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## Mission Critical for a Critical Mission

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### Introduction

It is a privilege to be with you for this event, and I am humbled to have been invited to deliver a keynote address. Firstly, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the organizing committee and all of you my fellow Lasallians.

I have almost 30 years of involvement in the Lasallian charism primarily through my time at *yourtown*, but I have also been fortunate to have had opportunities across the ANZPPNG District<sup>2</sup> and beyond. So I come to you today not as an expert, but rather as someone with a lived experience of engagement with, and love for, the mission. It is that love for the mission that has kept me energized, has sustained me through challenges, and has, as well, led me at times to question "the way and why we do things."

I believe that we must not allow ourselves to become so enamoured by our heritage, our tradition, and our Founder – as compelling and remarkable as they are – that we do not open our minds and our hearts to what we must do now as *critical partners of a critical mission* – a mission that is needed maybe more so today than ever before.

My address will focus on a number of themes, including (1) what I believe is necessary for us to consider in ourselves as Lasallians, (2) as leaders now and those who must be prepared for leadership in the future, and about (3) the role of women in the mission, and (4) I will pose questions about our Institute structures and what we may need to consider.<sup>3</sup>

### Themes for Us to Consider as Lasallians

It can be easy to become focused on or immersed in what we are undertaking and miss the reality of what is going on around us when it comes to the key elements of the Lasallian mission – that of providing a human and Christian education to young people, *especially the poor*.

That was just as true of the Founder. He had a direction for his life – or so he thought – and he would have, on a regular basis, walked past those who later became his utmost priority without possibly even seeing or thinking of them. He openly acknowledged that he initially rejected the suggestion of getting involved in the service of education to the poor. His meeting with Adrian Nyel was no doubt an awakening moment. However, perhaps even more significant was what we might call his courageous reflection. That is, the time spent in challenging himself in regard to the direction for his life and seeking guidance from those who meant the most to him.

We too must reflect on our focus on "*especially the poor*." How much of our work in the mission today is focused on that? Do we know? And if we don't, shouldn't we? One of the

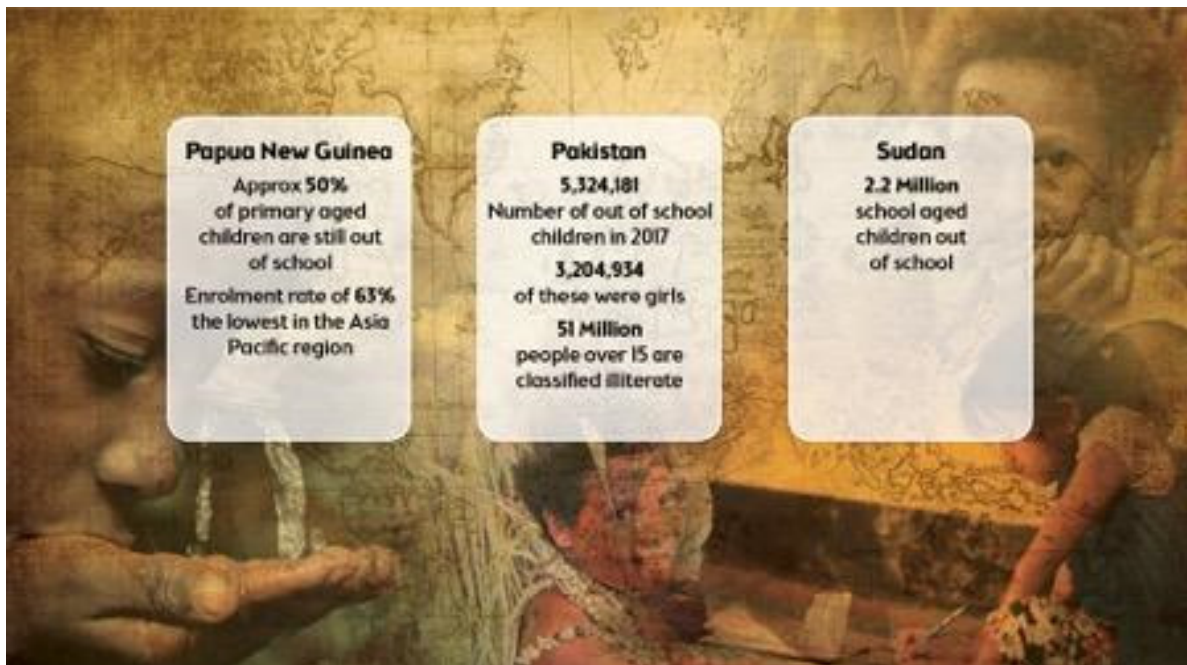
challenges for any work is how to remain true to mission, to avoid mission creep. Success, external environmental pressures, especially those directed by politics and funding bodies, as well as our own fear of letting go, can all contribute to mission creep.

It is not for me to suggest that there is mission creep within any of our works, but we must be prepared to challenge ourselves on how we rationalize or forgive ourselves for using such constraints as a means of curtailment rather than developing a way to work with and around them.

It seems relevant within that context to reflect also on an important element of our rich tradition – that of *gratuity*. The Founder gave away his personal fortune; the schools founded were for anyone at no cost. There was no divide based upon economic fortune and the Brothers were never permitted to take gifts in the recognition that whilst some families could afford to give others could not.

Gratuity is an attitude of giving freely without counting the cost. How much today do we undertake by giving freely? Have we been prepared to let go of some founding principles whilst holding on to others?

Defining “poor” is also not without complexity. Finite resources compete with increasing demand as we confront “poor” across multiple indices (economic, spiritual, emotional).



Yet there can be no denying that education is still not a reality for so many as we can see in the examples provided here.

What then to do with the knowledge confronting us of the divide between those who can access education and those who cannot?



In my own organization, *yourtown*, we developed a tool for identifying those communities in Australia of greatest disadvantage for children and young people so as to guide our decision-making on our services. That tool identified the communities in which we should prioritize our efforts and apply our resources, resulting in some programs being let go and establishing new services in new areas where the need was greater.

Our board of directors also set a mandate for the organization more than 15 years ago that we would never be more funded by government sources than what we could generate independently. I am sure we have all had experience with government agendas not always being in line with the human and educational needs of the poor. Our independence has also meant that we have been able to develop a strong advocacy agenda – giving voice to those who would be voiceless – without constraint.

Since the time of those decisions, the organization has grown significantly, both in direct service delivery to children and young people, and in advocacy and research work. Today *yourtown* is more than 60% funded by our own income generation, with an annual operating budget of more than \$100 million AUD.

This was a direction set for us and I am sure that others too have developed the means for determining their own direction in service to the mission. I would maintain that all of our works must regularly evaluate the real contribution being made to alleviate the disparity of those who have both the means and the capacity to engage in education, in all its forms, against those who do not.

### *What Does It Mean to Be Lasallian?*

All those engaged with the Lasallian mission should know how they contribute to our purpose – our reason for being – and should understand what is required of them. However, we cannot expect that *all* in our Lasallian ministries are Lasallians. Working in a Lasallian entity in and of itself doesn't make you a Lasallian.

We should look to how we stimulate interest and ensure that we have alignment between an individual's personal values and attributes, and those of the Lasallian entity.

It is not enough to be Lasallian in name; we must be Lasallian in deed and in action. It is from the seeing of what it means to be Lasallian that people seek to find their place and to be able to contribute to the true nature of the mission. Organizations have the responsibility to ensure that they provide those means, enabling those who wish to deepen their connection to be able to do so; but they also have to assure that *all those* who work in mission have, at the very least, foundational knowledge.

The mission lives through the people within our works. They must be equipped. Formation is the obvious key. A critical component to Lasallian organizations and individuals is the character of being Lasallian.

So what are the characteristics that highlight what it means to be Lasallian? As we think about what attributes we want and need in Lasallians and partners to achieve success in the mission, the Founder is of course the ideal starting point.

*Steadfast, Resolute, Disciplined, Humble,  
Consultative, Courageous, Enforcer, Firm, Relentless,  
Reflective, Belligerent, Gentle, A Man of Great Faith*

These are characteristics that resonated with me and I am sure that others could name many more. Of all the attributes of the Founder, I have often wondered why we have not placed more significance on courage.

Courage is the choice and willingness to confront agony, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation. Physical courage is bravery in the face of physical pain, hardship, death or threat of death, while moral courage is the ability to act rightly in the face of popular opposition, shame, scandal, discouragement, or personal loss.

There can be no doubt that the Founder confronted opposition, uncertainty, intimidation, discouragement, and personal loss – really all the elements we see in the definition of courage. But yet we appear to have not included “courage” as a Lasallian characteristic; nor have we made very much mention of it. We have instead seemed to focus on faith, service, and community. Of course, such courage was enabled through faith. Faith gave him the strength to stand by his beliefs, to be prepared to become what we might call today a disrupter, a transformational leader. However, transformation (creatively redesigning) has a partner, and that partner is courage.

Courage is very much what we have seen in this mission from the very beginning. It has lived on through those who took the mission to new frontiers, through those who put their own lives at risk during wars and conflict, and through those who have never given up on taking the mission to where it was, and is, needed most.

### *Characteristics Required within Lasallians*

And so, let's move on to examine some of the characteristics that are required to be Lasallian.

*Courage:* A willingness to be a disrupter, to challenge the status quo, to bring forth new ideas and strategies, to call out what isn't right. To not only be willing and capable of managing change but to also create it and to walk with those who face a real likelihood of being left behind.

*Zeal:* To have the drive to be action orientated. To have energy, commitment, and an unrelenting belief in the mission of human and Christian education.

*Faith:* There is no doubt that faith is a cornerstone, but we must acknowledge that faith is diverse. It is not just Catholic faith, or indeed Christian faith, because men and women of many different faiths have associated themselves with us. In that broad sense, we are united by the commitment to live by deeply human principles and values. Increasingly, it is in that context that Lasallians are people of faith.

Faith and zeal are a package deal; they have been together right from the very start. They focus us on the seeing and the doing from God's point of view.

We must be *Compassionate:* To be empathetic to the needs of those we serve. To see people as individuals, to listen and care, to be a brother and sister to all.

And be *Ongoing Learners:* To remain informed and engaged with contemporary practices, applying research findings, seeking out and utilizing new tools for engagement and educating. We must be prepared to learn from those we serve; their lived experiences should inform our methods and challenge us to think and to do differently.

We must also be *Disciplined:* To be uncompromising in the quality of support being provided, to showcase behaviors which bring our Lasallian values to life.

And embrace *Innovation and Creativity:* To be prepared to try new ways, to seek out different approaches in the way we connect and engage, and the ways in which we work. It is not for young people to be relevant to us; we must be relevant to them. We must go where they are.

Here too we see a package deal. Innovation requires equal parts creativity and discipline. A new idea will stay an idea without the discipline to implement it, and to implement it well.

We need to demonstrate *Social Justice:* To value each other, to promote needs, to give voice, and to be a force for change.

And *Love*: We should not underestimate the extent to which love plays a strong role in the mission. To love those the mission serves and those with whom we share in the mission. It is that love which means that even in the darkest of times faith and zeal never fade.

## **Leaders Now and in the Future**

In our current leaders and in our future leaders, we should consider further characteristics.

The need to be *Influencers* and *Storytellers*: Increasingly there is a need for leaders to be influencers internally and externally. Internally they are keepers of the founding story, sharing it and adding to it today. People want to be connected to something that is powerful, they can see themselves in, and understand the role they play. Leaders must have the responsibility for this. It isn't only something for those involved in formation or marketing and communications to take responsibility for. It ultimately must be led across our works by those at the most senior levels of our works.

Our leaders must also apply a similar capacity externally – to be able to influence agendas, priorities, social policy, and to be advocates for the Lasallian mission.

Of course leaders must be *Decision Makers*: Is there anything worse than a leader who does not make decisions? Internally it can be destabilizing; externally it can impact the positioning and value of the organization. Leaders must have the skills and capacity to constantly seek out information, both internally and externally, and to enable decision-making. In my experience, leaders must also be able to discern where the information has come from. Not all information is equal. It's not so much the answer you get; rather, it's the question you ask. Within fast paced environments, leaders will often have to rely on a balance between knowledge and their own instincts. The more “formed” they are the easier that makes the process.

They also need to be *Enforcers (Gentle but Firm)*: They must be uncompromising when it comes to living the values and setting expectations for such within their organizations. Behaviors that are not in keeping with those values must be called out. One of the many gifts we have received from the Founder are the letters he wrote to the Brothers of the time. They highlight that being gentle does not mean that there are not clear expectations, nor at times, the need for firmness.

To be *Relentlessly Dis-satisfied*: I heard this description when I was undertaking professional development at a leading business school and it has very much stayed with me in the ensuing years. We should celebrate success and acknowledge what has been achieved, but we must avoid the temptation to leave our work there. Rather, we should continually challenge ourselves on what we can do better, do more of, and create the drive necessary to keep organizations flourishing.

Leaders must, above all else, *Uphold the Values and Mission* – make it a reality – and no matter the ministry, ensure that there is an obvious connection to the human and educational needs of the poor. Of course accompanying such attributes must always be professional skills.

## *Strategies for Our Most Important Stakeholders (Our People)*

We have been gifted with an easily understood higher purpose; and no matter what role people have in our works, capturing the reality of that purpose is essential in genuinely engaging the most critical of stakeholders – the people we have in our organizations. The challenge is to not take that purpose for granted. Those of us who are leaders must expect and believe that all those engaged, or looking to be engaged, know what that purpose is and how what they do is truly connected to it.

It is easy to fall into the trap of believing we have stated the purpose and engaged with it enough. In my experience, you can never work on engaging people enough. I stated earlier that being a storyteller is important in our leaders. Engagement is the primary reason why. But storytelling must be authentic. An unauthentic leader will do more harm than good.

### *Communicate, Communicate, Communicate*

I would maintain that the old adage continues to be relevant: communicate, communicate, communicate and when you think you have communicated enough – keep going. Always remember that our purpose is worth it.

It is widely accepted that the more engaged people are, the more likely they are to deliver on the organization's strategy to be successful. Disengaged people go through the motions; they lack drive and are unlikely to go the extra mile. Engaged people understand how what they do is part of the purpose. They are energized by what that means. The agency's success is their success and they strive to make a difference.

Importantly, engaged people become your very best brand ambassadors and, equally, disengaged people can work against your brand.

### *Formation and Connectedness*

As stated earlier, formation is critical. Our people strategies, starting from recruitment and induction, should aim to achieve a genuine personal connection to the Lasallian mission and values, not just within an historical context but in the here and now of today. The richness of learning and sharing – unpacking the challenges and successes and fully utilizing experiences – create new opportunities at both the personal and professional level.

Induction of staff and volunteers should include a formation component. If this does not take place at induction along with the outlining of other elements of your work, what message does it send about the importance of the connection to the Lasallian charism?

We also need to look beyond only those experiences happening within our own organizations with regard to the mission. The concept of being part of something bigger and long-lasting is powerful; and providing opportunities to profile and engage with others from different Lasallian ministries can build awareness, respect, collaboration – all essentially furthering the sense of community.

There are a number of international formation programs that have become renowned for deepening the sense of connection. The Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies and those programs operated in Rome at the Mother House are fine examples. The challenge is how we make such connections and formation opportunities available to as many people as possible, in ways that are relatable to their contexts.

Whilst there is great value in bringing people together, we must also provide formation opportunities that can be undertaken individually, ensuring that we recognize the need for self-paced, self-led development. We must also seek to employ and engage as many delivery channels as possible, utilizing new technologies and social platforms.

We should also recognize the role that informal formation plays. In my own journey, I have been blessed to have had the opportunity to engage in formation activities within formal structures but also in the informal. The open discussions, reflections, debates and, at times, disagreements that have taken place between myself and Brothers have often been not only great learning opportunities but also very stimulating (I would like to think not just for me...).

We should also ensure that we see formation as a never-ending series of opportunities.

### *Sharing Knowledge*

Lasallian universities and other Lasallian organizations and agencies that undertake research and/or develop advocacy papers provide a wonderful opportunity for engagement across the Institute. Matching universities with the much needed research or evaluation of programs across the Institute would provide not only connection and engagement opportunities, but could also lead to increasing avenues for funding through validation of impact as well as enhancing social justice projects.

Immersion and mentoring are powerful tools for supporting the development of those engaged in the mission and can play an important role in preparing future leaders. Many post-graduate courses include mentoring as an essential element in preparing individuals for the realness of leadership. The development of a specific Lasallian mentoring program could enhance the capacity for retention and help to ensure that talents and skills are fully utilized.

### *Engaging People with Our Purpose and Our Business*

A key strategy for recruitment and retention, I believe, is engagement.

You may consider undertaking engagement surveys with those in your organization. For example, at *yourtown* we do this every two years. It provides information on where we are at, what's working, what we need to do better; and it includes measures of peoples' engagement with our values at all levels. The results are shared; nothing is held back. I have found that to be very important. If you seek to have people undertake the survey, then respect them enough to share the results; and be open when doing so to what ideas and suggestions they contribute for



improvements. Even if the results aren't as you would like them to be, undertaking the survey is a form of engagement in itself.

### *Our Stakeholders Are Many and Varied*

Moving on to stakeholders in our Lasallian mission, they are many and varied. They range from the leadership of the Catholic Church, to governments and funding bodies, through to a homeless child. Each one requires something different from us, but none more important than the other.

Critical stakeholders are those members within our works as well as those we serve, namely, those who come to our works as students and/or beneficiaries of aid and support. They deserve from us the very best that we can offer, and to feel valued, respected, and heard.

With our shared mission focused on growing the capacity of young people, ensuring authentic engagement with young people is critical. It is no longer enough to develop a service and expect that they will come. They want to be part of shaping it. Youth-participation frameworks are no longer only nice to have, they are becoming a necessity for any organization that wishes to position itself as a credible and valued youth-focused entity.

No money no mission is equally true in reverse – no mission no money. There is no doubt funding and those who provide funding are critical stakeholders. Globally there are many different models for securing independent (non-government) funding, ranging from engaging with corporations, trusts and foundations, philanthropic organizations, and on through to individuals. Their engagement and belief in our mission is critical to ensuring the development of new works, as well as sustaining those works currently in operation.

Just as connection to the mission is of paramount importance within our organizations, so too is the level of emotional connection we can encourage and enhance with and in those who partner with the mission through the provision of funding and other services.

### **Our Institute Structures**

Structures are designed and developed to best deliver on the mission, objectives, and strategies of an organization. At least that is the theory. We see today structural change in organizations occurring more regularly as they seek to deliver the best impact and value they can to stakeholders both internally and externally.

It is, therefore, critical that structures are reviewed as a matter of course to ensure their congruence to and alignment with the organization's objectives.

### ***The Lasallian Charism Has Already Escaped the Control of the Institute***

Whilst determining the relevance of any structure is the mandate for those governing and leading Lasallian works and the Institute, it is worth noting that the 1989 *Letter to the Lasallian Family* acknowledged explicitly that the Lasallian charism had already escaped the control of the Institute.<sup>4</sup>

The Lasallian charism is no longer just that of the Brothers. It has become a shared charism and, in doing so, is perhaps one of the greatest successes of all. The Lasallian expression *together and by association* expresses the very vibrant and authentic relationship that exists between Brothers and their partners in the mission. The fruits of this are evident in the manner in which the mission has been conducted and continued. Genuine participation in and for the mission is seen globally.

However, in acknowledging that, how then does that sharing in the mission translate to shared responsibility at all levels and can that be seen within Institute structures? There is the obvious matter that the Institute must comply with Canon Law and its mandates.<sup>5</sup> However, perhaps we should be mindful of not seeing that as an impediment to progressive options.

### ***To Promote New Leadership among Brothers and Lasallians***

As called for in *Circular 470*, we have been asked,

to promote new leadership among Brothers and Lasallians, capable of boldly and creatively discerning Institute responses in view of society and the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

It is widely acknowledged, and backed up by research, that diversity in attributes, skills, gender, and race is key to good governance and performance.

It is important also to consider how Lasallians (Brothers and partners) are readied for their roles within the structures required. There is much stated in my own District about both the diminishing number of Brothers and their aging – and with respect, I would suggest that it is spoken about too frequently. Yet where there are younger Brothers, they appear to lack awareness of the skills and attributes that they will need if they are to be leaders in the future.

An example of this was when I was in Pakistan in late 2017. I was meeting with a group of Brothers. There was discussion about their likely responsibilities in the future. One of the younger Brothers challenged me with the question, “how can we be readied for those responsibilities if we don’t even know what is required to be a Brother Visitor or on Councils?” It is a very valid point. How are they and partners to know what is necessary if there is not a defined criteria or, for lack of a better term, position descriptions?

It is important to consider that for any structure to be successful, there must be clarity as to what is required from within the leadership roles, both for those who are in them now, but also for those who will need to fill them in the future.

The promotion of leadership requires us also to consider how such leadership aligns with structures. How sustainable is it to have distinct and separate District Councils (Brothers only) and more broadly inclusive Mission Councils? How do we determine if separation of functions is a better option than one governance body, equipped with skills as well as being diverse in its make-up?

Why is the continuation of Mission Assemblies at District and International levels to which Brothers and their partners are invited, and which are then followed by Chapters for Brothers only, a better option than a combined Assembly or Chapter? Ultimately, the needs of the mission – those it serves as well as those who share in its delivery – should be the determining factors of any structure.

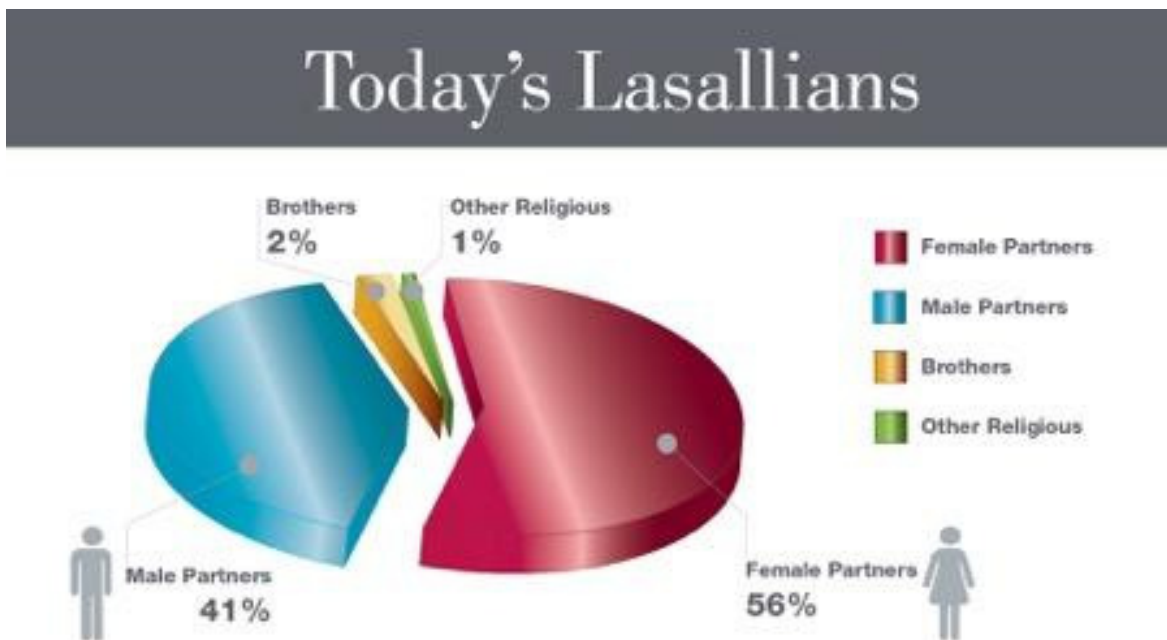
And in the context of the needs of those who share in the mission, we must acknowledge the role of women and consider how their contribution has evolved and what that will also mean for the future, for leadership, and for structures.

### The Role of Women in the Mission

At the post World War II General Chapter when reflecting on the difficulties of keeping the schools in France working, the following remark was made: “Women have become an unfortunate necessity.”<sup>7</sup> We may look at that quote and think, well that was some time ago and a lot has changed; but has it? Research undertaken by Dr. Sue Hines of Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota entitled “The Lived Experience of First-Generation International Lasallian Women Leaders,” released in late 2018, highlights that we may not have progressed as far as necessary.

A participant involved in the study shared, “I can remember the first day of the first meeting I went to when one of the Brothers got up and walked out just because of my presence in the room. It was quite shocking to many. I think about the second or third time, one of the Brothers in the group said to me, and I will never forget this because I can remember it verbatim, “The reason we are losing the Brothers’ vocations is because of people like you who are taking all of the good jobs. So, what is there for a young Brother to aspire to?”

I am sure we would all challenge the narrowness of that thinking, for there is of course another way to be looking at that. What mission would there be today without women?



Why should women not have the same rights to aspiration as others? Fifty-six percent of those involved in the mission are women. They have been and continue to be the fastest growing demographic of Lasallians.

Women have always been involved in the mission. After all, who was it that sent Adrian Nyel to seek out the Founder? Madame de Maillefer. Who was it that advised, or rather told, the Founder to return to his ministry when he was disheartened, exhausted, ill, and sick of battling the bishops? Louise Hours of Parmenie. The Founder acknowledged that his connection with Louise was one of the greatest graces God ever gave him.<sup>8</sup>

As Louise stated, “You must not abandon the family whose father God made you. This work is yours. You must persevere in it until the end of your life.”<sup>9</sup> We might consider if we would be here at all if the Founder had not listened to Louise.

So why then when women have been involved with this ministry from the very beginning, when women have become the single biggest group of Lasallians, why then do we continue to see them significantly under-represented in leadership at all levels? Why is it that when compared to national and international statistics, women in leadership roles within Lasallian ministries are lower, and not just by a small margin? I would suggest that there are a number of reasons.

The structures of the Institute have not kept pace with contemporary best practice. When we consider global organizations the size of the Institute, it wouldn't be accepted to have all male leadership and governance at the highest level, indeed at any level. But that is what we have, as do other male religious congregations.

It may be that is the way things are because of Canon Law or the by-laws of the Institute; but they were developed at a different time and in a very different world. It would surely be wrong not to at least look to how things can be changed. After all, Pope Francis has asked the global theological community to reflect upon ways in which the inclusion of women in the decision-making of the Church can be advanced.

Such openness to change may well have been driven by significant breaches of trust within the Church, in particular those related to child sexual abuse. Whilst there are multiple reasons as to the contributing causes to this painful reality, it has been acknowledged that they include: the Church's hierarchical structure, poor governance, lack of women in leadership roles, and a culture of secrecy.

It may be that women, by their nature, have what are known as feminine or soft behaviors – that is, they can be quiet, nurturing, co-operative, non-competitive, and wait to be invited to participate. These attributes may mean that they lack visibility – that their skills and competencies are not recognized. Such lack of recognition can be by women themselves as well as others. But we must recognize and acknowledge that women are often more competent than men with emotions and communication, essential elements when dealing with young people and also in leadership.

It might also be that women have not yet reached a place of truly seeing this as a shared mission. In some cultures or contexts women may more readily defer to Brothers, or elevate the views or opinions of a Brother or Brothers out of respect.

We must also acknowledge that in an international context we have very real cultural barriers to equality for women. We must ensure this is taken into consideration when we seek to engage with those involved in the ministry. We cannot apply a one-size-fits-all approach to structures and models. In doing that, we will continue to leave behind those who are mission critical, and who are mission critical in some of the countries and regions where the need is great.

Women must be encouraged to bring their unique individual skills and attributes forward, to use their voice, and ensure that others don't speak for them without consultation. At a time when there are tools and resources to enable connection, we must ensure that we use them. A failure to engage women, especially young women, may have major consequences for the mission in the future. Women who have roles in leadership now should consider what they are doing to mentor and guide those who will come after them.

### ***Brother and Sister***

Brother and Sister – human education – we must focus on what unites us and not on what separates us. Today, gender remains a separator. Surely we need to recognize that the best man for a position may be a woman. Women should aspire to the same levels of influence and recognition in the mission as their male peers. The statistics and lived experience of many women in the mission showcase that gender bias continues to exist. With acknowledgment that the journey of change becomes a reality.

Let us be open to models of governance and leadership that recognize skills and attributes before gender or religious life context. Let us acknowledge Canon Law and other mandates, but not use those as “excuses” for not doing anything in this regard. Enabling voice and ensuring genuine representation and acknowledgment of the skills of women needs to continue and increase.

It is important to acknowledge that I have highlighted the barriers and challenges we must overcome regarding the role of women in the Institute and that some progress has been made. We have seen an increase in women engaged within Institute committees and representation on Mission Councils; but there is more work to do at a local, national, and international level. My own experience has been one of being supported, of being granted space to become a leader, and of genuine participation. I hope that will become the way for many more women.

In the 2013 “Report to the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter” from the International Young Brothers Assembly, it was noted,

We dream that our association for the educational service of the poor will . . . continue to integrate the treasured gift that is our Lay Partners and affirm their identity and role within the mission.<sup>10</sup>

I suggest to you that we need not dream. It is easily within our grasp. Inclusion for *all* is the way to make it reality.

## Conclusion

In closing it seems fitting to revisit what Louise said to the Founder, especially during this year as we celebrate the life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and his death 300 years ago.

You must not abandon the family whose father God made you. This work is yours. You must persevere in it until the end of your life.<sup>11</sup>

What would he expect from all of us? I would suggest that, as he did, De La Salle would expect us to turn our minds and our hearts to what more can and should be done for the poor and for those living on the periphery. To never give up, and to always remember that this mission is a mission we share together – all Lasallians.

We must see ourselves as agents of change, responding to needs and creating structures that are inclusive and demonstrative of the skills necessary to continue this mission of ours. And, not just to continue the mission, but to ensure that it flourishes.

We must draw strength from what has come before and use that to have courage to forge a new path. It may be uncomfortable; and it may come with loss, hardship, and challenge. Might that not be the very best tribute we can offer to the life of the Founder? And we must ask ourselves that if now is not the time for such courage, then when; and if not us, then who?

## Endnotes

1. This text was delivered as a keynote address at the World Congress of Lasallian Education that was held at Universidad La Salle in Mexico City from 14 to 16 March 2019 in commemoration of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of John Baptist de La Salle (1651-1719) from this world into eternity.

2. Tracy Adams serves as the chief executive officer of *yourtown*, an agency that provides a range of face-to-face and virtual services to children, young people, and families seeking support. She is a graduate of the Harvard Business School General Management Program, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management (AIM), and an Affiliated member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

3. ANZPPNG is the acronym used in the worldwide Lasallian educational network when referring to the District of Australia New Zealand Pakistan & Papua New Guinea.

4. As used in this text, the word Institute refers to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and its international network of Lasallian schools, universities, and agencies.

5. Cf. *Letter to the Lasallian Family* by Brother Superior and General Council (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1989).

6. The *1983 Code of Canon Law* is the fundamental body of ecclesiastical laws for the Latin Church of the Catholic Church. Promulgated in 1983 by Pope John Paul II, it replaced the *1917 Code of Canon Law* promulgated by Pope Benedict XV in 1917.

7. *Circular 470: Toward the Year 2021: Living Together Our Joyful Mission* by Brother Superior and General Council (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2015), page 49.

8. Cf. *The Lasallian Mission of Human & Christian Education: A Shared Mission* by Brother Superior and General Council (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1997): “If the 37<sup>th</sup> General Chapter in 1946 appeared to be dismissive in relation to the ‘emergency role’ played by lay teachers in many schools during the Second World War, it was probably because . . . there was . . . a hope, perhaps even an expectation, that the Brothers would continue to maintain and even increase their numbers” (page 35); and “This is the movement followed by the Institute in its development from ‘tolerating’ the presence of lay teachers in the emergency situation of the Second World War to considering and esteeming them as *partners* in a common mission in the General Chapter of 1993” (page 93).

9. Jean-Baptiste Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle*, Book Three, translated by Richard Arnandez, FSC and edited by Luke Salm, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 638.

10. Jean-Baptiste Blain, page 637.

11. “Report to the 45<sup>th</sup> General Chapter” from the International Young Brothers Assembly 2013, #3.1.3.

12. Jean-Baptiste Blain, page 637.