
Reflections on Five Core Principles That Help Guide Lasallian Education

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Introduction

There are many different ways to summarize our mission as Lasallian educators in Lasallian schools. It is important for us to keep mission clearly in front of us as it should guide our work and our decisions. Today, the Lasallian Family, inclusive of the De La Salle Christian Brothers and their many lay and religious Partners, continues its 340-year heritage of providing a transformative education – human and Christian – to those God has entrusted to their care. Who are we as Lasallian educators? What guides, energizes, inspires, and focuses our educational ministry? What is at the heart of our *vision* of human and Christian education?

I will organize my comments around the five *core principles* that have been used for many years to help guide the work of Lasallian education in the District of San Francisco New Orleans.² My hope in sharing these reflections about the core principles is that others within the Lasallian Family might find here nurturance and support in their work of animating or guiding institutions grounded in the Lasallian education heritage.

What we call the five *core principles* have become so integral in describing the Lasallian Catholic culture of the schools of the District of San Francisco New Orleans that we engage many different groups in the exploration, discussion, and application of these principles: students, teachers and staff, coaches, administrators, parents, members of our boards of trustees, and others. They have emerged and developed over many years – the result of ongoing study, reflection, conversation, and experience. They are not the final word on what Lasallian education is about, nor are they the only word on what Lasallian education is about. But they have been very helpful in strengthening and focusing Lasallian identity in the works of our District. And it has been incumbent upon all in the District to put them into practice! The process of putting these *core principles* into practice has been never-ending. In a manner of speaking, "some translation is required," both *individually* and *collectively*, in order to apply these principles most effectively to local practice.

These *core principles* have become such a part of the Lasallian Catholic identity of the schools in the District that they are the cornerstone of the Lasallian Catholic Assessment Process (LCAP), an assessment that every school in the District is required to undertake every six years. Let's take a quick look at a statement from the opening pages of the *District of San Francisco New Orleans Lasallian Catholic Assessment Process School Guide*:

Article 3 of the *Rule* of the Brothers of the Christian Schools states: "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."

The mission of Lasallian Catholic schools in the District of San Francisco New Orleans is informed and animated by five *core principles* that serve to describe the culture of these schools. These *core principles* reflect the inspiration and wisdom of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, a Catholic priest in 17th century France whose response to his vocational call led him to form a group of educators (the Brothers of the Christian Schools) and found Catholic schools that served the human and Christian needs of children of the poor and working classes.

Not surprisingly, these *core principles* are *reflective of deeply held Catholic beliefs and values*. This particular constellation of principles, combined with the founding charism of De La Salle, provides *a Lasallian Catholic perspective on education* – a perspective that guides the schools throughout our District.³

Where Did These Core Principles Come From?

Before going any further, I would like to share with you the origins of these five *core principles*. It is a rich history, and it provides important context for the reflection here provided.

The Purpose of This Institute. . .

Let's begin by considering what I like to refer to as our "global mission statement":

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.⁴

The *core principles* have their origin in this statement from the Brothers' *Rule* – the guide for the Brothers' ministry and community life – and in many important ways, *our* guide for our ministry as a global Lasallian Family. These words are found at the beginning of article #3 of the Brothers' current *Rule*, which was approved in 2015 after a number of years of consultation, discussion, and revision of the *Rule* of 1987.

It is important to note that, despite the significant revision to the Brothers' 1987 *Rule*,⁵ not a single one of these words quoted above from article #3 changed in the 2015 revision. They are the very same words that can be found in article #3 of the Brothers' 1987 *Rule*!

Also, the *Rule* of 1987 resulted from 20 years of living a revised *Rule* "ad experimentum" – 20 years of putting into action what the Brothers discovered in their response to Vatican Council II's call for renewal. Reflection on experience shaped discussions of the ultimate purpose of both the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and, by extension, the purpose of the worldwide Lasallian Family.

Finally, this statement is similar to the beginning of article #3 from the first *Rule* of the Brothers in 1705:

The purpose of this Institute is to give a Christian education for children, and it is for this purpose that the Brothers conduct schools, that having the children under their guidance

from morning until evening, these teachers may be able to teach them to live a good life by instructing them in the mysteries of our religion and inspiring them with Christian maxims, and so give them a suitable education.⁶

This statement of mission and purpose speaks to all Lasallians around the world. It challenges us while also guiding us. But what do we mean by a “human and Christian education,” and what distinguishes the way Lasallians provide such an education?

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the 39th General Chapter (1966-1967)

Perfectae Caritatis, the Second Vatican Council’s decree on the call for the renewal of Religious Life in the Catholic Church, asked every religious congregation, order, and institute in the Church to rediscover its Founding charism – its inspiration, its response in faith to a need in the world, its unique contribution made in and to the Church and the world, and the way it puts its charism in dialogue with contemporary experience:

The up-to-date renewal of the religious life comprises both a constant return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes, and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.⁷

This “re-foundation” work inspired many religious orders, congregations, and institutes to ask, “Who are we?” “What guides our ministry?” The Brothers did just that, and they wrote about it in a document entitled *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*.⁸ In it, the Brothers articulated their identity as shaped by their Founding Story and applied to their reality at the time in 1967. This document was shared with Brothers worldwide; over time, it helped to guide the educational work of the Brothers and an increasing number of lay and religious Partners who worked alongside the Brothers in this educational work.

By the early 1990s, the Brothers were deep into a process of intentionally sharing their mission with lay educators. In doing so, the Brothers discovered a need to articulate certain characteristics, commitments, or principles that were central to their being. Brother John Johnston, FSC, superior general of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools from 1986 to 2000, and Brother Luke Salm, FSC, theologian and professor at Manhattan College in New York City, were two Brothers who wrote and made presentations on this topic. Not surprisingly, their lists of core characteristics differed in some ways and overlapped in others.

This articulation of central “characteristics,” “commitments,” “values,” or “principles” was fairly commonplace in the area of religious orders/congregations/institutes – in particular, a number of teaching orders engaged in such articulation in the 1980s and 1990s. Why? I suspect in response to Vatican Council II, as well as in response to the need to share their identity with a growing number of lay people participating in their ministries.

The particular articulation of five *core principles* that I share with you here came from these early efforts to “share the mission.” In particular, they were used in presentations made to student leader groups in District of San Francisco⁹ meetings on important facets of Lasallian education, based on a careful reading of the *Declaration*. Over the period of a few years,

reflection and conversation led to an articulation of these five *core principles* that found significant resonance with the student leaders who brought them back to their schools, where they have found great resonance with a good number of other groups – teachers, staff, administrators, parents, coaches, and the like.

It is important to note that the Brothers as an international group have *never* endorsed one articulation of “Lasallian education” as *the “official” articulation*. There is not, yet, one definitive list. Having said that, I have read several different lists of characteristics written by some very gifted Lasallian scholars (including the above mentioned Brother John Johnston, FSC and Brother Luke Salm, FSC); and these other lists contain many of the same themes.

For the District of San Francisco New Orleans, this constellation of *core principles* has been very helpful in our efforts to guide our “Lasallian Catholic” identity; and we use them consistently in our work with various groups across the District. However, they are not “black and white.” They require some “interpretation” locally and we must regularly “plumb their depths” to understand them and to practice them more and more authentically and more fully.

Five Core Principles

Some Things to Keep in Mind

As we look here at each of these *core principles* (I really prefer to speak of them as “core commitments” and “core beliefs”), I encourage you to keep several things in mind:

- *Descriptive, not Definitive*. These five core principles help to *describe* important elements of our Lasallian Catholic approach to education. They are not *definitions*. Instead, they invite reflection and discussion.
- *Aspirational, not a Checklist*. We never fully or perfectly respond to the challenges contained in each of these *core principles*. They are aspirational. They constantly challenge us to greater generosity, energy, devotion, and commitment. Consequently, they should never be used as a checklist, as items to be crossed off a “to do” list once we have made a good faith effort at each.
- *Discussion Starters, not Discussion Enders*. These principles are discussion starters, *not* discussion closers. We use these five to begin a discussion of what we hold most dear about our approach to education, rather than to end a discussion. They are meant to stimulate reflection and conversation, sometimes difficult and challenging reflections and conversations. Such reflection and conversation is essential as we continue to deepen our knowledge and understanding of who we are as Lasallian educators, and as we continue to sharpen our educational practice in order to most effectively serve those entrusted to our care.
- *Guides, not Pronouncements*. These are principles that guide our reflection on our how and why we educate. They are not black and white. Instead, they invite us to

apply them to situations. As mentioned above more than once, conversation and thoughtful consideration must be applied to these *core principles*.

- *They Are Five, yet They Are also One.* Each is a doorway into Lasallian education, it is true. At the same time, it is the constellation (hence the star image¹⁰) of these five together that guide our approach to Lasallian Catholic education. A careful consideration of these five *core principles* will indicate that they *overlap* and *inform* each other.
- *Not Exhaustive, but Helpful in Shaping and Steering Behaviors and Approaches.* These five *core principles* don't say *everything* about the Lasallian Catholic school. For example, they do not fully describe the religious studies program. They do not fully describe the many opportunities for faith formation at our schools. They do not fully describe the co-curricular program of any school. However, they do guide *the shape and substance* of all of the school's programs and activities, as well as inform *how* we teach, coach, counsel, admit, correct, and graduate our students.

So, as we consider each *core principle*, my perspective will be offered – based on personal experience, observation, and study – of what the *core principle* means and what I believe it challenges Lasallians to be and to do in our educational ministry. As you read along, I invite you to reflect on *your* perspective – based on your own experience, observation, and study – of what the *core principle* means to you and how it might challenge you, personally and collectively, in your educational ministry.

Core Principle: Inclusive Community

This *core principle* challenges Lasallian educators to be more inclusive than exclusive in a variety of relationships in our ministries, including the relationships among the adult educators, the relationships between adult educators and students, and among the students themselves.

It is important to note that, when De La Salle gathered the teachers of his schools together in 1686, he allowed them to decide for themselves what they would call themselves. They chose the title “*Brother*” to indicate the reality that they were brothers to each other as a community of educators. It also said something significant about their relationships with the young boys entrusted to their care: they were to act as “older brothers” to their students. Thus, community was, from the beginning, an essential element of Lasallian Catholic education.

It is also important to note that, from their beginning, the Brothers have affirmed that every Brother, including those who did not work in the school itself, contributed to the education of the young people God had entrusted to their care. For example, the Brother who worked in the house, taking care of the community needs, freed up the Brothers in the school to focus their attention on their school ministry. Thus, the Brother in the house contributed to the education of youth in the school. Today, Lasallian schools continue to value the contribution of every member of the educational community – classroom teachers, support staff, counselors, administrators, custodians, maintenance workers, volunteers, parents, students – since all contribute to the education of the young people enrolled in school. Those who advocate for using the word

educator as the umbrella term, rather than *teacher*, as a way of including all the contributors to the education of students are right indeed.

Everyone Finds a Place

Each person brings her/his own particular gifts, talents, experiences, etc. to the school community. The community reflects the many various gifts, talents, and experiences of its members. It is an important goal of Lasallian Catholic education that each person – students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents, coaches, etc. – feels that she/he belongs. Each person contributes to and enriches the school community. At the same time, the community is more than a simple compilation of gifts, talents, and experiences. The community is bigger than that! This *core principle* challenges us to focus our energies on welcoming, encouraging, and inviting. It is not surprising for visitors to Lasallian schools to comment on the great hospitality they experienced during their visit.

And Yet – And Yet

There are times when, despite our best efforts and the best efforts of a student and her/his family, it becomes clear that our school is in fact *not* the best “fit” for a student and that we are unable to “best serve” a particular student’s needs. At that point, it becomes necessary, in the best interests of a student, to assist her/him and her/his family to find a place that will better serve their needs. Therefore, this commitment is not foolproof – none of these *core principles* are – but they challenge us to go farther, to try again, to be more creative in our attempts to help each student find her/his place in the community.

Focus on Quality Relationships

De La Salle understood the power of relationships to foster education in all its facets: intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual. De La Salle discovered this very early in his experience with the schools: *it is in community that we are most effective*. De La Salle believed that we are stronger and wiser as a group than any of us are as individuals. Why? Not for our own benefit . . . but because these young people are better served by our shared ministry.

When this *core principle* is strong, both students and staff alike experience a strong sense of *belonging*. Each person is encouraged and assisted in finding her/his “place” and making her/his “contribution” to the school community.

Core Principle: Respect for All Persons

The first thing I notice when I see this *core principle* is that it utilizes a word that we use so often that its meaning becomes rather elusive: *respect*. I want to suggest a particular understanding of the word *respect* that resonates deeply with our Lasallian charism and our heritage.

“*Re*” + “*Specere*” = *to see again . . . and again . . . and again*

When we consider the etymology of the word “respect,” we get a hint as to its meaning for us as educators. To see someone again and again and again means we are committed to getting to know our students more deeply than what a first impression or first encounter might tell us. Our *first* impression of a young person is just that: a *first* impression. There will be many more encounters as our relationship with each young person unfolds.

De La Salle tells us in *Meditation #96*, “Recognize Jesus beneath the poor rags of the children whom you have to instruct. Adore him in them.”¹¹ Take good note of the order of the words in this statement of De La Salle’s. It is not the *children* who are poor; instead, it is the *rags* that are poor. “Rags” can literally be rags, it is true; just as often, “rags” is a metaphor for all kinds of challenges that young people experience – low self-esteem, poor social skills, issues with authority, family troubles that manifest themselves in negativity at school, and so on. Every young person--as every human being--is created in God’s image and likeness. Thus, it is in each person’s nature to be gifted, talented, and graced. Our pledge is to see beyond these presenting difficulties to see the goodness, the potential, the grace – in a word, to “recognize Jesus” – in each student. This “seeing beyond” – seeing the big picture – allows us to address the difficulty, the need, or the challenge with confidence. People are more than their challenges. I “have” a problem is not the same as I “am” a problem!

Persons, not “Types”

This *core principle* challenges us to deal with each student entrusted to our care as a real person, with blessings, gifts, and talents waiting to be uncovered and maximized. We refuse to deal with young people as “types” (as in, “I know *that* type of kid. . .” or “I taught your older brother/sister. I know your type.”). Each young person is worthy of becoming known in her/his own depth and beauty.

Growth, not “Reputations”

This *core principle* also challenges us to refuse the temptation to lock a young person into a “reputation.” My mother used to warn me, “First impressions are lasting impressions.” True enough. However, our commitment goes something like this: “My first impression of you will *not* be my last impression of you.” We allow students to grow, mature, recover from mistakes, change, and develop. There is no excuse in a Lasallian Catholic school for locking a young person into a reputation – even one that may appear to be well deserved!

Respect Is Not Earned

It is our call and our responsibility to respect students before we even meet them! As noted above, the Judeo-Christian tradition within which the Lasallian heritage is rooted tells us that every person is made in the image and likeness of God, and therefore is deserving of our respect. This also means that there is nothing any of them can do to *lose* our respect. We set the example. It is true that *we* must earn *their* respect, but we set the example of unconditional respect for them. What a *powerful* example of and a powerful witness to the innate goodness and potential of each person, each learner entrusted to us.

When this *core principle* is strong, both students and staff alike experience a strong sense of *being known – and being loved!* Each person, with her/his unique talents and gifts and potential is known, accepted, and embraced.

Core Principle: Concern for Those in Poverty and a Commitment to Social Justice

As I stated earlier, our “global mission statement” proclaims a special commitment to provide “a human and Christian education to the young, *especially the poor*” – put another way, to those most in need. From the very beginning of their existence, the De La Salle Brothers lived this commitment daily by providing an education to those young boys whose parents did not have access to an education that would provide opportunities for their sons later in life. So often the challenges that block access to a transformative education are economic. In light of this, the Brothers provided education essentially free of charge. Quite quickly, however, the Brothers ran up against a variety of other challenges that blocked access to a transformative education: family challenges, learning challenges, emotional challenges, physical challenges, interpersonal challenges, spiritual challenges, and others as well. As they developed their “way of educating” over the course of many years, they developed methods for addressing each of these challenges as best they could.

Fullness of Life for All

In his *Third Meditation for the Time of Retreat*, part of a large collection of meditations that De La Salle wrote to inspire, encourage, and educate his Brothers, De La Salle wrote: “Because you are ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the work that you do, you must act as representing Jesus Christ.”¹² What does it mean to “represent Jesus Christ”? In the *Gospel of John*, we get a hint of what Jesus was about during his time on earth when he said, “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”¹³ Jesus came that all may have life – and have it in abundance. As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we too work that all may have life and have it in abundance! We have a responsibility to do whatever we can when we encounter those who do not have access to fullness of life . . . “especially the poor” in our mission statement.

Special Consideration Given to Those Most in Need

And just how does Jesus go about bringing “fullness of life” to people on earth? See *John* 10:11: “I am the good shepherd.” Jesus brings fullness of life to those in need by loving and caring for them as good shepherds care for their sheep. De La Salle challenges us as educators to do the same in *Meditation* #33, for the Second Sunday of Easter:

Jesus compares those who have care of souls to a good shepherd who has great care for his sheep. One quality he must possess, according to our savior, is to know each one of them individually. This is also one of the most essential qualities required of those who teach, for they must get to know their students, and discern the manner in which to act toward them.

They must show more mildness toward some, more firmness toward others. There are those who call for much patience, those who need to be stimulated and spurred on, some

who need to be reproved and punished to correct them of their faults, others who must be constantly watched over to prevent them from being lost or going astray.

This guidance requires understanding and discernment of spirits, qualities you should frequently and earnestly ask of God, for they are most necessary for you in the guidance of those placed in your care.¹⁴

Our concern especially goes to those whose access to fullness of life is blocked in some way – those who are economically poor, those who are marginalized, those who are forgotten by society – more locally, those youth entrusted to our care who are having the greatest difficulty – be it economic, social, spiritual, interpersonal, familial, academic, and many more challenges indeed.

Concern Extends Beyond the School Community

Our concern goes beyond the four walls of the school. We are certainly concerned about building a concerned, supportive, welcoming, inclusive, and healing community at school, but we are but one chapter in the lives of those entrusted to our care. So what is our responsibility for preparing them for, or enhancing, their adulthood? Part of our responsibility lies in opening their eyes to the poverty and need within the broader local community at least, if not the community beyond the local – to the nation, to the world.

Both Social Action and Social Change are Values

It is important to be active in addressing real needs right here and now in our communities – food drives, clothing drives, working in soup kitchens, and so on. It is also important to consider the systemic forces that result in large groups of people going hungry, being homeless, getting imprisoned – and to begin to address issues from this vantage point as well. Social action and social justice . . . both are important!

When this *core principle* is strong, students and staff alike experience a strong sense of being cared for, in particular when they are experiencing difficulty. Likewise, students and staff feel a responsibility to do the same for others. Hence, the importance of social justice education and practice.

Core Principle: Quality Education

Integrated Education

We profess to provide the best education possible in order to give the greatest opportunity for young people to experience life in its fullness. Fullness of life involves a number of areas: intellectual, spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical. Lasallian education is an integrated, holistic education that prepares learners to be critical thinkers, thoughtful communicators, lifelong learners, and faithful, loving, caring, generous, responsible human beings.

Religious education has been an important element of Lasallian education from the very beginning. In fact, one of the defining characteristics of the earliest Christian schools was their attention to an integrated education that provided boys with *both* a secular education in the form of reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, as well as decorum and politeness – what they needed to gain employment – *and* a religious education in the form of daily catechism lessons that sought to provide the stable, effective, and even transformative education in Christian faith that the boys at the time needed for their eternal well-being as well as their well-being in this life. The integration of secular and religious education in the school setting was seen as essential for the developing educational approach of De La Salle and the Brothers.

A Challenging Environment

The starting point for Lasallian educators is the needs of each student. Because we love our students, because we believe in them, we challenge them as we “lead them out” toward growth and maturity. We often expect more from some students than they may expect from themselves, and we teach humility to those students who are more advanced. Conversely, we get to know each student well enough to be able to discern just how much and what kind of support each needs on their educational journey. They deserve nothing less for forming their character.

Creative Tension Is a Good Thing

When this *core principle* is strong, a funny thing happens in the educational community: *creative tension!* In committing to providing both a *human* (skills for employment and career) and a *Christian* (prepared to be adult people of faith) education, we take on a huge commitment that requires creativity, give and take, careful consideration of local realities and situations – and lots of choices. But we welcome the “creative” or “dynamic” tension that results from our multifaceted understanding of education. Courageous conversations about how best to approach each component given our local realities must be ongoing.

Core Principle: Faith in the Presence of God

This *core principle* invites us to see all things with the “eyes of faith.” This is a very challenging commitment – they all are, but this one in particular – and yet it is, I believe, at the very core of our Lasallian identity, our Lasallian heritage, and our Lasallian charism.

Let Us Remember That We Are in the Holy Presence of God

This is the foundational characteristic of our work as Lasallians. It drives everything else we do. We open our prayers many times daily with these words because we must constantly be aware of God’s presence and live out of that presence. Please note the words of our invitation: we *are* already in God’s presence. We are always and everywhere in God’s presence. However, we tend to forget. Therefore, we are invited on a regular basis to *remember*, to always strive to live in, from, and out of that reality.

Made in the Image and Likeness of God

From the beginning – in our creation story in the *Book of Genesis* – we have believed that we were created “in the image and likeness of God.” This is part of our very nature – and thus there is nothing we can do to lose this. What does it mean for us to live up to our nature? All of us have dignity, value, gifts, and talents. We all deserve opportunities to live with dignity and value, sharing our gifts and talents with others. We are to treat all people accordingly.

Realistic Optimism

“Ah yes,” you say, “but what about all the evil things people do in the world?” We cannot be naïve to the troubles and pain and evil in the world. People can choose to act against their nature. When people – students and adults as well – act against their best nature, it is important to call them back to their own best nature. This sometimes means that we hold students – and each other, for that matter – accountable when they mistreat others. But we don’t “punish” for punishment’s sake; instead, we *correct* in the hope that they may choose to change their offensive behavior and heal broken relationships. We call them back to right relationship with our universal human family, all created in God’s image and likeness.

God Is Present in Our Midst

We do not leave society, our families, our communities, or our schools in order to find God. Instead, we find God in our midst, especially in the young people entrusted to our care and in one another. Remember, the early teachers chose to call themselves “Brothers” both to indicate their desire to be brothers to one another in community and to be older brothers to those entrusted by God to them. The greatest challenge is to find God present in those with whom we struggle the most – be they a student or a colleague. Remembering the presence of God invites us to see beyond the presenting frustration or difficulty to get at the divine nature of the person and live from that.

When this *core principle* is strong, students and staff see themselves and each other *with the eyes of faith*; and all experience themselves and one another as *gifts* to be celebrated and shared.

Conclusion

As one of our school leaders in the District for which I work has said many times, each of these *core principles* represents a doorway – an opening that leads one into the Lasallian educational mission.

Which is *your doorway into the tradition*? In other words, which *core principle* do you find particularly appealing to you, particularly resonant with who you are and why you are an educator? Why do you relate with this particular *core principle* so deeply?

I suspect that most, if not all, of us find at least one of these *core principles* to be particularly *difficult* and/or *challenging*. Which one is it? What is it about that *core principle* that you or I find most difficult?

Know that your doorway is someone else's challenge, and vice-versa. This is why we are a community of educators and not independent contractors. Together and by association we teach! We support one another, we guide one another, we affirm one another, we challenge one another – all so that we can collectively address the needs of those who God has entrusted to our care.

Recall what I mentioned earlier. These *core principles* are five, but they are also one. So, celebrate and utilize those *core principles* you find most comfortable and natural; *and, at the same time*, learn about the ones that cause you angst. Learn from each other! You have much to share with one another.

It is the constellation of these five *core principles*, along with the *Founding Story* of John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers of the Christian Schools, that helps to describe who we are and what we believe in Lasallian Catholic schools.

Remember This

These five *core principles* are not the end of the discussion – not by any stretch of the imagination. They are discussion starters. We expand our conversation about who we are, what we do, and how we do it in our educational ministries based on these particular principles/commitments to inform how we go about providing religious education, co-curricular activities, financial assistance, programs and services for students with special needs, and all the other aspects of the educational mission. They are aspirational. They are ideals to which we aspire but never actually attain. In other words, we can always be more authentic and courageous in our commitment to each *core principle*; they, in turn, will always challenge us, always tug at us, always draw us toward fuller and deeper and richer responses to each.

Live Jesus in our hearts forever!

Endnotes

1. Gregory Kopra serves as director, Formation for Mission, for the District of San Francisco New Orleans of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He earned his doctorate in education from the University of San Francisco.

2. The international Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, which is headquartered in Rome, Italy, is currently subdivided into some 33 units of local government and animation. These units are called either Districts or Delegations.

3. *Lasallian Catholic Assessment Process School Guide* (Napa, CA: District of San Francisco New Orleans, 2019), page 3.

4. *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (Rome, Italy: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2015), article #3, page 17.

5. *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (Rome, Italy: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1987, 2002).

6. *Rule and Foundational Documents by John Baptist de La Salle*, edited and translated by Augustine Loes, FSC, and Ronald Isetti (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), article #3, page 14.

7. “*Perfectae Caritatis: Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life*” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery, OP (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1965), page 612.

8. *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration* (Rome, Italy: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1967).

9. Earlier in the text reference was made to the District of San Francisco New Orleans, but the reference here is solely to the District of San Francisco. Until just a few years ago, the District of New Orleans Santa Fe and the District of San Francisco were two separate units of the international Brothers of the Christian Schools; but after their merger, they are known as the District of San Francisco New Orleans.

10. Graphics associated with the five *core principles* most normally include a star, which is representative of the star of faith found on the Seal of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

11. *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, translated by Richard Armandez, FSC, and edited by Augustine Loes, FSC, and Francis Huether, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), #96.3, page 179.

12. Ibid, #195.2, page 437.

13. *John* 10:10.

14. Ibid, #33.1, page 91.