The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education

A SHARED MISSION
The Lasallian Family
Australia, New Zealand & Papua New Guinea

Australia

Armidale  O'Connor Catholic High School
Ashfield  De La Salle College
Balgo Hills  Lurnpa School & Brothers' Community
Bankstown  Benilde High School, De La Salle College & Brothers' Community
Beaudesert  Boystown School & Brothers' Community
Caringbah  De La Salle College
Castle Hill  Oakhill College & Brothers' Community
La Salle House Brothers' Community
Cronulla  De La Salle College & Brothers' Community
Dandenong  St John's College
Derby  Rosary School
Dubbo  St John's College
East Bentleigh  St James College & Brothers' Community
Henley Beach  St Michael's College & Brothers' Community
Kensington  Provincialate & Brothers' Community
Kingsgrove  De La Salle College
Kurmond  San Miguel Family Centre & Brothers' Community
Lakemba  St John's College
Lithgow  La Salle Academy
Malvern  De La Salle College & Brothers' Community
Marrickville  Casimir College & Brothers' Community
Mentone  St Bedes College & Brothers' Community
Midland  La Salle College
Narooma  Lasallian Centre & Brothers' Community
Orange  James Sheahan Catholic High School & Brothers' Community
Revesby Heights  De La Salle College
Scarborough  Southern Cross Catholic College & Brothers' Community
Southport  Retirement Village & Brothers' Community
Wanbinal  Cordero House & Brothers' Community

New Zealand

Mangere East  De La Salle College & Brothers' Community
New Plymouth  Francis Douglas Memorial College & Brothers' Community

Papua New Guinea

Bomana  De La Salle College & Brothers' Community
Hobola  Hohola Youth Development Centre & Brothers' Community
Kondiu  Rosary Secondary School & Brothers' Community
Mainohana  Catholic High School.
Mount Hagan  Holy Trinity Teachers College & Brothers' Community
The General Chapter strongly recommends to Brother Superior and his Council the drawing up and publication of a study (circular) on the shared mission which contains coherent teaching, guidelines and pastoral orientations.

Circular 435, 5.14, p. 49

The Brother Superior General and the members of the General Council, in response to the above recommendation, offer the following reflections to all members of the Lasallian Family throughout the world who share the Lasallian mission of human and Christian education, a shared mission.

This work is dedicated in homage to the memory of two great pioneers and architects of shared mission:

Brother José Pablo Basterrechea
Vicar General, 1966-1976
Superior General, 1976-1986

Brother Patrice Marey
Assistant, 1966-1976
General Councillor, 1976-1986
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Institute Texts
B Bull of Pope Benedict XIII approving the Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (1725)
C Circular of the Brothers of the Christian Schools [serial number added]
CL Cahiers Lasalliens [Critical editions and studies on the writings of John Baptist de La Salle and the origins of the Institute]
D A Declaration on the Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today (1967)
CS The Conduct of Schools (Conduite des Ecoles), sometimes called The Management of Schools (1720)
MTR Meditations for the Time of Retreat
RC 1718 Common Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (ms of 1718)
R The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (1987)
N.B. Other references are acknowledged within the text.
Introduction

Dear Fellow Lasallians,

Welcome to this introduction to your Lasallian Heritage, the Living Tradition, which links you to the first school of John Baptist de La Salle in Rheims in 1679 and so, today, with all those persons throughout the world whose educational mission is inspired by the same vision. In the following pages, you are invited to discover something more about your Lasallian Heritage. This is not primarily a history, but a connecting of various historical threads through a central theme which may be stated thus:

What does the Lasallian Heritage show us about generations of educators, inspired by the educational movement launched by De La Salle and his Institute, in trying always to find a response to the needs of young people, especially the poor, who do not have access to education?

The story of the first 150 years of this movement is initially entwined with the social, political and religious history of France, but the very success of the Institute’s mission of Christian education of the poor has subsequently made it become a world-wide movement to an extent which its Founder could never have envisaged. This mission, carried almost exclusively by the brothers for the first 200 years, is now a ‘shared mission’ in which many others, in various ways, choose to participate.

Most of you, who read the pages which follow, and so lay claim to your heritage, come from countries and use languages which De La Salle and his first brothers never knew, because you share this heritage with some 65,000 others who carry out their educational mission in more than 80 different countries. Since most of you who will read these lines are not members of the Institute, we have thought it most important to share with you a number of Institute documents of recent years which are part of our common heritage and which have determined the directions which have led us to recognise the grace of shared mission.

You will find, therefore, frequent mention of the Declaration on the Brother of the Christian Schools in the World of Today (1967), the decisions of the General Chapters of 1966-7, 1976, 1986 and 1993 and, above all, abundant citation from the Brothers’ Rule of 1987, as well as from a number of other documents which were addressed originally only to the brothers. It is a measure of our confidence in you and in the important role that you are called to play in the future of the Lasallian Mission of Christian education that we share these more recent ‘family’ documents with you.

The hope of all those who cooperated in producing this Heritage booklet for you, is that you may find inspiration and a sense of common purpose in your particular contribution to the ministry of teaching as it is embodied in the Lasallian Heritage. May you be strengthened by the knowledge that you do not work alone but that you are bound across many nations and languages by the common vision, practices and traditions of the Lasallian Heritage.

Brother John Johnston and the members of the General Council
30 April 1997, 346th anniversary of the birth of John Baptist de La Salle
Part I
The Lasallian Heritage
### 1.1 The First Century 1679-1792

#### 1.1.0 Prelude

Monsieur de La Salle had the idea of setting up gratuitous schools where the children of the working class and the poor would learn reading, writing and arithmetic, and would also receive a Christian education through catechisms and other forms of instruction appropriate for forming good Christians. For this purpose he brought together a group of young unmarried men. He strove to have them live in a way which was consistent with the end of their Institute, and in order to renew the life of the first Christians he composed Rules for them.

#### 1.1.1 The mission of the Institute

The end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children; it is for this purpose the Brothers keep schools, that having the children under their care from morning until evening, they may teach them to lead good lives, by instructing them in the mysteries of our holy religion and by inspiring them with Christian maxims, and thus giving them a suitable education (RC 1718, 1.3).

The necessity of this Institute is very great, because artisans and the poor, being usually little instructed, and being occupied all day in gaining a livelihood for themselves and family, cannot give their children the needed instruction, nor a suitable Christian education (1.4).

All disorders, especially among artisans and the poor, usually arise from their having been, in childhood, left to themselves and badly brought up. It is almost impossible to repair this evil at a more advanced age, because the bad habits they have acquired are overcome only with great difficulty, and scarcely ever entirely, no matter what care may be taken to destroy them, whether by frequent instructions or by the use of the Sacraments. As the principal fruit to be expected from the institution of the Christian Schools is to forestall these disorders and prevent their evil consequences, it is easy to conceive the importance of such schools and their necessity (1.6).

One thing is clear from the above three quotations: this group of people who comprise the Institute have come together in response to what they saw as an urgent need, namely, the provision of 'instruction' (i.e., religious instruction in the 17th century context) and a 'Christian education' (i.e., reading, writing, arithmetic, etc.) to poor boys who otherwise would not receive it through the ordinary schools which they might find it possible to attend. Today we are more inclined to see instruction as a general activity within the total process of education.
1.12 Response to needs

This ‘response to needs’ in what De La Salle saw as the education of poor boys through the ‘Christian school’ is the unifying theme, the *leitmotiv*, which can be traced through the 300 and more years since the first schools of the Institute in Rheims. De La Salle’s concern, expressed so consistently through so many of his writings for his brothers, is for the ‘salvation’ of the students whom he saw always as ‘confided to your care’. Yet, he does not limit the mission of his Institute to ensuring that these students have a word-perfect knowledge of the ‘truths necessary for salvation’, important though that is for him and for his contemporaries, by founding a catechetical confraternity of Christian doctrine.

Certainly, attendance at the daily catechism lesson, at the longer catechism lessons taught on the eve of feasts and at the special catechism lessons on the ‘great mysteries’ taught on Sundays, became a special emphasis in all of his schools, indeed the indispensable condition for being admitted and being retained as a student. But the bulk of the time in the Christian school was spent on the educational tasks of teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, politeness and good manners to the students so that they could find useful employment in their society.

a. Gratuities

Since the Christian school was to be at the service of the ‘children of artisans and the poor’, it was necessarily gratuitous — free. The poor could not pay. Since it was this uncertainty about payment which often prevented schoolmasters from remaining in their occupation and so threatened the continuity of school for the poor, the brothers provided a good, stable but gratuitous school in which the pupils could be prepared for useful occupations. Gratuity was above all an attitude of sharing freely without hope of reward in any shape or form. It was to remain one of the enduring characteristics of Lasallian works in education.

b. Teaching in the vernacular

Teaching pupils in their native French was one of the innovative aspects of the first Lasallian schools. This was a response to the obvious need of those first boys to be able to read and write their own language as an indispensable condition of their gaining employment. So, too, was the practical perspective which included making use of invoices and accounts in arithmetic lessons and the copying of contemporary documents as a part of the writing lessons.

c. Training of teachers

Besides training his own teachers thoroughly, De La Salle, in response to the needs expressed to him by others, devoted himself three times in his lifetime to training teachers, not members of his congregation, who would be schoolmasters in country areas. His vision was not limited to ensuring the future of his own works but extended to include ways of addressing the lack of any set structures for the training of teachers.

d. Unforeseen needs

In response to the particular needs brought to his attention in the parish of Saint Sulpice in 1698, De La Salle took charge of a group of Irish boys, sons of followers of the exiled King James II, and provided them with lodging and schooling at his main house in Paris. Soon afterwards, and again in response to needs expressed by some former pupils, the first of the so-called Sunday academies was opened. These taught more advanced drawing, arithmetic and accounting ‘to young persons below 20 years of age’. Although this first academy lacked continuity, it was the predecessor of many similar works in later years.
e. The needs of those who were not poor

After the transfer of the centre of his Institute from Paris to Rouen in the course of 1705, De La Salle accepted the request of a number of better-off families to open a Christian school as a boarding school for their children. This involved a considerable enlargement of the curriculum to help prepare these young men for a professional career as merchants. Even here, great care was taken that the teaching as such remained gratuitous, even though money was received for food and lodging for the pupils.

In 1709, De La Salle accepted to enlarge the boarding facilities at Saint Yon in order to assume responsibility as well for the care of young delinquents from better-off families, who followed the same curriculum as the boarders, and who could aspire to join them if their conduct was deemed satisfactory. While it is undoubtedly clear that the property at Saint Yon was important in offering De La Salle a site and the financing for his novitiate which was transferred from Paris, it is also clear that he was responding to the expressed needs of families both for the boarding school as well as for the correctional institution.

f. De La Salle's writings meet the particular needs of his followers

In the wide-ranging writings which La Salle bequeathed to his Institute, his principal motivation seems to have been to address the particular needs of his first followers by composing works which would help them in their personal formation. Without Latin, they had no access to the ordinary sources of further education in their society, such as the university. As laymen, they had no possibility of being admitted to study theology in seminaries. Since there were no teachers’ colleges as we now understand them, their pedagogical training depended on their own Institute.

Read from this perspective, De La Salle's writings address all the significant questions which their profession and state of life demanded of them: orthodox theological knowledge, pedagogical competence, catechetical skills, prayers, hymns and practices suitable for their pupils, a Rule, spiritual teachings and meditations for their lives as members of a lay institute. In the early years of the Institute, he showed the importance which he placed on continuing formation by occasionally withdrawing brothers from the schools for some months so as to give a more solid foundation to their religious and professional lives.

g. The need to recognise Christian education as ministry

It is especially in his later writings, most notably in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, that De La Salle developed the theological foundations of education as ministry, based on the application of Saint Paul's writings in 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Colossians and 1st and 2nd Thessalonians.
... just as he [God] commanded light to shine out of darkness, so he himself kindles a light in the hearts of those destined to announce his word to children, so that they may be able to enlighten those children by unveiling for them the glory of God.

Since, then, God in his mercy has given you such a ministry, do not falsify his word but gain glory before him by unveiling his truth to those whom you are charged to instruct. Let this be your whole effort in the instructions you give them, looking upon yourselves as the ministers of God and the dispensers of his mysteries (MTR, 1.1).

The order, system and method of the Christian school, the emphasis on close relationship between teacher and pupil, is also based on the real needs of the students. ‘God has had the goodness’, De La Salle writes, ‘to employ you to procure such an advantage for children’ (ibid).

The formal approval of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools by the Church was by the issuing of an official document, in this case what was called a Papal Bull, entitled In apostolicae dignitatis solo. In this document of approval, Pope Benedict XIII expresses succinctly its origin and purpose, first of all in the personal vision of De La Salle himself:

John Baptist de La Salle ... being moved with pity at the sight of the innumerable scandals that spring from ignorance, the source of all evils, more particularly among those who, whether crushed down by want, or busy with manual labour in order to gain a livelihood, are not only extremely ignorant of all human sciences for want of the necessary pecuniary means, but, what is more lamentable, are often without the knowledge of the elements of the Christian religion ... founded an Institute known by the title of the Brothers of the Christian Schools for the glory of God and the relief of the poor (B, Preface).

The 1st article of the Bull states clearly the mission of the Institute:

That ... they should make it their chief care to teach children, especially poor children, those things which pertain to a good and Christian life.

The 5th article reiterates the importance of gratuity and specifies how to implement it:

That the said Brothers teach children gratuitously and that they receive neither money nor presents when offered by the pupils or their parents.
The 17th article indicates the balance which is to be maintained between their teaching of school subjects and their role as catechists:

*That the Brothers not only teach the children reading, writing, orthography and arithmetic but that they chiefly imbue their minds with the principles of Christianity and of the Gospel — and other things necessary for salvation.*

What this official approval did was to recognise not only the legal existence of the Institute within the body of the Church but, more importantly, to validate its educational mission as a particular contribution to the overall mission of the Church.

The first century of the Institute's schools up to the time of the suppression in 1792 during the French Revolution affords us many examples of how this 'responding to needs' remained a dynamic principle. By forming schoolmasters through their particular methods, based on the Conduct of Schools, the Institute provided individual teachers for country and city parishes as well as for the early schools of the Sulpicians at Montreal.

The particular difficulties and needs of various parts of France stimulated great creativity in adapting the curriculum of the school to the needs of pupils who would go to sea (Calais, Vannes, Saint Malo), to the particular problems of those isolated areas where the Church campaigned to convert the children of Calvinists to Catholicism, to the development of more advanced training in methods of keeping accounts. The prohibition on the teaching of Latin, which was to provide the target for so many of the attacks and jeers of the *philosophes*, seems to have been an important factor in maintaining the practical focus of the Institute's schools and so continuing to make the schools accessible to the poor and drawing its major clientele from among the poor. The pioneer work with boarding schools and with the custodial care of delinquents, begun at St Yon in De La Salle's lifetime, was continued and extended to eight such institutions before 1792.

Three documents left by Brother Agathon, fifth Superior General, illustrate this fidelity. The first was his second *circular* letter to the brothers in 1785, the development of *The Twelve Virtues of a Good Master*, left simply as a list by De La Salle. This text shows a deep knowledge and understanding of the foundation principles of the Institute.

So, too, does Brother Agathon's letter of 10 April 1786, where he questions the brothers seriously about the 'Public Contests and Examinations' which had
become traditional in many of the schools and which he felt risked favouring the more gifted pupils to the detriment of the others, reminding the brothers that 'the finality of Christian and Gratuitous schools ... is to bring up pupils in a Christian manner'. Brother Agathon's spirited defence of the Institute during the French Revolution, in the document presented to the National Assembly in 1791, is a model of clarity and brevity which insists on the historical fact that

Their schools are completely gratuitous; they never receive anything, either from the parents or the pupils ... It should not go unnoticed as well that they offer a quite notable present to the Nation each year by forming more than one hundred teachers for the instruction of the poor youth of the different cities to which they are sent.

In responding to some particular objections levelled against the religious congregations in general, Brother Agathon insists on the education of the poor:

Concerning the instruction of the poor
It is certainly not for the Brothers of the Christian Schools to make known to the Nation the importance of children of the ordinary people being able to acquire religion, customs and some openness of spirit, of becoming accustomed from an early age to obedience, to rules of behaviour, to being kept busy, according to their age and their position. Such things, by keeping idleness and the possibility of learning vicious habits at a distance, dispose them more easily to the different professions which they need to take up. In the lowest class of the people the majority of fathers and mothers lack the time and talent which are needed for their children's education. It is obviously useful for artisans and tradesmen to know their religion, and to be able to read, write and calculate ...

There is no difficulty in recognising the historical continuity between the mission of Christian Education here defended by Brother Agathon and the origin of the mission of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Unfortunately, the legal existence of the Institute in France was terminated from 1792 until 1805. Only a small group of brothers in some of the Papal States and in Rome continued to exist officially.

For individual reflection and group discussion

1. What impresses you most about the foundation of the brothers and the development of the Lasallian mission as a 'response to needs'?

2. De La Salle often reminds the brothers about the importance of 'the salvation of the children confided to your care'.

What do you think De La Salle and his first brothers were trying to save young people from? Complete some phrases which begin: De La Salle and his first brothers were saving young people from ...

What do you think De La Salle and his first brothers were saving young people for?

Complete some phrases which begin: De La Salle and his first brothers were saving young people for ...
The Second Century 1802-1904

The restoration of the Lasallian mission in France initiated a century of extraordinary growth in the land of its origin, and saw its expansion beyond France into 35 different countries of the world and the development of a missionary policy far beyond anything which De La Salle and the first generation of brothers could ever have envisaged. The 160 brothers in France and in Italy in 1810 were to become some 14,631 brothers by the end of the century which culminated in the solemn canonisation of its Founder.

The mission of the Institute has to be understood against the social and political events in France, especially in relation to the role of the Church. Favoured by Bonaparte and by the restored Bourbons in the early years of the century, the Institute, along with other educational works of the Church, was to suffer from the anti-clericalism of the latter part.

The restoration of the mission of the Institute in France was a response to the needs expressed by ordinary people, the hierarchy and the government. The Institute was at first the only congregation authorised to resume its work through schools but, in accord with the centralisation which marked many Napoleonic reforms, the brothers’ schools were placed under the direct control of the University.

This privileged position under the University accorded to the brothers by imperial decree in 1808 may not have always left them as free as they wished but ensured cooperation with government and freedom from the forces opposed to their restoration. In a nation which was to see 17 religious congregations of women and four congregations of men devoted mainly to education founded by 1830, the Brothers of the Christian Schools played an important role in restoring a great deal of what they had already pioneered before the Revolution as well as being pathfinders in responding to new needs in education at a national level.

The most notable achievements are the following:

- the struggle to maintain gratuity in some form or another so that the poor could have schools;
- the accepting of responsibility for a large number of communal (i.e., government) primary schools which helped to provide the model for the national system of elementary schools;
- the insistence on maintaining their traditional methods, based on the continuing editions of the *Conduite des Ecoles*, against the attempt to impose the so-called Mutual, Monitorial or Lancasterian system. (In this system, a master teacher controlled some ten or more monitors, each of...
The Lasallian Heritage

There is an example known by everyone, the schools of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It cannot be denied that they have multiplied, brought about a great deal of good, adopted the best methods, in a word, played an important role in the progress of education (Guizot, Minister of Education, 1833).

The gentlemen of your Committee wish you to teach ... geography, history, chemistry, minerology and popular physics. Let them know that we are going to reply in the affirmative and that the Brothers, friends of the people and dedicated to the service of youth, will always be ready to do whatever is useful, especially if it concerns extending knowledge and spreading the sciences (Frère Philippe, Superior General 1838-1874, replying to a request from Rheims in 1831).

whom was responsible for ten or more pupils.) This was felt by the brothers to be contrary to the close relationship between teacher and pupils which they thought essential. If the brothers were judged 'conservative' in this regard, nevertheless:

Despite the conservative spirit which distinguishes them, the Brothers are prepared to introduce important improvements into their pedagogy (Pierre Lorain, Inspector 1837).

• the provision of evening classes for adults, especially between 1830–1848 when a total of 48,500 workmen were received in evening classes as students, a system studied and subsequently widely imitated by government;

• corrective work in institutions for delinquents (St Yon model) and institutional work in prisons, 1840–1882;

• the Teachers' College on the Lower-Seine, opened at Rouen in 1829, re-established the lifelong concern of De La Salle to provide for the training of teachers and became the first of what was to become one of the consistent works of the brothers throughout the world to the present day;

• after 1830, there was the gradual restoration of boarding schools such as had existed prior to the Revolution until there were 38 by the end of the century. It was in these schools, especially, that the brothers, accepting the prohibition on teaching Latin, made a notable contribution to the development of technical schools, schools of agriculture and schools of design, which were usually developed in response to local needs;

• the development of special professional or commercial schools (business methods, double-entry book-keeping, etc.) was extended almost naturally to the development of what became known officially after 1867 as Secondary Modern Schools where modern languages were part of the curriculum. Battersby's History of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (vol. II, p. 31) cites Duruy, Minister of Education, as saying in 1867:

It is to De La Salle that France owed, if not the first idea, at least the putting into practice and the popularising of this kind of instruction [ie, secondary modern schools]. From the first attempt there emerged a teaching which, if it had been generalised, would have advanced by one century, the organisation of specialised secondary education.

• the composition and publication by brothers of text books for primary schools, secondary schools and for evening professional courses became one of the most widely diffused aspects of the various Lasallian schools. Late in the century a decision was taken to set up and maintain a separate printing press, known subsequently from the opening letters of its title, Librarie Générale de L'Enseignement Libre, LIGEL.

1.2.2 Missionary efforts

The missionary expansion of the Institute, in the classic sense of going into foreign countries to help establish a Christian society where the Gospel was being newly preached, is a clear example of 'responding to needs'. The Brothers usually began by opening schools for the children of government employees, but increasingly these schools, with their catechism classes, catered for local people as well (e.g. the involvement of Blessed Brother Scubilion with the slaves in Réunion). The first efforts were, quite naturally, in French-speaking countries. The initiative usually came mainly from government or Church offi-
cials who sought schools in French colonial possessions as, for example, had occurred with the unsuccessful attempt of the brothers in Martinique in 1776.

In 1815, when the Institute was struggling to re-establish itself in France, a combination of factors, including the interest of the French government and the concern of the Church reinforced by a direct appeal from Pope Pius VII, saw schools founded in the island of Bourbon (now called Réunion), as well as in the ‘Louisiana Territory’ in what is now called the United States. Both these ventures eventually failed, probably because of the tendency to use the brothers individually or in groups of two, rather than respecting their traditional way of working as a community. Successive Superiors General, Brothers Guillaume and Anaclet, wrote important letters to the brothers reflecting on these ‘failures’. Their call for volunteers prepared to face the difficulties of life as missionaries, as they saw it, saw practically all the brothers offer themselves!

Following the failed attempt to send brothers to Canada in 1718, a new group was eventually sent to Montreal in 1837. Other developments in North America were largely due to the important role played by French priests, often members of religious orders, who, dispersed during the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, had gone to the help of various Catholic immigrant groups in the United States. Their requests for brothers, often forwarded through the Propagation of Faith Congregation in Rome (which was responsible for missionary efforts), usually brought a positive response, especially during the long period of Brother Philippe Brunsart as Superior General from 1838-1874. The Foreign Missions Societies of Paris and Lyons, as well as the expansion of the Propagation of the Faith movement launched by Pauline Jaricot, played important roles in the invitations made to the brothers throughout the century.

The first missionary efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean and in other countries of Asia came about through similar circumstances. Without any single formulation of a missionary policy, the Institute moved out of the French-speaking world into parts of the then British Empire (Penang and Singapore, 1852) and in 1863 prepared brothers to learn Spanish in order to open schools in Ecuador. During Brother Philippe’s generalate, there were some 1002 new foundations, more than a quarter of which were outside France. By the turn of the century, one-tenth of the brothers were classified as teaching in what were then called ‘the missions’.

The expansion of the Institute into the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean brought the brothers for the first time into contact with Islam and Judaism and the schools in Penang and Singapore included Moslem, Hindu and Buddhist pupils. The pupils of religions other than Catholic Christians could attend the brothers’ school but usually had to attend the catechism lesson which was seen as indispensable to the overall curriculum. But the experience of the brothers in such mission countries usually modified the ‘conversion’ model of mission which was the common theology of the time. Thus, for example, the prospectus, written by Père Beurel (Missions Etrangères) in 1848 announcing the opening of the brothers’ school in Singapore, included the following wording:

"The principles upon which [the brothers’ school] is based will be as liberal as possibly can be: thus it will be open to everyone, whatever his creed may be; and should, for instance, a boy of a persuasion different from that of Roman Catholics wish to attend it, no interference whatever will take place with his religion, unless his parents or guardians express their wishes to have him instructed in the Catholic religion. Public religious instruction will be given to Roman Catholic boys either before or after school hours; but at all times, the Masters will most carefully watch over the morals of the whole, whatever their religious persuasion may be."
The Lasallian Heritage

1.2.4 Expansion outside France

In the introduction to his eighth volume of the *Histoire Générale de L’Institut des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes*, M. Georges Rigault writes as follows:

The disciples of the saintly educator, already present in Italy, Belgium, Canada and the island of Bourbon before the time of Brother Philippe as General (1838-1874), spread into Central Europe, England, the United States, the Republic of Ecuador, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Madagascar, India and Indo-China during the glorious era which ended with the death of the leader known everywhere [i.e., Brother Philippe]. This peaceful conquest of the globe was to be stabilised, organised and even extended further in the generalates of Brothers Irilde and Joseph. After 1904, it allowed their successor, Brother Gabriel-Marie, to open up paths of the missionary apostolate to a good number of the French brothers who became victims of persecuting laws (p. 1).

This helps to explain why the General Chapter (the official meeting of elected delegates every ten years) of 1894 included 25 elected members representing the following groupings: England-Ireland, Austria-Germany, North Belgium, South Belgium, Barcelona, Madrid, Rome, Turin, Algeria-Tunisia, India-China-Vietnam, Réunion-Madagascar-Mauritius, Orient (i.e., Eastern Mediterranean), Montreal, Toronto, Baltimore, New York, Saint Louis, San Francisco, Ecuador-Colombia-Chile-Argentina.

The brothers’ schools in France were in continuity with the Lasallian tradition, but particular difficulties had already appeared in a number of other European countries because of the traditional ban on the teaching of Latin. This ban effectively prevented the brothers’ pupils from being qualified to enter seminaries to study for the priesthood or from matriculating for universities where Latin was usually a condition of entry into many faculties.

The difficulty was particularly acute in most of the English-speaking countries where Catholics were generally poor, a religious minority, and their access to higher education in practically all fields necessitated Latin. The bishops, therefore, frequently requested the brothers to teach Latin. In the traditional spirit of ‘responding to needs’, the brothers attempted to do this, but their particular situation was not well understood by the Superiors in Europe. This difficulty was felt in England, Ireland and Australia but became most severe in the United States and at one stage even seemed to threaten the links between these schools and the Institute. This was the first major manifestation of the difficulty experienced by the Institute in understanding itself as an international movement.

For individual reflection and group discussion

1. Why do you think the Institute developed so rapidly in the 19th century?

2. What do you think were some of the consequences for the Institute of the missionary expansion of the Institute during the 19th century?

   How do you think this affected the overall vision of the brothers towards their mission?

3. Did this expansion have any consequences for the country in which you live?
The Lasallian story of this century, up to the 39th General Chapter of 1966-67, takes place against the background of the ‘secularisation laws’ of 1904 in France, the First World War of 1914-1918, the world economic depression from the late 1920s to the mid 1930s, the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939, the Second World War and the beginnings of the Cold War. The educational mission of the Institute was affected by all these momentous events but the most important summary of what happened can be read in the statistical table which follows. This is a prelude to a summary consideration of three main issues:

• the implications of the 1904 ‘secularisation laws’;
• the consequences of the resolution of the ‘Latin question’;
• attempts to revise the Common Rules in order to maintain traditional values of the Institute and its mission without sacralising certain observances which had become in practice irrelevant.

The profile of the Institute, accelerated by the series of ‘secularisation laws’ which touched the Institute in France 1904-1912, changed dramatically as the following table shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Brothers in France</th>
<th>Brothers outside France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>10,6726</td>
<td>4806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>4141</td>
<td>8598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2784</td>
<td>13,951</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The so-called ‘secularisation laws’ enacted in France from 1901-1912 were anti-religious in their orientation and intent and aimed at destroying the power and position of the Church. Schools were often summarily forced to close by severe legislation against the religious congregations which were responsible for them. These laws forbade the religious to own property, to wear religious habits and to live in community. In face of these prohibitions, some religious were prepared to forego these aspects of their previous lives in order to maintain their work. Others considered this a betrayal, even an ‘apostasy’, and sought to continue their religious life and apostolate outside of France.

Southern Belgium, Canada and Spain profited most strongly initially from the expatriate brothers but Georges Rigault, in his Histoire Générale des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes (vol. 10), notes the impetus given to already-existing communities in Argentina, Ecuador and Egypt from these self-exiled brothers, as well as the foundation of what were to become new Districts in Brazil, Panama, Mexico, North Africa and Australia.

Today, this may be read in hindsight as a providential way in which the international Institute developed beyond any conscious planning, as the 1966 figures in the above table indicate.
The Lasallian Heritage

1.3.3
Resolution of the ‘Latin question’.

The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools extends its teaching to the classics in order to conform to the august will of our Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, manifested by his letter to the Most Honoured Superior General dated 17th April, 1923 (Addition to Common Rules, 1925).

1.3.4
Attempts to revise the Common Rules

In 1923, Pope Pius XI, by inviting the brothers to include the teaching of the classics where appropriate in their schools, brought a satisfactory conclusion to the historical difficulties between all the Districts where the prohibition against Latin had brought serious difficulties for the pupils of those schools. It resolved the difficulty between the English-speaking Districts — especially in the United States — and the centralised government of the Institute.

This decision relaunched the university apostolates of the Institute in the United States where Catholics, in a minority position and deprived of government support for separate education, relied on Catholic schools at primary, secondary and tertiary level to establish themselves within the society in general. In other parts of the world, it broadened the curriculum in many secondary schools, thereby facilitating the access of those pupils who aspired to the priesthood and to the professions.

The resolution of the Latin Question more than 40 years after the difficulties posed by the complete prohibition on Latin had become apparent was the outstanding example of what had become a more general problem for the Institute:

How remain faithful to the founding vision of the Christian education of the children of the poor when the pressing educational needs in modern society demanded greater flexibility in an Institute which had become international?

In practice, the difficulty was between those who saw fidelity as the literal observance of the original words written by the Founder and enshrined in the Bull of Approbation and, on the other hand, those who felt obliged to attempt to implement the spirit, the Founder’s vision, rather than feeling bound by a literal interpretation of the original words.
This matter came to a head in the 37th General Chapter of the Institute in
1946, just after the end of the Second World War. A General Chapter, prepared
in haste after a world conflict where many brothers had been killed and the lives of
many others had been severely disrupted, was also the first opportunity to meet
after the loss of some 165 brothers put to death in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-
1939. The 1946 Chapter, therefore, had no time to study in depth the basic changes
needed to bring the Rules up to date, but the Superior General sought Vatican
approval for the same Rules with only minor changes. By 1956 it was evident
that there would have to be a complete re-examination and re-expression of the
Rules. A critical study was now urgent.

Although the 1956 Chapter was itself unable to carry out such a complex
task of revision, it began the process. It took, moreover, the far-reaching decision
that

*the critical study of all the writings of our Holy Founder be continued and
that the writing of books and articles investigating his spirituality be further
encouraged.*

This was the important impetus given to official Lasallian Studies as such.
The opening of the Institute of Saint Pius X at Salamanca in 1955 and the estab-
lishment of the Institute Jesus Magister at the Lateran University in Rome in
1958 for the theological studies of religious brothers, furnished the Institute with
a succession of highly-educated brothers, many of whose theses provided the
critical studies for a proper discernment on fidelity to the Founder.

Meanwhile, of course, it was not only the Institute which felt the need to be
more relevant to the modern world. Pope John XXIII convoked the Second
Vatican Council in Rome 1962-1965, thereby providing a renewed theological
background against which the Institute prepared itself for the General Chapter
of 1966.

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**For individual reflection**
and group discussion

1. What were the main factors which led
the Institute in the 20th century to seek
to re-examine and re-express its under-
standing of the Founder’s vision?

2. The summary description in this section
points to an underlying tension in
these years between literal fidelity,
understood as exact observance of the
letter of the law, and a fidelity which
claimed to try to be faithful rather to
the spirit. Reflect on how this issue
affected many aspects of the Church’s
life and discipline. Can you give some
examples?
The La allian Heritage

1.4 From the Second Vatican Council and the General Chapter 1966-67 to the Present

1.4.0 Prelude

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was such an important event in the life of the Church that it is impossible to exaggerate its influence on the General Chapter of 1966, prolonged into a second session in the autumn of 1967. As already indicated, the international Institute was already moving in a radical revision of its fundamental expression of itself and its mission through its Rules at the time when the Vatican Council was begun. Such a movement received new impetus through the event of the Council itself and its sixteen documents and has continued to do so from the various Pastoral Exhortations which have followed the prolongation of the Council through the sequence of synods until the present day.

The changes in language which pointed to new perceptions of the Church’s understanding of itself and its role through the Second Vatican Council were reflected as well in the ‘new language’ of the Institute’s Renewal Chapter of 1966–1967. The four following major themes help to outline how the Institute’s adherence to the principle of responding to needs’ in the field of Christian education found a practical focus.

- The Declaration on the Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today (1967)
- The ‘service of the poor as a principal characteristic’ of the Institute’s mission
- The Rule ad experimentum (1967-1987)
- The gradual perception and recognition of ‘shared mission’.

1.4.1 A new language to express new insights

From the moment Pope John XXIII convoked the Council, one of the major emphases was the change from preserving the tradition — the post-Reformation polemic — to the idea of being ‘up-to-date’, summed up in the Italian word aggiornamento. This concept was to be the leading idea of the document Perfectae caritatis, on the Renewal of Religious Life, with its direction to religious congregations to return to the sources of their original inspiration — what was subsequently to be described theologically as the charisma of the founder or foundress — and to make themselves more strongly present to the modern world.

A second highly influential set of ideas was that of the collegiality of the Council Fathers with its theological emphasis on the sense of communion (communio) between the different groups in the Church, an idea which has dominated theological thinking to the present. This greater stress on horizontal relationships signalled a move away from an exclusively hierarchical understanding of authority and obedience. The concept of People of God as a description of the Church, and the adoption of the word dialogue to indicate the practical way in which matters could be discussed ‘collegially’, continued this movement. As these ideas developed, the word subsidiarity became an important description of the principle to determine the various levels at which decisions should be made in
religious communities and in the Church in general. Later there came the ideas of co-responsibility, solidarity and interdependence.

The first major document of the Council, *The Constitution on the Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)* in 1963, not only brought important reforms to the liturgy but effectively moved the Church away from the uniform Latin Mass and forms of liturgy which were sanctioned by many centuries of practice since the Council of Trent. In putting to one side centuries of chant and polyphony and effectively reducing them to the cultural expressions of previous ages, the Church showed how far it was prepared to go to be 'up-to-date' and relevant to people of today.

A whole new approach was taken to religious freedom (*Dignitatis humanae*) and to other religions in the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions (*Nostra aetate*). An emphasis on participation and the possibility of immediate understanding in the vernacular were henceforth considered more important than the carrying out of a ritual. The continuing growth of its self-understanding is expressed by the Church in three great documents, the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium)* in 1964, and, in 1965, the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today (Gaudium et spes)*, and the *Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)*.

While it is important to see the importance of the Council as event, it is even more important to see it as movement, both through its original documentation as well as through the cycle of subsequent synods which have concentrated on particular themes. Some of this more recent documentation has greatly influenced the movement to various forms of 'shared mission' in other religious congregations.

The emphasis on today, the present moment (the famous aggiornamento of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council), led the Chapter delegates of 1966-1967 to a new, up-to-date formulation of the identity of the brother. The *Declaration*, as its full title suggests, was a statement influenced by the Vatican Council and, along with the Rule, was the major document published by the Institute after the 39th General Chapter. There are 39 references to various Council documents, the major ones being to *Gaudium et spes* and *Perfectae caritatis*. Above all, the *Declaration* is a statement of identity, for, as Brother Charles Henry, Superior General, remarked in his Preface:

...it became more and more clear that we were in need of a document that would give a synthesis of the Brothers' life and mission in the world of today.

This synthesis was formulated in a very important way by defining the constitutive elements of the brother's *vocation* as religious *consecration*, apostolate or mission, and community life. What was significant about this clarification was the stress which the *Declaration* laid upon the integration of these elements as essential for the brother's identity.
The challenge issued under the heading 'Renewal and Adaptation' has a lasting relevance:

*The renewal of the religious life implies that certain practices be given new vitality and that certain institutions be transformed. More importantly, renewal demands a return to the sources found in the Gospel and in the origins of the Institute. In this way new vigour will be derived from the creative principles that gave the Institute existence and the brothers will be able to go beyond mere externals to live effectively the charism of the Founder in the world today (2).*

The same Preface invited the brothers to read all the documents of the 39th General Chapter ‘in the light of the Declaration’. The fidelity of the document to the heritage of the Institute is well brought out in the following words:

*The spirit of the Declaration, the spirit that is basic to an understanding of all the capitular texts, is at once a spirit of spiritual renewal, a personal, responsible engagement in the service of Christ; a missionary spirit of dedication to the needs of youth and to the educational service of the poor; a spirit of community which daily nourishes itself on the word of God, heard and served together; the spirit of renewal of our apostolic works, and especially renewal of the school (ibid).*

A perusal of the titles of the eight chapters which make up the *Declaration* show just how much it is a document of its time. The sequence begins with ‘Fidelity to the Founder’, is followed by directly quoting from *Gaudium et spes*, ‘The Signs of the Times’, and continues with two chapters which look at ‘The Constitutive Elements of the Brother’s Vocation’ and the ‘Personal Synthesis’ which each member is called to make. The fifth chapter takes up ‘The Religious Life of the Brother’ while the sixth concentrates on ‘The Service of the Poor through Education’. There is a separate chapter on ‘Education and the Teaching of Religion’ and the work concludes by an overall view of ‘The Educational Work of the Brothers’. These last three chapters will be referred to extensively later in this work.
1.4.3 The ‘service of the poor’ as a principal characteristic of the Institute’s mission

The common theme addressed by the Vatican Council and successive Church documents as the ‘preferential option for the poor’ has marked the Institute in its renewed attention to its educational mission as that of the ‘service of the poor through education’. The strong coherence between the Declaration and the Rule is most evident in this regard, although the classic tension between established works and new needs is always present.

The Institute is devoted to the poor in a special way, although it offers its apostolic and educational services to all young people who are able to profit from it (RC 1967, 1g).

Another element that can be drawn from the notes [sent to the Chapter] is the expressed will for greater flexibility in the commitment of personnel to institutions so that when more urgent educational needs present themselves the brothers will be readily available. In particular, there is a widespread insistence that the service of the poor become once again a principal characteristic of the Institute (D, 9.3).

The Declaration devotes its entire Chapter 6 to a lengthy consideration of the service of the poor through education by considering such questions as: Who are the poor? War against Poverty, Teaching the Poor, Training Other Social Classes, Help for Those Most in Need, and terminates by considering the necessary Preparation and Practical Orientation for this work.

Chapter 6 concludes with the following words which indicate the challenge posed to all:

*Every level of authority, then, every dialogue and decision in the Institute, must be in harmony with the orientation, so that all our plans and work will show in deed and in truth our ‘return to the poor’* (D, 34.4).

1.4.4 The Rule ad experimentum 1967-1987

Through a period of nearly ten years of study and discussion, with four separate drafts of the Rule, the Institute followed the practice of the founding brothers nearly 300 years previously by judging the suitability of this reform against the background of the life and experience of the Institute for 20 years before presenting a new Rule to the 41st General Chapter in 1986. In its approval of this Rule in 1987, the Church notes that the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes has recognised in these texts the faithful expression of the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and of the tradition of the Institute ... according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to them (R, Decree).

The Rule of 1987 is formulated on principles drawn from the Declaration and the Rule ad experimentum of 1967 and in the light of that lived experience.

1.4.5 The gradual recognition of the role of lay teachers

If the 37th 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 so many other immediate major issues had to be faced by that Chapter. There was also a hope, perhaps even an expectation, that the brothers would continue to maintain or even increase their numbers.

Both the Rule of 1967 and the Declaration make only slight reference to the role of lay teachers in expressions which are similar. The Rule specified that ‘they [the Brothers] cooperate closely with the lay teachers and others responsible for the education of the young, joining their labours with all those who promote the
cause of justice and unity among them' (RC, 9k). The Declaration offers a broader vision:

The school will be moulded into community only through a staff rich in diversity and the unity of its members. For this reason, the Brothers work closely with lay teachers, who make a unique contribution through their knowledge of the world, of family life and of civic affairs. Lay teachers should be completely involved with the whole life of the school: with catechesis, apostolic organisations, extra-curricular activities, and administrative positions (D, 46.3).

Both these documents draw attention to what can now be recognised with more clarity as the increasing involvement of the laity in many aspects of Christian life, especially through their work in schools. Many were increasingly inspired by the educational vision of John Baptist de La Salle. The late Brother Patrice Marcy, in a text of 7 June 1990 entitled The Relationship between Brothers and Lay Lasallians, expressed this in the following words:

We need to try to understand the times in which we are living and agree to judge it in terms of duration. The growing role of the laity is written in terms of duration. It began well before the Council, it is generalised in the Church and has never presented itself as opposed to priests or religious. If the laity fear clericalism, it is to affirm their own identity without arguing with other apostolic workers ... Another lesson to be drawn from this 'time-duration' bond is that there will be no return to yesterday's models ... The coming of many lay Lasallians ... is going to allow our works to continue in a way which we had never imagined ... It is up to us to grasp this passing grace ... We are living in a favourable time, a day of salvation (p. 7).
1.4.6

‘Degrees of belonging’

By the Chapter of 1976, however, there was such a clear recognition of the dedication of many lay teachers that the matter was addressed in terms of their ‘degree of belonging to the Institute’ through sharing in its mission:

The Brothers share Lasallian spirituality and the animation of their works with all the members of the educational community. They are concerned with their continuing formation and careful to make them know the different degrees of belonging to what is being called the ‘Lasallian family’ (C 403, 6).

This matter of ‘degrees of belonging to the Institute’ was addressed in two formal Chapter resolutions.

Besides the postulants, a young man or one of mature age can be associated with the apostolic activity and the life of the community without having made religious profession (The particular status and contract will be determined by the local community in agreement with the District) (no.44).

An individual or a group of persons can be associated in the apostolic activity of the Brothers and the spiritual life which animates them without sharing their community life completely (no.45).

This text may now strike us as patronising and limiting. But it is important not to overlook the advance in thinking which the chapter delegates made by their reflection on experience and their openness to something completely new and different. Perhaps, too, in the general perception that not all those who shared in Lasallian works necessarily had the same commitment to them as a mission, there was a certain intuition which remains valid (see 3.26).

That this growth in understanding continued to develop becomes even more marked in the next decade so that the group of brothers constituted to prepare the draft of the Rule for the 1986 Chapter summed up this relationship between the Institute and those who work with it in the Christian education of young people, in the shorthand expression ‘A Shared Mission’ (R, 17).
The following-out of the directions of the Second Vatican Council and those of the renewal Chapter of 1966-67 provided a strong challenge to an international Institute. If the Chapter delegates had a broad view of what had been achieved through the two sessions of the Chapter, it was not easy to communicate this uniformly and have it understood in the same way throughout the Institute. The inspiring tone of the Declaration was not always uniformly heard or understood despite the efforts to pass on the results of the Chapter. Much was achieved, but the fruits tended to be seen somewhat later. That is why the 20 years between the General Chapters of 1966 and 1986 were a period of great challenge for the Institute.

After 1966, when the Institute knew its greatest number at any period of its history, there followed a period of rapid decline when a significant number of its members, for various reasons, decided to leave it. At the same time there was a marked diminution of younger members entering so that the overall numbers of 1986 were about half of those of twenty years before. Yet, paradoxically, the apostolic works for which the Institute was responsible in 1986 were more numerous because of the growth of the Lasallian Family.

In 1946, the Sisters known as Hermanas Guadalupanas De La Salle, founded in Mexico, received canonical approbation and have continued to develop their apostolic works in close association with the Institute. In 1948, the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, begun by Brother Teodoreto in Torino in 1917, received formal approval as a secular institute. In 1973, a small group of Lasallian Sisters in Vietnam and Thailand received diocesan recognition. These three foundations, along with other groups and movements, were formally recognised by the General Chapter of 1986 as forming part of what was called the Lasallian Family. But there was clear recognition in the Letter to the Lasallian Family, issued in response to the Chapter on 2 February 1989 that many other persons, especially teachers and those closely associated with the Lasallian educational mission, belonged to the Lasallian Family, even without formal links to any particular group or movement. The years since then have shown the richness and vastness of this gift of the Spirit. This brings us up to the present, and the purpose of this document.

For individual reflection and group discussion

1. What does it mean to think of Vatican II as a 'movement' rather than simply as an 'event'?
2. Why do you think that some saw the changes in the Institute after 1966 as a necessary search for new vitality while others saw them as a recipe for disaster? What is your view?
3. Why did the critical changes of the 1960s lead the Institute to a rediscovery of its mission to the poor?
4. Why do you think the Declaration of 1967 spoke so positively about the role of lay teachers in Catholic schools?
1.5 The Present Scene

The Institute establishes, renews and diversifies its works according to what the kingdom of God requires (R, 11).

1.5.0 Prelude

partners—An expression chosen by the 1993 General Chapter to indicate the close mutual relationship which is possible between brothers and colleagues in mission.

In order to respond to this plan [of salvation] and also to situations of distress similar to those that the Founder knew, the Institute desires to be present to the world today as part of the Church’s work in spreading the gospel (R, 11.).

The educational policies of Lasallian Institutions are centred on the young, adapted to the times in which they live, and designed to prepare them to take their place in society. These institutions are characterised by the determination to make the means of salvation available to young people through a quality education and by an explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ (R, 13).

1.5.1 The present reality

The Lasallian educational mission embraces 63,116 religious, priests and lay persons in partnership, teaching and administering in 914 establishments in more than 80 countries, reaching 785,127 pupils, according to the statistics published by the Institute in December 1995. The brothers, who are currently involved in full-time positions in schools and other educational works throughout the world, are around 7 per cent. The accompanying tables show this world-wide distribution of Lasallian educational works and those who are currently working in them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lasallian schools and students, by continent</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Americas</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Australia/Oceania</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>53,075</td>
<td>337,982</td>
<td>112,675</td>
<td>12,248</td>
<td>268,120</td>
<td>784,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### a. Staff in Lasallian schools, by continent
Reported as of 31 December 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Americas</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Australia/Oceania</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brothers fsc</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>1649</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1614</td>
<td>3859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers not fsc</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Women</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>12,055</td>
<td>3,772</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>11,168</td>
<td>28,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Men</td>
<td>1,649</td>
<td>12,633</td>
<td>2,902</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>11,966</td>
<td>29,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,905</td>
<td>26,900</td>
<td>7,023</td>
<td>1,187</td>
<td>25,055</td>
<td>63,070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### b. Brothers and other staff in Lasallian schools, by level
Reported as of 31 December 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 0</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Levels 4, 5, 6</th>
<th>More than 1 level</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal/Infant Age 3-6</td>
<td>Maternal/Primary Age 6/7-12/13/14</td>
<td>Maternal/Secondary Age 12/13/14-17</td>
<td>Maternal/University/Technical Age: 17+</td>
<td>4: Court-referred</td>
<td>5: Handicapped</td>
<td>6: Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers fsc</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>2113</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other staff</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>11,253</td>
<td>28,316</td>
<td>10,870</td>
<td>1867</td>
<td>4946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2024</td>
<td>12,221</td>
<td>30,429</td>
<td>11,188</td>
<td>2035</td>
<td>5173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### c. Distribution of staff in Lasallian schools, by level
Reported as of 31 December 1995

*It is important to note that these tables do not indicate the brothers who work in other than Lasallian institutions, nor the brothers who are effectively retired. The total number of brothers at this same date (31 December 1995) was 7225.*
The Global Lasallian Educational Mission

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**Europe Centrale (RELEC)**
- North Belgium, Central Europe, South Belgium, Holland, Poland.

**España y Portugal (ARLEP)**
- Andalucía, Bilbao, Catalunya, Madrid, Valencia, Valladolid, Central de España with Golfe de Bénin.

**Africa-Malagache (RELAF)**
  **Delegation:** Ruanda.

**Proche Orient**
- (incl. Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Turkey).

**Pacific & Asia (PARC)**
- Australia, Vietnam, Philippines, Penang with Hong Kong and Singapore, Colombo with Pakistan.
  **Delegations:** Japan, India, Myanmar, Thailand.

---

The administrative units of the Lasallian mission, and in which the varied subsets relate to each other, are the Districts. The 66 districts (including Subdistricts and Delegations) are combined into larger sets, the 11 Regions, which are grouped by mutual agreement for support and enrichment by considerations including language, culture and geography (Bulletin 231, 1988; Memento, 1995).

- Regions: bold type
- Districts: normal type
- Subdistricts: *with* italic type
- Delegations are small groups of institutions which have direct relations with the Generalate, Rome.

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**Distribution of establishments by continents:**
- Asia & Australasia: 104
- Americas: 327
- Africa: 74
- Europe: 409
The Lasallian school educational mission embraces 63,116 religious and lay women and men in partnership, teaching and administering in 914 establishments across 87 countries reaching 785,127 pupils (December 1995).

**United States & Toronto (USA/T)**
Baltimore, Midwest, Toronto,
Long Island-New England, New York,
New Orleans-Santa Fe, San Francisco.

**Canada (francophone)**
with Haiti.

**Latinoamericana (RELAL)**
Antillas, Argentina *with* Paraguay,
Chile, Medellín, Bogotá,
Bolivia, Caracas, Peru,
Centroamérica *with* Panama,
São Paulo, México-Norte,
Ecuador, México-Sur,
Porto Alegre (incl. Moçambique).
1.5.3 Variety and breadth of the Lasallian Mission today

Lasallian schools and institutions try to be open to all who wish to attend them. Pupils from all cultural backgrounds and faiths work with a similarly mixed body of teachers and advisers in a caring community.

Education in secondary schools is the focus for 49.9 per cent of Lasallian works. The large number of teachers and administrators in tertiary level education, almost equal to those engaged in primary education, is a recent development. The 3.3 per cent of Lasallians who work in pre-school and the 11.8 per cent who work in special education services — as court-referred, handicapped, children at risk and other activities — reflect the growing awareness of the crucial nature of early childhood development, and an expanding of the traditional Lasallian commitment to the deprived, disadvantaged and vulnerable in response to their special needs. It also reflects the greater involvement of women (now close to 44 per cent of the total) in the Lasallian mission. The majority of pupils in the schools in Asia (with the exception of the Philippines) would be from the Moslem, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucianist, or Shintoist traditions. Many of the educators would also come from one or other of these traditions.

In all these levels of education, the traditional attitudes and values of the Institute, as found in the Lasallian Heritage, are the basis of what is done. Lay colleagues are bringing their distinctive contributions to their increasing presence in posts of responsibility in this overall transition from what was the brothers’ school to the Lasallian school. The Rule of 1987 indicates the necessary openness to change and development as new needs arise:

The Christian School, which has always to be given new vitality, is the preferred field for the activity of the Brothers. The Institute also explores other possibilities for teaching and education more adapted to the needs of time and place (R, 3).

1.5.4 Level 2: Secondary education

If the original Lasallian mission began with primary schools and expanded only gradually via the boarding schools into secondary education (see 1.5.1, 1.5.2), today around half of Lasallian educators work in secondary schools. Frequently, the original primary school sometimes became the secondary school and, in a certain number of cases, the technical or trade school became the college or university.

Secondary education is the last stage of formal schooling for the great majority. In the ‘developing economies’, therefore, schools for young people up to the age of 15 years are the obvious centres for a training in skills that enhance individual opportunity and community wealth. It is frequently found that these schools are fully engaged in promoting the social and economic growth of the people of the area through adult literacy classes and training in appropriate trades. In this regard, it is especially important to emphasise the role which can be played by technical schools in a better preparation of young people for a trade, by collaborating with public authorities, local businesses, trade unions and other educational and social agencies.

1.5.5 Level 3: Adult higher education

The industrialisation of Europe and the immigrant settlement in the United States of America in the nineteenth century produced urban populations for whom the traditional primary education was initially indispensable and subsequently insufficient. The children of the working class and the poor came to need and to seek secondary education. Both for reasons of expense and from fear of the secularism and even anti-clericalism of the existing universities, aspirations beyond secondary education would have been frustrated without the provision of Church-affiliated higher education at modest cost. In the changed
circumstances in many parts of the world today, Lasallian higher education institutions are now challenged with the deterioration of the urban centres out of which many of them grew.

Many of the world's great cities have significant areas which are in steady or steep decline. Accordingly, urban poverty constitutes one of the great strategic problems facing Lasallian universities, especially in that dimension of their mission which emphasises justice, communal responsibility, moral reflection on social conditions and a commitment to providing access to a high quality human and Christian education for people of all economic categories, especially the needy (Br James Gaffney to the meeting of Heads of Lasallian Universities, Encuentro 4, Rome, July 1993).

Statistics made available by the Secretary General show that, in 1995, one in eight of all pupils at Lasallian establishments was in tertiary level education, and, of our present brothers and colleagues, one in five is involved in tertiary level teaching, administration and support. This is a staff deployment similar to that engaged in primary teaching. The Lasallian tertiary institutes number 76 in 19 countries.

The Lasallian response to the call for higher education has been to develop, with a certain pragmatism, a diversified service in universities, technical colleges and teacher training establishments inspired as much by perceived needs as by pre-existing models. Each institution tries to be present to the local society, responsive to its culture and adaptable to its particular needs. Research projects tend to support local industrial initiatives and to promote community awareness. At the same time, academic excellence and, in favourable circumstances, fundamental and theoretical research are pursued.

The educational policies of Lasallian Institutions are centred on the young, adapted to the times in which they live, and designed to prepare them to take their place in society. When the Brothers work in the area of adult education, they put the same emphasis on the importance of person, adapting their methods accordingly (R, 13).
1.5.6 A special Lasallian tradition: the training of teachers and catechists

The Institute tradition in teacher training and the preparation of catechists has been maintained since the time of the Founder, both in specific teachers' colleges and in integral programmes in the professional training of student brothers. The 1987 Rule notes:

Ever since the time of their foundation, the Brothers have contributed to the promotion of the Christian laity, especially among those educators who want their professional work to be a form of gospel ministry.

The Brothers cooperate in forming Christian teachers. They help them to build their professional competence and also to become increasingly involved in the work of the Church and in the field of education (R, 17).

A characteristic of recent developments in this professional training is the care to maintain a close relationship between the local realities and the approaches to the teacher training.

1.5.7 Literacy and community support programmes

There is a demanding and growing call for involvement in the lives of young people who are in difficult circumstances, especially where increasing urbanisation threatens the cohesion of community cultures and often, paradoxically, limits opportunities for formal education.

The very poor are isolated and exposed to exploitation. The influence of the media can cause a distortion of values. Extreme poverty can deprive some of basic human dignity, leading even to their being excluded from the society of the better-off. The unequal distribution of wealth and the limited access to resources tend to foster frustration and undermine the sense of self-worth. This was recognised by the capitulants of the 40th General Chapter in their 'Orientations concerning the Poor and Justice', when they invited the brothers:

to work directly in the educational service of economically poor young persons (children of labourers, of under-employed persons, of migrants), of the victims of social injustice, of the handicapped, of delinquents (C 403, Oct. 1976, p. 78).

Young offenders, or children referred by the courts as being especially at risk, are cared for in an honoured tradition dating back to the expansion of the school at Saint Yon in De La Salle's lifetime. It is not surprising, therefore, to note that, everywhere, Lasallians are increasingly involved in various forms of education for parents, in family support services and in projects with street children, homeless children, young offenders, Boys' Villages and Boys' Towns, and also in many other forms of advocacy for the young.

Many newer projects, with their holistic approach to education which addresses at once the intellectual and moral development of young people and the support of the communities in which they are growing up, cannot be fitted easily into the traditional groupings adopted in this review. A less formal 'pedagogy of the poor' enables educators to go to where the young are and to be a presence of Christ to them there.

Wherever the mission is especially adapted to meet the needs of the very poor, those who work in it are increasingly involved with a broad spectrum of authorities, religions, cultures and resources in a community approach to the education of the disadvantaged. The partnership of women, which has greatly enriched the Lasallian mission overall, has notably enhanced our understanding of the needs of families and extended the support services that can be offered to them.
The incidence of ‘drop-outs’ from formal schooling is a reminder that many students do not succeed in school. Alternative structures, more easily adapted to the special circumstances of neglected young people, are increasingly a feature of Lasallian education. Such centres usually involve cooperative arrangements among brothers and local governmental and religious leaders of various faiths and the support of a devoted personnel. This was already anticipated for the brothers by the Declaration in 1967:

New educational and apostolic needs are making themselves felt in many places; these will require new educational ideas, new teaching methods, new ways by which the Church can make her presence felt among the young ... Nevertheless it is the mind of the General Chapter [39th] that the Institute not limit the interpretation of its educational apostolate so as to refuse all apostolic activity unrelated to the school. Such a narrow point of view would not conform to the traditions of the Institute. It would run the risk of opposing the action of the Holy Spirit among us, and it would paralyse the very initiative that is capable of renewing the schools themselves (D, 51.2, 4).

Even though many schools are able to develop and maintain excellent programmes of religious education with strong pastoral emphases, school-based catechesis can suffer from the fact that the time set aside for religious education is sometimes inadequate and not always well chosen. Such lessons may do little to engender spirituality. For reasons which differ from case to case, it may be difficult to foster positive attitudes to religion in the classroom. Lasallian pastoral centres of various kinds, led by experienced youth leaders, can help young people by giving them the opportunity to share their faith among themselves in less formal surroundings than the school.

The endorsement by the Church of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (1989) commits the Institute to implementing its proposals. While, historically, Lasallian principles have long preceded this formulation of the United Nations, the convention emphasises significant elements in the contemporary understanding of individual autonomy during the years of dependency. It acknowledges, for example, that the right of a child to an identity extends to ethnicity and name, nationhood and culture, and to access to information and education (art. 6:14). Children are to be listened to, especially where decisions affecting their access to resources are concerned (Art. 12). The convention is underpinned by a view of childhood which accepts young persons as partners in society and not simply objects of its care; as having a contribution to make, not merely a debt to pay.
1.5.1
The colloquia on ‘Phenomena affecting the Educational Mission’

The Institute tries to respond through its educational mission to the particular needs of young people in different parts of the world. The 1993 General Chapter was particularly aware of the global problems which more and more influence the young at the approach of the third millennium. This was the perspective which led the Chapter to pass the following formal proposition so as to encourage continuous monitoring of the global issues which ultimately have their own influence on the lives of the young.

The General Chapter asks the Brother Superior and his Council to name a group of experts in the field of education who will serve as observers of the broad educational concerns throughout the world to enable the centre of the Institute to develop a public policy (C 435, ch. 4, prop. 2).

Implementation of this proposition has taken the form of a series of colloquia on issues that illustrate the current impact of world trends on young people. The Lasallian Mission is challenged to recognise a new anthropology of childhood and to renew and adapt itself accordingly. The five principal issues under examination in the series are, in sequence:

- The family today (1994)
- The phenomenon of globalisation and its effects on education (1995)
- World-wide urbanisation and its consequences (1996)
- Information technology and some of its implications for education (1997)
- Suitable approaches to proclaiming the Gospel today (1998).

The main issues arising from these colloquia will be published to all involved in the Lasallian Mission as part of the preparation of the 43rd General Chapter in the year 2000.

For individual reflection and group discussion

1. In the 1990s Lasallian educators still try to respond, through their educational mission, to the particular needs of young people and adults in different parts of the world. From your experience, what kind of needs does your school address?

2. How can the international diffusion of the Lasallian mission be more constructively valuable in the particular situation where you are working?

3. How does your school or educational work try to develop fundamental human values in the young? What are some of these values? What practical suggestions do you have about what more could be done in this regard?
Part 2
Educational Communities with a Vision

By virtue of their mission the Brothers establish schools and cooperate in creating educational communities inspired by the vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle (R, 13)

2.0 Prelude

As the preceding outline of the Lasallian Heritage has indicated, the Lasallian Mission in education has become a global mission. Wherever this mission is being carried out, those involved in it attempt to provide what the Declaration and 1987 Rule refer to as ‘a quality education’ which will help all those who receive it to be actively involved in their own formation as they grow in their human and spiritual development.

De La Salle and his first brothers chose to exercise the mission of Christian education principally through the school. The importance of the Conduct of Schools is that it is the expression of the corporate educational vision and practical experience of the first brothers. In the history of education it marks a new moment: it offers a serious and systematic approach to ensuring that the school, in De La Salle’s frequently written phrase, ‘runs well’. The attention of the Institute to subsequent updating of this basic approach to running good schools accounts largely for its own success in the 18th and 19th centuries and for the model which it provided for other groups interested in promoting popular schools.

It is the school, then, understood broadly in its different levels and manifold forms, which has always been regarded as ‘the preferred field’ in the Lasallian Heritage for offering a good human and Christian education. It is through the school that Shared Mission has originated and developed: it is through the school principally that brothers and their partners in Shared Mission came to meet and work side by side. This dynamic principle of updating, which has characterised the whole Lasallian Heritage, needs to continue with some particular emphases today. These are the same emphases as found in the Lasallian Heritage but they are sharpened and focussed to what appear to be important needs of today’s world, even if the degree of emphasis will be determined in relation to the local culture.

In the following chapter, then, the priorities for a ‘human and Christian education’ for today are set out by considering the following six topics:

- Educational works of quality (2.1)
- The explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ (2.2)
- Relating the educational work and the Gospel to the local culture (2.3)
- Careful attention to the education of the poor (2.4)
- Fostering ecumenical dialogue between Christians (2.5)
- Openness to inter-religious dialogue (2.6).
2.1 Educational Works of Quality

2.1.0 Prelude

Any good school or educational work needs good educational programmes and the pedagogy which is appropriate to the particular needs of its pupils. Whether it is a formal school as such or an adapted learning centre, it sets out to prepare and help its students to take their place in society by giving them the skills they need. Such is the clear message of the Brothers’ Rule of 1987; such is the aim of every Lasallian educational work.

The Christian school, which has always to be given new vitality, is the preferred field for the activity of the Brothers. The Institute also explores other possibilities for teaching and education more adapted to the needs of time and place (R. 3).

In a very detailed analysis of ‘The Need for the Renewal of the Christian School,’ the Declaration, in a section (no. 45) greatly influenced by the Council document Gaudium et spes, insists that this renewal ‘calls for reference to contemporary culture’. In its call for a school which offers ‘quality education, a truly professional spirit, and genuine service to students and to society’, the document insists that one of the principal functions of the school is ‘the vitality and growth of a new culture without sacrificing fidelity to the living heritage of tradition’. The emphasis in the curriculum of such a school, therefore, is not ‘mere book knowledge’, but ‘the powers of observation, imagination, reasoning and discrimination’ in a way that ‘does not undermine ancestral wisdom, or jeopardise the uniqueness of each people’.

This stress on the intellectual is not for the cultivation of an intellectual élite but is an integral part of ‘quality’ education. More recently, in March 1996, in exhorting religious institutes to try to renew their commitment to ‘the mission of education ... at every level’, Pope John Paul II returns to a theme which he has treated often, stating that ‘the need to contribute to the promotion of culture and to the dialogue between culture and faith is deeply felt in the Church today’. He makes a special appeal to consecrated people for ‘a renewed and loving commitment to the intellectual life’ seeing it as ‘extraordinarily timely, in the face of present-day cultural diversity’ (Consecrated Life, 97, 98).

What the school, then, sees as its mission to be accomplished is no mere abstraction but a set of achievements which, by giving due emphasis to the human, cultural and intellectual development of its students, attempts to open them up to a whole world of values, such as the following:

- awakening in them a sense of the meaning of their lives as human beings;
- helping them towards autonomy through personal reflection and the development of a critical spirit;
- helping them to think clearly, to express their personal opinions, to seek for and to respect the truth;
- teaching them to make use of their freedom, to overcome prejudices, ready-made ideas and social pressures;
- forming them to listen, to seek, to understand, to trust others, to be ready to help others, to love, to admire, to contemplate: all of this is to help develop the student in the image of God.

2.1.1 What does a quality school try to achieve?
One of the most important ways in which this might be achieved in a school is indicated in the following citation from the Brothers’ Rule of 1987:

*In order to encourage their students to take in hand their own formation and so to develop a sense of social responsibility, the Brothers give them an active role in the total life of the educational institution, including leadership positions, and a part to play in its functioning and in its discipline (R, 13b).*

**2.1.2 Relationships in the Christian school**

The Christian school asserts the essential dignity of each human being. De La Salle’s important work known as *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* saw the importance of its practices as ‘virtues which have reference to God, to their neighbour and to themselves’. Everything which engenders a school climate of warm relationships is an important step in achieving the school’s mission. These relationships include those of the students with one another, as well as those of the students with all adults, the relationships of the adults among themselves: all of this is to be marked by respect for the uniqueness of each person.

The framers of the *Declaration* in 1967 expressed this sense of the school as a community in what may be considered idealised language but with a vision which can encourage all who work together to realise it:

*Thus the school will be a living community where young people, coming from different social and family backgrounds, educate one another by mutual understanding and respect, openness of mind in dialogue, acceptance of the uniqueness and limitations of each, growth in the spirit of service, and the practice of justice and fraternal charity (D, 46.2).*

Given the size and nature of some schools as institutions, it is important that the school not lose sight of the importance of the individual student, clearly recognising the individuality of each and the necessity that each be treated accordingly. This aspect touches something fundamental about the accompaniment of others. The first brothers in the 1680s defined themselves indeed as ‘brothers among themselves … and older brothers to the young people confided to their care’(R, 53). This same Rule of 1987, in insisting that ‘the educational policies of Lasallian institutions are centred on the young’, is picking up an important emphasis noted at greater length by the *Declaration*.
2.1.3 New vitality in the Christian school

This concern [ie, concern for each student] encompasses the whole person: family background, temperament, strong points, special interests; he or she is more than just another student who happens to attend the school. The [Lasallian teacher] will endeavour to discover and develop more and more the special talents of the students, not concentrating on shortcomings and mistakes (D, 46:2, text slightly adapted).

The quality of the education given through the school is conditioned by the concern for renewal and the continuing updating of all those concerned in the educational process as well as by the attention given to programmes and structures. The Rule of 1987 reminds the brothers that ‘the Christian school has always to be given new vitality’ (R, 3) while the Institute re-affirms what has been the constant characteristic of the Lasallian heritage when it affirms that ‘the Institute establishes, renews and diversifies its works according to what the kingdom of God requires’ (R, 11).

2.1.4 The overall educational plan

The overall educational plan, worked out and evaluated regularly by all those involved in the educational process, is the best way of ensuring that Lasallian school and educational centres not only function well but are also capable of continuing renewal and adaptation to the needs of the pupils. In this way the school avoids the danger of becoming ‘irrelevant’ in comparison with the other ‘schools’ of the media where the young are influenced by factors which are outside the knowledge, let alone the control, of the school community. This need for continual revision and updating is made succinctly in the 1987 Rule:

*In order to fulfil their mission, the Brothers, together with those who work with them, undertake a periodic evaluation and revision of their educational programmes (R, 13d).*

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For individual reflection and group discussion

1. What do you see as the principal challenges which face Christian schools in your culture today?

2. The ‘special character’ of the Christian school has been much discussed in recent years, especially where the state contributes to the support of such schools. What do you see as some of the aspects of this ‘special character’?

3. Why do you think an attempt to improve the quality of the Christian schools has become a major educational concern in the 1990s?

4. You might like to suggest two or three changes which could give new vitality to an educational institution with which you are familiar.
2.2 The Gospel and the School

[Lasallian institutions are characterised ... by an explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ (R, 13)]

2.2.0 Prelude

... I am convinced that too often we have been satisfied and perhaps too easily satisfied today when we have created excellent academic, professional, technical or agricultural institutions, whether the level is primary, secondary or tertiary. Even if these institutions are accessible to lower middle-class and poor youngsters, they cannot be said to be the privileged instrument of Lasallian apostolic ministries if they are not Christian (Brother John Johnston, Pastoral Letter, 1 January 1988).

2.2.1 The Lasallian school is Christian

As the historical glimpses of earlier sections have indicated, the Lasallian school is unashamedly Christian in its origins and came into being to give a human and Christian education to young people, especially to the poor. It does this to the extent that its organisation and its programmes are concerned 'to tie together the work of evangelisation, or making the Gospel known, with growth in education and culture' (D, 40.2).

In the 1996 Apostolic Exhortation Consecrated Life, Pope John Paul II notes that 'the Church has always recognised that education is an essential dimension of her mission', and shows how 'educational undertakings permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity' not only help young people 'to mature humanly under the action of the Spirit' but enable the 'community of learning [to] become an experience of grace, where the teaching programme contributes to uniting into a harmonious whole the human and the divine, the Gospel and culture, faith and life' (96).

2.2.2 Our students are at very different levels of commitment to faith

It is clear that the young people in the Lasallian schools are in very different situations with regard to Christian faith and its practices. While this is obvious in countries where Christianity is not a major religion, it is increasingly true in many of the traditionally Christian countries. In his Pastoral Letter of 1 January 1994, Brother John Johnston reminded the brothers of this point in the following words:

We have in the same school young people who live their faith and others who do not; young people who are Christian but not Catholic; young people who are not Christians; young people who are indifferent and even hostile to organised religion.
2.2.3

All of our students have the right to hear the Gospel

Reflection—The ideal of the daily exhortation or reflection is to enlighten the conscience about moral principles, move the will to carry out firm resolutions, and, if possible, satisfy the taste of the listeners with well-balanced and serious words. The reflection is a powerful means of formation.

(C 197, 35-36).

Rather than being surprised by this, the Lasallian teacher sees this as natural to the age and development of students and recognizes the challenge which this presents in terms of the particular needs of each. In some circumstances, this means that the starting point is often in an education to values by a process which requires involvement of all the students. Meeting at this level of reflection on behaviour and the meaning of life through sharing of opinions may well be the necessary first step which disposes someone to reflect more deeply in a personal way on aspects of life which have been too easily dismissed or never previously considered. Sometimes in such circumstances, it is the voice of a fellow student which carries more weight than that of the teacher.

Nevertheless, all the young people whom we meet, no matter the diversity of their situations, have the right to hear the Good News, the Gospel, the salvation brought by Jesus Christ. The Lasallian school has the duty to offer them this opportunity but this duty is not fulfilled simply by having compulsory religion classes: there must be a whole pastoral programme or campus ministry which keeps alive the spiritual life of the school. Youth groups, reflection groups, the opportunities for retreats and suchlike activities, are indispensable.

The Gospel needs to become known because it is taught, lived and celebrated through such traditional practices of Lasallian schools as the recalling of the Presence of God, the traditional Reflection and the invocation 'Live Jesus in our hearts!' The Gospel becomes better known when formal classes enable students to see how Christian beliefs flow out of the life and teaching of Jesus. The social Gospel becomes real when students are helped to take part in service activities in which they learn how to express their faith through deeds.

These are the practical means of salvation which the school can help to make available to its students. The Declaration, basing itself on the Vatican II Pastoral Constitution in the World of Today (Gaudium et spes) (57,4), encourages the brother (and hence the Lasallian educator) ‘to find God’s work in whatever he does for the advancement of human civilisation and culture’ and presents the following broad perspective:

To open the mind of the human person to the world and to life, to the wonder and beauty of nature, to the diversity and richness of art, to the conquests of science and technology, to a deep thought and reflection, to the varieties of civilisations, to the joys of friendship and of giving oneself to others; by all these things a human being is led to recognise ‘the Word of God who, before he became flesh in order to save all things and to sum them up in himself, was in the world already as the true light that enlightens everyone (D, 41,3).
2.2.4 We propose, but do not impose ...

This deep conviction that the Gospel should be made more readily accessible to all students will always respect the personal freedom of each person. A way through this tension between respecting human freedom and the duty of making the Gospel known in a pluralist society can be offered by remembering that 'the sole requisite of pluralism is that we propose, not impose'.

The Rule of 1987, in supporting this attitude by encouraging the brothers to 'take advantage of the right moment and use the appropriate language to speak of Jesus Christ to those to whom they bring their message', recognises as well that 'reciprocally, they themselves are open to being evangelised' (R, 15). This is a profound truth which touches the very nature of faith coming through hearing and through the mutual sharing of faith which is the very basis of catechesis. What is important, especially for all who teach, is the ability to cultivate an attitude of listening to students.

2.2.5 Catechesis or the Education of Faith

Catechesis is the aiding of nurturing and maturing in faith. It is, in the words of Catechesis in Our Time of Pope John Paul II in 1978, 'educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ'. It is, by its nature, a sharing of faith with particular emphasis on developing a greater knowledge and understanding which is appropriate to the age of those participating. A Lasallian school takes this as its 'principal function' and provides the staff, the resources and the organisation needed.

It would certainly be a serious mistake if the catechetical programs and activities of the school were reduced to the bare minimum because of other demands of the curriculum. It would also be an abnegation of the whole Lasallian tradition if catechesis were to be envisaged as something which is mainly applicable to junior classes and immediate preparation for sacraments. Above all, the catechetical programme is a systematic presentation of the faith in a form which offers all the students the possibility of deepening their faith through the intellectual conviction which better understanding can bring.

But it would be a serious deficiency to limit 'the education of faith' to knowledge and understanding since faith must also be developed through action. In his Pastoral Letter of 1 January 1994, Brother John Johnston suggests some practical ways in which this 'sharing of faith' can take place:
that every existing school ‘reach out’ to the poor around it and respond creatively: literacy programs — in the school or in other centres; teams of volunteer teachers and young people to work with street children; night classes for school drop-outs; Lasallian youth groups to respond to the needs of the sick, the aged, the neglected ... (p. 42).

The Lasallian school has many opportunities to offer its students a deeper participation in the sacramental life of the Church. In primary schools, there is the preparation, in cooperation with the parish, for the reception of First Communion and Reconciliation. For many young people, Baptism and Confirmation may be offered through the school. Experience shows that school celebrations, especially of the sacrament of Reconciliation and the active participation in Eucharistic liturgy for which they have carefully prepared, can have great significance for many young people. The Lasallian school, through careful attention to such celebrations, may help to strengthen the faith community of the school.

A community of faith proclaims by its very existence the truth which brings it into being and sustains it, that is, that all the members have received Christian baptism and acknowledge God as Creator, Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as sent by Father and Son to bring us to wholeness in God. If this is the ‘classic’ form which merits the description of community of faith, it is important to note that this is not a group of the ‘elect’ who wish to present themselves as better than others. It is the usual collection of human beings trying to be faithful to the vision which inspires them.

This sense of community of faith may be much stronger at some times than at others, when some particular happening binds the members more strongly to their faith and to one another. The celebrated text of Pope Paul VI cited in Evangelisation in the Modern World comes to mind:

‘Today people listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses (41).’

The 1993 General Chapter saw, as an ideal to be pursued, ‘that every Lasallian work, when that is possible, favours the birth of a community of faith, a reference group capable of welcoming various persons (brothers, priests, religious, laity, young people ...), who wish to deepen their faith and whose concern it is to proclaim in an explicit way Jesus Christ and to commit themselves to the service of the poor’ (C 435, 5.5).
What is important about this notion is that the community of faith is essentially outward looking. It is less concerned to restrict or limit its membership but is more concerned to include all those who can benefit by the grace of the moment to give expression to the faith that is in them. Christians, it has been said, often recognise their imperfect hope and charity but somehow seem to insist that their faith must never be less than complete, thereby forgetting the prayer of the Apostles, ‘Lord, increase our faith’.

Moreover, it must always be remembered that the ‘faith community’ is not simply a set structure with rigid rules of membership into which people enter by right of their Christian Baptism. The nature of Christian faith is such that it is clearly not exclusively a question of initiation via Baptism nor of knowledge of Christian doctrine which confers membership. The grace which the Christian tradition insists is conferred by Baptism can remain potential in those who make no effort to cooperate with it by the usual practices of Christian life.

A faith community can be formed implicitly by those who act in accordance with the principles of St Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 25, in giving to eat, in offering a cup of cold water, in visiting the sick and those in prison. Many have had that experience of an implicit faith community, somehow visible and tangible at those moments when members of the school community gather to celebrate the mystery of life and death, of sickness and suffering among its members. It can be felt in the efforts of those who strive gratuitously for humanitarian reasons to alleviate human suffering in any shape or form. The example of Pope John Paul II praying with other religious leaders at Assisi in 1986 is probably one of the most striking examples in modern times of this ad hoc faith community, which met to acknowledge the one Lord and Creator in the common prayer for peace.

2.2.8

Personal witness

There are Lasallian schools operating in countries where government restrictions make formal teaching or practice of religion difficult. In such cases, an important witness value comes from the very presence of the school and the service it offers for human development. The individual teacher’s own integrity is frequently the most important influence on young people. The discussion of topical problems — war, violence, racism, sexuality, AIDS, peace, the environment — can be an important way of witnessing to truth. The words of the Declaration, written to describe the brother as a catechist, can be applied more widely to all Lasallian teachers who wish to make them their own:

The Brother [Lasallian educator] reveals the religion of love by giving to the students an idea of what it means to experience a love that is sensitive, virile and unselfish ... It is not in words or in books that young people meet most forcibly the God who calls them by name, but rather in the person of the Brother [teacher] who catechises them (D, 40.5).

For individual reflection and group discussion

1. As you listen to students whom you know, what do you hear about their practice of their faith?

2. In what sense is your educational community a ‘faith community’? If you feel that there are a number of ways of looking at this topic, state them.

3. How is the Gospel ‘heard’, ‘lived’ and ‘celebrated’ in your school?
2.3.0 Prelude

Inculturation is needed both in proclaiming the Gospel and in instructing others about it. (R, 18)

2.3.1 Inculturation

The Brothers make every effort to get to know, to respect and assimilate the positive values of the people .... whom they are called to serve (R, 18).

Inculturation is the process by which the Gospel is presented in a way that respects the mentality, customs and traditions of the culture of the people to whom it is brought. If the word inculturation has had a particular importance in modern times, the principle of respecting cultural forms is as old as Paul's famous discourse to the Athenians at the Areopagus in the Acts of the Apostles (17:23-34).

The Lasallian school needs to question itself about its relationship to the culture in which it is found. Pope John Paul's Mission of the Redeemer (33) proposes three broad situations which could be applied to education thus: some Lasallian schools are a Christian presence in countries which are overwhelmingly non-Christian; others in traditionally Christian countries are part of solid Christian communities which function well; a third group are those in countries with ancient Christian roots or in the Church at the time of the baptised have lost a living sense of the faith.

In his Apostolic Exhortation Catechesis in our Time, following the 1977 Synod, Pope John Paul II drew attention to the important link between the mystery of the Incarnation — Jesus, Son of God becoming human — and the need to express the Gospel in terms which have meaning in the particular culture being addressed:

We can say of catechesis, as well as of evangelisation in general, that it is called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures (53).

Inculturation', says the Instruction on Christian Liberty and Liberation of 1986, 'is not simply an outward adaptation, it is an intimate transformation of authentic cultural values by their integration into Christianity and the planting of Christianity in the different human cultures.' Such is the experience of the Christian church throughout history, as the same document continues, because 'cultures will be given fresh life through their meeting with the Gospel. But all of this presupposes that the Gospel is indeed proclaimed' (96).

What this means in practical terms is that the Lasallian school has as one of its duties to make sure that Gospel values are known and appreciated, even when they run counter to prevailing norms as portrayed in the media. Similarly, if the Lasallian school introduced into a new culture becomes only a means of social advancement in that society, and not an enrichment of the culture through the values of the Gospel, its long-term value must be seriously questioned.
For the Gospel to be heard, it must be expressed in the language of the culture. This means in practice that there has to be a dialogue between the historical and cultural forms in which the Gospel has been transmitted and the hearers in any particular culture. Where this dialogue is open to speakers from within the culture and to those who proclaim the Gospel mystery, such openness may ‘help them to bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought’, as *Catechesis in Our Time* expresses it (53). The same document goes on to remark that ‘Genuine catechists know that catechesis takes flesh in the various cultures and milieux: one has only to think of the peoples with their great differences, of modern youth, of the great variety of circumstances in which people find themselves today’.

Efforts at inculturation seek to root the Gospel in the distinctive aspect of each people and within their own history. It is the same effort at inculturation which envisages also the bringing of the Gospel into the emerging culture of today’s world, marked by the phenomenon of globalisation and all its attendant aspects. It is today’s culture which has to be evangelised by a Lasallian education which is appropriate for today. The Brothers’ Rule of 1987, having emphasised that ‘every culture needs to be evangelised’, points out that ‘this effort at inculturation is equally necessary and applies as well to youth culture as to the rapidly evolving culture of contemporary society’ (R, 18).

Among the attitudes needed by a Lasallian educator in face of the rapid transformation of traditional cultures through the phenomenon of globalisation with its attendant knowledge and communications explosion, the following five points appear to be most important.

- Knowledge and understanding in a rapidly changing world. If the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesis in Our Time* of 1977 emphasised the importance of ‘knowing cultures and their essential components’ (53), and if the Brothers’ Rule of 1987 emphasised the ‘effort to get to know, to respect and to assimilate the positive values of the cultural heritage where they are located and where they are called to serve’, the General Chapter of 1993 emphasised that ‘Inculturation is an ongoing process. For the shared mission, formation to inculturation is necessary for both brothers and lay persons. This formation includes a study of the language of the country,'
2.3.6 The school community and the search for values

insertion into the life situation of the population, getting to know the young people, etc' (C 435, 3.5, p. 43).

• Respect and assimilation of the positive values of the cultural heritage of the people. The Brothers’ Rule further invites all Lasallian educators to discover the signs of the presence of the Spirit, in the cultures of different peoples (18).

• The critical dimension in the approach to cultures. Knowing, understanding and respecting cultures does not mean approving everything in them. The Rule of 1987 stresses that ‘the ferment of the Gospel renews and enriches this cultural heritage’ (18), while the Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, The Mission of the Redeemer, insists that ‘the process of [inculturation] is thus a profound and all-embracing one, which involves the Christian message and also the Church’s reflection and practice’ (52). It is in this spirit that Lasallian educators are called ‘with an open mind and yet in a spirit of healthy criticism to study the various religions, ideologies and cultural traditions of the areas in which they establish themselves. They will be able in this way to absorb the positive values therein and so to make a valuable contribution to the education of the people around them’ (R 18c).

• Patience. Inculturation has to be a permanent process and therefore all those engaged in it have always to be open to the changes which are part of its vitality and a reflection of the life of the society.

• Inculturation needs to be visible. The Rule of 1987 insists that ‘Brothers [and Lasallian educators] who belong to the country are the ones principally in charge of inculturation into their own social milieu. [Those] who come from other countries collaborate ... in a spirit of fraternal solidarity. In those areas where the latter are still numerous, they encourage the local people gradually to assume complete charge’ (18b, adapted).

2.3.7 Building a bridge between culture and faith

The students in the Christian school bring their own values, acquired in their homes, from their parents, from their peer-group, from their experience of life, according to their age. The role of the Christian teacher qua teacher, is to open up the storehouse of Christian culture and to try to make this accessible to these students. Values, the wise old maxim asserts, are caught rather than taught.

But, to the extent that this maxim is true, it needs to be refined by suggesting that values can also be caught precisely because they are taught, that is to say, they can be acquired precisely because students see these values embodied in the attitudes and actions of their own teachers in the climate of the school community and in the importance given to values in the curriculum.

Many of the practical steps already suggested in 2.3.5 can help to bridge the gap between the contemporary culture and the practices by which faith is expressed. The frequent changes in language which have marked the post-war catechetical movement can be a useful reminder that this dialogue is never exhausted: it must always be open, as the changes with regard to the following words and expressions indicate:

• for some hundreds of years the lesson in religion was the ‘catechism lesson’;
Educational Communities with a Vision

• the overall process was often referred to generally as 'religious education' but the re-appearance and widespread use of the word 'catechesis' in the 1950s showed a search for more precision for those aspects of religious education which assumed a common faith;

• the expression coined by the post-war French catechists, the 'education of faith', displaced the centre of attention from the catechism to the mysteries and great truths which the catechism could only express in precise formulas;

• the so-called kerygmatic movement of the 1960s gave prominence to salvation history as read, studied and celebrated through the Bible;

• the 1970s saw the arrival of values education and religious studies;

• at the same time, there was a tendency to seek to supplement the traditional lessons by various kinds of out-of-school or pastoral activities — retreats, prayer sessions (Taizé style);

• in North America, there was the development of what became known as campus ministry with its wide range of activities ranging from formal studies in class to many kinds of outside activities. A similar movement in France, marked by significant cultural differences saw great changes in the traditional aumoneries or chaplaincies.

• in Spain and in Latin America, the expression 'pastoral' tended to be used as the overriding description for a whole range of the teaching and celebration of faith, especially with the young.

It is clear that each change in language or terminology was an attempt to recognise important changes and differences. Note, for example, that values education and religious studies were already much more objective, less dogmatic, more inclined to be relativist, certainly some considerable distance away from the traditional assumption that all in the same school or class were practising believers who all held and carried out the observances of the same faith. In the modern pluralist society, the Gospel can appear to be only one voice, one ideology among many others. What is essential is that the Lasallian school help all in it to bring the criteria of the Gospel to the different and frequently conflicting values of the society by providing both a content and a basic philosophy of the human person in its curriculum and procedures.

Much more could be said but what is clear is that the culture/faith dialogue is essential if Lasallian schools are to offer a Christian education worthy of their name and their particular heritage.

For individual reflection and group discussion

1. ‘Every culture needs to be evangelised.’ Examine how this may be true of the culture and society in which you live and work.

2. For a Christian, the bridge between culture and faith is above all the person of Jesus Christ, his teaching and his role as Saviour. How does your school or Lasallian work, with full respect for personal religious freedom, try to make Christian teaching accessible to the school community?
The Human and Christian Education of the Poor

The brothers are entrusted with their mission by the Institute, a mission especially to the poor (R, 14).

The connecting thread which has linked the history of the Lasallian movement in education has been the response to the need to provide for the human and Christian education of the poor. It has been and remains the essential dimension of the Lasallian school.

The Rule of 1987 reminds us that ‘John Baptist de La Salle gave a new meaning to the school by making it accessible to the poor and offering it to all as a sign of the Kingdom and as a means of salvation’ (R, 3) and that, with his first brothers, ‘they associated together to respond to the needs of young people who were poor and far from salvation’ (R, 47).

2.4.1 A ‘return to the poor’

Following the orientation of the Second Vatican Council, the Institute, through its Renewal Chapter of 1966–67 (as we have already noted in 1.43), addressed itself to the authenticity of its service of the poor through education. The Declaration expresses this clearly by saying ‘that the apostolate with the poor is an integral part of the finality of the Institute’ (D, 28.2), and concludes with the clear direction that ‘every level of authority, then, every dialogue and decision in the Institute, must be in harmony with this orientation, so that all our plans and work will show in deed and in truth our “return to the poor”’ (D, 34.4). The Rule of 1987 invites the brothers to consider ‘the direct or indirect service of the poor as the preferred aspect of their ministry of education’ (R, 40).

2.4.2 The process is continuing ...

The fact that this return to the poor is being addressed from the centre of the Institute can be seen from the following steps which have been taken. In 1980, the General Council issued an important Circular of some 150 pages entitled The Educational Service of the Poor and the Promotion of Justice (no. 412), the last chapter of which concentrated on describing some important initiatives from each continent. The basis for this circular was a Working Paper of 1979 which simply gathered together experiences from all around the world of what was being done throughout the Institute for the service of the poor. The discussion which centred around the final form of the Rule after the 20 years ad experimentum led to some important strengthening of the historical sense of the special vow of Association for the service of the poor through education in articles 39-41. The request from UNESCO in 1990, the Year of Literacy, to provide a dossier of things being done by the Institute in various parts of the world to promote literacy revealed such a wide range of major activities that the Noma Prize was awarded to the Institute.

The General Chapter of 1993 made its own affirmation of its continuing option for the poor in the following words:

As members of the Institute of St John Baptist de La Salle, we strongly re-affirm our option for the human and Christian education of young people and adults, and in particular for the poor (C, 435, p. 20).
In specifying ways in which this option is being exercised, the Chapter instanced the willingness of brothers ‘to become trained and to adapt to all kinds of social situations’, and noted that brothers ‘especially in the third-world continents … have made a strong commitment to help the most deprived young people and adults’ (C 435, 1.4, p. 20). As the section finishes, the text stresses the importance of being ‘active witnesses to the dignity of all people’ and then enumerates a variety of ways, many of which have direct reference to the poor such as the following:

- [...] active witnesses to the urgent need for national and international programmes which include specific cultural measures regarding the poor;
- [...] active witnesses to God’s solicitude for people who are marginalised by great poverty and other modern forms of misery (C 435, p. 21).

A n important initiative in recent years has been the widespread concern, in the best tradition of the Institute, to ensure that educational works are, as far as circumstances allow, gratuitous even if they cannot be completely so, and open to all who wish to come. The progress realised in recent years has led to a growth in sensitivity, a greater awareness and concern for what can be achieved in spite of financial restrictions. Where the schools receive no or little state subsidy, this has led to extensive fund-raising and development projects, often staffed by volunteers, and to the creation of new works or to the development of previously unforeseen initiatives to try to give some kind of answer to new situations of poverty such as the following:

- activities on behalf of refugees and immigrants;
- orphanages or centres for young persons in difficulty;
- centres for young people who have learning difficulties;
- various ways of accompanying young people who have dropped out of school;
- different ways of helping and supporting young people who are handicapped;
- educational activities which cater for street children and gypsies;
- the setting up of evening courses either as literacy courses for adults or to provide courses for young persons in need.

An interesting contribution from a pedagogical viewpoint has been the introduction of special programmes and the creation of various structures so as to reach more efficiently those students who are having difficulty in our educational establishments. There has been a marked contribution from brothers and other Lasallian educators in this regard. There are also places where older students help younger students who are having difficulty.
2.4.4 For which 'poor' does the Lasallian school have a preference?

In its Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum educationis), the Second Vatican Council spoke of three kinds of 'poor':

The Council exhorts all associated with Catholic schools to carry out their task even more perfectly, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in temporal goods, or deprived of the help and affection of a family, or are strangers to the gift of faith (9).

The Rule suggests to the brothers that they 'work directly for the poor by providing an education for the economically deprived, victims of social injustice, delinquents, and those neglected by the rest of society' (40.2). There are, above all, those who have neither an active nor a passive role in society or who simply lack the possibility of developing their talents and aptitudes. This point is addressed by Brother John Johnston in the Second Lasallian European Congress at Strasbourg in 1994:

Many economically poor youngsters are extremely talented intellectually. They have a right to develop their God-given talents and abilities. We must be careful to avoid forcing the economically poor into a special category, as if economic poverty were equivalent to a lack of ability to learn. We need to open the doors of opportunities to those who have become marginalised by circumstance (Lasallians ... without Frontiers, 5).

2.4.5 A preferred option for the poor which arises from considering unjust structures which lead to poverty

In a powerful passage which could have come from today's newspaper, the Declaration of 1967 considers the world where the Lasallian educator is called to serve.

It is a world in which the life, liberty and dignity of [people] are more and more threatened; a world of loneliness and despair for many who are trodden down by selfishness, greed, indifference, or desire for power; a world of social injustice with an increasing disproportion between rich nations and the poor; a world of illiteracy and ignorance in which the young are neglected (D, 11.3).

Pope John Paul II, in encouraging all to greater solidarity with the poor, reminds us that 'the freedom with which Christ has set us free encourages us to become the servants of all. Thus the process of development and liberation takes concrete shape in the exercise of solidarity, that is to say, in the love and service of neighbour, especially of the poorest' (Sollicitudo re socialis, 46). In his Pastoral Letter on Solidarity in 1989, Brother John Johnston suggests that 'we have to see more vividly and to feel more intensely the poverty that exists throughout the world, in our cities, and perhaps in our own backyard' (p. 29). The General Chapter of 1993 highlights some aspects of the present world which are so many challenges to the Lasallian educational mission:

- migratory movements, racism, urban violence, terrorism, drug addiction,
- loss of basic human values, crises of faith, refusal of religious education,
- the attraction of sects, unemployment, AIDS, hunger, illiteracy, street children, homelessness, contempt of life, broken families, school dropouts (C 435, p. 22.2).

Four particular challenges are presented to Lasallian educators:

• respect for children's rights;
• the fight against illiteracy;
• education in values;
• specific ways of accompanying young people who are the victims of exclusion.
2.4.6 Preferential option for the poor enlightened by discovering the causes of poverty

When the Brothers' Rule invites them 'to become increasingly aware of the reasons for the poverty that surrounds them' (R, 14), it is not simply so that they be better informed of a phenomenon of our society. What is intended is that such an understanding — enriched by a variety of means such as the study and presentation of the social teachings of the Church, by attendance at local and international conferences which address the problem and, in general, by making this topic a focus of interest — should make students, parents and society more aware of the problem and so inspire them to do something about it.

Such was the intent of the 42nd General Chapter in a series of Recommendations to the Institute on this point. Districts were encouraged to support 'projects of insertion in the world of the poor'; brothers in any kind of renewal project were invited 'to include ... some involvement with the less fortunate'; District Chapters were to look critically at their educational centres and programmes to evaluate their degree of involvement with various groups in need; Lasallian universities and tertiary institutes were asked to consider 'scientific research into the causes of poverty and social injustice and into the elimination of the causes', while the same institutions were to look to 'the preparation of technicians and professional experts in the conversion of our ecosystems, in collaboration with national and international organisations' (C435, 3.1-3.4, pp. 25-26).

2.4.7 Making this option for the poor a reality

Since the great Encyclical Letter The Progress of Peoples of Pope Paul VI in 1967, the Church has constantly addressed itself to the growing gap between the rich and the poor. The present cycle of debt of so many developing nations to the World Bank is so crippling that any further growth becomes impossible. But if this is the case at the macro-level of world economics, what can be done at the micro-level of education? In his address at Strasbourg, Brother John Johnston, Superior General, made the following practical suggestions:

I have long advocated that each of our schools be an ‘impact centre’, that is to say, a centre which 'reaches out' to the poor around it and responds creatively and effectively. The possibilities for service are almost unlimited: literacy programs — in the school or in other centres; teams of volunteer teachers and young people to work with street children; night classes for school drop-outs; Lasallian youth groups to respond to the needs of the sick, the aged and neglected, etc. Many of our schools 'reach out' to the poor of other countries by providing financial assistance. Some even send young people, teachers, former students, parents, and friends for service in needy countries during vacation periods (no. 5, p. 11).
2.4.8 What are some practical steps to be followed?

This solidarity with the poor challenges all Lasallian educators as well to give serious attention to their own situation if they are not directly involved with the poor. The Rule of 1987 reminds the brothers that ‘concern of the Brothers for the poor serves also to motivate their activities when they deal with people in a more favourable social environment, urging these to become more sensitive to unjust situations of which the poor are so often the victims’ (R, 14).

In his comment on this point, Brother John Johnston makes the following four practical suggestions about what Lasallian schools need to offer as programmes:

1) enable the students to know and understand the injustices that exist at every level of society;
2) learn the social teachings of the Church;
3) have the opportunity to serve the poor, the sick, the aged;
4) participate in follow-up discussions and evaluations (3, 11).

The General Chapter of 1993 suggested some strategies at different levels so that the preferential option for the poor would be an effective reality in the Lasallian Family at local, District and at Institute level. At local level, the brothers were challenged ‘to respond concretely to situations of poverty’; at District level in ‘the District Plan for Shared Mission, worked out and evaluated by all concerned’, by giving priority to ‘the promotion of the educational service of the poor and justice’; at Institute level, there was the first and major resolution of the Chapter expressed as follows:

The General Chapter asks Brother Superior General and his Council, between 1993 and 1997 ... to make an appeal to the Regions and the Districts to make available 100 Brothers and a certain number of Lasallian Partners who will receive special training and will be sent on mission in view of responding to the following needs:

— to create new apostolates for the poor in places where the Institute is already present or in new places;
— to renew or strengthen existing educational apostolates for the poor;
— to train (initial or continuing formation programmes) brothers and Lasallian Partners, especially in the small and developing sectors of the Institute (C 435, pp. 26-27).

For individual reflection and group discussion

1. ‘The Christian education of the poor ... the essential dimension of the Lasallian school’. In what ways does your school or work express its concern for the poor?

2. The Lasallian Heritage shows us how jealously the Institute defended its foundation sense of ‘gratuity’. In the diverse socio-political situations of Lasallian schools today, what are some of the ways in which gratuity can still be maintained, especially with regard to the various forms of poverty met with in the situation which you know?
2.5 Ecumenical Dialogue

The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit (Second Vatican Council, The Restoration of Unity, 21 November 1964, 1).

2.5.0 Prelude

Dialogue is at the heart of ecumenical cooperation and accompanies all forms of it. Dialogue involves both listening and replying, seeking both to understand and to be understood. It is a readiness to put questions and to be questioned ... Ecumenical dialogue allows the members of different Churches and ecclesial communities to get to know one another, to identify matters of faith and practice which they share and points on which they differ’ Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism (172).

All Lasallian works have a particular interest in this task because of the many different Christian groups represented in their school communities.

2.5.1 The importance of ecumenical dialogue in the Lasallian school

The objective of ecumenical dialogue is reconciliation among baptised Christians who, acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord, seek for the unity — the communion — for which Christ prayed before his death. Lasallian schools in many different parts of the world include pupils from various Christian traditions other than the Roman Catholic. Since the school is a place where young people grow in their understanding of their heritage and of life in general, it is a particularly favourable place for young people to become aware of the importance of such ecumenical dialogue. Hence, the Ecumenical Directory of 1993 speaks of the role of the school as follows:

Every kind of school at every level, should give an ecumenical dimension to its religious teaching, and should aim in its own way to train hearts and minds in human and religious values, educating for dialogue, for peace and for personal relationships (68).

The qualities of such a dialogue are further developed. It is to be marked by ‘a spirit of charity, of respect and of dialogue which requires the elimination of language and prejudices which deform the image of other Christians. This holds especially true for Catholic schools where young people should grow in faith, in prayer and in the resolve to put the Christian Gospel of unity into practice’ (68a).

After suggesting how this delicate topic can be approached through such topics as the history of art, the Directory insists that ‘it is also desirable that teachers be correctly and adequately informed about the origins, history and doctrines of other churches and ecclesial communities, especially those that exist in the same region’ (68b).

2.5.2 Some ways of favouring ecumenical dialogue

Among other means of favouring ecumenical dialogue, the Ecumenical Directory mentions those which refer to the sharing of spiritual activities. The first one mentioned is that of common prayer because ‘such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine expression of the ties which still bind Catholics to these other Christians. Shared prayer is in itself a way to spiritual reconciliation’ (108).
The content of such prayer is specified in the following article which stresses the importance of being present together so that ‘together they may put before God the needs and problems which Catholics and other Christians share among themselves, as for example, peace, social questions, etc’ (109). This idea is intensified elsewhere where the same document suggests that ‘it may be helpful in certain cases to arrange for spiritual sharing in the form of days of recollection, spiritual exercises, groups for the study and sharing of traditions of spirituality and more stable associations for a deeper exploration of a common spiritual life’ (114).

The same Directory recognises a common source of enrichment which is possible in many schools but which can pose difficulties unless the issue is well understood. This is the question of the spiritual needs of Christians other than Catholics in our schools.

In Catholic schools and institutions, every effort should be made to respect the faith and conscience of students and teachers who belong to other Churches or ecclesial Communities. In accordance with their own approved statutes, the authorities of these schools and institutions should take care that the clergy of these other confessions have every facility for carrying out their spiritual and sacramental ministration to their own faithful who attend such schools and institutions. To the extent that circumstances allow for it, with the permission of the diocesan Bishop, these facilities can be offered on the Catholic premises, including the church or chapel (141).

The implementation of these principles has important implications for Lasallian schools which include teachers of other Christian denominations in their faculty.

2.5.3 Forms of collaboration and common witness

The Second Vatican Council, in its Decree on Ecumenism, had already emphasised that collaboration between Christians was an important way of setting ‘in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant’ (12). Collaboration between young people in a school setting is possible at a number of levels. First of all, there is the work together in a common Lasallian project of
some kind. One of the most important ecumenical experiences can come through a common task which attempts to build towards unity. The same appreciation of human life, work towards building peace, applying the social principles of the gospel, sharing cultural forms, working with the poor and so many other forms of Christian service can provide an important experience of shared Christian values, while at the same time the pain of separation, felt more poignantly, can be its own prayer for unity.

Secondly, even if this is more delicate, there can come about a deeper understanding in certain forms of catechesis where the common and differing aspects of various traditions are looked at respectfully. This certainly should not deteriorate into a kind of ‘reduction to a common minimum’ (35), as Catechesis in Our Time insists, for, as the same document says, ‘the communion of faith between Catholics and other Christians is not complete and perfect’.

In this respect, the role of individual teachers is of the greatest importance in order that this ecumenical dimension is always present in the overall life of the school or institution. The openness of older pupils to an understanding of ecumenism according to their age and circumstances is a pastoral question with many implications for the lives of young people today in a way that was not so for previous generations.

For individual reflection and group discussion

1. In what ways is the ecumenical dimension present in the ‘overall life of your school’?

2. How, in a practical way, does your school help to appreciate the richness of the various Christian traditions present in its pupils and teachers. What attention is given to the common celebration of the great Christian feasts?
2.6 Inter-religious Dialogue

2.6.0 Prelude

The presence of the Institute since 1817 in the countries of Africa and Asia where Christianity is a minority religion has always been marked by a profound respect for the different religions encountered (see 1.23). But this classic sense of inter-religious dialogue has been greatly extended as a consequence of the expansion of the Institute and the large-scale immigration of the post Second World War. Nowadays there are Lasallian educational works in Europe, North America and Oceania where Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists and many other religious groups can be encountered. Inter-religious dialogue, therefore, is not something exotic reserved to scholars and theologians but something which takes place daily in many schools at one level or another.

2.6.1 Why inter-religious dialogue now?

The history of religions shows that religious people have too often in the past seen their mission too narrowly as persuading or enforcing their particular religion, sometimes even to the extent of imposing it on others. When religion acts in this way and becomes more of an ideology, it effectively loses its spiritual sense because the first gift of the Spirit according to Saint Paul is 'freedom'. The Declaration on Religious Liberty, (Dignitatis humanae), from the Second Vatican Council is uncompromising in insisting 'that the human person has a right to religious freedom' so that 'nobody is forced to act against his or her convictions in religious matters in private or in public' (2, amended).

Ever since this important change of attitude towards other religions, apparent in Dignitatis humanae and in other Council documents, notably Nostra aetate and Ad gentes, the Church has pursued inter-religious dialogue through many symbolic meetings such as the meeting of the Pope with other religious leaders at Assisi in 1986 as well as by the publication of a number of important documents from what is now known as the Pontifical Council on Inter-religious Dialogue such as Dialogue and Mission of 1984 and Dialogue and Proclamation of 1991. Both these documents state their understanding of inter-religious dialogue:

[In the context of religious plurality] dialogue means 'all positive and constructive inter-religious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment,' in obedience to truth and respect for freedom (Dialogue and Mission, 3).

This form of dialogue, Dialogue and Proclamation assures us, is 'one of the integral elements of the Church’s evangelising mission' (9), but it goes on to say that 'The foundation of the Church’s commitment to dialogue is not merely anthropological but primarily theological. God, in an age-long dialogue, has offered and continues to offer salvation to humankind. In faithfulness to the divine initiative, the Church too must enter into a dialogue of salvation with all men and women' (38). What is being sought is not to win an argument but rather to be open to the same broad questions which the traditional religions seek to answer:

Through dialogue, the Church seeks to uncover the 'seeds of the Word' (Ad gentes, 11,15), 'a ray of that truth which enlightens all'; these are found in individuals and in the religious traditions of humanity (Mission of the Redeemer, 56).
Such dialogue does not stop us from presenting the Gospel

Pope Paul VI in his 1975 exhortation, *Evangelisation in the Modern World*, stresses that 'the presentation of the Gospel is not optional for the Church. It is her duty, by command of the Lord Jesus, so that people may believe and be saved' (3). But, at the same time, it is the Church which recognises the importance of being open to these 'seeds of the Word' which are to be found in the profound truths of other religions. That is why the inter-religious dialogue is of such importance, as the document of 1991 called *Dialogue and Proclamation* from the previously mentioned Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue points out:

A just appraisal of other religious traditions normally presupposes close contact with them ... These traditions are to be approached with great sensitivity, on account of the spiritual and human values enshrined in them. They command our respect because over the centuries they have borne witness to the efforts to find answers 'to those profound mysteries of the human condition' (*Nostra aetate*, 1) and have given expression to the religious experience and the longings of millions of their adherents, and they continue to do so today (14).

When he addressed the question of furthering inter-religious dialogue in the school in his address at Strasbourg, Brother John Johnston based his approach on the section called 'Forms of Dialogue' (42) in the already-mentioned document entitled *Dialogue and Proclamation*. He published it also in the *Pastoral Letter* of 1 January 1995, where he considers some different forms of inter-religious dialogue and affirms that each form is a participation in the mission of evangelisation as follows:
We can identify at least six ways in which we can engage our young people in dialogue — whether they are Christians, or non-Christians, believers or non-believers.

1. **Fraternal relations**: when we promote fraternal relations among our young people, regardless of their religious beliefs, we are evangelising.

2. **Human promotion and education**: when we commit ourselves to the intellectual, moral, psychological, and physical development of those God confides to our care, we are evangelising.

3. **Promotion of justice**: when we strive to sensitise our students and pupils to questions of social justice and encourage them to commit themselves to the construction of a more just society, we are evangelising.

4. **Prayer**: when we make possible and promote various forms and celebrations of religious expression and of prayer among our young people, we are evangelising.

5. **Informal ‘dialogue’**: when we communicate with youth through the signs and symbols which identify the school as Catholic and when we share our faith with young people in informal conversation — while maintaining total respect for them in their belief or non-belief — we are evangelising.

6. **Formal ‘dialogue’**: when we organise lectures, seminars, discussion groups on topics relating to our faith as Christians, we are evangelising.

All teachers in the Lasallian school are invited and expected to accept the basic philosophy of the school. At the same time, educators coming from different religious traditions will enrich the overall education by bringing something of their own convictions in their relationships and general attitudes, thus promoting mutual respect and support for religious attitudes. In practice, it is impossible to maintain a strictly ‘neutral’ position in so many aspects of teaching. This is not required. What is necessary is more accurately described as an impartiality which indicates a deep respect for convictions other than one’s own and an openness to dialogue.

### For individual reflection and group discussion

1. How seriously does your school regard the need to promote inter-religious dialogue? How does this affect the life of the school?

2. What ‘seeds of the Word’ (see 2.6.2, 2.6.3) have you discovered in your students and colleagues?

3. Reflect critically on your experience of the six ways of engaging young people in dialogue.
Part 3
Lasallian Mission: A Shared Mission

The Brothers gladly associate Lay Persons with them in their educational mission [R, 17]
3.1 The mission is shared ‘in response to needs’

3.1.0 Prelude

The historical circumstances in which the Lasallian mission of Christian education originated meant that the members of the young Institute were recognised in 1725 by a Bull of Approbation of the Catholic Church as members of a lay religious congregation with an approved Rule of Life. We have already traced how the task of living out this mission in the second half of the twentieth century has involved bringing the Rule up to date, a lengthy but extremely enriching process.

Part of this process has been the recognition that the mission of Lasallian education, pioneered and preserved for a long time entirely by generations of brothers, has now been enlarged and enriched by the gifts brought by others who have already become associated with this mission and wish to share it. But these gifts are not simply at the level of talents but, above all, are at the level of identity and vocation. An unsuspected source of enrichment for the Lasallian mission can come from this mutual complementarity.

This transformation has not taken place in a vacuum nor in response to any theory: it has come from life. Ideas have certainly come from the Institute’s reflection on its own heritage as we have seen above (especially in 1.4.2, 1.4.3, 1.4.5 and 1.4.8) and from the new emphases which have marked the Catholic Church’s profound attempt at renewal following the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965.

This movement of the Church and the Institute has continued through Church synods and four Institute General Chapters so that the new needs of the poor in their search for a good education have become more apparent and more challenging. It is the wish to respond as far as possible to traditional needs in education, as well as to seek solutions to those of a changing world society, which brings brothers and Lasallian partners together in their common Lasallian mission.

If it is true that ‘ever since the time of their foundation, the Brothers have contributed to the promotion of the Christian laity, especially among those educators who want their professional work to be a form of gospel ministry’ (R, 17), it was especially in the 30 years since the General Chapter of 1966-67 (see 1.4) that the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools advanced significantly in its understanding of the role and place of lay collaborators within Lasallian educational communities. Let us remind ourselves of what the Declaration of 1967 had said:

*The school will be moulded into community only through a staff rich in the diversity and the unity of its members. For this reason the Brothers work closely with lay teachers ... Lay teachers should be completely involved with the whole life of the school: with catechesis, apostolic organisations, extra-curricular activities, and administrative positions (D, 46.3).*

Some nine years later, the General Chapter of 1976 introduced the idea of ‘different degrees of belonging’, when it spoke of mission in the following way:
The Brothers share Lasallian spirituality and the animation of their works with all the members of the educational community. They take care of their ongoing formation and are careful to make them know the different degrees of belonging to what is being called 'the Lasallian Family' (C 403, p. 77).

It has already been noted that the General Chapter of 1986 approved the new Rule which introduced the expression 'shared mission' and explicitly stated that 'the Brothers gladly associate lay persons with them in their educational mission. They provide, for those who so desire, the means to learn about the Founder and to live according to his spirit' (R, 17). Along with other very concrete orientations from this Rule, this Chapter gave a strong impetus to 'shared mission' and to the closer integration of lay persons into what is more accurately described as the Lasallian Mission.

In the years which have followed, Brother John Johnston as Superior General, frequently refers to the important role of lay people in the Lasallian Mission in the traditional New Year pastoral letters which he addresses to the brothers. Thus, on 1 January 1988, he states:

[Lay people] take their place as 'full partners' — and we Brothers gladly associate them with us in our mission. We accept that from now on our schools will not be Brothers' schools, allocated by the Brothers' community with secondary collaboration of lay teachers, parents, students. They will be instead 'Lasallian schools', animated by Lasallian educative communities of faith, within which the apostolic activity of the Brothers' community takes place (R, 17) (The Destiny of the Institute: Our Responsibility, p. 32)

In 1989, the General Council of the Institute, in response to the demand of the 1986 General Chapter, published the Letter to the Lasallian Family, which gave a new stimulus and attempted to offer clear and concrete directions concerning shared mission and the Lasallian Family.

The General Chapter of 1993, by inviting some 20 lay consultants to participate in the Chapter's discussion on mission and by deciding to make shared mission one of the priorities for the next seven years, showed how essential the development of shared mission was for the continuation of the Institute's traditional mission of human and Christian education. Some of the leading ideas on this important topic as they are reported in the official document of the Chapter, Circular 435, indicate new insights from the Chapter. Thus, shared mission is:

— 'a sign of the times' (pp. 8, 15);
— 'a grace' (p. 31);
— 'guided by the Spirit' (p. 42);
— 'a call of the Spirit' (p. 9);
— 'a new chapter in the history of the Institute' (p. 8);
— an 'irresistible and irreversible step' in our history' (p. 13).

The Chapter saw the Institute as being at a new moment of its history:

In this new perspective we see our shared mission as a sign of the times. Far from being a regrettable situation, it constitutes an integral part of our vocation as religious lay persons. The Spirit invites us to a deeper and richer understanding of who we are and what we are called to do (C 435, 3.61, p. 43).
Such an understanding of this new reality demands a change of mentality, quite as much among lay people as among the brothers, so that shared mission can be accepted as a gift of God which commits all engaged in it to develop it for the good of the common mission, the Christian education of the poor.

For the brothers: this change of mentality implies that they will no longer consider themselves as the only trustees or proprietors of the Lasallian charism in education. It is their duty to believe in the vocation of lay people, to support it and to encourage it. What is even more important is that the brothers draw the practical consequences at the personal and community level for the specific responsibility which they carry in the shared mission as 'the heart, the memory, the guarantors of the Lasallian charism' (C 435, p. 17).

For lay people: the change of mentality allows them to consider the Lasallian task in which they work as something which is proper to them and not something for which the brothers alone are responsible. It means that they should completely accept their place and their responsibilities in the Lasallian educational plan and to feel that they are co-responsible in the common mission.

For both groups, this change of mentality means accepting differences, respecting them and working at the common mission together in a complementary way, according to their respective and specific vocations.

God is calling each one according to his or her own vocation, to accomplish together the mission confided to St John Baptist de La Salle and to the Institute he founded (C 435, p. 13).

It can be seen, therefore, that this General Chapter opened up vast horizons with regard to the theme of shared mission. This is expressed succinctly in the following sentence:
Lasallian Mission: A Shared Mission

3.1.3 How did the expression ‘shared mission’ come to be used with regard to Lasallian Mission?

The expression ‘shared mission’ was used by the framers of the 1987 Rule as a shorthand expression to describe the evolution of thinking about mission in the light of the practical experience of the Institute during the 20 years of the Rule ad experimentum which followed the revised Rule of 1967. It is significant that the expression is not found at all in the 1967 Rule. If, at one level, it is possibly true that the expression would not have been necessary if the Institute had continued to develop as it had in the post-World War II period to the mid-1960s, it is also important to note that the Catholic Church’s own understanding of the role and the mission of the laity has developed most strongly in the years following the Second Vatican Council. This new thinking recognises the indispensable role of lay persons in the ministry of Christian education.

The combination, therefore, of the declining numbers of the Institute since 1966 and the new attitude to lay involvement in the Church is what has led the General Chapter to the statement already cited above that ‘God is calling each one according to his or her own vocation, to accomplish together the mission confided to St John Baptist de La Salle and to the Institute he founded’ (C, 435, p. 13).

The expression ‘shared mission’, as used by the Brothers’ Rule, is naturally a viewpoint from within the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. As a new term, it expresses a new perception, a recognition of a major change in self-understanding. At its face value, it means that the mission of Christian education which was carried out almost exclusively by the brothers of the Institute since 1679 is now being shared with persons who, without formal links which bind them to the Institute, have become involved in helping to carry out the Lasallian mission. In many of the more than 80 countries where the Institute is located, the expression ‘mission’ is easily and naturally understood as referring to the way in which the particular mission of the Catholic Church in education is being extended to Christian educators who are not members of the Institute. This retains the sense of mission from the Latin root mittère with its basic meaning of ‘being sent’ by some authority to do something in the name of that authority.

Mission is not just a personal choice in the way that someone chooses personally to follow a particular career, to be doctor or teacher or factory worker. The grammatical passive ‘being sent by’ is central to the idea of mission. In Christian theology, therefore, mission in this sense is always linked to the one mission of Jesus Christ, whom Christians believe was sent by God the Father as Saviour and Redeemer, and who, in his turn, promised to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to give continuing vitality and inspiration to the human beings who share in carrying on this one mission.

In the Theological Synthesis which he presented at the conclusion of the Rome International Congress on the Consecrated Life Today in November 1993, José Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes wrote about mission as follows:

Mission proceeds and comes from God. In it the mission of the Holy Spirit is actualised in a visible way, the same mission, in fact, which in a mysterious way, energises the march of the nations towards the Reign of God ... For this reason we are aware that the mission is not an activity that is simply added to the being of the Church. It is its very being. The Church is called
to be sign and docile and humble instrument of the mission of the Spirit, to be a witness of the love of God for the world, to proclaim Jesus Christ and to make him present, to commit itself to the task of reconciliation and of making all men and women of the earth brothers and sisters (p. 19).

But the word 'mission' itself is also used more broadly in a contemporary sense to describe the particular purpose of many kinds of organisations. For example, the title of 'mission statement' has been appropriated in recent years by many business organisations in order to state their underlying aims and philosophy: Why does this organisation exist? What does it try to achieve? What are the principles which guide it?

It is against this rich background of meanings that the expression itself, 'shared mission', is better thought of henceforward as the Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education, which is by its very nature today, a Shared Mission.

The Church's document of 1965, the Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum educationis), from the Second Vatican Council, before setting out certain enduring principles regarding education, justifies its role in education because of its obligation, its 'mandate from her divine founder ... to promote the welfare of the whole life of human beings, including their lives in this world' (Preface, pluralised and adapted).

The document then begins by asserting that all persons 'of whatever race, condition or age, in virtue of their dignity as human persons, have an inalienable right to education' (1), thereby endorsing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1959. Becoming more specific, it asserts that 'all Christians ... have a right to a Christian education' (2, emphasis added), that the obligation to educate belongs first of all to parents before becoming the responsibility of society as a whole (3), and that the Church is particularly concerned that the spiritual aspect of education be seen as essential. The role of the school is seen as essential (5) and parents should have the right to choose the kind of school they wish for their children (6). The Church's role 'is especially evident in Catholic schools' because of the service it can offer 'in developing the mission of the People of God' (8).

This concern for education has been continued since the Council, notably through a series of documents issued by the Vatican Congregation for Christian Education. These include The Catholic School (1977), Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to the Faith (1982), and The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (1988). Consistently developed through these documents are the following principles listed in the Introduction to the 1988 document:

What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its religious dimension and this is to be found in

(a) the educational climate,
(b) the personal development of each student,
(c) the relationship between culture and the Gospel,
(d) the illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith.

To focus these ideas today in relationship to the existence of Catholic schools in countries where there is greater religious pluralism or where the Christian religion is a minority religion, the following principles need to be kept in mind:

• The educational mission of the Church, based on the principles of the Gospel, asserts that all human persons have the same right to an
education which enables them to live with dignity in their particular society and culture. Such an education, through the offices of the Church, is extended to all those of the Christian faith or of any other religious faiths who wish to profit by it.

- The educational mission of the Church is to make Jesus Christ and his Gospel more widely known but it must never be a proselytising effort to win new adherents to the Christian faith (see 1.23).

- In seeking to present the religious principles and attitude to life which it believes should underlie all education, the Catholic Church, in terms of its own official teachings, must be respectful of other religious beliefs and practices and indeed encourage the educational process through dialogue with other religions (see 2.6).

- Throughout its history, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools has been open to sharing its educational practices with all those who have become its students, as has already been mentioned (see 1.23; 1.2.4).

Lasallian schools, therefore, as the earlier treatment of the Lasallian Heritage has indicated, have a clear mission linked to the historical reasons for their existence. That is why it is now important, firstly, to consider the mission of the brothers of the Institute in this ‘new’ way of living the mission which is one of the constitutive aspects of their vocation (see 1.4.2).

Second, it is no less important to consider the mission of those many educators in different parts of the world who share in the educational work of the Lasallian school without being members of the Institute. Third, there are those who work in various aspects of Lasallian works but without sharing the same adherence to the Christian religion. In what sense can it be said that these latter educators share in the traditional mission of the Institute? Such educators might rightfully claim to be willing to be associated with the educational work of the school, to carry out the duties for which they were engaged as educators in a professional way, but to have no particular interest in furthering what they are now told is part of ‘the mission of the Catholic Church’. Profound respect for the religious freedom of each teacher makes it important for the Institute not simply to assume their participation without consulting them as to whether or not they wish, or feel free, to share this mission.

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For individual reflection and group discussion

1. What do you personally bring to the mission of your school?

2. How do you contribute to the ‘shared mission’ of your school?

3. Are there any particular practical suggestions which you feel would strengthen the sense of ‘shared mission’ for you and your colleagues? Such as ...?
3.2 Shared Mission: Diversity and Complementarity

The Brothers work closely with Lay Teachers, who make a unique contribution through their knowledge of the world, of family life, and of civic affairs (D, 46:3)

3.2.0 Prelude

One of the important recurring questions, which has touched the brothers in a special way, is that of the identity of the brother in the Shared Mission. The brother can find himself asking what is the particularity of his vocation as a person, consecrated by the vows of religion, who now finds himself in a minority position as regards the number of persons sharing in the ministry of Christian education through the Lasallian Mission.

At the same time, many Lasallian educators, while anxious to share as deeply as possible in the spirituality which has underpinned the Lasallian Mission in education since its beginning, do not see their role in any way as simply a diluted version of the brother’s vocation. Others, because of their personal religious beliefs and affiliations, may find themselves uncomfortable with the description of their educational work only in terms of Christian theology and may well feel that there is a solid anthropological basis for what they choose to do. These questions, and other related questions, are considered in the section which follows.

3.2.1 What is the role of the brother in the Shared Mission?

In attempting to situate himself in this new context, the brother has to avoid the temptation to seek out differences between himself and his lay colleagues by reserving certain educational functions, whether administrative or pastoral, to himself. Brother Superior General has been careful to draw attention to this point in his Pastoral Letters:
We Brothers have to acknowledge that there is no educational service that is reserved to us. It is clear, therefore, that the nature of our identity and specific mission in the Church is not to be found in the particular services that we render (1 January 1991, p.20).

The Brothers' Rule of 1987 takes up the fundamental insight of the Declaration of 1967 (Nos.12, 13) in setting out the fundamental three elements, the constitutive elements, of the brother's vocation as

*consecration to God as a lay religious, [the] apostolic ministry of education, especially of the poor, and community life (R, 10).*

First of all, these constitutive elements can be distinguished separately but are inextricably linked for the life to be lived authentically. As a person consecrated to God by vows, the brother tries to live out his consecration. But this is not something hidden, something personal between himself and God: the brother consecrates himself by public profession of vows, to be lived out in a community devoted to the apostolic ministry of education. The Brothers' Rule is challenging:

*As religious vowed to the ministry of Christian education, the first apostolate of the Brothers consists in the witness of their consecrated life (R, 24).*

Religious consecration, with its particular characteristics expressed in the vows, constitutes the brother as a sign, a reminder to his colleagues in shared mission of something in which all Christians share. Brother Superior General, in an allusion to ideas brought out in the Synod on Consecrated Life, refers to it in the following way in his Pastoral Letter of 1 January 1995:

*Its identity [ie, that of consecrated life] lies in the capacity to be a clear and visible sign of the radical choice of Christ which is innate in the vocation of all Christians (p. 47).*

The consecrated lay man, the community man, the minister, are three aspects of the one same identity of the brother. Each aspect assumes the others and is manifested in them. That is why we can say that the specific ministry of the brother in the Church — his identity within the Church — is his personal consecration, lived in community for, and through, Christian education. From the origins of the Institute in the late 17th century, John Baptist de La Salle saw that communities of laymen were necessary if there was to be any continuity in the Christian school which he founded. That is why the lay character of the brother's vocation has always been insisted upon because of the possibility of a full-time dedication to this important ministry of the Christian education of the poor without being diverted by the necessary duties associated with priesthood.

Lastly, the challenges of the shared mission, which require the brothers themselves to be 'the heart, the memory, the guarantors of the Lasallian charism' (C 435, p. 15), must not remain simply at the level of imagery. Before all else, this expression, in its strikingly heightened imagery, reminds us of the prophetic function with regard to the Covenant between God and his people. In the same way, the brother has to be watchful in regard to the overall fidelity of the Lasallian body to this small covenant which is none other than the Lasallian charism, a precious gift of the Spirit to the Church.

In facing the challenges of being the heart, the inner heart, as it were, of the international body, the brothers everywhere are called to draw from their heritage those aspects of the common memory which are more immediately accessible to them through their initial formation and education as members of the Institute. Such aspects may not be reduced simply to history and documentation but
Educators from different regions speak of their choice of a Lasallian school

**ROBERT GAUTHIER**  
French-speaking Canada

The Lasallian school is a privileged place which allows me to walk beside young people in such a way as to help them develop themselves completely.

**ANGELES SANCHEZ**  
Spain-ARLEP

I felt myself welcomed by a family which allows me to grow in all dimensions: human, professional and Christian.

**MICHEL BERTET**  
Turkey-Near East

Brothers, I did not choose you: someone among you chose me and allowed me to work. I have found the meaning of freedom in you allowing me to choose.

**GENEVIEVE HOUART**  
France

Working in a Lasallian establishment has helped me to build the unity of my professional and spiritual life by carrying out my profession as a Christian teacher.

**MOHAMMED IJAZ KHAN**  
Pakistan-PARC

In my 26 years of service I see the Lasallian schools spreading education for humanity irrespective of class and creed.

**ROBERTO ZAPPALA**  
Italy

Because in its spiritual and pedagogical inspiration there is incarnated the idea of a school for persons and of persons, which is the Church's response to the needs of our time.

**DINO PEDRO VIOTTO**  
Brazil-RELAL

I took this option of working in a Lasallian Centre because it gives meaning to my life to be working in building the kingdom along with the Brothers of La Salle.

**JEAN DEDINGAR**  
Togo-RELAF

I share the Lasallian vision of the school as a place where the young can be educated in freedom and according to the Gospel.

**CHARLES E. GAUS**  
USA-US/Toronto region

Knowing that along with my colleagues I am part of a world-wide Lasallian commitment to education of the poor continues to be a reason why I choose to work in a Lasallian childcare agency.

**MONIKA NEFZGER**  
Austria-RELEC

I bring young people a Christian value system so as to help them find support, meaning and direction in a pluralistic society.
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Country/Region</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>NAOMI PLANT</td>
<td>Ireland--Great Britain,</td>
<td>I teach in a Lasallian school because the brothers, teachers and parents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ireland &amp; Malta</td>
<td>work together, united in their shared purpose of educating the children.</td>
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<td>THIERRY ROSSINGNOL</td>
<td>Belgium--RELEC</td>
<td>I try to live in such a way that, by my very style of life, it is</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>impossible to think that there is no God!</td>
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<td>SHAFTI SIVASUBRAMANIAM</td>
<td>Singapore--PARC</td>
<td>I want to share in making La Salle's dream come true and play a part in</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>this big Lasallian Family.</td>
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<td>YVES KPESSOU</td>
<td>Togo--RELAF</td>
<td>To affirm my faith and work beside the brothers in the struggle against</td>
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<td>spiritual, intellectual and social poverty among the young, especially</td>
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<td>STEFANIA DALL'ACQUA</td>
<td>Italia</td>
<td>I feel that I am working on solid bases, forming part of a great family</td>
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<td>and being useful to others while forgetting about myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIMEON MARTIN REINER</td>
<td>Spain--ARLEP</td>
<td>I feel myself fulfilled in participating in a community which carries out</td>
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<td>a mission of the Church, through my vocation as a Christian educator with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>its living relationship to Lasallian pedagogy and spirituality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HELEN FRIEDL</td>
<td>USA--US/ Toronto region</td>
<td>I am enriched by our Lasallian heritage and excited by our vision of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>shared mission.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOHAMMED ANAS</td>
<td>Egypt--Near East</td>
<td>I have the very strong feeling of belonging to a college where I discover</td>
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<td>honesty, differences, the importance of the working atmosphere, discipline,</td>
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<td>order, justice and truth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PATRICK WARD</td>
<td>Eire--Great Britain,</td>
<td>The Lasallian school enables me to contribute to the building of a</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ireland &amp; Malta</td>
<td>community which views as a priority the Christian formation of young</td>
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<td>people, especially those disadvantaged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONCEPCION FERNANDEZ</td>
<td>Mexico--RELAL</td>
<td>I discovered the solid philosophy of the Founder, St John Baptist de La</td>
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<td>Salle; I am growing as a person helping others grow; and I have</td>
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<td></td>
<td>discovered the presence of God in so difficult a task.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAUL FOISY</td>
<td>French-speaking Canada</td>
<td>My work with adolescents, the strength of an exceptional team of</td>
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<td>brothers and lay persons, of a spirit of faith and remarkable zeal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRANCOIS TRIBOUT</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>To respond more radically to my Christian commitment and to witness what</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>attracted me many years ago to the Lasallian Family.</td>
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should include rather the living manifestation of those Lasallian characteristics of devotedness to the mission of Christian education, the profound sense of gratuity as free giving without hope of reward, and such fundamental Lasallian practices as the recalling of the Presence of God, the daily Reflection and frequent prayer with students, where the brother is called to speak in faith with his students. He does this in faith because of his concern, his zeal, that all students come to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the salvation brought through Jesus Christ.

Lastly, there is the importance for the religious community as such to be a true sign of the Gospel life which it professes. To the extent that this is authentic, it can be the nucleus of the educational community and thus the creator of other communities of various kinds around itself.

We witness by our community life and the vow of stability, our availability to take on urgent tasks when others are unable or unwilling to do so and our unselfish dedication to the advancement of the laity. The Brothers’ vow of association for the educational service of the poor is an indispensable sign for everyone of fidelity to a mission received from God (C 435, p. 44).

As has already been pointed out (1.46), the General Chapter of 1976 made use of the phrase ‘degrees of belonging to the Institute’, in a way which was limited at that time to men, to try to express its appreciation of certain men, who without formally joining the Institute, wished to share some aspects of its community and prayer life while making their particular contribution to the Lasallian mission of Christian education. If this notion has been superseded by the subsequent development of a clearer understanding of the Lasallian mission, the irreplaceable contribution of women and the use of the expression ‘shared mission’, there seems to be a basic intuition of the 1976 General Chapter about ‘belonging’ which should not be lost.

Objectively speaking, from the viewpoint of dedication to Roman Catholic Christian education, there are certainly different levels of commitment among the many participants who contribute to the Lasallian mission. As the photos and statements of various Lasallian educators in this text indicate (pp. 68-9), there is also a wide diversity of religious affiliations among those who work in the various Lasallian educational works. As the same illustrations show, the cultural and religious circumstances in which these Lasallian educators work are extraordinarily diversified.

Perhaps, beginning from life, as the photos in this text do in showing different levels of participation in the Lasallian Mission, is to stand before an extremely rich panorama of real life situations where the mystery of life, of individual existence and the overriding importance of the freedom of the individual meet. If the following points show a certain gradation towards complete acceptance of Catholic beliefs and practices, this is intended to be simply descriptive and not normative in all circumstances. Thus, the Lasallian Mission in education is shared by

- those, who while not sharing the same religious beliefs or practices as Catholics, wish to devote themselves personally and professionally to the education of their pupils and are prepared, in complete respect, to support the traditional religious practices of the Lasallian school;

- those who for personal reasons do not consider themselves as fully-
Lasallian Mission: A Shared Mission

practising Christians but wish to support the principles of the educational work in which they freely engage;

- those who see their involvement and commitment to the Lasallian mission as linked to their understanding of their own Christian beliefs and practices and bring a certain personal vocation and commitment to what they see as the ministry of teaching.

This gradation is viewed from a Christian perspective. But the Lasallian Heritage (see 1.2, 1.3) has already shown us that for the second half of its history, the Lasallian mission in education has grown and developed in many countries precisely because of the openness, good will and dedication of many Lasallian colleagues of other faiths. The Lasallian school or work has been a presence, a witness to gratuitity and the willingness to share the living of the Gospel with others.

Brother Robert Schieler, in Lasalliana (32-16-D-84), has approached the question of fostering the Shared Mission through what he calls the stages of 'degrees of commitment' and 'levels of sharing', according to a sequence which can be presented diagrammatically as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degrees of commitment</th>
<th>Commitment as profession</th>
<th>Profession as vocation</th>
<th>Vocation as Lasallian educator</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levels of sharing</td>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>Faith development</td>
<td>Lasallian formation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is important to recognise that each degree of commitment and sharing is valuable in itself. Those persons who wish to be more than professionally committed may come to develop a personal sense of vocation as Lasallian educators through their willingness to take part in sessions of Lasallian Formation.

Many such Lasallian educators seem to have found that their lives as married persons with family responsibilities can find a particular enrichment and focus through programmes of Lasallian Formation.

3.2.3 Christians understand that all baptised members are responsible for the Church’s mission

Christians have always accepted that they should help in their own way to make Christ and his message known. The Acts of the Apostles tells the story of the first generation of Christians who took it as their duty to make known to others the Good News (Gospel) which they had received through the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Saint Paul, in the First Letter to the Corinthians (9:16), expresses his conviction about this duty as ‘not that I do boast of preaching the gospel, since it is a duty which has been laid on me; I should be punished if I did not preach it’.

Every Christian is not necessarily called to be a full-time preacher of the Gospel but is rather someone who ‘proclaims the Gospel’ by allowing his or her life and actions to be shaped according to the principles of the Gospel. This attitude is strongly confirmed in the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful of December 1988, in the following citations:

The voice of the Lord clearly resounds in the depths of each of Christ’s followers, who through faith and the sacraments of Christian initiation is made like to Jesus Christ, is incorporated as a living member in the Church and has an active part in her mission of salvation (3).
3.2.4 When there is greater awareness of the mystery of the Church as communion, as People of God, everything in the Church is directed towards ministry, all the members are equal in the dignity conferred on them by baptism, and all are co-responsible in the one mission of Jesus Christ. When this is understood, lay persons are equal with all others in the Church, that is, they are not simply people to be evangelised but are rather foremost in sharing the gospel themselves. This is a transition from a ‘clerical’ Church to a new understanding of Church in which lay people find their particular place and their specific role.

This is what is meant by the advancement of the laity. By reason of their Christian vocation, lay people are called to be, in Gospel images, light, salt and leaven in the very heart of family and social life, so that their role and their mission are irreplaceable. It is because of their very lay character in the world that they have to arrange earthly matters according to God’s saving plan. Such an advancement of the laity is a genuine sign of the times with great advantages for the Church’s overall mission.

This is the movement followed by the Institute in its development from ‘tolerating’ the presence of lay teachers in the emergency situations of the Second World War (1.45) to considering and esteeming them as partners in a common mission in the General Chapter of 1993. Pope John Paul II, referring to the ‘objective of the third millennium’ makes reference to the role of lay Christians in the task of a new hearing of the Gospel:

The whole Church, pastors and lay faithful alike, standing on the threshold of the Third Millennium, ought to feel more strongly the Church’s responsibility to obey the command of Christ, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation’ (Mark 16:15), and take up anew the missionary endeavour ... The lay faithful ought to regard themselves as an active and responsible part of this venture, called as they are to proclaim and to live the gospel in service to the person and to society while respecting the totality of the values and needs of both (Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful, 64).

The brothers, who ‘have contributed to the promotion of the Christian laity, especially among those educators who want their professional work to be a form of gospel ministry’ (R, 17), continue their work in this direction with renewed vigour and with new perspectives.

3.2.5 If it is true that all Christians are responsible for the mission of the Church, each person is so in terms of his or her own vocation and personal identity. In the decree on the Apostolate of the Laity in 1965, the Second Vatican Council expressed this clearly:

In the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission ... Lay people too, sharing in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, play their part in the mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the world (2) ... From the reception of these charisms, even the most ordinary ones, there follows for all Christian believers the right and
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mission: A Shared Mission

duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of humanity
and for the development of the Church (3).

This emphasis is, of course, not new in the Church. The First Letter of St
Peter (4:10) reminds its readers that ‘Each one of you has received a special grace,
so, like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put your-
self at the service of others’, while in his First Letter to the Corinthians (12:7),
Saint Paul points out that ‘The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each
person is for the common good’. The complementarity of gifts which can enrich
the educational community and thus be a source of richness for the mission is
well described in the citation which follows:

Education in the faith is a part of the finality of a Catholic school. The
more fully the educational community represents the richness of the ecclesial
community, the more capable it will be of fulfilling this mission. When
priests, men and women religious, and lay people are all present together
in a school, they will present students with a living image of this richness,
which can lead to a better understanding of the reality of the Church (Lay
Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, 43).

All educators who work in Lasallian schools and foundations, therefore, are
invited to share the common principles and particular emphases which are
essential to the Lasallian Heritage. To the extent that these educators feel
that they can bring their own particular gifts to Lasallian education, they
can legitimately feel themselves sharers of the overall educational mission carried
out by their particular institution.

They should feel as well that they bring distinctive elements of their own
religious traditions as Protestant Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus,
Confucianists or Shintoists to the religious understandings and spiritual tradit-
ions which are essential to Lasallian education. In a very important sense, they
should see themselves as enlarging and enriching the Lasallian Heritage’s tradit-
ional sense of responding to needs by bringing and sharing their own particular
gifts with their students. In this important exchange of gifts, the Lasallian school
can help to further the important principles of ecumenical and inter-religious
dialogue (see 2.5, 2.6).

If this was not always the historical position taken by the Church, what has
led to this different perception? The key to this change during the 20th century
lies in the development of the theological idea of communion and its application
to widely different situations.

For individual reflection and
group discussion

1. What special dimension might the brothers, as
individuals or through their community, bring to
the shared mission of a Lasallian school?

2. What special dimension might lay Lasallian
educators bring to the shared mission of the
Lasallian school?

3. How do you feel that the Lasallian mission has
been enlarged by educators who have a family
life?
3.3 Associated Together in the Same Mission

The Brothers gladly associate lay persons with them in their educational mission (R, 17)

3.3.0 Prelude

The first generation of brothers found their collective strength in choosing to associate themselves with others for the rest of their lives so as to provide schools for poor boys. It is a similar common vision derived from the Lasallian Heritage which can link all those who wish to be more closely associated in creating or maintaining Lasallian educational works.

This is not to limit the Lasallian Heritage to something static and pre-determined. As the historical survey of the opening chapters has shown, the continuing vitality of the Lasallian work in education has come from its ability to continue to apply its founding principles in its response to new needs. The willingness of others who are not members of the Institute to work together in unity to apply the principles found in the Lasallian Heritage can develop and extend its content, as has happened in previous generations.

If the Lasallian Heritage can help to motivate and enrich those lay persons who share in it, these ‘newcomers’ do not come empty-handed. They, in turn, can bring their own gifts to enrich the Heritage. In this sense, the Lasallian Heritage can constantly be revitalised by all those who share in it.

This strong sense of unity was expressed in the foundation Rule and in the formula by which the brothers still consecrate themselves to God for the work of Christian education: ‘together and by association’. This guiding principle has much of the richness of the central idea which has unified theological reflection during and since the Second Vatican Council, that of communion.

3.3.1 Communion and the Lasallian Heritage

Shared Mission, as the very words themselves suggest, demands a process of growth in unity, in communion (literally in its root sense of united with), between persons who share the same mission. This process of communion requires the development of links of unity, of communication, unified objectives, common actions, and good personal relationships in the same Lasallian tradition which brought the brothers to make a vow of association among themselves so as to maintain the schools ‘together and by association’.

Association, such as it was lived by the brothers, had a deep impact on the organisation and functioning of their schools. It was a decisive factor in helping their cohesion, efficiency and creativity. Today, under new forms still to be invented, the same spirit of association should continue to inspire and give life to the Lasallian Schools where Lasallian partners are the great majority. The challenge now is for the brothers and all other Lasallian educators to discover together in open dialogue how to found and promote in new foundations the associative dimensions of their commitment on behalf of the human and Christian education of the young, especially the poor.

This may not happen in one step. There may have to be first the stage of mutual acceptance and respect; this may lead to working together with common
objectives and developing a real co-responsibility; a third stage may well be marked
by the deepening of interpersonal relationships; perhaps this may lead towards
that deeper unity which comes through sharing in faith; and this latter experi­
ence may lead towards a deeper sense of the educational work as ministry and
the development of bonds which have been formed gradually across this sequence
of experiences. Working together is the important first step which can ultimately
give a common meaning and become the source of the dynamism in whatever is
done. It is important to leave enough space and time to encourage a gradual
progress towards this unity, and the development of this communion which can
ultimately bind all together. The imposition of an initial uniformity may stifle
creativity and thus frustrate the growth of real communion.

3.3.2 The process that links communion and mission

The process of communion within Lasallian educational communities is very
important for the mission itself. The following text from Pope John Paul II
in *The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful* makes the point strongly:

"Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they
interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that communion
represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion
gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion (32.4)."

The Rule indicates that the aim of the process of communion is one of co-
responsibility within the educational community to come to the setting up of
‘faith communities’, the highest level of communion and the ultimate aim of
Christian educational activity. The following two citations explicitly point in this
direction:

*The Brothers’ community makes known to the rest of the educational
community the essential elements of the Lasallian tradition. The Brothers
offer to those who desire it, a more intensified sharing of Lasallian
spirituality, encouraging such persons to make a more specific apostolic
commitment. The Brothers join in the formation of faith communities which
are witnessing to the truth of what the Brothers profess (R, 17c)."

*The Brothers’ community shares in the animation of the institutions in
which it is involved. It develops therein an atmosphere of brotherhood
rooted in mutual respect and freedom. Its action to promote the gospel
aims to bring into being a community of faith in the midst of the educational
community (R, 51a)."

The setting up of an authentic faith community through the process of com­
munion is so decisive that the Rule reminds the brothers that gospel activity and
catechesis would be difficult without this reality:

*Catechesis is above all a form of witness. It springs from the depth of a
community of faith, that brings together Christians within whose hearts
dwells the Holy Spirit, the teacher of all truth (R, 15a)."

This represents the ideal in Christian language. But, as has already been
pointed out in earlier sections (especially 2.2, 2.5, 2.6), this community is not
like a closed club with narrow rules of membership, but something to be found
in the process which develops thanks to the tension between two poles. One pole
is that grouping of faith-people which is being constantly created and lived in the
events that mark the life of the community of the school or work, especially in
the anthropological constants of life, joys and sufferings, and death. The other is
that stable faith-community, notable for the permanence of its ministerial aspect
Communion in the sense of educational work as ministry

Communion in mission is not only a possibility for those who make it so in a common work but can be strengthened when such work is viewed and carried out as ministry. Communion then can be richer and more profound as brothers and other Lasallian educators try to accomplish their educational work, the common mission, ‘according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to it,’ that is, the Institute, and so to all those who wish to share the Lasallian mission as fully as possible.

For De La Salle, the brother who frequently met his students during the day at the level of faith, sharing the Gospel with them, helping them to understand their religion, speaking to their hearts during the daily Reflection, accompanying them to Mass and helping them to assist at it was exercising a ministry in the Church. The language used by De La Salle was daring for the time but unequivocal: the brothers exercised a ministry in the Church by their work with children in matters of faith and religion. But the brothers’ work for most of the day was also ministerial as they helped their students to acquire the knowledge and skills which would help them to gain employment.

Nevertheless, De La Salle did not limit himself to underlining the ministerial character of the brother’s educational tasks but went much farther to the very identity of the brother: ‘You are ministers of Jesus Christ and of the Church’ (M, 195.2). According to De La Salle, the brother should live with the awareness of being a minister during the whole day, even when he was back in the community, praying or taking recreation with his brothers. The secret of his ministry lay, as De La Salle notes in the Collection of Various Short Treatises of 1711, in ‘making no distinction between the duties of his state of life and those of his personal sanctification’ (p. 78).

The brother’s way of living, his consecration to God and his community life gave him a particular credibility which was confirmed by the Bull of Approbation as has already been remarked (see 1.13), thus recognising this as a ministry particular to the brother in the Church, something which was later confirmed by the Church’s approval of the Rule of 1987: ‘The Brothers are called to provide a human and Christian education to young people, especially the poor, according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to them’ (Decree of 26 January 1987).

There is a text of the Apostolic Exhortation Vocation and Mission of Lay People in the Church which, for many reasons, makes us recall the Lasallian meditation no. 201, the 9th Meditation for the Time of Retreat. Pope John Paul II personalises the common origin of the different ministries in Christ, the Good Shepherd, and highlights what gives meaning and consistency to ministry. This is not the external task in itself but the attitude from which the task is done, an attitude which both unifies and directs life towards those who are being served:

The ministries which exist and are at work at this time in the Church are all, even in their variety of forms, a participation in Jesus Christ’s own ministry as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11), the humble servant who gives himself without reserve for the salvation of all (Mark 10:45) (21).

It is in the root sense of serving others, serving their interests ahead of personal convenience, that we can recover the profound sense of what ministry is
in practically all uses of the word, whether as a religious expression or in ordinary usage.

Maintaining this reference to Christ, the Man who came to serve and not to be served, we can understand ministry as a peak expression of communion. The ideal of shared mission would be, in that perspective, the formation of a ministerial community among those who share the Lasallian mission.

This new ministerial community has to be for the Lasallian school the sign that the Kingdom of God is made present and grows in this space. All those who share in the community, to the extent that they are animated by faith, live and show forth their ministry in complementarity with others, but with different characteristics according to the proper identity of each. The brother, from the perspective of his consecration to a celibate life; the lay person, from a life much more in contact with the secular reality, and, according to circumstances, from the viewpoint of being married or celibate as a lay person; the priest, from the particular aspect of his priestly ordination, placed at the service of Christian education.

*Because of each member’s unique and unrepeatable character, that is, one’s identity and actions as a person, each individual is placed at the service of the growth of the ecclesial community* (Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful, 28).

### 3.3.4 The ministerial aspect of the Church

If we are talking about a ministerial community today, it is thanks to the renewal which the Church has brought about of its own image from the Second Vatican Council. Schemes are being developed which are much more representative of the ecclesiology of communion: community, ministries and charisms, of different vocations in the Church in which

- unity precedes and lays the foundations for the distinction;
- the common Christian condition shines out at the same time as the free and varied initiative of the Spirit, which sustains the richness of ministries and charisms in the Church for the common good;
- a scheme which, in valuing differences, does so in a way which is complementary and subordinated to unity.

The Church community feels called to offer the world the service of being a sacrament of salvation (*Lumen gentium* 1, 9 & 48). This statement is true both for the universal Church as well as for each small local community. This service of being the sacrament of salvation is the great Church ministry. The ministries themselves, both for the ordained as for the lay, surge up within the Church for the building up of the Body of Christ so as to complete his mission in the world (*Lumen gentium*, 4). Both ministries and charisms come from the Spirit to the Church.

The time when ministry was limited to what came from the Sacrament of Orders has now passed. As we well know, De La Salle never accepted that limitation. Since Vatican II there has been a recovery of the ministerial set-up so characteristic of the apostolic churches, as Saint Paul expresses so openly in his letters. John Paul II refers explicitly to the direct sharing of the faithful lay person in the common mission of the Church in the following words:

*The Spirit of the Lord gives a vast variety of charisms, inviting people to assume different ministries and forms of service and reminding them, as he reminds all people in their relationship in the Church, that what distinguishes
persons is not an increase in dignity but a special and complementary capacity for service... Thus, the charisms, the ministries, the different forms of service exercised by the lay faithful exist in communion and on behalf of communion (The Vocation and Mission of Lay People, 20).

The pastors, therefore, ought to acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices and roles of the lay faithful that find their foundation in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, indeed, for a great many of them, in the sacrament of Matrimony (ibid, 23).

Following this idea, lay ministries are not simply the result of a personal choice but come from the gift of grace, or charism, which is given by the Spirit and passes by the recognition of the church community. Charisms, whether extraordinary or simple and ordinary, are given to all, since the Spirit works in all (1 Corinthians 12:6) and always have, ‘directly or indirectly, a usefulness for the ecclesial community, ordered as they are to the building up of the Church, to the well-being of humanity and to the needs of the world’ (ibid, 24).

The concept of ‘charism’ in this new model of post-conciliar Church can help us to clarify how to form a ministerial community in the service of the Lasallian mission. A charism is a personal gift for a specific purpose, but it may be shared, by what is changed into a ‘bond of communion’ between various persons. This is what John Paul II proposes:

These charisms are given to individual persons, and can even be shared by others in such ways as to continue in time a precious and effective heritage, serving as a source of a particular spiritual affinity among persons (ibid, 24).

This is what has been recognised by the Brothers’ Rule when it states:

The Spirit of God has given to the Church, in the person of St John Baptist de La Salle, a charism which even today inspires the Brothers and a great number of other educators (R, 20).

The Lasallian charism generates a particular spiritual affinity between many persons at the service of Christian education. This means that the ministerial Lasallian community can never be reduced to an ‘organisation for work’. What gives it its proper identity, life and the possibility of development is this common foundation which ‘implies a particular mode of being, mission, fraternal life and spirituality’ (Brother John Johnson, Pastoral Letter of 1 January 1995, p. 38).

Let us complete the presentation of the Lasallian ministerial community by comparing it to a musical chord, which is richer and more varied according to the number of notes it contains. The possibility of agreement comes from its affinity with the charism which is common. But each person, each group — brothers, sisters, partners, priests — adds its personal note, its particular identity and charism, to the chord. It is especially up to the brothers to watch out that they do not spoil the tonality in the way that the chord is developed.

By means of this basic image, we will more easily understand why we can affirm at the same time that we have in the ministerial Lasallian community a common Lasallian charism and also different charisms which are characteristic of each group. Let us hope that a common ministry, that of Christian education, can be developed from these specifically different ministries.
One of the most important roles which can determine the overall direction of any school or educational work is that of the person or persons who are responsible for the various aspects of its administration and support services. There is the deep Gospel sense of stewardship, that is, being responsible for things which belong to the whole group or community. It is not unimportant to recall, as does Ghislain Lafont in his book _Imaginer l’Église Catholique_, that ‘one of the first examples of praying and laying on hands in the New Testament concerns those chosen by the early Church community and accepted by the Apostles with the aim of administering the goods of the community and especially, looking after the poor’ (pp. 192-193).

The good administrator makes it possible for others to use their gifts to the full. Often, the work is a hidden one, but when good administration is absent, the whole project suffers. The many different tasks of administrators, ranging from those who are the leaders and animators of their fellow teachers to those whose task is more with ensuring that there is proper accountability for the money, equipment and property at the service of the whole community, all call for efficiency and dedication to the service of others. This requires on the part of all concerned a good sense of association. In many Lasallian educational works today, the administrative and support services are increasingly entrusted to Lasallian partners.

In many parts of the world parents, former pupils and others linked in some way to the Lasallian work make an important but often hidden contribution to the success of the school. Since, as sociological studies often show, the success of a school — especially in an economically poor area — is linked closely to its relationship to the local community and it is here that parents and other interested persons can play a vital role.

Co-responsibility is the attitude which leads to a search to respond together to the challenges and demands of the common mission, in interdependence with one another, or even better, in solidarity.

For all Lasallian educators, this living according to the spirit of association is, at the local level, to feel co-responsible for carrying it out, for being steadfast and active partners in putting it into operation. It is, in fact, to be convinced that maintaining a Lasallian Centre is first of all everybody’s concern and then acting accordingly. At the District level, it is also to recognise oneself as a member of a network of educators and of establishments sharing the same spirit and the same educational plan.

The spirit of association lived in this way helps to bring about closeness between men and women of different religious beliefs working together in the common service of the poor through education in order to build up a more fraternal humanity. For Christians, it invests their action with a church dimension by the exercise of co-responsibility between baptised persons among the People of God.

For brothers and all other Lasallian educators, the spirit of association is nourished by seeking and deepening what they have in common. First of all, there is the fact of living a common human experience in different states of life, being marked by a culture and the same concerns, especially that of living the same profession. Committed as they are to the human education of their students, brothers and Lay Christians, or believers of other religions, share a certain number of fundamental human values without which any agreement on such an education would not be possible. What unites them is their common
reference to Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the pedagogical tradition associated with him.

With teachers who are Christians, the brothers share in the richness of the same baptism as well as in that of lay people in the People of God. All are called and sent for a common mission which is that of carrying the Gospel into the world of education. The mission and the Lasallian charismatic unite them also in a common Church ministry, even though each one, according to his or her different identity, brings ministerial characteristics or dimensions which are different.

Lay teachers ... make a unique contribution through their knowledge of the world, of family life, and of civic affairs (D, 46.3).

In this dialogue which deepens the sense of association and leads towards a deep sense of communion, there is a particular content which comes from the Institute’s 42nd General Chapter in the following Proposition 5:

**Instituted by Chapter 2 of the Rule, every District will draw up a plan for the shared mission concerning the educational works:**

a) this plan will make quite clear how the articles of the Rule will be implemented, taking into account local conditions. It will give priority to:

-the promotion of the educational service of the poor and the promotion of justice (R, 40, 40b, 40c), evangelisation and catechesis (R 13; 15);

-the formation of Lasallian educators (R, 17c) (C, 435, p. 49).

These emphases are indeed to be the substance of the dialogue between the Institute and its lay partners in attempting to strengthen the bonds of association and so develop the profound sense of communion.

**For individual reflection and group discussion**

1. 'Together and by association': What do you think helps this Lasallian principle to work effectively in your experiences of school? Are there any ways in which you consider it might operate more effectively?

2. Communion and association both imply that there are things which are done together. Name some of the ways in which you see these ideas at work in your school?

Are there some other ways in which you think your school could profit by further consideration of these principles?
3.4 Formation for the Lasallian Mission

3.4.0 Prelude

It is clear that the continuing vitality of the Lasallian Mission will depend on the extent to which all those engaged in it have the necessary preparation and formation to keep themselves and the Lasallian mission up to date. In this process, the brothers, whose numerical involvement is shrinking, have their particular role to play as 'heart' and 'memory' of the Lasallian Heritage. There is an urgent need to ensure that other Lasallian educators have different forms of access to this Lasallian Heritage according to their personal backgrounds and their desire to be more deeply involved.

This reciprocity of relationship, this interdependence between brothers and lay partners or colleagues, has particular implications which need to be explored in greater depth by considering the necessary processes by which others may be inducted into the Heritage and how their understanding and appreciation may be further developed and sustained.

3.4.1 Formation for the Lasallian Mission

Proposition 4 from the 42nd General Chapter in 1993 insisted that 'in the Institute, at every level, shared mission is to be one of the priorities for the next seven years' and that 'the District will make the Lasallian formation of teachers and educators a fundamental priority' (C 435, 5.4, p. 47).

As part of the Institute's implementation of this request, the Institute Bulletin No. 242, 1996, is devoted completely to setting out experiences of Shared Mission from all around the Lasallian world. In some way or another, all the activities so described can be understood as part of the continuing formation for this priority, but certain chapters are explicitly so. For example, Chapter 4 entitled 'Sharing the Mission' requires an adequate formation (pp. 32-57), gives 26 examples of various courses, workshops and seminars which address this question of formation. Some of these courses are run in permanent Lasallian Centres, others in ad hoc Lasallian Centres and most of them are individual units of a complete course over a scheduled number of meetings which may run during a year, two years, or over three summers.

3.4.2 Those for whom Lasallian formation is intended

It is obvious that some basic or initial Lasallian formation is important for all those who are to work in various ways in the Lasallian Mission. This includes the brothers with their particular formation as members of the Institute and all others who wish to work in the same spirit. Then there is the question of continuing formation, the necessary updating which is part of professional life, but also the attention to the underlying spirituality which can help transform school teaching into ministry. Such continuing formation is indispensable for all who share the mission.

Indeed, one of the most important gifts which the brothers have to share out of their own lived experience as members of the Institute is the willingness to participate in such continuing formation sessions so as to facilitate the passing on of their lived experience as 'heart' and 'memory.' No less important for them is the opportunity for them to hear the questions posed by their lay partners in their search for a lay spirituality which is derived from the Lasallian Heritage but which is not simply a scaled-down version of the brothers' spirituality.
The role, indeed the duty, of the brothers’ community is clearly indicated by the Rule in the two stages which follow. First of all, ‘The Brothers’ community makes known to the rest of the educational community the essential elements of the Lasallian tradition’. Then, with great respect for individuals, a second stage is proposed as ‘The Brothers offer to those who desire it, a more intensified sharing of Lasallian spirituality, encouraging such persons to make a more specific commitment. The Brothers join in the formation of faith communities which are witnessing to the truth of what the Brothers profess’ (R, 17c).

The activities in the already mentioned Institute Bulletin No. 242 offers some ten very different examples of how some communities and Districts have implemented this second stage (pp. 98-107). Indeed, it is not really possible to separate spirituality as such into a kind of separate compartment in the Lasallian Heritage, since it furnishes the underlying principles for the educational work. In that sense, practically all the experiences cited in the Bulletin indicate various stages of that ‘more intensified sharing’ of which the Rule speaks.

3.4.3 The aim of Lasallian formation

The aim of Lasallian formation is to ensure that educators make a gospel ministry out of their work and thus successfully carry out the mission which is being entrusted more and more to them. It is certainly true that there is a content to be handed on, certain non-negotiable aspects which are essential if new teachers are to come to understand progressively that their task can be a gospel ministry and carried out as such.

Of course, since not all Lasallian educators are Christians, the formation of such persons needs to take into account important religious and cultural differences. In this matter, Bulletin No. 242 has an extremely interesting account of how the Lasallian Centre in Egypt has developed its programme to include its non-Christian teachers (p. 46). Basically, this approach gives emphasis to two specific dimensions of the Lasallian tradition, the importance of a human formation (formation to human values) and the educational service of the poor.

Formation is obviously a continuing process which demands personal conversion, the renewal of educational communities and the bringing up to date of whatever is needed to achieve this aim. The final aim in centres of Christian confession is to create, where possible, the ‘communities of faith’ of which the Rule speaks (R, 17c).

3.4.4 The spirit of Lasallian formation

Becoming partners in mission is the ideal which the 1993 General Chapter proposed to all who share the Lasallian Mission. This means that they participate together ‘in complementarity and without paternalism’ (C 435, p. 32) in the same programmes. Such a common formation of brothers and lay persons is in the spirit of Recommendation 5.4 from the same source:

Brothers and lay persons together will:

a) intensify the activities of Centres of formation, suitable courses and programs;
3.4.5 Conditions for a Lasallian formation

Experience teaches that there are several conditions which guarantee the value of Lasallian formation for teachers and educators.

- It needs to be adapted to the diversity of the recipients, to their needs, their expectations, their state of life, their family or professional commitments. Certain programmes need to be considered in relation to the responsibilities which they carry out or could be asked to carry out in shared mission. As the General Chapter (C, 435, p. 32) comments, ‘it is important that the strategies and the programmes allow for a wide participation’ and develop with a certain flexibility.

- Since it is a continuing formation, it needs a follow-up. It should not, therefore, limit the structures of accompaniment in order to give more life to the content by simply multiplying sessions which are mainly informational. It should help whoever wishes ‘to develop further his or her commitment, according to the successive calls which might be received’ (ibid).

- It should take care to be progressive and set up according to stages. On this matter, the General Chapter has also given some directions:

  Some of these programmes offer information and ‘pre-formation’, for example, about works, objectives and methods of the Institute for those who have a professional relationship with the Institute; others will be more specific, offering stimulating information and an appropriate formation for people who are committed. For those who wish to share in the mission to the extent of forming Lasallian communities of faith, a deeper formation is needed: ‘They provide for those who so desire, the means to learn about the Founder and to live according to his spirit (R, 17) (ibid, p. 33).

- It needs time. It is continuing formation with all its aspects for ‘in order to take on the challenges of the world of education, we need to develop and deepen our mutual understanding, to respect our differences and to trust in one another’ (ibid, p. 14).

3.4.6 The content of Lasallian formation

Experience shows that the following dimensions be given importance in Lasallian formation:

- an anthropological dimension which favours the human and spiritual maturity of the Lasallian educator;

- a professional dimension which envisages the acquisition of ‘know-how’, but especially a ‘knowing-how-to-be’ in the relationship between adults and young persons;

- a Christian dimension in view of the ministry of Christian education;

- a Lasallian dimension which begins from John Baptist de La Salle’s own story and from the Lasallian educational heritage.

Each District and Region needs to work on this content in relation to its particular Lasallian origins and cultural circumstances.
3.4.7 Joint responsibility for Lasallian formation

The responsibility for Lasallian formation should gradually be assumed jointly by brothers and their lay partners and colleagues. The Recommendations of the 42nd General Chapter (5. 2. to 5.14, pp. 46-49) go into great detail.

At the local level, every educational work is to see to this as one of its priorities; at the community level, the 'means of living the shared mission' are to be indicated, with particular attention to the community's willingness to be welcoming and open to sharing the means of 'human, educational and spiritual formation'; at the individual level, each brother is invited to reflect on his 'specific way' of committing himself to the shared mission.

At the District level, it is the Brother Visitor and Council who are responsible for setting out the plan for shared mission which the 1993 General Chapter in Proposition 5 requested to be in place by 1995. This plan was to be worked out and evaluated 'with the participation of partners associated with the educational mission'. The Institute Bulletin No. 242 gives an extremely rich panorama of what is being already done around the Lasallian world.

3.4.8 The creation of appropriate structures

Educational programmes, no matter how good in themselves, will not achieve the long-term aims of shared mission unless certain structures are put into place. Such structures are not imposed. Indeed, it is the spirit of association which becomes embodied in appropriate structures and thus favours the communion of persons and groups in the Lasallian Family, while at the same time respecting the autonomy of each.

This seems to be an area where there remains much to be done even if certain groups, such as Signum Fidei in some countries, parent groups and youth groups, associations of former pupils, already have their own established structures. The most pressing need, certainly, is that structures of equality be established between brothers and partners in shared mission. Good will by itself is not enough. This kind of association of different groups with diverse interests needs 'rules' which ensure the harmonious exercise of the responsibilities of each group in carrying out a task, a plan, a mission.

The 42nd General Chapter insisted on this aspect of collaboration between brothers and lay people by the following details:

The relationships among the partners in the shared mission ought to be characterised by respect, understanding, justice and mutual trust. Collaboration implies that both rights and duties are recognised by everyone in what concerns regulations, work contracts and job descriptions. Collaboration ought to guarantee an effective co-responsibility, common understanding of guidelines and of priorities and shared power in preparing, making and carrying out decisions (C 435, 3.63, p. 44)

At the District level, the recommendations are an invitation to put appropriate structures into place so as to assure a harmonious and fruitful collaboration between brothers and lay people as the two following citations indicate:

The District will strengthen the structures (people, places) with a view to animating and coordinating the shared mission, after having been the object of discernment between the Brothers and Laity. These structures will respect the various levels of commitment in the mission of the Lasallian network (C 435, 5.6, p. 47).
In the light of Article 17 of the Rule, the District will strive more and more to integrate the Lasallian Family and the shared mission. It will take into account the requisite changes which sharing necessitates:

— recognition of the rights and duties of everybody (position, work contract, family expenses);
— mutual recognition and confidence;
— sharing of responsibilities.

3.4.9 The challenge to be confronted

The future of the Lasallian mission of human and Christian education clearly depends now on the way in which the shared mission is developed. The capitulants and consultants at the 42nd General Chapter in 1993 saw this with great clarity and the brothers have since received the practical recommendations contained in Circular 435. Many different sectors of the Institute have already developed and implemented long-term planning for the development of shared mission. On the principle of sharing ‘family documents’ as enunciated in the Introduction to this document (pp.ii-iii), it seems important to share finally some of the main recommendations of Circular 435, pp.47-48 so that these points may serve as a common reference point for continuing evaluation by all concerned with shared mission.

At District Level

5.4 The District will make the Lasallian formation of teachers and educators a fundamental priority. To achieve this aim, brothers and laity together:
   a) will intensify the activities of centres of formation, suitable courses and programs;
   b) develop Lasallian research, information and communication;
   c) name one (or more) persons to coordinate, animate and supervise this formation.

5.5 The District will take the necessary means to ensure that every Lasallian work, when that is possible, favours the birth of a community of faith, a reference group capable of welcoming various persons (brothers, priests, religious, laity, young people) who wish to deepen their faith and whose concern it is to proclaim in an explicit way Jesus Christ and to commit themselves to the service of the poor.

5.6 The District will strengthen the structures (people, places) with a view to animating and coordinating the shared mission, after having been the object of discernment between the brothers and laity. These structures will respect the various levels of commitment in the mission of the Lasallian network.

5.7 In the light of Article 17 of the Rule, the District will strive more and more to integrate the Lasallian Family and the shared mission. It will take into account the requisite changes which sharing necessitates:
   — recognition of the rights and duties of everybody (position, work contract, family expenses ...);
   — mutual recognition and confidence;
   — sharing of responsibilities.

5.8 The ‘Signum Fidei’ groups constitute for the Districts a form of spirituality well suited to the laity, especially educators, which finds its source of inspiration in St John Baptist de La Salle.
5.9 The District will contribute to the renewal of Alumni Associations according to the spirit of the ‘Charter of the World Federation of Former Lasallian Students’.

5.10 The District is concerned about the formation of animators (assessors), either brothers or lay people, for the various Lasallian groups, in order to favour their own identity and autonomy but avoiding every form of paternalism and clericalism.

5.11 The Brother Visitor will make the shared mission one of the most important themes of his visits. Together with his council, he will plan to invite the laity to retreats, chapters and other meetings of the brothers.

As an overall strategy to respond to the overall picture presented by the various diagrams of 1.5.2 (see p. 27), the priorities could be summarised as follows:

Groups of persons committed to the shared mission should be given programmes of gradual initiation and continuing formation in which the members feel that they are being accompanied, that they have the support of other members of their group and that they accept responsibility for the continuing inspiration of the Lasallian communities of the future.

For individual reflection and group discussion

1. Identify some long-term and short-term goals to develop a greater attention to shared mission where you work.

2. What kind of programmes are in place in your country to help more persons to receive a Lasallian formation? Are these programmes easily accessible to those who wish to follow them? If not, what are the chief obstacles? Can you see ways of getting past these obstacles?

3. In any partnership, there are reciprocal rights and responsibilities. Are you satisfied that the programmes of Lasallian formation in your country are encouraging partnership as it is described in the present document?
Towards the future

With Shared Mission, a new chapter is being added to the rich history of the Lasallian Heritage. It is a chapter which is still in process. We have seen its origins and we have tried to establish the principles on which it will continue to grow, to develop and to change as it goes into a different future.

It is a chapter which finds an echo in many aspects of the Church’s life at the present moment. The recent Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II (25 March 1996) notes that ‘Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity ... We may say that, in the light of certain historical experiences ..., a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity’ (54). The following paragraph notes that ‘these new experiences of communion and cooperation ... can, in fact, give rise to the spread of a fruitful spirituality beyond the confines of the Institute’ (55).

But the movement is not simply in one direction. As the Institute’s own experience of the various movements in the Lasallian Family has already shown, ‘the participation of the laity often brings unexpected and rich insights into certain aspects of the charism, leading to a more spiritual interpretation of it and helping to draw from it directions for new activities in the apostolate’ (55. 2).

This text is a most apt description of the richness merging from so many Lasallian movements, the active participation of so many lay partners, as well as the various forms of Lasallian movements around the world.

The twenty consultants who were invited to the two weeks’ study of Shared Mission during the 1993 General Chapter expressed their Hopes and Aspirations as follows:

- that the spiritual and professional formation of all Lasallian educators will become a priority that will help us to persevere as ministers for the human and Christian education of the young, especially the poor;

- that these educators will be involved in the lasting, shared educational mission as equal partners, bearing in mind the distinctive yet complementary characteristics of the partners;

- that we want to encourage the brothers to continue to be an authentic witness of the Lasallian charism which is a source of inspiration to us as we ourselves understand and embrace the mission and its consequences, personally and communally;

- that the Chapter and the Districts will provide a plan for the further implementation of the shared mission which will include appropriate structures, resources and programmes.

We make their sentiments our own as we go forward together into an exciting future.
Glossary of terms
The following expressions, which are used throughout the present text, are given a basic description and explanation rather than a dictionary definition. In some cases, the usage of the same expression is significantly different in different cultures. The different translations of the document will take this into account.

**apostolate** Those places where the shared mission is realised: schools, retreat centres, child welfare centres, and other places.

**catechise** To instruct believers in the faith.

**capitulant** Delegate who takes part in a General or District Chapter.

**Centre** Centre of the Institute indicates the place where Brother Superior and his Council reside and direct the affairs of the Institute.

**charism** The foundational inspiration of the Lasallian Family given to the church by the Spirit of God in the person of St John Baptist de La Salle and the founding brothers.

**circular** An official communication to the brothers from their headquarters in Rome.

**colleagues** Persons who share their professional work with the brothers in the Lasallian Mission. See partners.

**community** Members of the Institute who are appointed to share their lives as consecrated persons together.

**consecration** Membership of the Institute is sealed by the consecration made by each member to God according to the particular forms of the Institute.

**conversion** An individual’s journey of change in order to live more fully in faith.

**conversion of works** Revitalising the apostolates according to the spirit and charism of St John Baptist de La Salle (an expression used in the 41st General Chapter).

**Council** Members of a group whose responsibility is to advise the Brother Superior (General Councillors) or the Brother Visitor (District Councillors).

**District** A territorial division of the Institute with its own council and Brother Visitor.

**District Chapter** Authoritative and legislative body of the brothers of the District. Frequency of meetings varies from District to District but is usually every three years or four years.

**evangelise** To spread the Gospel message.

**formation** A process of education by which people can learn about the Founder and live according to his spirit.

**General Chapter** International authoritative and legislative body of the brothers. The General Chapter currently meets every seven years.

**inclusive language** Language that includes all cultures, ages, genders, religions, roles and lifestyles.

**Institute** The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (De La Salle Brothers).

**Lasallian Family** All people, groups, and movements that find their inspiration in the educational approach and spirituality of St John Baptist de La Salle.

**Lasallian spirit** Spirit of faith and zeal (faith dynamically expressed in the works of apostolic communities).

**Lasallian Youth** Organisations of students who learn, explore, and act on the spirit of John Baptist de La Salle, with a focus on service to youth and the poor.

**lifestyle** The way people live according to their vocation — married, religious, or single.

**ministry** 'A charism recognised, approved and institutionalised by the Church for the building up of the Body of Christ.'

**mission** To give a human and Christian education to the young, especially in schools, with the service of the poor as a priority, in order to evangelise and catechise, to promote peace and justice, accomplished together as a shared mission (42nd General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools).

**partners** An expression chosen by the 1993 General Chapter to indicate the close mutual relationship which is possible between brothers and colleagues in mission. See colleagues.

**Reflection** 'The ideal of the daily exhortation or reflection is to enlighten the conscience about moral principles, move the will to carry out firm resolutions, and, if possible, satisfy the taste of the listeners with well-balanced and serious words. The reflection is a powerful means of formation' (C 197, 35-36).

**Rule** Officially describes and defines the life of a Brother of the Christian Schools as decided by a General Chapter and approved by the Church.

**synod** A meeting convened by a particular bishop on a regular basis or by the Pope to discuss a particular theme of importance for the whole Church.

**vocation** The personal call which an individual experiences from God to live as a responsible baptised person.

**volunteers** Individuals who dedicate themselves to some form of service in Lasallian education for a particular work or set time, often in another country, and who sometimes live in community with the Brothers of the Christian Schools.
The city of Rheims at the time of the coronation of Louis XV in 1722. De La Salle, a canon in the cathedral, began his work in this city where the kings of France had been crowned from the time of Clovis and the early Middle Ages.
You are engaged in a ministry in which you are obliged to touch hearts.

John Baptist de la Salle