

Lasallian Education in Multi-Cultural and Inter-Cultural Contexts¹

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Introduction

The phenomenon of multi-culturalism is a fact that needs no further discussion. How societies and institutions are negotiating its impact, however, deserves attention. The present article discusses how Lasallian educational establishments attend to this, exploring the implications for moving from a mere acceptance of multi-culturalism to a total embrace of inter-culturalism. While the former refers to the fact of diversity, the latter refers to the active interaction between the diverse cultures and religions. Taking the Second Vatican Council as starting point, the article highlights the need for a renewed hermeneutics in appreciating Lasallian spirituality and Church teachings and examines issues of Catholic identity and mission in the context of religious pluralism in the postmodern world.

Vatican Council II and the Brothers in the World Today

The Second Vatican Council was revolutionary in that centuries-old teachings and practices that had been in vogue since the Counter-Reformation Council of Trent were reviewed, renewed, and some done away with altogether. This impacted the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools significantly, founded as it was by John Baptist de La Salle, who was very much formed in Tridentine theology. Its official response can be found in the 1966-1967 document *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration*. The *Declaration* expounds on Pope John XXIII's vision of *aggiornamento* (updating) by positing that "renewal demands a return to the sources to be found in the Gospel and in the origins of the Institute in order to recover in all its vigor the creative principle that gave birth to the Institute."³

This statement is but an articulation of the *ressourcement* (return to the sources) school of thought that was advocated strongly by the council fathers. It invites the Brothers to employ the appropriate hermeneutical methods that will assist in discerning the what, why, how, and when of the Institute today. Reading what *Gaudium et Spes* calls the "signs of the times," the Institute has since acknowledged multi-culturalism in the changing contexts of contemporary societies as a reality that its mission has to address. The 2015 *Rule* has this to say: "The Lasallian mission, at both the national and international level, is expanding in secularized, pluri-religious, and multi-cultural contexts." It then advises, "In these contexts, the Brothers strive to enter into a respectful dialogue with the persons they are called to serve."⁴

To be sure, these societal traits are very new to the Church as they are phenomena that evolved only in the twentieth century in the increasingly globalized and postmodern world where pluralism, multiplicity, polyvalence, heterogeneity, transience, and relativism are characteristics that condition many of its worldviews. Vatican Council II is, therefore, the first council to ever have to deal with not only the issue of secularism but also the Church's relationship with religions other than Christianity and the issue of multi-culturalism. If the doctrine of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church no salvation) shaped much of the pre-conciliar Church, Vatican Council II, especially through the document on the Church's relationship with religions other than Christianity (*Nostra Aetate*), states unambiguously that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions."⁵ Furthermore, in its document on religious freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*), it clearly spells out that "this Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom."⁶ Thus, secularists, those who do not believe in God, or those who have beliefs that radically differ from that of Catholicism are regarded as exercising their rights and are by no means excluded, much less condemned, by the Church's teachings. Instead, Vatican Council II exhorts that Catholics engage in dialogue with all of them not only to share with them but also to learn from them. Dialogue became the operative mode of being in the post-Vatican II Church. In fact, the word "dialogue" was first introduced into the vocabulary of official Church statements only with Pope Paul VI's 1964 encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, where he insists that "the Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives."⁷

In response to the new directives advanced by the Second Vatican Council, the Institute, with its Brothers running schools in many nations where the majority of the students affiliate with religions other than Christianity or with no religion at all, expands on these teachings in the *Declaration*:

The Church . . . affirms and marvels at the action of the Holy Spirit beyond her visible boundaries, among the separated brethren as well as among those who are not Christians. The Church calls her members to acquire an ecumenical spirit and to collaborate with all persons of good will.⁸

This means that those who adhere to other religious beliefs are now looked upon as partners and collaborators rather than as competitors or targets of the Church's evangelizing mission. For the Brothers, the implication is that their students and staff who are not Catholic are now valued members and play an integral role in the discernment of the school's Catholic and Lasallian identity. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the Institute to explore the implications multi-culturalism has on its many schools and other educational establishments.

From Mono-Cultural to Multi-Cultural Schools

To begin, it has to be acknowledged that when De La Salle founded schools in France they were strictly Catholic schools. The Brothers served as ministers of the Church or, using the Pauline term "ambassadors" of Christ. The original *Rule* spells this out unequivocally:

The purpose of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children, and it is for this purpose the Brothers conduct schools . . . by instructing them [the children] in the mysteries of our holy religion and inspiring them with Christian maxims, and so give them a suitable education.⁹

Thus, for the Founder, education was a means for ensuring the salvation (as understood in seventeenth-century Catholic teachings) of the children. One could, therefore, say that the schools founded by De La Salle were in the service of the Church and strictly mono-cultural in that they catered only to those who affiliated themselves with the Catholic culture. There is nothing unusual about this, as France of the seventeenth century was predominantly Catholic.

With time, however, the Institute expanded to other countries, some of which were predominantly not Christian, and began enrolling students who affiliated with other religions. This opened the doors of Lasallian institutions to multi-culturalism. The following excerpt from the Institute document on *The Lasallian Christian School and Its Presence among Other Religions* gives an account of the extent of this expansion:

But throughout the eighteenth century and especially in the nineteenth, the Christian school spread to countries where other religions were in the majority or to other nations where other religions existed alongside Christianity. . . . Although such schools were originally established for the children of Christian families in these countries, they soon opened their doors to students of other beliefs because the country's school system was not sufficiently developed. With the passage of time, schools in many areas became frequented by a majority of students who were not Christians.¹⁰

This openness to multi-culturalism has since become more common, in some countries even becoming the norm rather than the exception. A few statistics of present-day reality of Lasallian schools around the world will suffice.

- The Brothers in Lebanon run three schools where the Muslim students are in the majority: the Sacré-Cœur colleges (50% Muslims), Notre Dame College (60% Muslims), and the College of Deddeh (60% Muslims).
- The Brothers' school Bab-El-Louk College in Egypt has 1,040 students, of whom about 75% are from Islamic backgrounds.
- The Brothers' school in Turkey, Lycée Saint-Joseph in Istanbul, has Muslims constituting up to 98% of its 928 students, as well as 70% of its 91 professors.
- Burkina Faso has one Lasallian school with 130 Muslims in the student population of 143, the other 13 being Christian.
- Almost all the students and lay teachers of the Niamey Professional High School in Niger are Muslims. This is but a reflection of the country, which is 99% Muslim. Three Brothers work in this high school.
- The eight Lasallian schools in Hong Kong have a population of over 7,000 students, of whom 23% are Catholics, 7% other religions, and 70% no religion. Among its teaching staff, about 20% identify as Catholics, 20% other religions, and 60% no religion.
- The Vietnamese Brothers recently opened up free kindergarten schools in predominantly Buddhist Cambodia where only 1% of its student population is Catholic.

- The Institut Saint-Jean-Baptiste de La Salle in Belgium has 710 pupils originating from more than 60 nationalities, and those in the college year number about 50% Muslim.
- The Jean-Baptiste de La Salle-Notre-Dame de La Compassion school in the town of Saint Denis in France has about 60% to 70% of its students adhering to religions other than Christianity, the majority being Muslim immigrants. Of its 150 teachers, roughly 30% are Muslim, 30% Catholic, 5% other religions, and 35% with no religious adherence.

It is safe to say that, globally, many Lasallian schools have moved away from being strictly mono-cultural to becoming increasingly multi-cultural. This is, in part, due to the fact that the Brothers' schools have been successfully assimilated into the mainstream of the nation's educational system and so need not remain isolated or protected. The responsibility that comes with this is that they have to be manifestly non-sectarian and inclusive in their admissions. In some countries there are even laws which prohibit schools from excluding anyone primarily on account of the person's creed or religion. Moreover, most schools have little choice but to admit students who do not adhere to the Catholic faith to ensure not only financial viability (as there may be insufficient Catholics enrolling or who can afford to enroll), but also to maintain their standards (by not ruling out academically inclined students who are not Catholic) and ensure their ranking and position in the academy.

Shared Mission and Teachers Who Are Not Christians

The same story can also be told about the diversity among the teachers of Lasallian schools. Until the mid-twentieth century, Lasallian schools were mainly identified as "Brothers' schools." It was only after the Second Vatican Council and as a response to the decline in the number of Brothers that the Institute took seriously the role of lay teachers. Moreover, Vatican Council II's document on the laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) clearly speaks of the laity as having a "proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church" and that "the apostolate of the laity derives from their Christian vocation and the Church can never be without it."¹¹

For the Institute this acknowledgement appeared in the *Declaration*:

The school will be molded into a community only through a community of teachers rich in diversity and the unity of its members. For this reason the Brothers are happy to collaborate with lay teachers, who bring to the teaching community a contribution that comes from their knowledge of the world, their experience in family life, civic affairs, and labor organizations.¹²

By 1987, the idea of the Brothers sharing the mission with their "Partners" was firmly etched in the psyche of the Institute. The 1987 *Rule* speaks of "a shared mission," "the first time this term was used in an official Institute document."¹³ The last three decades have seen the laity playing more significant roles as teachers and administrators, and the term "Lasallian schools" and "Partners" came into ascendancy.

Note that we are thus far talking only about lay teachers who are Catholic. Obviously, the inclusion of those who are not Catholic is even more challenging as teachers are looked upon as custodians of the school and counted upon to perpetuate its tradition. While preference is usually

given to appointing Catholics or Christians, there is the stark reality of the finite number of Catholics entering the teaching profession. Thus, we see today the inclusion of teachers who are not Catholics, many of whom have been well integrated into Lasallian schools for years and decades. The *Rule* of 2015 is the first time that the Institute officially recognized this: “When they work with Partners with different beliefs and religious traditions, the Brothers seek to establish common ground.”¹⁴ Thus, if it took about two decades for the Institute to finally affirm the role of lay teachers in the Lasallian mission in its *Rule* (from 1967 to 1987), it took almost another three decades for the role of teachers who are not Catholics to be similarly affirmed (from 1987 to 2015).

Besides the above, there is also the rise of the religious “nones” (those who do not identify with any religion and also those who regard themselves as “spiritual but not religious”) in many Western countries, as well as in the major cities in other parts of the world. The Institute speaks of them as “people who profess no particular religious allegiance but who, through a genuine religious sense, are in search of God in their own way.”¹⁵ They, too, have an integral role to play in the Catholic mission of Lasallian educational communities.

Catholic Identity and Evangelizing Mission

In the context of this new situation of multi-culturalism, adjustments are made to different aspects of school life. For instance, there are accommodations in the area of language (for communication as well as the teaching of the students’ mother tongue), dress-code (e.g., those who wear the hijab), hair-style (e.g., Sikh students whose hair must remain uncut), food (menu offered in the school cafeteria or at school functions), celebrations and holidays (to include religious or cultural feasts such as Eid-al-Fitr, Divali, and Harvest Festival), and school amenities (such as installing taps for ablution practices or Muslim prayer rooms) to address the day-to-day needs of students who are not Christians. By and large there are few problems in many of these accommodations.

The same cannot be said of the accommodation in the area of the faith life and in ensuring the Catholic identity of multi-cultural Lasallian schools. Previously, the fact that there is a Brother serving as principal or president of a school was proof enough of its Catholicity. Today, the majority of Lasallian schools around the world are already headed by non-Brothers, mostly lay Catholics. The next step, i.e., of having principals or presidents who adhere to other religions, remains rare in the West but is not uncommon in Asia. In Hong Kong, for example, six of the eight principals of the Brothers’ schools profess no religion. A number of Lasallian schools in Malaysia are headed by Muslim principals, some of whom may have a staff of forty or fifty but only two or three are Catholics while the rest are committed Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and from the other religious traditions.

What, then, is the measure of the Catholic identity of Lasallian schools? A surface-level response would emphasize the explicit and externals. Now that Catholic people (principals, teachers, and students) are no longer a measure of a school’s Catholic identity, attention is somewhat shifted to Catholic things and activities. Hence, Catholic signage and symbols, statues and crucifixes, and naming buildings after Saints become important. Likewise, Catholic activities such as school Masses and daily prayers, the singing of Christian songs and religious school anthems, and the

celebration of Christian holy days and feast days as well as the teaching of catechism or Christian instruction are seen as markers of the school's Catholic identity. It may also be that Catholic identity is measured by the extent the school is of service to the parish. Hence, grade schools are expected to help in the sacramental preparation of the children and in strengthening the *leitourgia* (liturgy) and *koinonia* (fellowship) dimensions of Church life while high schools focus on the *kerygma* (proclamation) and especially the *diakonia* (service) aspects of being Christian. Together they help form the students in the various aspects of the Catholic Church's mission of evangelization.

All of this is well and fine for seventeenth-century Catholic France or for places where the Institute still runs mono-cultural schools. But in the context of multi-cultural schools, questions need to be raised about how some of these Catholic things and activities can remain measures of Catholic identity. Given that most Lasallian schools are explicit that they are not only open to all, regardless of religious affiliation, but will also see to the holistic development of all their students, questions need to be asked about how the spiritual development of the students who are not Catholics is actualized. On the part of the Institute, it was the *Declaration* that first signaled the official acknowledgement of this understanding of Christian responsibility in the face of religious pluralism:

It seems that more and more we shall be exercising our apostolate in a *milieu* that is *de facto* pluralistic. Not all those who come to the Christian school are looking for an education that is explicitly Christian. A contemporary sensitivity to the demands of religious freedom obliges us not to impose indiscriminately the same catechesis on all of our students, especially when dealing with adolescents.¹⁶

Sensitivity to the demands of religious freedom would mean that there needs to be a rethinking of the practice of daily Christian prayers and monthly Masses for all, including students who are not Christians. It would also mean that further reflection needs to be given to mandatory Christian instruction classes even for those who are not Christians. A quote from a former Brother Visitor of Japan, where Catholics number less than 0.5%, is instructive here:

It must be realized that hardly any of the children entering Catholic schools are sent there by their parents to become Christians. The parents, Catholic or not, are interested in the academic and "moral training" given by the Catholic schools, not ordinarily in religious instruction as such.¹⁷

In short, it is crucial that Lasallian educational communities explore appropriate models for the expression of the faith life of their students in inter-cultural schools.

Toward Inter-Cultural Lasallian Communities

Embracing inter-culturalism entails taking seriously the backgrounds of all persons in the Lasallian school for the purpose of facilitating the interaction between their religious and cultural practices. Its aim is to foster a true sense of communion within the educational establishment so that everyone is treated equally for their humanity and experiences a sense of social and spiritual belonging. In so doing the Lasallian school witnesses to the values of the Gospel by promoting

the *with-ness* among all persons, irrespective of culture, creed or religion. This is in keeping with Catholic teachings, as clearly spelt out in the 2013 Vatican document *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love* (EID), which insists that Catholic schools

must give voice and reality to an education truly based around the human person, in line with Christian humanist culture and tradition. There must be new commitment to the individual seen as “person in communion” and a new sense of his or her belonging to society.¹⁸

Moreover, the document stresses, Catholic schools “are to be open to encountering other cultures. They have the task of supporting individuals so that each person develops his or her own identity in an awareness of its richness and cultural tradition.”¹⁹ In other words, it is the school’s responsibility to ensure that their students who are not Christians are equally supported in their religious growth. This is in accordance with the teachings of Vatican Council II, which call on Catholics to “recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values” found in persons of other religions.²⁰ Thus, in the context of secularism and religious pluralism, the mission of the Catholic school is broadened and more encompassing. Preaching the Gospel is much more than proclaiming Jesus to those who are not Christians and certainly not aimed at converting them to the Catholic religion or bringing them into the Church. The 2015 *Rule* advises,

In their contact with people with different religious traditions, or in highly pluralistic or secularized countries, the Brothers seek inventive ways to announce the Gospel; the witness of a Christian presence and fraternal relations, gratuitous service, the experience of prayer in common, interreligious dialogue, and sharing with one another the story of Jesus Christ. In their turn, the Brothers allow themselves to be questioned by these people.²¹

The above passage from the *Rule* is actually a paraphrase of an article of the 1984 Vatican document *Dialogue and Mission*, which, for the first time, identifies the mission of the Church as a complex ministry entailing a number of elements: “Mission is thus presented in the consciousness of the church as a single but complex and articulated reality.”²² It then spells out how the Church’s mission is to be carried out in religiously plural contexts by identifying four forms of interfaith dialogue that Catholics are called to engage in: (i) dialogue of life; (ii) dialogue of works; (iii) dialogue of theological exchange; and (iv) dialogue of religious experience. They are described below, discussed in concert with the “inventive ways” for announcing the Gospel that article 17.2 of the *Rule* suggests:

1. Dialogue of Life: Witness of a Christian Presence and Fraternal Relations

Firstly, the Brothers and their Partners announce the Gospel by witnessing to God’s love through the ministry of presence and by promoting fraternal relations. This is often referred to as the interfaith “dialogue of life.” It is where Lasallians from diverse religious backgrounds relate to one another and live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. In simple terms it means reaching out to one’s religious neighbor

to be with them, interacting with them, and just getting to know them as fellow human beings. Where relationships blossom, prejudices are put to rest. This dialogue of life is greatly facilitated when Lasallian educational communities actively enroll students or employ teachers who adhere to religions other than Christianity not because there are not enough Catholics taking up those positions but because of the conviction that inclusiveness and having a diversity of faith traditions within the schools are integral to what it means to be Christian in the globalized world.

This is not to say that there will be no difficulties. Like De La Salle, Lasallians need to be courageous in breaking new ground and embracing religious pluralism, despite the fear of the unknown and the challenges that the different faith traditions might pose. A bold decision that the Institute made when confronted by a critical situation about their schools in predominantly Muslim Turkey some years ago is instructive here:

In 1980 Brother Superior General had to take a firm stand before 500 Brothers meeting at Beauvais to prevent the French Brothers from abandoning completely this sector. On the contrary, he encouraged them to reinforce the Brothers still in Turkey with these words, “It would be a disgrace to abandon a sector because conditions are difficult. That is precisely where we should be.”²³

2. *Dialogue of Works: Gratuitous Service*

Secondly, Lasallian institutions announce the Gospel by providing gratuitous service, especially in favor of the poor. When persons of different religions engage in this together, it is also referred to as the interfaith “dialogue of works.” The *Rule* establishes this as very much in line with the Institute’s mission:

When they work with Partners with different beliefs and religious traditions, the Brothers seek to establish common ground for cooperation on the basis of the promotion of human dignity, solidarity among all human beings, and the integral development of the individual, in line with the Lasallian tradition.²⁴

Many schools do provide avenues for their students to be of service to the community, especially since the virtue of service, as an expression of the Lasallian spirit of zeal, is one of the cardinal traits of the Institute’s charism.

In the context of pluralist societies, Lasallian educational communities can explore opportunities where they can engage in these acts on behalf of society in partnership with institutions belonging to another religion, such as a Buddhist or Sikh school. Or, when organizing programs for students to offer their services in homes for the aged or in orphanages, instead of going to one run by Saint Vincent de Paul, the Lasallian School can consciously choose to go to a home run by the Fethullah Gulen or the Vivekenanda movements. Such opportunities of collaborative action are then seen not only as occasions for rendering community service but also as occasions for interfaith cooperation, bringing persons of different religions together for the sake of the common good.

3. Dialogue of Theological Exchange: Interreligious Dialogue and Sharing with One Another the Story of Jesus Christ

Thirdly, Lasallian educational communities announce the Gospel through the formal activity of interreligious dialogue, which includes telling of the story of Jesus. This is also regarded as the interfaith “dialogue of theological exchange.” They are occasions for the honest and authentic sharing and exchange of one’s faith. This, of course, is a reciprocal process where both parties share and both parties also learn. The *Rule* points out that this dialogue “presupposes openness and a willingness to listen, to learn, to witness to Gospel values and, as far as possible, to announce the Word of God.”²⁵ The study of the world’s religions assists this dialogue tremendously as it helps the various parties understand and appreciate the beliefs and practices of their religious neighbors. This has become part of the curriculum of many Catholic high schools. By the same token, it is also important for Lasallian students who are not Christians to study about the Christian tradition, not so much as a catechetical subject or from a dogmatic perspective, but more for widening their perspectives and enabling them to appreciate the Christian worldview. With these studies as backdrop, theological dialogue can then be engaged in to discover areas of convergence and/or divergence between the religions. Lasallians will then be mutually learning from one another about each other’s faith as well as their own.

A necessary dimension of this dialogue for Christians is the telling of the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Needless to say, a similar invitation to one’s dialogue partner to tell the story of their religious founder or other saintly figures should be presumed. Important elements in the Gospel story or in announcing Jesus the Word of God would be how Jesus reached out to those who are suffering, the lepers and sinners, how he was concerned about the widow and the sick, and the way he responded to and taught about people who were outcasts. For Jesus, being inclusive of all persons was a priority and so, for him, “salvation” was understood as the ability for the marginalized and downtrodden to be accepted in love and be able to live again and, indeed, have life and have it to the fullest (Jn 10:10). Thus, when De La Salle exhorts his followers to procure the “salvation” of the children confided to their care he was asking them to do the same, namely, enable the young to be saved from the bondage of ignorance, injustice, and discrimination so that they would be able to attain to their full potential and live in this world decently. Obviously, education and empowerment are important means toward this end, thus enabling the young to “grow as human beings and as sons and daughters of God.”²⁶

4. Dialogue of Religious Experience: Experience Prayer in Common

Fourthly, the Brothers and their Partners announce the Gospel by facilitating the experience of prayer in common between persons of different religions. This is often called the interfaith “dialogue of religious experience.” They are occasions where students of different faiths come together for the purpose of sharing with one another their experience of spirituality, as well as to celebrate and participate (not by compulsion) in prayer together. Fellow Lasallians of different faiths are then able to regard each other as spiritual brothers and sisters. These dialogues of religious experience in Lasallian schools witness to a Catholic community that is respectful of the other religious traditions, valuing them as contributing to the spirituality of the world and the holiness of all beings.

Lasallian schools can introduce this dialogue by engaging in little steps first, such as encouraging their students to visit the places of worship of their religious neighbors. Or they can encourage their Christian students to participate in the fast along with their Muslim friends during the month of Ramadan so they can experience their neighbor's religion. Educational communities can also conscientiously adapt school policies and requirements so that their students and staff of the different religions are able to practice their faith authentically and give witness to them. They can also educate their students on the specific religious observances of their Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu friends the same way they talk about Christian observances such as Lent, Easter, or All Souls Day. Of course, where these feasts can be celebrated together they are the perfect occasions for facilitating the experience of common prayer.

The four forms of dialogue above constitute the heuristic for Lasallian educational establishments to move toward an inter-cultural model in the expression of the spiritual life of the community. They are in harmony with the teachings of the Church as well as that of the Institute. In the context of religious pluralism, dialogue is the means by which the Gospel is announced. Dialogue is also the means for Catholic mission and the way for being Christian. The four forms of dialogue are, therefore, the measures of the Catholic identity of inter-cultural Lasallian schools. To put it bluntly, if a Lasallian educational community is not practicing any or most of the four forms of dialogue that are constitutive elements of the mission of the Church, then it should no longer be regarded as Catholic.

The Lasallian Tradition Revisited

As alluded to earlier, the most important challenge for Lasallian educational establishments is how the faith or spiritual dimension is expressed so as to enable them to become truly inter-cultural schools. This is, in part, because a lot of the teachings of De La Salle especially with regard to the spiritual elements of life may seem to be exclusive to Christianity. While they made a lot of sense during the foundation years, there needs to be a reinterpretation of the same in the context of the twenty-first century and in the light of the increasingly secularized, multi-cultural, and pluri-religious world.

Specifically, the term "Christian" has to be discussed. That the purpose of the Institute is to provide a "human and *Christian* education" is not used in contradistinction to Buddhist or Islamic or other religious education but, in the context of seventeenth-century France, simply to emphasize the role of "religion" or faith in the education process. So the adjective "Christian" is used to signify the "religious" dimensions of life; but in today's context where there is a built-up antipathy toward religion, perhaps the word "spiritual" more adequately represents this.²⁷ Thus, the Lasallian School aims at providing both a human and also a spiritual education, which means its concerns are for both the flesh and the soul, or matter and spirit. This is another way of saying that Lasallian schools stand for holistic education that encompasses all aspects of the person's being, the intellectual, mental, psychological, social, moral, and spiritual.

Thus, the "Brothers of the *Christian* Schools" can be taken to refer to Brothers who promote well-rounded and wholesome education. That accounts for why Lasallian schools throughout the world have vision and mission statements that emphasize quality education, personal relationship, discipline, sports, respect for all, morality, spirituality, concern for the marginalized,

and a host of other Gospel values. Again, “Gospel” is used here not in contrast with the scriptures of other religions but as signifying the spiritual bases of the Lasallian tradition. Today, we might be more at ease at saying that the Lasallian tradition is based on spiritual or universal values. These broadened perspectives on the spirituality of the Lasallian tradition ought to be more appreciable to the Partners and students of other faiths as they are at once enculturated as well as inclusive. The insights from Antonio Botana, FSC can shed more light here:

Many persons who come from other religions and forms of humanism, when they come into contact with value systems or schools of spirituality that have Christian roots, such as the case of Lasallian spirituality, can feel very much at home with them because they find them to be faithful reflections or manifestations of many of the values and meanings to life that are also present, explicit or implicitly, in their own religion. Lasallian spirituality is for many non-Christian educators a means to be better believers in their own religion or humanistic beliefs. It is for all Lasallians a point of encounter and a source of common understandings for the mission that we share.²⁸

Another way of understanding the word “Christian” is to reflect on its derivation. Deville opines, “In the seventeenth century, it really meant being ‘Christ-like,’ dependent on Christ according to the quotation of Saint Paul: ‘Christ lives in me.’”²⁹ Thus, the Christian school really means that it takes after Jesus. The school should, therefore, mold disciples who would strive to do what Jesus did and stand for what he believed in, especially in his outreach and concern for the oppressed and disenfranchised. Lasallians are, therefore, invited to model their lives after Jesus of Nazareth and, more profoundly, allow Jesus to be made manifest in their lives:

The very invocation which later became the watchword and signal of the community: “Live Jesus in our hearts!” “Forever!” was a constant prayer of the community members for one another. It is striking to note how often in his *Method of Interior Prayer*, De La Salle invokes the text from Galatians 2:20, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me,” as the interior disposition to which faith should lead us.³⁰

So, the invocation serves to remind Lasallians that their task is to emulate the behavior of Jesus until they become the “Jesus” of today in their respective societies, reaching out to the outcasts, healing the sick, and caring for the stranger and opting to be on the side of the marginalized. In some countries, such as India, where there is sensitivity toward the use of the name Jesus in view of the aggressive evangelization techniques used by some quarters, the Brothers have instead modified the signal to “Live God in our hearts!” (it sounds more rhythmic in the local Tamil language) to which the students, most of whom are Hindus, can enthusiastically respond “Forever!”

¹ This paper relied on the results of a survey conducted across the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools that was circulated through the Institute’s formation secretariat (c/o Brother Jesús Rubio). I am grateful to all those who generously responded to the survey. The paper was presented at a seminar organized in the Institute’s Motherhouse in Rome in May 2016. The

seminar was titled “Reflecting on Lasallian Formation for Today and the Future: Toward the Declaration on Lasallian Education in the 21st Century.”

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³ Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1967), 2.

⁴ Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2015), 14.1.

⁵ Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (Vatican City, 1965), 2.

⁶ Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae: Declaration on Religious Freedom* (Vatican City, 1965), 2.

⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam: Encyclical on the Church* (Vatican City, 1964), 65.

⁸ Brothers of the Christian Schools, *A Declaration* (1967), 10.

⁹ John Baptist de La Salle, “Rule of 1718,” in *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), 1.3, page 14.

¹⁰ Brothers of the Christian Schools, *Bulletin 243: The Lasallian Christian School and Its Presence among Other Religions* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1997), pages 3-4.

¹¹ Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem: Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (Vatican City, 1965), 1.

¹² Brothers of the Christian Schools, *A Declaration* (1967), 46.3.

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¹⁶ Brothers of the Christian Schools, *A Declaration* (1967), 39.2.

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¹⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love* (Vatican City, 2013), 46.

¹⁹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools*, 50.

²⁰ Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*, 2.

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²⁷ Antonio Botana, FSC, *Thematic Vocabulary of Lasallian Association* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2008), page 68.

²⁸ Antonio Botana, FSC, *Thematic Vocabulary of Lasallian Association*, page 68.

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³⁰ Gerard Rummery, FSC, “The Journey of the Lasallian Community,” *MEL Bulletin 27: Lasallian Identity, Working Documents for a Workshop* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2006), page 12.