



# *International Women's Day*

## 2021



### *Dear Lasallians*

The United Nations designates Monday 8 March as International Women's Day. It is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. The theme for the day is "Choose to Challenge."

The UN reminds us: "We can all choose to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality. We can all choose to seek out and celebrate women's achievements. Collectively, we can all help create an inclusive world" (cf [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)) and not to forget that one of our core Lasallian values is inclusive community. I invite you to reflect on the theme.

Recently the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (De La Salle Brothers) circulated from Rome statistics dated 31 December 2020. Across the globe 103,542 Lasallian Partners are engaged in the Lasallian Educational Mission, 60,294 or 58.23% of them women. In our District of ANZPPNG there are 4090 Lasallian Partners engaged in the mission with 2605 or 64% of them women.

On this occasion last year, I wrote and reiterate in 2021. "It is fitting that on this day we honour and affirm the part that women play in the Lasallian Mission across the District. In all the District's ministries women contribute significantly whether it be in the Catechetical Training Centre at Khushpur in Pakistan, in the various services of yourtown, the Lasallian Family in Papua New Guinea, in teachers' colleges also in Papua New Guinea, at La Salle Centre either in Lasallian Mission Services or District Administration, in classrooms in all four countries, in Signum Fidei in New Zealand, Youth Ministry, Lasallian Volunteers and various ancillary duties. There are women named as Affiliated Members of the Institute while others are Benefactors of the Institute. Women also contribute on Boards of Directors, Sector Mission Councils, the Lasallian Mission Council and councils and committees of both the District Council and Lasallian Mission Council." And since writing a year ago women are increasingly taking up positions of leadership in ministries across the District.

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Taking a step back in history we recall that in 1714, while John Baptist de La Salle was living with the Brothers in Grenoble and at something of a loss regarding the future of his leadership of the Institute, he received a letter from the Brothers in Paris urging him to return. At nearby Parménie he discussed his future with 'Sister' Louise, the very practical mystic leading a community of women who welcomed people to their retreat house.



*Illustration by: Mervyn Soares*

Bernard Hours, the French historian who has written the recent critical biography of the Founder, analyses the various accounts of De La Salle's encounters with 'Sister Louise'. He concludes that it is difficult to establish the details, but that there is no doubt about Louise's significant influence on De La Salle's state of mind and his decision to comply with the Brothers' urgent request:

He left Parménie resolved and reassured because God had spoken to him by affording him the two voices towards which he had always been drawn: meditation and action.

Many Lasallians today just as John Baptist de La Salle did in his day, turn to women for support, advice and accompaniment. In your District ministry I expect that there are women to whom you turn and whose accompaniment and support you appreciate. Beyond our Lasallian Family there are also women whom we admire and who support us in our lifestyle and ministry.

As we celebrate International Women's Day, we express our gratitude and appreciation to all women in the District whose valuable contribution is appreciated and valued. We hold each of them before God in prayer.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Hawke'.

**David Hawke FSC**  
Visitor (Provincial)

