

Chapter 3 - Lasallian Association: Common Characteristics Experienced in Different Ways (part 1)

A multicultural, multireligious reality

3.1. The original experience of *together and by association* that begins with John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers now continues in eighty countries on five continents. The Lasallian charism appears to have a new dynamism because of its presence in a variety of ethnic, cultural, and religious settings. Educators throughout the world find in De La Salle and the Lasallian educational mission an inspiring element to integrate into their daily lives.

3.2. This new reality of Lasallian association in a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and global context has common elements, even though Lasallians experience them in different ways. Two universal concepts however are essential: the relevance of human nature and the value of education.

3.3. The anthropological view of human nature that motivates Lasallians recognizes and dignifies every human being as being unique, unrepeatable, and educable. Discrimination based on gender, culture, religion, sexual orientation or political affiliation has no place in the Lasallian educational mission. As social beings, humans are capable of establishing meaningful relationships. As spiritual beings, they are open to transcendent reality and the search for life's meaning. This holistic view of human nature includes intellectual, emotional, social, cultural, ethical, and spiritual dimensions.

3.4. Lasallians recognize that each person can and needs to be formed in a holistic way. Inspired by the Founder's writings and experience and by the living tradition of the Institute, Lasallians regard education as a process of integral human formation. They recognize human dignity in the face of everyone they meet. In keeping with the Lasallian tradition,

they devote themselves especially to the education of young people who are in difficult and challenging circumstances.

A new reality in the Church

3.5. The movement in the life of the Church that the Spirit has inspired in recent decades makes clear that *having been born for the good of everyone, the charisms of the founders [...] must be placed at the center of the Church itself, open to communion and participation by all the members of the People of God.*

3.6. As stated in *Starting Afresh from Christ*:

The new phenomenon being experienced in these days is that some members of the laity are asking to participate in the charismatic ideals of Institutes. This has given rise to interesting initiatives and new institutional forms of association. We are experiencing an authentic re-flourishing of ancient institutions, such as the secular orders or third orders, and the birth of new lay associations and movements linked to religious Families and Secular Institutes. Whereas at times in the recent past, collaboration came about as a means of supplementing the decline of consecrated persons necessary to carry out activities, now it is growing out of the need to share responsibility not only in the carrying out of the Institute's works but especially in the hope of sharing specific aspects and moments of the spirituality and mission of the Institute. This calls for an adequate formation of both consecrated persons and laity to ensure a collaboration which is mutually enriching.

3.7. By valuing the charisms of the founders of religious communities, the Church establishes new relationships of communion and participation among the baptized. A most significant innovation is the request by people who are not members to take part in the charismatic ideals of an institute. The request involves more than sharing the mission or carrying on specific professional tasks, important as they are. The request means, among other things, committing the person's life to a

specific way of living God's call through an institute's charism. These new forms of communion and co-operation enrich both members and non-members, especially in mission, community life, and spirituality.

3.8. Unity in diversity is the goal of this new reality *It is essential to maintain a dynamic balance between unity and diversity in the Institute...This appears to be indispensable in a rapidly changing world that requires response and flexibility.* Everyone's participation is important because everyone has a unique contribution to make. The Church accomplishes its mission of building the Kingdom of God through the participation of all its members.