

Introduction to AXIS 16.2

Matt J. Nowakowski, Ed.D. ¹

Responding to a call for papers concerning how Lasallian spirituality informs, engages and supports the work of members of the Institute, this special volume of *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* brings together diverse voices exploring the dynamic interplay between Lasallian spirituality and educational practice in today's world. Rooted in the vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, these contributions illuminate how faith, community, and mission continue to shape personal journeys, institutional cultures, and global educational networks. Across essays and reflections, authors examine the transformative power of Lasallian charism in contexts ranging from athletics and classroom pedagogy to systemic challenges and global association. Each piece invites readers to consider how Lasallian spirituality—through a lived relationship with God and openness to the Spirit—animates ordinary practices, fosters human flourishing, and sustains hope.

Themes and Contributions

- **Sport as Spiritual Formation**
Mary Volmer reframes athletics as a sacred, communal act grounded in Lasallian values. Through mentorship and holistic coaching, sport becomes a “pedagogy of fraternity,” nurturing unity and spiritual growth.
- **Teaching in Tension and Mystery**
Tim Coldwell reflects on paradox as a spiritual posture, integrating Scripture and Lasallian tradition to embrace creative tensions that lead to integrity and hope.
- **Teacher Identity and Cultural Realities**
Marco Saez and Maria Gracia Olorga analyze Filipino educators' struggles within systemic inequities, juxtaposing Lasallian metaphors of vocation with contemporary socio-economic challenges.
- **Renewing Morale and Belonging**
Julian Elorduy calls for radical empathy and co-responsibility, urging Lasallian schools to embody inclusive community beyond programmatic solutions.
- **Personal Vocation and Leadership**
Kathleen Bagnell Finnegan offers a testimony of Lasallian spirituality as a guiding force in her decades-long vocation, shaping leadership and mission-driven engagement.
- **Global Association for Mission**
Matt Nowakowski reports on the 2024 Lasallian Research Seminar, highlighting

emerging themes of community, inclusivity, and faith in God’s plan for association in the Lasallian educational mission.

- **Foundational Spiritual Insights**

Brothers Mario Presciuttini, FSC, Edgar Nicodem, FSC, and Joseph F. Schmidt, FSC, delve into core dimensions of Lasallian spirituality—salvation history, justification, and prayer—revealing its enduring relevance for educators and communities. Brother John Johnston, FSC, calls us back to the source of this charism—prayer as a personal encounter with God. Brother William Mann, FSC, reflects on the turbulence of contemporary culture through the lens of his experience in a hurricane, likening the rescue of a drifting boat to the challenge parents face in guiding children amid moral ambiguity, materialism, and isolation. Finally, Tim Gossen presents a succinct annotation of W.J. Carriere’s Ph.D. dissertation entitled “The Correspondence of Lasallian Philosophy and Teacher Education in Selected Christian Brothers’ Colleges.”

Together, these contributions affirm that Lasallian education is a living tradition—a dynamic response to the needs of the time, grounded in prayer and animated by zeal. As cultural currents grow more complex, the call to form faith-filled communities committed to justice and service becomes ever more pressing. This volume invites educators and leaders to rediscover the spiritual roots of their vocation and to renew their dedication to the transformative mission entrusted to them.

¹ Matt J. Nowakowski, Ed.D. is the Managing Editor of *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education*. He is a retired faculty member and administrator from Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota and graduate of the Buttimer Institute. He was named a Distinguished Lasallian Educator at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota in 2020.