in the area of his vocation, each one using his apostolate as a means of promoting justice.”¹⁸ Buttimer pledges to the Pope “the educative action of our Brothers during 1973 for promoting justice for all [people], wherever we are privileged to serve the people of God through the ministry of education.”¹⁹

Buttimer identified two concrete ways that Brothers and Lasallian Partners could take up the pursuit of justice. One way to respond to the demands of justice was then, and is now, through direct service, a way to “[alleviate] the effects of injustice” in its various forms.²⁰ He listed a plethora of apostolic ways Brothers and Partners provide services to meet immediate human needs.²¹ The second response is “through our specialty, education.”²² By exercising this particularized response, the Lasallian “specialty” “is more long range and less spectacular, but even more important than the former, because it attacks injustice at its roots.”²³

I quote the Brother Superior at length because what he writes offers striking insight for the Lasallian obligation to educate in faith for justice and to promote justice today.

[Attacking injustice at its core] consists in educating our students in a sense of justice, in imbuing them with a thirst for justice, in forming their consciences to be sensitive to sins of injustice, in educating them to use the instruments that promote justice and cast out injustice, in educating them to take seriously their future civic, political responsibilities. This requires a carefully prepared curriculum that will be graded and progressive through the years of secondary and higher education. It cannot be the work of an enthusiastic Brother alone. It must be the cooperative venture of all the school staff, both in planning and implementation.²⁴

Reading this passage from his pastoral letter, there is little doubt that the inspiration for Buttimer’s exegesis is, in large part, his reading and reflection on the Vatican Council II and post-conciliar social teachings including *Gaudium et spes* and *Justitia in mundo*. At the same

time, he shows knowledge of the long tradition of modern Catholic social teaching beginning with *Rerum novarum* [*On the Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor*]. Significantly, he posits that it is important for the Brothers to take responsibility for reading and studying the social teachings of the Church, as well as to take up reading about the social situations that cause injustices. He states, “No Brothers serious enough about educating for justice *can afford to be ignorant of the doctrine of justice* developed over eighty years in the pontifical documents . . .”²⁵ What Buttimer proposes is as necessary today for Lasallian educators in general and religious education practitioners in particular as it was nearly 50 years ago.

While his 1972 Christmas pastoral letter was seemingly his most extensive reflection on justice and Lasallian education, Buttimer continued to address the subject in later pastoral letters. In one of his last letters as superior general, he observed that many dioceses and some Districts in the Institute had established justice and peace commissions.²⁶ Then, he makes this salient point:

To be alien to these ideals and programs [of the commissions] would be tantamount to being alienated from the Gospel ideals and from the doctrine enunciated by the Sovereign Pontiffs, the Vatican Council II, the Synod of 1971, and the Pontifical Commission on Justice.²⁷

Permeating Buttimer’s sense of Lasallian education and the promotion of justice is a conviction that the prophetic dimension of Catholic social theological ethics provides a new horizon, to use Hans-Georg Gadamer’s²⁸ hermeneutic, to challenge the Lasallian worldview. Because the social teachings of the Church are rooted in the prophetic Hebrew tradition from which Jesus preached and taught, it is a platform to shape and mold the Lasallian commitment to justice and social transformation.

Amidst the turbulence the Roman Catholic Church, the Institute, and the wider society faced during the late 1960s and across the 1970s, Buttimer, listening to the Spirit, maintained a steadfast focus on the priorities of the *Declaration* for the Brothers and the Lasallian mission. He rendered a major contribution to the Lasallian discourse on the intersection of Christian education and the promotion of justice. Through deliberate engagement with the Catholic social tradition and the Lasallian educational heritage, he contextualizes the Lasallian charism and mission by rendering the signifier “justice” as vital for discernment and discourse.

Collectively, Buttimer’s pastoral writings contextualize the Lasallian charism and mission by rendering the signifier “justice” to an understanding about Jesus’ invitation to experience the reign of God by serving all, but starting with the “least among us.”

Reading the pastoral writings of José Pablo Basterrechea, FSC, superior general (1976-1986), suggests that his thinking also remains aligned with Catholic social teaching principles and the unambiguous directions set by both the 39th and 40th General Chapters. The proceedings of these two Chapters provide him the warrant to challenge the Brothers and all Lasallian educators to commit themselves to the work of education and justice. In his 1978 Christmas pastoral letter, Basterrechea uses the 1979 United Nations International Year of the Child (UNIYC) – that marks the twentieth anniversary of the 1959 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child²⁹ – to move forward Lasallian engagement with social justice concerns. He spotlights the

UNIYC as “...the pinnacle of an international effort to promote the needs and rights of children...,”³⁰ an “initiative coming from outside our own little world [that] finds a special echo in a religious educational institute.”³¹ Basterrechea sees the UNIYC pointing to Lasallian educators and, “therefore, we must not remain indifferent to what this year asks and proposes.”³²

What, then, did the UNIYC ask? What did it propose? United Nations General Assembly Resolution 31/169, adopted 21 December 1976, put forward these two objectives:

- a. to provide a framework for advocacy on behalf of children and for enhancing the awareness of the special needs of children as part of the decision-makers and the public;
- b. to promote recognition of the fact that programs for children should be an integral component of economic and social development plans with a view to achieving, in both the long term and short term, sustained activities for the benefit of children at the national and international levels.³³

And thus, in Basterrechea’s discernment, with the 39th and 40th General Chapters in view, the two broad objectives pronounced by the United Nations should find a “special echo” in Lasallian educational communities. The challenge for Lasallians “not to remain indifferent” consists in identifying children’s rights issues that should claim priority for the Lasallian mission. Learning to do advocacy will contribute toward achieving effective policy and programs that enhance agency and freedom for children and young people.

In the case of the 40th General Chapter (1976), the Lasallian vision of Christian education in the service of justice is perceptible and appropriately historicized. The Chapter programmatically offers two propositions that can be considered a general expression of solidarity with those afflicted by injustice, especially children and youth. Proposition 1 states:

The Brothers must integrate personally . . . in community . . . in their institutions, the components of Christian education, the ministry of the Word, the service of the poor and action on behalf of justice in the world.³⁴

Proposition 14 calls for action:

Each District will submit . . . a report to the General Council in which it will show how it has put into practice . . . the principles of the *Declaration* and the orientations of the present Chapter concerning the educational service of the poor and action on behalf of justice.³⁵

In May 1979, Basterrechea wrote an informative letter to the Brothers, offering an initial reaction to the District reports thus far received. This letter anticipated a more thorough response by him and the General Council in the form of an Institute *Circular*. Of the sixty-three reports received from the Districts, thirty-three said nothing about the challenge to promote justice. One District declares, “We are just not ready to confront the issue.”³⁶ While the reports cite “numerous achievements in the area of the educational service of the poor, [they] become incomplete or even silent regarding the promotion of justice.”³⁷ In short, Basterrechea suggests that the reports lacked consequence. Inertia, or resistance in some cases, to the unfinished global agenda of

building a world predicated on justice runs counter to the spirit of the Institute's vision and hopes articulated in its Gospel-inspired documents.

Circular 412: Binding Lasallian Education and the Promotion of Justice

Within the context of fulfilling the hopes of the 40th General Chapter, the Brother Superior and his General Council promulgated *Circular 412: The Educational Service of the Poor and the Promotion of Justice* in September 1980, the beginning of the Tercentenary Year of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In *Circular 412*, an extraordinarily perceptive text, it reads:

Far from considering the promotion of justice as a sort of separate – and extraneous – issue, we should view action on behalf of justice as essential to the broader view of service to the poor that is desired by the contemporary Church, since it gives this service a firmer social dimension.³⁸

This view is not static, but rather a dynamic interpretative stance that insists on the need to include the fundamental elements of social justice in understanding Lasallian education and evangelization today. Taking a cue from the prophetic orientation of the earlier referenced *Justicia in mundo*, *Circular 412* witnesses a “reading the signs of the times” in light of the Lasallian founding story and vision. Brother Superior and General Council assert: “It is in the name of the Gospel, then, that we must commit ourselves to promoting justice and to serving [those who are] poor.”³⁹ Then they say: “It is this Gospel accepted and announced in its fullness, which reveals salvation and the kingdom as fruits of the death and resurrection of Jesus.”⁴⁰ Thus, this vitally important Lasallian text arrives at a more holistic theological and pastoral framework for experiencing the reign of God in the current world.

Two themes *Circular 412* develops are pertinent to this narrative. The first, taken directly from the text, claims the ministry of Christian education and evangelization is not separate from promoting justice. The second is devoted to revealing assumptions and attitudes still prevailing among the Brothers. The *Circular* claims that the promotion of justice is “seldom mentioned . . . in an explicit manner” in the District reports requested by Proposition 14 of the 40th General Chapter:

It is obvious that little connection is made between the service of the poor and the promotion of justice. This failure to mention the promotion of justice in an explicit manner and the fact that no analysis has been made of its relationship to service of the poor seem to indicate that the various dimensions of this perspective have not yet been fully grasped.⁴¹

To further its claim, the document reports:

[It] appears clear from reading the reports that very many [Districts] retain a quite narrow concept of our *service to the poor*. These [reports] continue to voice an almost fundamentalistic interpretation of the Founder, even though the world and the Church have changed in three hundred years. Now what is important is to reproduce this spirit by measures suited to a social and Church context requiring different activities.⁴²

A sustained reading of the documents of the 39th and 40th General Chapters gives rise to a shift in direction taken by Vatican Council II and the Institute with profound consequences for educating in faith and promoting justice. These two Chapters of renewal arguably represent a paradigm shift in the Institute's understanding of the *educational service to the poor*. Quite clearly, the scope of *service to the poor* in the world today involves acquiring a social consciousness that subverts this "fundamentalistic interpretation of the Founder" and urges the Institute and the Lasallian polity to engage in the hard struggle for justice. Basterrechea and the General Council observe:

Social consciousness requires that we be constantly and readily attentive to those things which cause poverty, injustice, and oppressive situations, as also to the possibilities available to [persons], organizations, and events to prevent these dangers and to promote positive action.⁴³

As part of the Church, the Institute and the wider Lasallian educational community bear responsibility "to interpret the world of its time in light of the Gospel and its call to justice."⁴⁴ In the words of *Circular 412*:

We must be ready . . . to begin a change, to embark on a journey similar to that by the Founder, in order to better discover our responsibilities in face of the calls for more justice heard in the world today, and to make use of those means of responding that are suited to our specific vocation.⁴⁵

Here the Brother Superior and General Council offer a strikingly different lesson for discerning, understanding, and acting in response to the ongoing and emergent social consciousness rooted in the spiritual pilgrimage of De La Salle.

With a wider horizon, *Circular 412* identifies four main tasks in its quest to weave together the fabric for a social consciousness that enables Lasallians to respond to the calls for justice "suited to our specific vocation." First, Lasallians must grasp the wide dimensions of injustices and engage in activities that promote justice. Second, the *Circular* declares that Lasallians need to become conscious of their own prejudices: ethnic/cultural, socio-economic, color, and practical judgments expressed about daily aspects of life. Third, the *Circular* challenges Lasallians to increase awareness of the importance of Catholic social teaching through reading, contemplation, and dialogue. Finally, Lasallians need to be more deliberate in accepting the challenge of announcing the Gospel among the People of God.⁴⁶ These four tasks signify the struggle to build up God's reign on earth derived from the mission of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷

Through a Lasallian lens of contemplation and action, giving room to the Spirit to guide us is key. *Educational Service of the Poor and the Promotion of Justice* reflects this Lasallian understanding. It captures the *Declaration's* sentiment that "the context of the world today makes it possible for us to discover . . . new ways in which the Brothers can exercise the ministry of the Word of God . . ." ⁴⁸ With the eyes of faith, the Spirit enables Lasallians to share Basterrechea's "[profound commitment] to making the education of the poor and the promotion of justice through education dominant characteristics of the identity of the Brothers [Lasallian

educators]”⁴⁹ Allowing the Spirit to flourish, educating in faith for justice, standing in solidarity with marginalized people, and advocating for the transformation of the social structures that cause human misery can further define Lasallian education and evangelization. In this way Lasallian education, informed by De La Salle’s sense of “progressive awareness,” moves toward achieving emancipatory action for the common good, which is to say, what the reign of God requires.

Uncovering and Recollecting the Noma Literacy Prize

Finally, let us note the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) awarding the Brothers of the Christian Schools the Noma Literacy Prize⁵⁰ in 1990 during the International Literacy Year. At a ceremony in Geneva, Lasallian education received recognition for its global commitment to literacy and human development for young people and adults alike. As José María Valladolid, FSC, the primary chronicler of this Noma Literacy Prize moment, and who was present at the ceremony, writes,

If the dossier submitted to UNESCO is studied carefully, it will become clear that in many instances [this literacy work] does not take place within the school but around it. The [Lasallian] school extends its influence outside its walls to transform society.⁵¹

Valladolid’s observation that the work of literacy concerns “transform[ing] society” points us to why we must uncover and recollect the significance of the Noma Literacy Prize awarded to the Institute.

Here we identify three reasons why the Noma Literacy Prize moment grounds a Lasallian educational agenda for unmasking injustice and creating justice. First, the work of literacy is a common Lasallian ministry thrust into a global spotlight. The UNESCO dossier⁵² submitted for consideration of the award was an impressive compilation of the work of the Brothers and Lasallian Partners; at the same time, still it did not completely tell the story of Lasallian involvement in literacy promotion. Recalling his encounter with a journalist at the Noma Literacy Prize ceremony, Valladolid notes that the journalist was amazed at how it is “possible to do all these different kinds of work in so many different places, all bearing the same distinctive mark.”⁵³ The distinctive mark is this: a charism rooted in an Incarnational-Trinitarian spirituality that responds to urgent educational and spiritual needs of all, especially children and young people from impoverished, marginalized circumstances. UNESCO’s award signifies that individual Brothers and Lasallian Partners, as well as entire Lasallian school communities, can turn toward the world to tear down barriers and build a more just society.

Second, the Noma Literacy Prize moment reminds us that promoting literacy affects basic human dignity and human rights. Literacy constitutes more than simply teaching and learning reading, writing, and rudimentary arithmetic. Promoting literacy means

to teach a person to organize [their] life, to find solutions for [their] personal problems, to survive. To promote literacy means teaching many other basic things . . . health care, hygiene, work, productivity, the requirements of social life, participation, management of

family resources, relationships, living together, commerce, the economy, etc. . . . not to mention human, moral and religious values.⁵⁴

Consider how this contemporary expression corresponds to De La Salle's vision. Edgard Hengemüle, FSC, writes: "By teaching the sons of the people, De La Salle offered them perspectives on better living conditions . . . 'placing a pen in the hands of the poor did not give them a weapon . . . but rather their own means of support, their defense.'"⁵⁵ He continues: "De La Salle was no theoretician about society . . . Nevertheless, the Gospel inspiration of his popular and effective education certainly contributed in large measure to social reform."⁵⁶ This last point leads us to make clear that De La Salle was, nonetheless, a person of his time. As Hengemüle notes, "He in no way questioned in theory the existing social order, nor the basic doctrine that justified it."⁵⁷

Further still, literacy fosters a "democratization" of culture. Participation in society and living spiritual values are key markers. During the beatification of Brother Scubillion Rousseau, FSC, then French Prime Minister Michele Rocard remarked in the presence of Pope John Paul II that the Brothers of the Christian Schools contributed to France's literacy even before the French Revolution. However, as, Valladolid observes:

by making French society literate, the Brothers had created by their educational works a new social class that was no longer ignorant . . . and which changed the world. After the Revolution, it was the Institute also that provided the stimulus for the "democratization" of culture in France, by extending [literacy] to all the working classes.⁵⁸

Gradually, this process erupted around the world. Countries came to understand the fundamental importance of providing access to basic education to the whole population.

Third, the Noma Literacy Prize moment still constitutes a source of encouragement and an appeal – to "share with others the wealth implied by education, and social justice makes this a duty for us."⁵⁹ It presents a hope-filled vision of parents, teachers, former students, and elder pupils collaborating in conducting literacy programs -- all in all, a "magnificent social and apostolic contribution."⁶⁰ What comes along with this appeal is the possibility to witness Lasallian association. This dynamic that is articulated coheres with the challenge to take advantage of the wide network of people connected with Lasallian education: one, to contribute to ameliorating immediate social needs; and two, to collaborate as advocates for social transformation with other organizations that share the emancipatory goals of the Lasallian charism and mission.

The Enduring Challenge of Defending and Promoting the Rights of Children

Anticipating the 30th anniversary of the *Declaration* of the Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today, John Johnston, FSC, superior general (1986-2000), marked this occasion with his pastoral letter *Being Brothers Today: The Enduring Challenge of the Declaration* (1997). Providing a critical re-reading of the *Declaration*, he recalls four priorities that are embedded in the 1967 text. In addition, he advances a fifth priority – making salient the rights of children – which he points out is not "rooted directly" in the *Declaration*.⁶¹ It, too, is an enduring challenge

for being Lasallian educators today. Thus, we quote the letter at some length because what Johnston presents is significant for Lasallian discernment today. He writes:

Some years ago the Jesuits decided to devote themselves in a concerted manner to the problem of refugees. I have tremendous admiration for what they have accomplished. I think that the Lasallian Family, located in more than 80 countries, including more than 63,000 teachers, 800,000 pupils, countless parents, former students, and friends, could have a very significant impact in the struggle against exploitation of children. The struggle would have to be carefully planned, organized, and implemented at the levels of communities, schools, Districts, and Regions. I think that our universities could be particularly helpful – as I suggested in July 1995 to the rectors and presidents of Lasallian institutions of higher education, gathered in Rome.

But I am convinced that we, Brothers of the Christian Schools, for whom a loving concern for abandoned, marginalized, oppressed children is an integral and indispensable dimension of our vocation, should play the role of catalyst.

My recommendation that the defense and promotion of the rights of children be a major priority in our life as Brothers today is personal. I propose it for the consideration of the Institute and of the entire Lasallian Family.⁶²

This narrative prefigures the emergence of the defense and promotion of children's rights as a major priority for the Lasallian mission. It results from a level of courage and persistence to live the Lasallian charism – a spirit of faith and zeal actualized through mission.

The initial urge for the Brothers and the wider Lasallian community to take up the challenge of children's rights emanated from the 42nd General Chapter (1993). As Johnston reminds us in his 1997 pastoral letter, the Chapter evokes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) adopted in 1989.⁶³ Probing the inert response by the Brothers and Lasallian Partners to the UNCRC, the 43rd General Chapter (2000) offers this candid critique: "Although the Convention was recommended by the 42nd General Chapter and again in the *Pastoral Letter of the Superior* of 1999, its contents are little known and understood by Brothers and Partners."⁶⁴

Approaching the end of his fourteen years as superior general, Johnston commanded our attention just as the new millennium was dawning with *On the Defense of Children, the Reign of God, and the Lasallian Mission*. A bold pastoral letter, it is informed by De La Salle's "progressive awareness" of the human and spiritual distress of poor and abandoned children. A major purpose of this letter is putting forward that "...the idea of the reign of God can serve as an excellent framework for deepening our understanding of the Lasallian mission. More specifically, it can help us situate the defense and promotion of children's human rights in a theological and ecclesial framework."⁶⁵ The letter seizes on the quandary Saint Pope John Paul II raises in his 1996 World Day of Peace Message: "How many exploited children do not even know they have rights?"⁶⁶ Recalling the Pope's message further, the pastoral letter continues:

[It] calls attention to the children who are victims of armed conflicts and other kinds of physical and sexual violence, and to those who live in the streets, are illiterate, become

addicted to drugs, become involved in criminal activity, are obliged to serve as soldiers and are taught to kill. He reminds us of those who suffer the consequences of unhappy, unhealthy, and “broken” homes.⁶⁷

These children, the letter avers, are our children. De La Salle reminds us: “This God of goodness places these children in your hands.”⁶⁸ The vivid picture Johnston depicts about the lived reality faced by countless children and youth around the world, coupled with his expressions of faith, was undoubtedly a catalyst for the Institute’s eventual decision to situate the difficult challenge of the UNCRC in the context of living today the founding Lasallian story and vision.

Seeing with eyes wide open, the 43rd General Chapter adopted Proposition 14: the rights of the child should become “...a major focus of concern for the Lasallian mission of education . . . Each District, Sub-District and Delegation should include this question in their plan of action.” The proposition states further:

[The District] will appoint one Brother or Partner who will help it:

- to cooperate with local organizations that work for the promotion of the rights of the child;
- to detect local violations of the rights of children;
- to alert local authorities when children’s rights are violated;
- to ensure that its schools and universities teach and observe the rights of the child;
- to maintain contact with the secretariat for the educational mission.⁶⁹

Accompanying the proposition, the General Chapter offers four guidelines for approaching this new dimension of carrying out the Lasallian mission of education. The guidelines are these: (1) Brothers and Partners need to be more aware of the contents of the Convention; (2) the implementation of the Convention has to be adapted to local conditions; (3) the Lasallian educational mission should concentrate on children whose rights are not protected; and (4) the response of the Brothers and Partners to the demands of the Convention must be inspired by Gospel values.⁷⁰

When we look closely, the posture assumed by the General Chapter toward the UNCRC – that children’s rights are among the urgent educational needs of today – is rooted in the prophetic tradition of Catholic social thought; and it echoes De La Salle’s vision to proclaim the reign of God through the ministry of Christian education. In short, the Chapter makes the defense and the promotion of the rights of children not simply an activity of the Institute and the Lasallian community, but one integral to the heart of the Lasallian charism and mission itself.

More than two decades later, *On the Defense of Children* still reads as a compelling piece of social “teaching” and ethical reflection within the Lasallian canon. In his pastoral letter, Johnston ponders the Lasallian movement taking greater advantage of its numerical power to “. . . respond with love and creativity . . . to the struggle against the destitution, injustice, manipulation, and exploitation that prevent children from being children and make a mockery of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.”⁷¹ He continues:

Like Jesus we have to be men who are attentive, loving, compassionate, men who reach out effectively to the needy, men who defend the rights of the poor and oppressed, who “bear witness with the boldness of a prophet who is unafraid of risking even his life.”⁷²

Here we sense Johnston’s deep understanding of the prophetic character intrinsic to the Lasallian vocation – a ministry of the Word.

With the 43rd General Chapter’s consequential resolve to constitute children’s rights as a major priority of the Lasallian mission, Johnston remained steadfast in his effort to apprise Lasallian audiences about this Lasallian priority. Building on his 1999 pastoral letter, his address to the opening session of the Huether Lasallian Conference in November 2001⁷³ is framed with a provocative interrogatory title, “Jesus Was Indignant...Are We?” It is a seminal text that constitutes a major contribution to the Lasallian discourse on justice and political engagement. The stimulating narrative vividly illumines the Markan episode in which Jesus welcomes and blesses the “little children.” Recalling that the apostles were slow to understand the meaning of Jesus’ teaching about God’s reign, Johnston provides a succinct interpretation of the biblical text:

This Kingdom welcomes everyone, regardless of power, or lack of power, status or lack of status, race, ethnic heritage, culture, economic status. It welcomes children. In this Kingdom, God takes children seriously, reverences them as human persons, and welcomes them as full participants.⁷⁴

This hermeneutic points us to the questions to which we must attend, those questions that arise from the everyday experiences of children and young people – their joys, their sufferings, their hopes, their disappointments.

Seeing With Eyes Wide Open

Johnston reminds us in a persuasive way that we must view that historical reality with our eyes wide open. He states:

the stories of Jesus and of John Baptist de La Salle led the General Chapter to challenge us to open our eyes wide, to *SEE* children and youth today who, in one way or another, are “poor, abandoned, and far from salvation.”⁷⁵

He insists: “If we really see them, we will experience indignation.”⁷⁶ The *Rule*’s emphasis “to become increasingly conscious of the reasons for the poverty”⁷⁷ that prevails around us provides context for Johnson’s insistence on the importance of the reign of God as ground to interrogate how Lasallian schools educate students for justice. For Lasallian educators, this involves building fraternal relationships reflective of God’s love. Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, elaborates: “In the context of the globalized world in which we live today, this involves excluding no one and being concerned principally about those who are excluded.”⁷⁸

Johnston advances four ideas for Lasallians to consider in creating a “culture of action on behalf of the rights of children and youth.”⁷⁹ Though this list is not exhaustive, the intention is to stimulate concern for and action to:

1. create ongoing education and formation programs centered on the rights of children;
2. strengthen existing schools, centers, and programs that serve children, youth, and young adults “at risk”;
3. continue the momentum of new schools for children who are “poor, abandoned, and far from salvation”;
4. mobilize Lasallians as advocates for children and for their rights.⁸⁰

Note that the insightful direction Johnston suggests coheres with Buttimer’s proposal in his 1972 pastoral letter. Johnston also attaches the long history of Lasallian education responding to educational needs through diverse educational programs with the commitment to advocate for children’s rights. With the rich contemporary Lasallian documentary heritage on justice discussed thus far, the stage is set for Lasallian educators: to be prophetic ministers of the Word who strive to foster the coming of the reign of God on earth through providing a human and Christian education together with building up the infrastructure to *educate* and *advocate* on behalf of the justice priorities the Lasallian community identifies.

During the time of his pastoral leadership, Rodríguez Echeverría maintained an appropriately critical focus in regard to Lasallian education and the promotion of justice. Reflecting on the 44th General Chapter’s propositions and recommendations, the Brother Superior and General Council point us toward reinforcing solidarity with “those whom the world rejects.” This entails strengthening the presence and involvement of the Institute and of Lasallians in a number of more specific issues such as the rights of children⁸¹ Fittingly, Rodríguez Echeverría writes:

Lasallian education . . . should be attentive to situations that we experience today . . . it must be responsive to the defense of the “rights of children,” which is intended to be a characteristic of the Lasallian Family as a whole⁸²

It is worthwhile to make note of the language the Brother Superior employs here. He tethers the defense and promotion of children’s human rights to the proper character of the Lasallian charism and mission. It arises from his reading of Johnston’s pastoral letters and, of course, the final documents of the General Chapter of 2000.

Two texts from Rodríguez Echeverría occupy our focus on Lasallian education and the pursuit of justice: the pastoral letter *Associated with the God of the Poor: Our Consecrated Life in Light of the 4th Vow* and “Final Reflections: ‘New Wine in New Wineskins.’”⁸³ By way of these texts, Rodríguez Echeverría challenges the Brothers and all Lasallian educators to achieve a “vital synthesis” between the Gospel and world realities. He maintains that it is not possible for this synthesis to be achieved without permanently disposing ourselves, like De La Salle, to the movement of the Spirit of God – “the great protagonist in our Lasallian journey.”⁸⁴ Through deliberate encounters with the Spirit in the daily life of the Gospel, Rodríguez Echeverría maintains that Lasallians are presented with the power to discover and respond to the educational and evangelical needs of children and young people, especially “those whom the world rejects.”

In *Associated with the God of the Poor*, Rodríguez Echeverría turns to a contemporary understanding of the “fourth vow” of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the educational

service of the poor through education, to emphasize the close connection between Lasallian education and the promotion of justice.⁸⁵ He constructs an historical progression of thought originating with De La Salle's intention as expressed in the first vow formula (1694) to exemplify how the Founder's original intuition continues into the Institute's particular way of following Jesus in the world today. As Rodríguez Echeverría observes,

It is a fact . . . that our current fourth vow was the first vow for the Founder and the first Brothers and it represented for them the expression of the charism and the purpose of the Institute.⁸⁶

According to Brother Superior, what makes the Lasallian vow so contemporary is “how it opens up our horizons and moves us beyond ourselves”⁸⁷ to respond creatively and robustly to the urgent needs of children and young people, starting with those living in poor and marginalized situations. He concludes,

It seems to me that as we revitalize this constitutive dimension of our vocation it will enable us both to capture what is essential and return to our roots. In this context it is important to realize that running good institutions does not mean, in itself, that we are evangelically significant.⁸⁸

Reading the *Rule*, the *Declaration*, and other theological and spiritual Lasallian sources, Rodríguez Echeverría retains the Lasallian aspiration to respond to calls for justice “suited for our vocation.” For him, this aspiration is building up the reign of God, the ministry of Jesus. By encountering the founding story and vision, Lasallians are presented with Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God “in which all can live as sons and daughters of God and as brothers and sisters.”⁸⁹ This hope is interpreted further. Lasallian education aims “to build a world in which education would be the birthright of everyone and where children and the young who are poor might find ways of participation and growth.”⁹⁰

Reaching New Horizons within an Historical Tradition

In May 2003, Rodríguez Echeverría addressed the Third Congress of the World Union of Lasallian Former Students (UMAEL). In this address, he offered six challenges to which this group should commit themselves:

1. called to serve children by defending their rights;
2. called to serve young people by helping them find meaning in their lives;
3. called to serve those impoverished and marginalized by promoting their active participation in the benefits of globalization;
4. called to serve the world by creating bonds of fraternity;
5. called to serve the cause of peace and to be builders of peace in a divided world;
6. called to serve in the cause of unity for the human family by means of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.⁹¹

Recognizing these challenges as well suited for the current moment in Lasallian history, they offer conceptual guidance for the work ahead of the whole Lasallian network. Rodríguez

Echeverría insists that it is not enough to speak about justice; platitudes and good intentions simply will not suffice. To get at the issues of injustice and oppression and create a more just social order, he claims that Lasallian educators must, as the *Rule* suggests, “become increasingly conscious of the reasons for the poverty that surrounds them and so become earnestly involved in the promotion of justice and human dignity through the educational service they provide.”⁹²

Rodríguez Echeverría adds:

Just providing welfare is not enough. It is important to get to the root causes of poverty and search for solutions of a structural nature. At the same time, we need to be aware that we cannot do everything and that we ought to respond, first and foremost, by means of Christian education.⁹³

When Rodríguez Echeverría asserts “we cannot do everything,” it coheres with Buttimer’s earlier observation that the Lasallian specialty is in education. Indeed, it is a critical education that aims to understand the “root causes” of poverty and human rights violations, which, in turn, should ignite a local and global public engagement toward solutions for the sake of the common good.

More than fifty years since the promulgation of the *Declaration* of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the World Today, the Institute and the wider Lasallian world continue the exhausting task of reaffirming its “missional” aspirations, to establish markers on educating in faith for justice and pursuing Lasallian advocacy, especially for children’s human rights. I share ground with Patricio Bolton’s bold proposal that calls Brothers and Lasallian Partners “to rethink [Lasallian education] today with the *conviction* of the first Lasallian community: [an education] can and should transform; [education] can help to form new men and new women, and should do so.”⁹⁴ As Bolton states so well, “The community of the beginnings was aware of its helping form new personal and social identities, and in this, that it was shaping itself. Its clarity came from knowing to where they were to journey together”⁹⁵ It is important to insist on this recollection because it signifies the incarnational and practical dimensions of the Lasallian educational heritage. In understanding the story of the Lasallian beginnings, this journey of shaping life in the Spirit – to educate and form young women and men – can prosper. In a Freirian sense, shaping the life of students involves creating an educative environment in which they engage in

a continuous transformation through which they become authentic subjects of construction and reconstruction of what is being taught, side by side with the teacher, who is equally subject to the same process.⁹⁶

When Freire speaks of this “continuous transformation” happening “side by side with the teacher,” it brings us back to the educational relationship -- one of the foundation stones of Lasallian spirituality. Engaging in such a dynamic mode of transformation to be lived out is a shared exercise: teacher-student and student-teacher. This spiritual relationship can become sedimentation for educating in faith for justice.

Seeing with eyes wide open, we must not simply talk about the idea of justice but, rather, we must create it. To live what Pope Francis calls “the joy of the Gospel” requires witnesses who are committed to not only responding to urgent humanitarian needs but also to expose publicly structural injustice and work toward building new structures that create justice and restore right relationships.⁹⁷ What is crucial for the present moment is to recognize a new horizon for “our charismatic and Gospel-centered history.”⁹⁸ As John Johnston observes, “[L]ike De La Salle, we have to move beyond mere indignation to act, to discharge the prophetic potentiality to unmask ‘acts of injustice’ and ‘manifestations of misery.’”⁹⁹ Lasallians must engage in critical reflection and social analysis, reading and understanding the signs of our times, lest “we end up with occasional and isolated acts of social indignation but without the power or imagination for the long haul, which is necessary if there is to be serious social transformation.”¹⁰⁰ This approach could open the way for creating a genuine culture of advocacy rooted in the Catholic social tradition and Lasallian spirituality. Learning to do advocacy will contribute toward achieving policy and programs that enhance the agency and freedom exercised by persons and communities. To be ever vibrant and vital for the reign of God here and now, Lasallians are faced with realizing the prophetic possibilities on how to achieve a new horizon, an unfolding of life in abundance in the present historical reality.

The *Letter of James* reflects the Gospel invitation for disciples of Christ to be “doers of the word,”¹⁰¹ “who, through the darkness of great inequalities of our global society can see and respond to the light of God’s Kingdom about to dawn.”¹⁰² The itinerary of John Baptist de La Salle and his first Brothers fashioned a praxis of not only hearing the Word, but also doing the Word, witnessing the struggle for decency and dignity by providing a human and Christian education to young people, especially those who were the last, the lost, and the least in society. Across the arc of Lasallian history, the deep commitment to build God’s reign has involved both expanding the Lasallian educational mission and thickening solidarity “to challenge those dimensions of society that diminish people’s relationships with God, others, the environment, and themselves, and promote those factors that enhance these relationships.”¹⁰³

Conclusion

To that end, *Circular 412: The Educational Service of the Poor and the Promotion of Justice* articulates a prophetic line of action – and sets a horizon – that still constitutes a source of light today. This seminal text enriches our understanding that providing a human and Christian education *and* the promotion of justice are joined. The key is to recognize the importance of the word “and.” Given the importance of this passage that envisions a horizon, I quote it in full.

It is not enough to train [educate] individuals; at the same time it is necessary to influence *social structures* so as to remove from them, to some extent, any characteristics which are instruments of oppression. Although educational institutions, schools or others, cannot accomplish this program by themselves, they have two obligations: the first is to establish within themselves a society free from such hindrances. The second is to prepare youth [and adults] to work toward this objective and little by little to involve themselves in the organizations that are working toward this goal, whether in the Church or in society.¹⁰⁴

This passage shows a solid reading of the Catholic social tradition, particularly the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. With a spirit of discernment, Brother Superior and the General Council put forward an unambiguous summons: strive to change the social structures that cause injustice, generating so much human anguish and misery. Their summons signifies the concrete need to “[bring] the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.”¹⁰⁵ With its prophetic vision, *Circular 412* foregrounds Jesus’ “liberating salvation.”

This is the joyful task for the sons and daughters of John Baptist de La Salle to attend to in our time. To prosper the mission of building up the common good, that is, the reign of God, requires courage for the long haul. Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world is a marathon.

Endnotes

1. Brother Ernest J. Miller, who serves as the vice president for mission, diversity, and inclusion at La Salle University in Pennsylvania, earned his doctorate at the Chicago Theological Union.

2. *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2008), #11.

3. “Rule of 1705” in *Rule and Foundational Documents by John Baptist de La Salle*, translated and edited Augustine Loes, FSC, and Ronald Isetti (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 14; see *Cahiers Lasalliens* 25, 16.

4. For De La Salle, salvation carries a double meaning: wholeness in this world and in the next.

5. *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1967), 37, http://lasallian.info/wpcontent/uploads/2012/08/The_Declaration_Revised_English_Translation_1997.pdf.

6. Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, *Pastoral Letter: Associated with the God of the Kingdom and the Kingdom of God: Ministers and Servants of the Word* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2004), 42.

7. Patricio Bolton, FSC, “A Curriculum for Learning How to ‘Live Well,’ for Good Living, for Living the Good Life,” *Lasallian Studies 17: That Your School Runs Well*, edited by Pedro María Gil, FSC, and Diego Muñoz Leon, FSC (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2013), 305.

8. See Thomas Groome, *Will There Be Faith? A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples* (New York: Harper One, 2011), 275-276. Groome asserts: “It is difficult to pin down its meaning with a precise definition.” He describes it this way: “To begin with, praxis refers to purposeful human activity, what we do reflectively as deliberate and imaginative – toward some

desired end. Praxis infers that we both intend what we are doing and can learn from what we are doing. It is neither abstract theory nor a technical skill or know-how. Instead, praxis is something in between, namely, reflective and informed action toward desired and practical outcomes.” See also Suzanne Toton, *Justice Education: From Service to Solidarity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), 110. Leaning on Paulo Freire, she characterizes praxis as “critical reflection and critical intervention in society.”

9. The UNCRC (1990) is the most important international legal instrument on children’s human rights. For further discussion of this United Nations treaty, and why its vision and contents are a priority for the Institute. To read the Convention, see <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

10. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 447: The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2000), 9.

11. The number of Brothers, Lasallian educators, and students in the world, not including alumni/ae, benefactors, and parents/guardians, characterizes Lasallian numerical power.

12. Suzanne Toton, *Justice Education: From Service to Solidarity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), 26.

13. Toton, 27.

14. *Circular 412* (1980), the 42nd General Chapter (1993), the 43rd General Chapter (2000), the 44th General Chapter (2007), the International Mission Assembly (2006), Brother Superiors *General Pastoral Letters* (1972-present), among other Institute texts, urge collaboration and cooperation with local and international organizations that work for the promotion of justice, with a particular concern for the rights of children.

15. Pedro María Gil, FSC, “Lasallian Pedagogy and the Lasallian Community” in *Lasallian Studies #17: That Your School Runs Well*, edited by Pedro María Gil, FSC, and Diego Muñoz Leon, FSC (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2013), 323.

16. David Hollenbach, SJ, *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 9.

17. *Declaration*, #11.1.

18. Charles Henry Buttimer, FSC, *Pastoral Letter to the Brothers* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1972), 4-5.

19. Buttimer, *Pastoral Letter to the Brothers* (1972), 5.

20. Buttimer, *Pastoral Letter to the Brothers* (1972), 5.

21. See Buttimer, *Pastoral Letter to the Brothers* (1972), 6. “My experience visiting our Brothers in many parts of the world attests to the generosity and zeal of the Brothers, and their

ingenuity and initiative, in finding ways to assist students and immigrants, migrant workers, drug addicted boys and girls, emotionally deprived youth, delinquent boys, school drop-outs, to overcome the sad effects of injustice. I have felt and still feel that the groups of Brothers engaged in these apostolates . . . are responding, in a manner adapted to the needs of this decade, to the inspiration and idealism of Saint De La Salle.” The Lasallian world is still responding to these needs in varied ways.

22. Buttimer, *Pastoral Letter to the Brothers* (1972), 6.

23. Buttimer, *Pastoral Letter to the Brothers* (1972), 6.

24. Buttimer, *Pastoral Letter to the Brothers* (1972), 6. Note that Buttimer put educating in faith for justice as one of two dimensions of the promotion of justice. The other dimension of promoting justice is using “the instruments that promote justice and cast out injustice, in educating them to take seriously their future civic, political responsibilities.”

25. Buttimer, *Pastoral Letter to the Brothers* (1972), 7. Emphasis added. At this point, much of the Catholic social teaching canon consisted of papal texts. However, by 1972, national or regional conferences of bishops had produced important documents including the Second Episcopal Conference of Latin America in Medellín, Colombia.

26. Charles Henry Buttimer, FSC, *Pastoral Letter to the Brothers* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1975), 4.

27. Buttimer, *Pastoral Letter to the Brothers* (1975), 4.

28. Hans-George Gadamer, a leading continental philosopher of the 20th century, led the development of hermeneutic philosophy. Hermeneutics, “the art of interpretation,” originated in biblical and legal fields and migrated to all texts.

29. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, it marks the first major international consensus on the fundamental principles of children’s rights. Revealing the shortcomings of the 1924 Geneva Declaration on children’s rights by the League of Nations, this Declaration recognizes the advancement of rights following the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

30. Michael Jupp, “International Year of the Child: Ten Years Later,” *Proceedings of the American Academy of Political Science* 37, no. 2 (1989), 31.

31. José Pablo Basterrechea, FSC, *Letter of the Brother Superior General* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1979), 16.

32. Basterrechea, *Letter of the Brother Superior General* (1979), 17.

33. United Nations General Assembly, accessed November 25, 2014, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/31/169.

34. Brothers of the Christian Schools, *Circular 403: The Acts of the 40th General Chapter* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1976), 74.

35. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 403: The Acts of the 40th General Chapter*, 78.

36. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412: The Educational Service of the Poor and the Promotion of Justice* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1980), 57.

37. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412*, 62.

38. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412*, 10.

39. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412*, 103.

40. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412*, 103.

41. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412*, 10.

42. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412*, 85.

43. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412*, 84.

44. Judith A. Merkle, SNDdeN, *From the Heart of the Church: The Catholic Social Tradition* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 53.

45. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412*, 84.

46. See Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412*, 86-104.

47. Merkle, 65.

48. *Declaration*, #41.1, #33.

49. John Johnston, FSC, Homily for the Funeral of José Pablo Basterrechea, FSC, June 30, 1995.

50. The Noma Literacy Prize is an award given to an individual who or a group that has done immense work to combat illiteracy. See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001111/111158E.pdf>.

51. José María Valladolid, FSC, “The Literacy Campaign at the End of the 20th Century” in *Bulletin of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* 234 (January 1991), 3. John Johnston, FSC, superior general at this time, received the Noma Literacy Prize on behalf of the Institute. Brother José María was the Institute Secretary for the Educational Mission.

52. The Institute was nominated for the Noma Literacy Prize by representatives of the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC) based at UNESCO. Informed that the

nomination was accepted, the Institute had to construct a dossier of literacy programs across the Districts of the Lasallian map. See *Bulletin of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* 234 (January 1991).

53. Valladolid, 3.

54. Valladolid, 4.

55. Edgard Hengemüle, FSC, “La Salle: Social and Work Insertion and Christian Upbringing,” in *Lasallian Studies 17: That Your School Runs Well*, edited by Pedro María Gil, FSC, and Diego Muñoz Leon, FSC (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools), 47.

56. Hengemüle, 47.

57. Hengemüle, 44.

58. Valladolid, 3.

59. Valladolid, 4.

60. Valladolid, 4.

61. John Johnston, FSC, *Pastoral Letter: Being Brothers Today: The Enduring Challenge of the Declaration 1967-1997* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1997), 78.

62. Johnston, *Pastoral Letter* (1997), 79-80.

63. See United Nations Children’s Fund – unicef.org/crc. The CRC is the most ratified human rights treaty in history. Only three countries have yet to ratify the agreement: Somalia, South Sudan, and the United States of America.

64. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 447*, 26.

65. John Johnston, FSC, *Pastoral Letter: On the Defense of Children, the Reign of God and the Lasallian Mission*, (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1999), 31.

66. John Paul II, *Let Us Give Children a Future of Peace* (Vatican, 1996), http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paulii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121995_xxix-world-day-for-peace.html.

67. Johnston, *Pastoral Letter* (1999), 8.

68. *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, edited by Augustine Loes, FSC, and Francis Huether, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), #37.3.

69. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 447: The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter*, 26-27.

70. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 447: The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter*, 26.

71. Johnston, *Pastoral Letter* (1999), 8.

72. Johnston, *Pastoral Letter* (1999), 6-7.

73. The 2001 Huether Lasallian Conference, which was held in Chicago, was focused wholly on the rights of children.

74. John Johnston, FSC, “Jesus Was Indignant . . . Are We?” (presentation, Huether Lasallian Conference, Washington, DC, November 15, 2001).

75. Johnston, “Jesus Was Indignant . . . Are We?”

76. Johnston, “Jesus Was Indignant . . . Are We?”

77. *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (2008), #14.

78. Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, *Pastoral Letter: Associated with the God of the Poor* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2002), 46.

79. Johnston, “Jesus Was Indignant . . . Are We?”

80. Johnston, “Jesus Was Indignant . . . Are We?” Brother John’s reference to “numerical power” regards the total number of persons who comprise the Lasallian community – Brothers, Lasallian Partners, and students -- and not to exclude alumni/ae, benefactors, parents, and guardians.

81. Brother Superior and General Council. *Circular 448: Toward the Year 2007* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2001), 27.

82. Rodríguez Echeverría, *Pastoral Letter* (2003), 10.

83. “Final Reflections: ‘New Wine in New Wineskins’” is an address delivered at the first International Assembly for Mission of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. This body meets every seven years ahead of a General Chapter. It brings together Brothers and Lasallian Partners to exercise voice and vote on matters pertaining to mission. The assembly’s decisions are then considered for adoption by the General Chapter.

84. Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría, FSC, “Final Reflections: ‘New Wine in New Wineskins’” in *Report of the International Assembly 2006: Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2006), 43.

85. In January 2008, the Vatican approved the 44th General Chapter’s decision to make the vow of educational service to the poor through education the first in the Institute’s vow formula.

86. Rodríguez Echeverría, *Pastoral Letter* (2003), 16.
87. Rodríguez Echeverría, *Pastoral Letter* (2003), 12.
88. Rodríguez Echeverría, *Pastoral Letter* (2003), 13.
89. Rodríguez Echeverría, “Final Reflections: ‘New Wine in New Wineskins,’” 45.
90. Rodríguez Echeverría, “Final Reflections: ‘New Wine in New Wineskins,’” 45.
91. Rodríguez Echeverría, *Pastoral Letter* (2003), 5.
92. *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (2008), #14.
93. Rodríguez Echeverría, “Final Reflections: ‘New Wine in New Wineskins,’” 49-50.
94. Bolton, 303. I faintly modify Bolton’s language of the “school” to simply capture the deeper essence of what Lasallians do: educate and evangelize with the school as a primary instrument. The emphasis is added.
95. Bolton, 306.
96. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers), 33.
97. Toton, 55.
98. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 469: The Documents of the 45th General Chapter* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools), 10.
99. Johnston, “Jesus Was Indignant . . . Are We?” 5.
100. Brueggemann, “Preface” in *To Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly: An Agenda for Ministers* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), 9.
101. *Letter of James 1:22* (NRSV).
102. Merkle, 65.
103. Daniel Groody and Colleen Cross, “From Neighbor to Brother and Sister: Immigration in Catholic Social Teaching” in *A Vision of Justice: Engaging Catholic Social Teaching on the College Campus*, edited by Susan Crawford Sullivan and Ron Pagnucco (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 77.
104. Brother Superior and General Council, *Circular 412*, 112. Italics in the original. Rodríguez Echeverría makes a similar claim in his pastoral letter *Associated with the God of the Poor*: “Education for justice should not be merely a specific subject area but a common thread that runs through the whole curriculum. This common thread should be reinforced by daily

practice within the school. It is important to create a kind of micro-climate which offers an alternative, miniature model that does not support the anti-values which society often presents to us: market worship, corruption, fighting, competition, and consumerism. It is important that within the school there exists an experience of justice in which values, such as solidarity, communion, and participation, are top priorities. Otherwise the school runs the risk of duplicating the system and preparing students for a society of privileges, training them in the competitive struggle where there is no solidarity. It is precisely this situation which we have to try to avoid”

105. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [*Evangelization in the Modern World*] (Vatican, 1975), #18.
Accessed March 25, 2015,
http://w2.vatican.va/content/paulvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.