



De La Salle University

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE PHILIPPINE LASALLIAN FAMILY

INTRODUCTION

These three documents, the Foundational Principles of Lasallian Formation, the Principles of Lasallian Education in the Philippines, and the Principles of Lasallian Social Development, are products of an ongoing effort to define and clarify the nature of the Lasallian presence and mission in the country today. They are the direct result of resolutions passed during the First Lasallian Family Convocation of 2003 calling for the strengthening of the sense of Lasallian identity and the deepening of the Lasallian charism among individuals and institutions in the Philippine District. Each of these statements builds on three values which are fundamental to Lasallian identity: ***the spirit of faith, zeal for service, and communion in mission.*** The intention of each of the three documents is to articulate the commitments that flow from these values in relation to the training and formation of Lasallian associates and partners, the conduct of the Lasallian educational mission in schools and the socio-political involvement of the Lasallian Family.

The preamble of the Foundational Principles of Lasallian Formation articulates the core values of Lasallian identity. In this sense, it is the “heart” of the three documents. The values of faith, zeal for service, and communion, taken together as dimensions of one spirit, capture an important dynamism that goes back to the time of the Founder and his first associates. It is this same dynamism that has given rise to the countless apostolic initiatives and innovations that have since grown out of St. John Baptist de La Salle’s initial response to the call of God discerned in the needs of poor and abandoned youth. Taken as one spirit, the spirit of faith, zeal and communion provide a paradigm for living the Lasallian story today.

These documents are intended to stimulate apostolic creativity, not to restrict it. The intention of the members of the three committees tasked with drawing up these documents was to provide a starting point for discernment regarding the way the Lasallian charism and mission are to be incarnated in Philippine society today. They are intended to provide principles and parameters rather than specific answers and solutions. It is the task of individuals and institutions using these documents to find ways in which to develop their own contextualized way of living out the Lasallian story in creative fidelity to the principles articulated herein.



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FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF LASALLIAN FORMATION

Preamble

"As he became aware, by God's grace, of the human and spiritual distress of the 'children of the artisans and the poor,' John Baptist de La Salle devoted himself to forming schoolmasters totally dedicated to teaching and to Christian education. He brought these teachers together in a community and subsequently founded with them the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools." (R 1.1)

In creative fidelity to our Founder's inspiration, we, the Lasallian formators¹ in the Philippines, commit ourselves to assuring the vitality and continuity of the Founder's mission by providing a genuine Lasallian formation to all members of the Lasallian Family in the Philippines.

Believing in a God of goodness and compassion who wills the integral liberation and salvation of all,² we as Lasallian formators commit ourselves to educating and forming persons of faith and zeal who will make the saving compassion of God a living and effective reality in the lives of men and women today, especially those who are poor and vulnerable³ in society.

We believe that the vocation of an authentic Lasallian is essentially a free and willing collaboration with God in the work of building truly human communities that reflect the values of God's kingdom as expressed in the Gospel. Thus, the process of Lasallian formation is about enabling persons to acquire the *vision, values, attitudes* and *practices* that support collaboration with God's creative and redemptive action in the world.

In the Lasallian tradition, there are three constitutive elements that enable this participation. These elements, taken together as one dynamic unity, provide a way of integrating and expressing every Lasallian's vocation.

The Spirit of Faith

The spirit of faith⁴ flows from a relationship of communion with the Triune God who wills to save all people by drawing them into a lifegiving communion with him and with one another in the Lasallian tradition, the spirit of faith is a spirit that allows one to:

o discover God's active presence in his Word, in men and women, in the poor, in nature, in history, and in ourselves;⁵

o judge and evaluate things in the light of the gospel,⁶



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o search for God's will in order to carry out his saving plan,⁷
o unite one's actions to the ongoing saving action of God in the world ⁸ and
o trust in God's loving presence and providence when acting or discerning God's will.⁹

Zeal for the Integral Salvation of All

Zeal¹⁰ is the active expression of faith in gospel witness and service. It is oriented towards the integral salvation of persons, particularly the poor and the excluded. Zeal is the enthusiastic and total gift of self for the sake of the mission expressed in such qualities as gratuity and generosity¹¹, creativity and fortitude,¹² compassion and commitment.¹³ It involves a preferential concern for the poor and the vulnerable. The desire to be of greater service to others conditions the quest for excellence and continuous self-improvement.¹⁴

Communion in Mission, Mission as Communion

Communion¹⁵ recalls the dynamic of association¹⁶ by which the first Brothers bonded together for the sake of the particular mission entrusted to them by God. Communion has four dimensions. As a relationship with God, it is the *source* of all mission and ministry; as a *way of accomplishing mission*, it suggests the solidarity and collaboration that comes from sharing in one vision, one spirit and one mission; as a *way of relating* to others, it suggests openness to all persons and the desire to be brother or sister to all especially those in need; as a *goal* of mission, it suggests the unity that comes through reconciliation between God, human beings and creation.

Endnotes

¹ *All Lasallian educators* are considered formators by virtue of their participation in the Lasallian experience of education and formation. Moreover, those who enable persons to acquire vision, values, and practices through activities initiated by the campus ministry, social action, guidance counseling, and Lasallian Family offices are considered in a more formal sense as Lasallian formators.

² *Integral salvation and liberation* - Integral salvation refers to the salvation of the whole person in communion with others and with the whole of creation. This salvation embraces the physical, intellectual, affective, imaginative, moral-spiritual, and social-relational dimensions of human existence. It can be experienced in a partial way in history but awaits consummation at the end of time. *Liberation* that is integral has four aspects: *personal liberation* is freedom from human ignorance, immaturity and psychological impediments for mature self-possession, self-commitment and self-giving; *spiritual liberation* is freedom from the alienation of sin and religious ignorance for the life of virtue in communion with God and others; *social-political liberation* refers to freedom from unjust and dehumanizing structures and social arrangements for participation in social arrangements that facilitate respect for human dignity and solidarity; *cosmic liberation* refers to freedom from destructive ways of relating to creation for modes of relationship that respect the harmony and integrity of all created things.



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³ *Poor and vulnerable* -The term refers in the first place to the economically poor and to all those deprived of the means to realize their dignity as persons. In a broader sense, these are men, women and children who suffer from various forms of "poverty as frustration," the impoverishment born of injustice, physical and social evils, personal insufficiency and failure.

⁴ *The spirit of faith* – The spirit of faith is a disposition of the mind and heart that (1) allows believers to interpret, judge and evaluate reality in the light of the Gospel; (2) moves and motivates them to contribute actively to the fulfillment of God's saving plan; (3) enables them to take necessary risks and act with boldness in accomplishing what is demanded by each situation, placing their trust in God's providence to guide, sustain and make fruitful their efforts.

⁵ In his letter to young Lasallians (July 2002), the Superior General, Br. Álvaro Rodríguez Echevarría FSC, writes: "First of all, the spirit of faith invites us to look at life, events, history, as places where God is made manifest. Here we are speaking of looking at everything in the light of faith or in the light of God, and to discover Him present in his Word, in men and women, in the poor, in nature, in history, and in ourselves.

"In the GOSPEL, his Word is always alive and ever present. For De La Salle, the Gospel was not a book which evoked a story of the past, but the Good News of a close God who loves us as we are "today." And it is up to us to make that gratuitous love present to the world, that love which we experience in our lives.

"In HUMAN PERSONS made in the image of God and the revelation of his mysteries.

"In the POOR. If everyone is a reflection of the face of God it is especially in the poor where his manifestation is greater. The Founder invites us to "*recognize Jesus beneath the poor rags of the children*" (Meditation 96.3). The more we have this attitude, the more we will be attentive and sensitive to all forms that are opposed to God's saving plan. Being sensitive to, and defending human rights, especially those of children, is part of our Lasallian vocation.

"In NATURE, the place of the marvels of God. It is this nature, which each year is renewed in passing from the death of winter to the life of spring. We need only to open our eyes to find God. The sky, mountains, the sea... all of these are gifts from God. By means of the book of the world, we can reach the author of everything.

"In HISTORY, the place of God's activities, where his saving plan is made manifest. In a certain way for the Christian, all of history is sacred, because it reveals God and his love for the world. Therefore, two types of reading are mandatory for all young Lasallians. The Bible, especially the Gospels, where God is revealed in his Word and the newspaper or the television news, where each day I can discover the face of God through world events about which I cannot be indifferent.

"In MYSELF, the temple of the Trinity. The more I go deeply into myself the more I encounter God. This was the experience of Saint Augustine: *'I loved you late in life, beauty so ancient and so new, I loved you late in life. You were in my inner being and I was outside and I set about searching for you in all the beautiful things created by You.'*"

⁶ "Saint John Baptist de La Salle invites us to look at the world with the eyes of faith in such a way that we can say that the two Lasallian places of encounter with God are REALITY and the WORD OF GOD. De La Salle always looked upon everything with a contemplative view of reality, a double view, if you will. On the one hand, there is



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God's saving plan, discovered in his Word and in prayer; on the other hand, there is the historic view of the abandonment of the children of artisans and the poor. Both views have the same goal: to put the means of salvation within the reach of young people who are far from it."

⁷ "... the spirit of faith invites us always to search for God's will. Basically, this involves searching for the best way to carry out God's saving plan." (Br. Álvaro Rodríguez Echevarría FSC). God's saving plan is the integral salvation and liberation of all, and especially of those who experience the greatest level of need.

⁸ "It is interesting to note that our Founder in his writings cites this text from John four times: '*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*' (John 10:10) God's will is that each person might have a full life. Therefore, because I have experienced in my life the loving and liberating actions of God, I decide to share with my brothers and sisters my lived experience and to commit myself to God's work, as De La Salle liked to say." (Br. Álvaro Rodríguez Echevarría FSC)

⁹ "... the spirit of faith involves always trusting God, abandoning myself into his hands. And I can do it because the Lord is always there, in my inner being. Therefore De La Salle always insisted on the presence of God and I can do this, because the Lord is not only there, but he also leads me in my own history and in the history of humankind. This is one of the principal Lasallian ideas: God seeks us first, before we seek Him; God is already present, God guides us. It is up to us to open ourselves to Him, recognizing Him by faith." (Br. Álvaro Rodríguez Echevarría FSC)

¹⁰ *Zeal* – A passionate commitment to realize God's will which, in Lasallian terms, is the integral liberation and salvation of all, especially the youth and the poor. In De La Salle's thinking, faith and zeal are inseparable, two dimensions of one spirit. Zeal is the expression of faith in service to human need.

¹¹ *Gratuity and generosity* - These are qualities that mirror the graciousness of God. These traits are expressed in the willingness to "go the extra mile," to do more than is strictly required without regard for remuneration, and in efforts to extend one's services to the poor and the marginalized who are often unable to repay one's efforts.

¹² *Creativity and fortitude* – Zeal is expressed through a willingness to adapt and diversify the educational project in order to respond more adequately to the needs of learners. This creativity needs to be matched by a corresponding courage and persistence to see the changes through.

¹³ *Compassion and commitment* – Zeal is fuelled by compassion for those whose need is great and sustained by a commitment to transform their situation for the better.

¹⁴ Attention to excellence and quality in one's work is a manifestation of zeal for service. One tries to be and do the best one can in order to be of greater service to God and to contribute to the common good.

¹⁵ John Paul II defines communion this way: "Communion . . . speaks of the union with God brought about by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit." (*Christifidelis Laici* 19). Communion with the Triune God bears fruit in communion with others: "Communion with Jesus, which gives rise to the communion of Christians among themselves is an indispensable condition for bearing fruit: 'Apart from me you can do nothing.' (Jn 15.5) And communion with others is the most magnificent fruit that the branches can give: in fact, it is the gift of Christ and His Spirit. . . . Communion and mission are profoundly connected with one another, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that communion represents both the source and fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion." (CL 32).



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¹⁶ *Association* - Lasallian expression approximating "communion in mission." Association carries the sense of fidelity to God, to one's collaborators, and to the mission. However, it must be acknowledged that there are different degrees and levels of collaboration and association for mission. Association is to be interpreted in an inclusive sense to embrace even those who through goodwill collaborate in the Lasallian educational project without sharing all the Lasallian values and commitments.