
Communal Discernment in Service of Our Lasallian Future

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Introduction

I appreciate the reference made during your introductory remarks to my time coaching soccer. It was a privileged time learning about a game and life with kids. My days of soccer coaching are over. I'm now just a devoted fan. But since I'm a Catholic fan, you should know I have a special devotion to Our Lady of Prompt Soccer!³

I'd like briefly to give you a sense of where we'll be going in these remarks. First, I will propose a methodology for the discernment you will be making together in these days. Second, we'll investigate the concept of charism and how to find it in the District of the Midwest. Third, we'll locate the District in the international context of the Lasallian movement. Finally, we'll look at some rules of engagement to guide our days together. So, this keynote is a four-legged table:

- *method of communal discernment,*
- *charism,*
- *Lasallian movement,* and
- *rules of engagement.*

It's a lot to cover; so it's helpful to have an inspirational "presence" in the room. That "presence" is that of the late Brother Luke Salm,⁴ who on this campus 19 years ago, presented on the topic of association and mission. He opened his presentation in this way:

It would be impossible in a presentation such as this to exhaust the topic, but not impossible perhaps to exhaust the patience of the audience.⁵

I will take Brother Luke's words to heart.

My remarks will have as their purpose to help you as delegates *locate* your District and its multi-colored mission as part of the international movement we call Lasallian. The emphasis will be less on physical location as location within the charism, which has its own special geography.

I also want to challenge you to think outside the 2018 box and to think inside a 2023 perspective. That may mean my remarks will challenge your assumptions. That's good for the discernment process you are entering, but I don't expect you to consider my words definitive. You have the last word here; mine are just the first ones. In either event, the challenge remains to listen deeply to one another.

Wherever the Spirit leads us in these days, I hope you will join me in Saint Augustine’s counsel, to

Trust the past to God's mercy, the present to God's love, and the future to God’s providence.

A Uniquely Lasallian Method of Communal Discernment

As delegates, you are asked to “think” in terms of the District, to think of the “whole.” Quite a charge when your everyday concerns are more particular. After all, it’s hard to see the whole picture when you are inside the frame. One of the time-honored ways we step outside of the frame is discernment. There are different ways to discern, and each has its own method. A starter definition is that it’s a process of moving to a decision with God as a partner in the conversation.

In the Lasallian ethos, discernment is a communal engagement.⁶ It is less about the needs of the person and more about the needs of the community. It parallels the Lasallian method of interior prayer, where there are three movements.⁷ In brief:

- first, educators bring to the table personal and local experience and identify “the signs of the times”⁸;
- then, the Word of God is brought into relationship, in prayer and dialogue with these experiences and signs;
- finally, out of this deep listening to the signs and the Word, preliminary outlines of personal and community response emerge.

When the community gathers to learn and reflect and decide – as you are doing here – you “do this in memory” of Jesus Christ, the human face of God, who loved the poor and on their behalf confronted the leaders and structures who oppressed them. We focus on the needs of those most vulnerable in our society and educational community. We bring the Word and Presence of God into the community, and if possible draw from the deep wells of our mystical and prophetic traditions.

John Baptist de La Salle was in love with God. And the Word – Scripture – was key to that intimacy. The Lasallian scholar, Brother Miguel Campos, points out that Saint Paul’s *First Letter to the Corinthians* provided De La Salle, and by extension the community, with a pivotal understanding of educational ministry.

We are fellow-workers in God’s service; and you are God’s garden. Or again, you are God’s building. God gave me the privilege of laying the foundation like a skilled master builder; others put up the building. Let each take care how he builds. There can be no other foundation than the one already laid: I mean Jesus Christ himself.⁹

Gathered together as the Midwest District community, I invite you to discern recalling that you are fellow-workers in God’s service.

Another foundational passage for De La Salle, which Lasallian scholar Brother Don Mouton highlights, is from Saint Paul’s *Second Letter to the Corinthians*.

For anyone united to Christ, there is a new creation: the old order has gone; a new order has already begun. All this has been the work of God. He has reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has enlisted us in this ministry of reconciliation: God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, no longer holding people's misdeeds against them, and has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors. It is as if God were appealing to you through us: we implore you in Christ's name, be reconciled to God!¹⁰

We are ambassadors – each of us – entrusted with a message of God's love. I invite you to keep bringing this central understanding into your reflection and conversation.

Natalia Imperatori-Lee is an associate professor of theology at Manhattan College. In her new book, *Cuéntame: Narrative in the Ecclesial Present*,¹¹ she asks us to pay attention to the faith experience as it is conveyed in the stories of ordinary people. A leading way we tell the story of our Catholic faith community is through ideas, convictions, beliefs, doctrines. Natalia urges us to pay attention to literature, painting, and sculpture as “ordinary” expressions of faith and to faith-filled practice outside church-sponsored gatherings. Discernment's first step is bringing personal and local experience to the table. Are we including the stories of ordinary and everyday faith along with what we think of as the normative ones?

I'm going to date myself here. Remember the “Ed Sullivan Show” on television? After the Beatles performance on that show, my second enduring memory is of the performance of George Carlin. My third remembered performance is that of the guy who kept the plates spinning. Lasallian discernment is that third memory. We start spinning the memory plate, then the signs of the times, then personal experience, then someone else's experience ... then we start spinning our experience of God in our heart, God in our minds, God in the world, God in the Word. The God plates, the experience plates, God plates, experience plates. Broken plates! After awhile, a few things begin to happen. The plates aren't so different anymore. My experience and your experience harmonize; the ordinary in life is infused with the extraordinary; the eternal bleeds into the temporal. It's not magic, but fresh approaches and new directions emerge.

Of course, plate spinning is work. Discernment is also about not doing work, but letting yourself be worked over. There is a Belgian Brother by the name of Herman Lombærts, who points out that De La Salle was shown the way by the

urban context in which children were suffocating. We should grant ourselves the [same] freedom, the “vocation,” and the courage to be transformed by the (social) changes affecting us in our contemporary world. It's often unknown at the start where a new way of thinking will lead, and what kind of conclusions or new forms of institutionalization will emerge from it.¹²

So for example, it takes some courage to accord legitimacy to the way young people and young adults live their faith – especially if it is divergent with our own or seemingly at odds with what is, in our understanding, “normative.” So let's make sure to add the perspective-of-young-people plate to the act. They are critical parts of an authentic discernment!

Charism

You use the word “charism” explicitly three times in the focus statements of this Mission Congress. As Brother Larry¹³ hinted last night, this is not a household word. But you don’t have to be a Navajo code talker to use it either! It’s key to our community understanding and, therefore, foundational for the forward thinking of this Congress. Let me offer a definition – but I’ll begin with what it is *not*. It is not *chrism*, a holy oil used in the sacraments for anointing. It is not *charisma*, a charm, appeal, or presence that is a personal attribute. It is a *grace*, a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is not supernatural power, but it does empower; and it enables someone to act for the good of the human community. And that good being enacted is effected by bringing the living love of Christ into that community.

Every Catholic religious institute or congregation can trace its founding to the emergence of a charism, both in the founder and in the community. Each group would say they *carry Christ* to others; and they do it in a special, perhaps even unique, way. Saint Benedict received a charism, and Benedictine monks now carry Christ to the world through prayer and hospitality; Catherine McAuley received a charism, and Sisters of Mercy now carry Christ to the poor, sick, and uneducated through acts of justice; Saint La Salle received a charism for founding the Christian Schools and for founding the Brothers of the Christian Schools. His gift is our gift too. Our way of carrying Christ to the world is through education and formation. Some say we leave a breadcrumb trail to Jesus. Our mission is one where we guide – sometimes even rescue – young people and young adults from the seductions that conspire against life and dignity. We offer a place that is a community first, an institution second, and a space to honor and celebrate each person.

In short, our charismatic purpose and passion is to make of our educational centers redemptive and saving places.

Charism, as we use the term in our family of educational communities, is God’s gift of love, purpose, imagination, energy, and innovation to us and even for us, that we might transform lives through educational work and community witness. When we are informed by the charism that fueled Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the original community in their day – and which we believe does the same in our day – we are led to ask, “How might we use this charism to respond to God’s call in our day? How might we allow this charism to guide our discernment here?”

Fortunately, “charism” is not just a theological term with a limited audience; it offers real meaning for the real work we do. And, I would add, even if we don’t use the word explicitly with youth and young adults, every time we challenge them to engage in the story of De La Salle and make connections with their own story, we are sharing the charism. Whether it’s at the Darst Center, La Salle Manor, Montini or the Press,¹⁴ our charism compels us to urge this generation to engage with the questions that matter. Often, these are the questions left partially or incompletely answered by the generations ahead of them. And just as often, they pose new questions that haven’t been asked before!

There is a prophetic nature to the Lasallian charism. A prophet tells the truth, and a prophetic education does three things. It tells the truth, but it also listens to young people to hear the truth;

and then it invites, challenges, and supports them in telling the truth. Is your educational community prophetic? If it is, it's kinetic and dynamic; and the charism is alive and breathing.

In my service as General Councilor, I have endless opportunities to see the charism in a variety of cultural settings. The travel I do is not glamorous, but the privilege to see the charism living and breathing certainly is.

One thing I have seen very clearly in my visits, to countries where there is a thin separation of Church and State, is that the vitality of the Lasallian mission is fragile. Keeping the doors open in a literal sense and keeping the doors open to faith in a practical sense is quite dependent upon the "state." They provide the salaries and the operating and capital expenses for the site and buildings. In a tuition and benefactor-dependent model, such as we have, the viability and vitality are dependent upon the educational community.

Last year I visited one of our schools in Togoville, in Togo. A beautiful school but a struggling school whose enrollment decline imperils its viability. After a lot of reflection, the District of Golfe du Bénin determined it was time to withdraw from this diocesan school. It's a sad story, though not an unfamiliar one in the long history of the Midwest and its legacy Districts. You know what the Lasallian community in Togo knows. The charism doesn't flame out even if the institution does. It finds a new home.

The fidelity and perseverance of the Brothers in Vietnam and Myanmar can hardly be overstated. The government which seized the schools and pushed the Lasallian charism into the shadows is showing signs of loosening its oversight and control. And there are signs of new educational works. Even in the face of war and violence and suppression, the charism doesn't flame out.

Another dynamic example of charism's mobility can be seen in Beirut, where a school conducted by Brothers and Partners and Volunteers for Syrian and Iraqi refugees has materialized out of nothing. And in Rumbek, an isolated village in civil war-torn South Sudan, where the Lasallian movement has opened a grade school for boys. New needs emerged, and it is thrilling to see how our charism surrenders to that magnetic pull.

The upshot? The charism doesn't have to look the same to be the same. These examples teach us that charism isn't just a concept or an intangible spiritual reality. Charism is embodied. Your District has men and women who brought – and bring – these spiritual gifts forward in their lives:

- I'm thinking of Brother Terence McLaughlin, whose commitment to justice is integral to the Lasallian charism.¹⁵
- I'm thinking of Dr. Stephany Schlachter, whose leadership in creating a platform for association is integral to the Lasallian charism.¹⁶
- I'm thinking of Brother James Miller, whose self-donation for the liberation of the poor is integral to the Lasallian charism.¹⁷
- I'm thinking of Brother John Johnston, whose clear and insistent articulation of shared mission grew the Lasallian charism.¹⁸

- I'm thinking of Julie Michels, whose pivotal guidance in the Mission and Ministry Council has grown the Lasallian charism.¹⁹
- I'm thinking of Emily Vogel, whose clear and insistent living of shared charism is growing the Lasallian vision.²⁰

So let's state the obvious. The Lasallian charism, our Lasallian charism, is embodied and therefore relational. It began in a man who said "yes" to the Jesus who sent street kids to knock at the door of his heart. And here it is, a little travel-worn from centuries of growth, sitting right here in Romeoville, Illinois. And it is still a gift and grace, it is still the living presence of Jesus, and there are still people in need knocking at the doors of our hearts.

Last year in an article in *The New Yorker*, Larissa MacFarquhar²¹ told the story of Julie, who in her adulthood felt drawn to return to her hometown in Orange City, Iowa, which for her and her husband "meant building their lives around relationships rather than personal ambition." The theological meaning of this move speaks to the origins of the charism we share.

[Julie] believed that because God was a trinity, to be created in the image of God was to be created for relationships; so to make relationships the purpose of your life was to fulfill your human mission.

I don't know if there is a better way to amplify the origins of our embodied, relational and communal charism.

And let's state what isn't so obvious. The Lasallian charism which informs these days of discernment as delegates is about saving people. I find people generally unsure of whether they are saving people. Salvation, that's for God, right? Yes and no. We don't have an inflated sense of our importance, but it's not deflated either. God's gift to us is, in the words of De La Salle,

to give these children a Christian education and to procure for them the life of grace in this world and eternal life in the next.²²

So eternal life, heaven, judgment? That's God's work. But liberation, transformation, conversion? That's our work. Here and now.

Salvation isn't just afterlife. It's not a refrain from the old song

Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.²³

If we had a song, it'd have lyrics from this plaque in front of a statute of Saint La Salle in front of a vocational school for the poorest of the poor in Colombo, Sri Lanka.²⁴

Child, give me your hand that I may walk in the light of your faith in me.

Lasallian Movement

Rosanne Cash, like her father Johnny, is a songwriter and performer. She tells the story that when she was eighteen years old,

I was on the road with my dad. One day, we were sitting in the tour bus, talking about songs, and he mentioned a song, and I said, “I don’t know that one.” He mentioned another one, and I said, “I don’t know that one, either.” Then he started to get alarmed, so he spent the rest of the day making a list on a legal pad, and at the top he put “100 Essential Country Songs.” And he handed it to me and he said, “This is your education.”

A Mission Congress that considers charism as an organizing principle for its forward-thinking ultimately has to confront the questions, “What is essential? What is core?” There is no Lasallian movement without these questions. There’s just tradition. And tradition, unless it’s interrogated, becomes traditionalism and ceases to be life giving.

I admire the preparatory work that has been done so far, particularly the “Focus Areas.” Three of them – very Lasallian! – and all on one page – impressive. It represents, to my reading, an effort to hone in on what is essential.

We ask this question of ourselves frequently – the Brother Superior and the eight members of the General Council. And we pose this question to the Brothers in District leadership. Brother Bob Schieler²⁵ has been insistent that the Visitors and Auxiliary Visitors include the Districts in responding to that question. As you can imagine, when you are trying to guide a movement that encompasses 80 countries and cultures, 90,000 educators, and just north of 1,000,000 students, it is difficult to settle this question uniformly.

In March we gathered at the General House in Rome with the Visitors and Auxiliaries for two weeks. We wanted to see how we have progressed since the General Chapter in 2014 and ensure our progress toward the next General Chapter in 2021. When you bring people from around the world together, you bring wildly varying mindsets and worldviews into one room. One fun way to illustrate this is to look at various perspectives on law. You don’t have to look further than Europe to appreciate this challenge.

- In Germany, everything is prohibited unless it is permitted.
- In France, everything is permitted unless it is prohibited.
- In Russia, everything is prohibited even if it is permitted.
- In Italy, everything is permitted, especially if it is prohibited.

The good news is that we found a way to speak of what is essential across cultures by using the language of “call.” We are called and committed to:

- a. deepening our identity and living the charism as a community.
- b. living association.
- c. ensuring a greater effectiveness of pastoral ministry of vocations and youth ministry.

- d. establishing ongoing formation and accompaniment programs that guide and mentor the next generation of Lasallians.
- e. sharing responsibility and governance.
- f. establishing leadership and animation structures that express collegial authority, subsidiarity, and solidarity.
- g. ensuring transparency and accountability for our financial resources.
- h. increasing the funding of projects serving the poor.

Now what is striking about this list is that it is very similar to your list. By my count, six of the eight “calls” identified at the intercapitular gathering are embedded in your three “Focus Areas.” We are singing from the same hymnbook!

But here’s your challenge as a Congress. These words are only meaningful if they take shape in life. You have a lot going for you. The Midwest District cup overflows with examples of being out in front. Over the years, I’ve taken note of your ethos of creativity and ingenuity and risk-taking. If the Midwest District were a science experiment, we’d discover that in this District, opportunities attract. Your challenge is to let that spirit guide you and to keep the core and essential questions operative.

Another challenge to keep in mind is that you embody the Lasallian movement in this day and time in the District of the Midwest. The District isn’t Burr Ridge alone.²⁶ It’s this visible, and sometimes invisible, band of brothers and sisters. You may live and work in Saint Paul, Memphis, Browning²⁷; but this is a special moment when all of that individuality comes together to set a vision for the whole. It’s a bit like having two identities. It’s the Captain Kirk experience. On one episode of “Star Trek,” he was asked if he lived in outer space. He said, “No, I live in Iowa. I just work in outer space.”

This sense of being a body, a collective, a District, is critical to the movement. Charlie Legendre²⁸ referred to it last night in speaking of the principal Brothers who gathered to organize the Christian School.²⁹ It was a practical thing, this manual for ensuring the school ran like clockwork; but it was a mystical thing too. Why do I say that? ... For sure, it mattered when the catechism lesson was in the school day. It mattered to correct and not to punish. It mattered whether a student was in school or not. It mattered what details belonged in the student records. On the surface, these are practical things; they make the school run well. But these Brothers saw God in all things, all situations, all events. The school manual was a manual of vigilance and care, and a human response to grace and to the presence of the Holy Spirit of God in the kids and the class. This is what I mean by the mystical element of this movement.

So the call for you as delegates is to respond to “the signs of the times” and the grace of God and to remember you are cooperators with God. The District is not principally a hierarchy. You have your leaders, sure; but you believe the Spirit moves in the faculty room, the classroom, and the boardroom just as it did in the Upper Room.³⁰ That is, where people gather to listen deeply to one another, the Holy Spirit joins the assembly.

And so when we ask what is core – what is essential – we are doing discernment in a Lasallian key; and we are also growing the movement. When I was in Belgium in January, I saw this up

close and personal. In the 1990s the Flemish-speaking northern District saw the trends – a growing secularization in society, the diminishing number of Brothers for educational service, the new understanding of vocation – and was proactive in creating a center to organize and animate the network of schools. In the French-speaking south, they created a sustainable network of animators. They each identified culture-specific ways to remain faithful to what is core and what is essential.

In Australia, perhaps more than any other context, they have examined in detail different models of shared governance between the Brothers and Lasallian Partners – models that balance church and civil law in different ways. The Marist Brothers, Sisters of the Good Samaritan, Salesians, Edmund Rice Christian Brothers, Mercy Sisters and others have implemented models that assume a very small number of the founding religious order’s members and a significant number of committed associates. The new governance models are designed to stay faithful to what is core and essential, even as membership in these religious communities declines.

I am just learning about what is happening in Spain, but there is training and formation for educators in what they are calling a “pedagogy of interiority.” In other words, organizing a curriculum for developing the inner life of the young person, with the aim of encouraging emotional, mental, and spiritual health. It’s a creative way to stay faithful to the Lasallian emphasis on the whole person.

Rules of Engagement

There are rules of engagement for the Congress that Charlie³¹ will lay out in crystal clarity, but I’d like to offer some as well in the form of a to-do list. But let’s begin with the don’t-do list!

Of all the contributions that Lewis Carroll made to the English language – burble, chortle, gimble, galumph – by far the most useful to contemporary culture is “rabbit hole.” Carroll did not, of course, invent the rabbit hole; that distinction belongs to rabbits.³²

Sometimes the Holy Spirit stirs the embers into flame, and our imagination catches fire. Proposals and plans multiply in those wonderful moments. But sometimes there are too many good ideas, and it just isn’t feasible to honor them all. So, stay on the lookout for that rabbit hole; and repeat this mantra: *less is more, less is more.*

I mentioned earlier that the charism can be eloquently described in letters, stories and bulletins. Its eloquence can also be told in the lives of the committed people. Sometimes documents hide rabbit holes. We want our documents to be clear, to be in continuity and alignment. We want to use the right word or phrase to convey the key idea. These are unquestionably important aims. I am just recommending that you keep in mind that fine distinction between enough and too enough!

And sometimes the search for the breakthrough idea or innovative approach represents a rabbit hole. I can suggest a couple of detours. One, begin with the needs and see where that takes you.

Two, keep in mind what is being done now, what is working now; and ask if strengthening that approach is what is needed as you position yourselves for 2023.

Time doesn't allow, on my part or yours, for a full development of what 2023 will look like. What I can offer is *a short list of trends* that I think could inform your discernment during these days. At the very least, they will catalyze your own thinking.

First, the Internet, with its blessings and curses, to say nothing of its seductions and promises, will continue to challenge our capacity to leverage *technology for learning*. Technology gives access to information, and sparks imagination and innovation in ways never before seen in human history. That won't change. What needs to change is what one observer noted about the internet age – namely, that assumptions are replacing observation, assertion is replacing assessment, and ideology is replacing evidence. The learning paradigm is still new, and there's so much more to understand. Heads up, Totino-Grace, Holy Family, Fe y Vida, and Benilde-St. Margaret!³³

Second, the need young people and young adults have for *a safe and secure environment* to make possible healthy relationships will not diminish. It may be even stronger in 2023. So what implications might that have for teaching non-violence and conflict resolution and building inclusive communities? CBU, CBS, CBHS, and CBCHS,³⁴ we need your insights!

A *third* trend is the growing gap between what it costs to educate a young person and the annual tuition and fees. The *question of sustainability* becomes more acute with every passing fiscal year. There is an urgency to this question, and people's futures are on the line. Bishop Kelley, DLS Blackfeet, Blessed Sacrament and Cretin-Derham,³⁵ you're not alone!

Disaffiliation from institutional religion by adults and young people alike, a *fourth* trend, will continue, and this will challenge Catholic leadership – and that means us – to provide appropriate spaces and places where faith can be nourished. My family's nice needlepoint Catholicism isn't around anymore. “Where did it go?” is not the pressing question here.

We need to be asking, what relevant religious expression can we offer to families and young people? We can see that the script has been flipped. Exclusive participation in only one institutional religious group is beginning to resemble something like an “alternative” religious practice.

Matt Maher, the Catholic musician and evangelist,³⁶ remarks that the Church has three things of value to offer the young today: silence, service, and mystery. I like his short list. Young people need spaces to talk and relate – not like adults – but as adolescents; and young adults need spaces to talk their way into an understanding of life and its mysteries.

The “spiritual geography” is new, but I wonder, “how new?” Haven't we always needed silence? The volume of urban noise will be even higher in 2023, but will the noise of incivility be stronger? What can we do to anticipate this?

Catholicism is more than a religion of dogmas centered on iniquity and infinity. It's an invitation into a community where people look out for one another.

A *fifth* trend is that the presence of De La Salle Christian *Brothers* in the life of the District *will decline in number and influence*. I won't review the statistics, but one simple way to note the demographic changes is to look at the Institute in the northern hemisphere, where the average age is 75, and the southern hemisphere, where the average age is 51.

Finally, the number of teachers and administrators in our schools who have experienced Catholic education will decline; and this will challenge everyone to determine how to provide *ongoing training and mentorship with limited resources*, to say nothing of adhering to the principles of "hiring for mission." This will be true today and tomorrow at De La Salle, San Miguel, Saint Mary's, and St. Pat's.³⁷

So that leads me to the "to-do" list, and I'll let Emily Dickinson introduce it.

The sailor cannot see the North, but knows the needle can.³⁸

We simply cannot see 2023; but in the spirit of her metaphor, perhaps you can steer the Congress in the direction of true north. You have the needle. What more do you need?

What our needle knows is that the specific way we carry Christ through education makes: suffering endurable, evil intelligible, justice desirable, and love possible.

What our needle knows is that young people: need adults willing to save their soul so it doesn't die before their body does; don't need to be told what to think but what must be thought about; need communities where they can count on a circle of love, a circle that has no circumference; and want someone to introduce them to mystery – and then keep them company as they get acquainted.

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.³⁹

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them,

Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.⁴⁰

Have you ever wondered why Jesus rolled up the scroll? Why he didn't read the entirety of the sixty-first chapter of *Isaiah*? It begins with a prophecy about liberation and justice. But as soon as words of the prophet were turning racist against gentiles, he stopped in mid-sentence. He refused to read of God's wrath and vengeance on the enemies of the Jewish people. What was being fulfilled in their hearing was the message of reconciliation.

So this is why they were staring at him. Their eyes were asking, "Was this jubilee, this year of God's favor, this year in which the debts of the poor are cancelled, the slaves are liberated, and the land is returned to its original owners for *everyone*?"

Jesus's action was a clear break with the tradition – it was clear that yes, God is the God of all people and cares for all and embraces all, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

Jesus, living in our hearts, is the needle.

Conclusion

I feel privileged to share this space with you, even if it meant going back to college dorm life⁴¹ with you. I pray that the Spirit will visit this assembly and give you everything you need. You're going to need it because the "Charlie Pilates Workout"⁴² is about to begin! So a final rule of engagement.

In the formula of consecration for the Brothers is found a powerful phrase:

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, prostrate with the most profound respect before your infinite and adorable majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to you to procure your glory *as far as I shall be able* and as you will require of me.⁴³

It's fascinating to see that De La Salle uses this phrase, "as far as you are able" in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* several times.⁴⁴ In other words, work your tail off for the kids; but just do as much as you can. No more.

I offer you the same gentle encouragement. Do everything you can, but only as far as you can.

Thank you.

Endnotes

1. These remarks were delivered as the keynote address of the Mission Congress of the District of the Midwest at Lewis University in Romeoville, IL, on July 19, 2018.

2. Brother Timothy Coldwell was elected a General Councilor of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at the 45th General Chapter of 2014. He had previously served for seven years as the Brother Visitor of the District of New Orleans – Santa Fe, and he has earned a masters degree at the (now) School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College.

3. Our Lady of Prompt Succor, the play on words here referenced, is the “Roman Catholic title of the Blessed Virgin Mary associated with a wooden devotional image enshrined in New Orleans, Louisiana.” Succor, according to the *Collins English Dictionary*, is “help given to people who are suffering or in difficulties.”

4. Cf. “Brother Luke Salm: A Life, A Reminiscence, A Valediction” by Amy Surak, Richard Tristano, and William Mann FSC in *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 8, no. 1 (2017), pages 5-12.

5. “Together for Mission” by Luke Salm FSC in *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 7, no. 2 (2016), page 89.

6. Cf. “Fidelity to the Movement of the Spirit: Criteria for Discernment,” an address to the 1st International Assembly of the Educational Mission of 2006 by Miguel A. Campos FSC in *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 3, no.2 (2012).

7. Cf. *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer by John Baptist de La Salle*, translated by Richard Arnandez FSC and edited by Donald Mouton FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1995).

8. *Perfectae Caritatis*, the 1965 decree of the Second Vatican Council on religious life, focuses on renewal and adaptation in light of the *signs of the times*. In consequence, this remains a privileged ecclesial lens of discernment.

9. *1 Corinthians* 3:9-10.

10. *2 Corinthians* 5:16-20.

11. Natalia Imperatori-Lee, *Cuéntame: Narrative in the Ecclesial Present* (Orbis, 2018).

12. “Vlaams Lasalliaans Perspectief (VLP) Future,” unpublished monograph, February 3, 2017.

13. Brother Larry Schatz serves as the Provincial / Visitor of the Midwest District of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

14. These are ministries of the District of the Midwest: Brother David Darst Center for Justice & Peace Spirituality & Education (Chicago, IL); La Salle Manor Retreat Center (Plano, IL); Montini Catholic High School (Lombard, IL); and Saint Mary’s Press (Winona, MN).

15. Brother Terence McLaughlin, a Midwest District Lasallian, was awarded the Bishop Dozier Award for Peace and Justice by Christian Brothers University in 2014 “for his faithful championing of racial equality, especially in education, and his dedication to ensuring equal access to a quality education for all.”

16. Dr. Stephany Schlachter AFSC, a Midwest District Lasallian, has served in leadership roles at Lewis University for nearly four decades, the last seventeen years of which serving as provost. She has demonstrated an “exceptional ability to invite and encourage others to integrate Lasallian values into all levels of education and everyday life on campus.”

17. Brother James Miller (1944-1982), a Midwest District Lasallian, gave his life in service of the students of the De La Salle Indian School at Huehuetenango. “His murder in Guatemala came during a string of priests and religious being assassinated.”

18. Brother John Johnston (1933-2007), a Midwest District Lasallian and Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools from 1986 to 2000, encouraged the sharing of Lasallian mission by Lasallian partners and provoked reflection on global issues like the rights of children and literacy.

19. Julie Michels AFSC, a Midwest District Lasallian and counselor and former principal of Totino-Grace High School in Minnesota, has been a vital force within the Lasallian educational network for almost three decades.

20. Emily Vogel, a Midwest District Lasallian and recent graduate of the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies, serves as campus minister and religion teacher at De La Salle Institute in Chicago.

21. “Where the Small-Town American Dream Lives On” by Larissa MacFarquhar in *The New Yorker* (November 13, 2017).

22. *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, translated by Richard Arnandez FSC and edited by Augustine Loes FSC and Francis Huether FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), #201.3.

23. From “The Preacher and the Slave,” a song written by Joe Hill in 1911.

24. Lasallian Community Education Services (LCES) is a Lasallian ministry of the District of Colombo in Sri Lanka.

25. Brother Robert Schieler was elected Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at the 45th General Chapter in 2014.

26. The District Office of the Midwest District of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is located in Burr Ridge, IL.

27. These are cities in which ministries of the District of the Midwest are located: Saint Paul (Cretin-Derham Hall in Minnesota), Memphis (Christian Brothers University, Christian Brothers High School, and De La Salle Elementary at Blessed Sacrament in Tennessee), and Browning (De La Salle Blackfeet School in Montana).

28. Charlie Legendre AFSC, the director of the District Office of Lasallian Evangelization and Catechesis of the District of San Francisco New Orleans, served as the facilitator of the Midwest District Congress.

29. Cf. John Baptist de La Salle's *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, translated by F. de La Fontainerie and Richard Arnandez FSC and edited by William Mann FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 43. In the introductory note of 1720 by Superior General Brother Timothée, explicit reference is made to the work of the Founder with "the principal and most experienced Brothers of the Institute" in preparing this text.

30. Cf. *Acts of the Apostles* 1:12-2:4.

31. That is, facilitator Charles Legendre AFSC.

32. "The Rabbit-Hole Rabbit Hole" by Kathryn Schulz in *The New Yorker*, June 4, 2015.

33. These are ministries of the District of the Midwest: Totino-Grace High School (Fridley, MN); Holy Family High School (Victoria, MN); Instituto Fe y Vida (Romeoville, IL); and Benilde-St. Margaret High School (St. Louis Park, MN).

34. These are ministries of the District of the Midwest: Christian Brothers University (Memphis, TN); Christian Brothers Services (Romeoville, IL); Christian Brothers High School (Memphis, TN); and Christian Brothers College High School (St. Louis, MO).

35. These are ministries of the District of the Midwest: Bishop Kelley High School (Tulsa, OK); De La Salle Blackfeet School (Browning, MT); De La Salle Elementary at Blessed Sacrament (Memphis, TN); and Cretin-Derham Hall (St. Paul, MN).

36. Matt Maher is "a contemporary Christian music artist" from Newfoundland, who lives in the USA.

37. These are ministries of the District of the Midwest: De La Salle High School (Minneapolis, MN); De La Salle Institute (Chicago, IL); San Miguel School (Chicago, IL); Saint Mary's University of Minnesota (Winona and Minneapolis, MN); and Saint Patrick High School (Chicago, IL).

38. Cf. "The Sailor Cannot See the North" in *Selected Letters* by Emily Dickinson (Harvard University Press, 1986), page 175.

39. *Luke* 4:18-19.

40. *Luke* 4:21.

41. The allusion here is to sleeping in a college residence hall and eating in a school cafeteria at Lewis University, the site of the Mission Congress.

42. As noted previously, Charlie Legendre AFSC of the District of San Francisco New Orleans served as the facilitator of the Midwest District Congress. Pilates, a rigorous physical fitness system, is used here in a metaphorical sense.

43. Cf. *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (Rome, 2015), #25.

44. Cf. “Meditations for the Time of Retreat” in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, translated by Richard Arnandez FSC and edited by Augustine Loes FSC and Francis Huether FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), pages 432-472.