

PARC MISSION ASSEMBLY

OPENING REMARKS

5 August 2019

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In Jesus Christ incarnate among us and living in us by His Spirit, contemplate and admire the marvels of the Son as liberator and mediator who sends us to be His representatives among abandoned youth. (Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer)

A. Introduction

I am happy to be present with you at this assembly and to congratulate you for the confidence your colleagues have in selecting you as Delegates to the 3rd International Mission Assembly. I sincerely thank you for generously making yourselves available to discern, with Lasallians from around the world, on the needs of, and the direction for, our mission at this time in its history.

Inspired by its theme: *Identity, Vitality and Transformation*, the International Mission Assembly in 2020 “will look at our current reality and interpret the signs that can help us respond to the challenges of the Lasallian Educational Mission in the 21st Century.”¹ To do so we need to think in terms of the global Lasallian mission and not only of our local district or delegation. In my brief opening remarks I want to alert you to three points that I hope will have a prominent place in the discernment and decision making of both the Assembly and the 46th General Chapter. These points are: 1) the General Council’s leadership priorities, 2) the work of the ad hoc International Strategy Commission, and 3) the Federation of Asian Bishops’ policy of triple dialogue.

B. General Council Leadership Priorities

¹ Lasallian Reflection 5, Great Things are Possible, General Council, 2019, p. 15.

To realize any theme, such as the one chosen by the assembly, requires the identification of priorities among numerous needs. Since taking office in 2014, and reflecting on what we have seen and experienced, in the different Regions of the Institute, the General Council² is proposing two priorities for the global Lasallian Family to consider and to contribute to their realization. The two priorities are: *Leadership and Governance* and *Association for Mission*.

Leadership and Governance

We are all familiar with the rapid changes and significant developments in the Lasallian Mission in recent decades. The fewer Brothers and the preponderance of women and men in the 1,100 educational institutions in eighty countries are the most obvious. This particular reality has resulted in changes to how we are organized internationally and how we have adjusted inherited structures for the mission. The creation of local mission councils and regional assemblies such as our gathering here are examples of these adjustments. The creation of mission councils and mission assemblies were based on three convictions: the first, and obvious one, is the overwhelming involvement of women and men in the Lasallian mission. The second is the acknowledgement that the 20th century model of top-down, centralized organizational structures, whether Church or Business, were based on a modern industrial worldview. The post-modern 21st century requires a new model, certainly for the Church where the majority of members live in the southern hemisphere with different cultural, philosophical and historical realities than that of Western Europe. Third, in the not-too-distant future, some Districts will disappear, and in others, no Brothers will be involved in the educational mission or a particular educational ministry. The implications for leadership and Governance require fresh thinking and new ideas on the part of all of us. How should we organize ourselves going forward?

² "The mission of the Brother General Councilors is to assist the Brother Superior in the government and the animation of the Institute. They share with him and under his authority all the tasks of the government of the Institute."

Among the significant developments and reasons for our hope for the ongoing vitality of the mission are the various centers, institutes and programs of Lasallian formation for Partners and Brothers. Never before have so many Lasallian educators become acquainted with, and embraced the Lasallian educational vision and spirituality that informs and influences their own profession and vocation. This is a welcomed development for the vitality of the global Lasallian mission. Going forward we want to make *sure that the link and integration between governance, spirituality, and identity happens and continues to evolve, and grow as our reality continues to change.*

Association for Mission

We believe Association is a priority for several reasons: 1) we all have a vocation and mission in life. For those baptized in the Christian faith we are called to mission, 2) Lasallians - Partners and Brothers - sharing the mission and charism has been a conviction and a commitment of the Institute for the past several decades, 3) the current Lasallian generation exhibits confusion over the term and its implications, 4) Lasallian pedagogy for the 21 century depends on our association for mission, and 5) we are called to be in community; to be in relationship with one another for mission – the foundational principle of “together and by association”.

What we look for today are:

- More conversations and reflection on actual lived experiences of association.
- Different models of association within the Lasallian Family responsive to, and respectful of the local culture.
- Prioritizing the dynamics of shared spirituality and life, not just mission alone.

International Strategy Committee

It is my conviction that new and different voices should be at the table when addressing the needs of the Institute today. When only members of any organization evaluates itself, they can be limited by too narrow a vision. There is a tendency to repeat the same conversations and possible solutions to an issue ad nauseam. In 2017 we established the International Strategy Committee to be an additional voice and to help us anticipate the needs of the Lasallian Mission for the next generation. The Committee presented three initial recommendations to the March 2018 Intercapitular Assembly of Visitors, Auxiliary Visitors Delegates and Presidents. These were: 1) increase the participation of Lasallian Partners in the leadership of the mission through a new vision of lay leadership and strengthen the functions of the center of the Institute in the conduct of the mission; 2) formulation a policy of financial co-responsibility to ensure assets are properly organized, managed, and channeled to mission requirements and demonstrated institute priorities; and 3) the Superior and General Council create a roadmap for the implementation of the two recommendations.

An outcome of that meeting was to expand the membership and scope of the committee. It now includes Lasallian women and men, Visitors, Brothers and investment/financial advisors. The committee has organized itself into three blocks or work groups to recommend: a) a new vision for the next generation of Lasallians and Brothers, b) optimizing returns and value from patrimony to ensure sustainability into the next generation, and c) developing holistic policies resourcing the mission. We anticipate a final report in January 2020. The report will be shared with the Preparatory Commission for the 46th General Chapter, and the delegates to the International Mission Assembly and 46th General Chapter.

D. Triple Dialogue

As you know, for many years, the Federation of Asian Bishops has called for a triple dialogue with cultures and the great religions of Asia. Specifically, they call for dialogue with the poor, with cultures and an inter-religious dialogue. As a region you are very much engaged in these dialogues. Also, as Lasallians you are familiar with a conviction of the Brothers' Rule:

*When they work with Partners with different beliefs and religious traditions, the Brothers seek to establish common ground for co-operation on the basis of the promotion of human dignity, solidarity among all human beings, and the integral development of the individual, in line with the Lasallian tradition.*³

As a global educational Institute, we need your help to better understand and properly integrate the reality of the Lasallian mission present as a minority in Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic cultures. Share with us your insights on how to establish common ground among the different faiths or those with no faith. How is human dignity and solidarity among all human beings promoted?

E. Conclusion

At the Brothers' 39th General Chapter in 1966-67 the once highly centralized Institute that served us well for nearly three centuries was abandoned. In its place the Institute embraced the governance model of subsidiarity. It was the right decision and remains the right decision for the Institute today. However, subsidiarity is not equivalent to autonomy. Subsidiarity is being in solidarity with the whole. With advances in technology since our decentralization, the opportunities to stay connected through networking have been enhanced. Also, in the post-modern world, leaders – whether business, political or ecclesial – acknowledge new forms of organization are required. In new organizational models the local community is given prominence; local communities that effectively network and collaborate with the larger organization. This being the case, today we are called to be inspired faith communities living among and advocating with the poor, the marginalized and the abandoned (cf. O'Murchu, *Religious Life in the 21st Century*, p. 196).

³ The Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Rule*, Rome, 2015, Article 17.2

Gathered in assembly, and confident in the presence of the Holy Spirit, I invite you to be co-creators of Lasallian faith communities throughout the Region to sustain the mission entrusted to your care.

Thank You.