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Our Message of Hope: CIL 2010 – Understanding and Living Association for Lasallian Mission Today¹

CIL 2010 Participants

Dear Lasallians: Brothers and all who serve the Lasallian Mission,

Grateful and Challenged by a New Frontier

In a spirit of gratitude to our Lasallian ancestors and pride for our Lasallian Heritage, we Lasallians together (locally) and by association (globally) are called to see, to listen, to feel and to proclaim. When we are true to the Lasallian educational mission to the poor, we are communities of prophetic witnesses and transformation agents.

The CIL program, "Understanding and Living Association for Lasallian Mission Today," gathered seventy-seven Brother and Lay participants from 8 to 26 November 2010 and exposed us to the richness of Association in Lasallian history. We have shared our experiences of Association and reflected upon Circular 461 "Associated for the Lasallian Mission ... an act of HOPE."

We came together with anxiety, doubt, and fear about the future. But we began to see ourselves not at a crossroads but at a new frontier. We do not have a single choice to make, but a great unknown full of possibility which is both fearful and awesome.

Two key ideas greatly influenced us. First, Our Founder, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, and the first Brothers considered the moment of entry into the community as the moment of consecration. Second, Association finds its meaning in the "for," i.e. Association is for the educational service to the poor and disadvantaged.

After these days of reflection about our call "together and by association" we want to share with you the richness of what we have lived and prayed, to encourage you to dig a little deeper into the rich personality of the Founder, his work, his writings, and how they are a call by God to live the Mission.

¹ The International Lasallian Center, also known by its Italian acronym CIL, has been a place of extended renewal and study (often for periods of five to eight months) for more than 40 years for De La Salle Christian Brothers from around the world. Housed in the Brothers' international headquarters in Rome, Italy, extended residential seminars of two to six week duration have also been conducted at CIL since 1997 for all Lasallians (lay, clerics, Sisters, and Brothers) engaged in the Lasallian educational mission in over 80 countries of the world.

During fall of 2010, some 50 participants from around the globe gathered for four weeks at CIL to study and to explore the concept of association among Partners and Brothers for Lasallian mission in the twenty-first century. Here presented is a written statement they prepared in the final days of their time together.

Through our Vocation

We are a gathering of people who have come from diverse faith and community experiences. We are people on a journey in response to a call by God, in search of a better world just as La Salle was. We realize that through education we can participate in creating the kingdom of God on earth. To this call, we respond by associating for mission. We want our communities to respond creatively to the realities and needs of our different environments.

A Welcoming Diversity

Two symbols spoke to us: God's ever expanding tent which has room for all and the promise of the rainbow which intimates that all are one in a beautiful diverse world. These symbols evoked in us a sense of hope, a confidence that this is God's work, and a commitment to act together and by association to build the kingdom.

Essential for New Life: Tradition, Transition, and Transformation

Our discussion led us to identify three components to our current experience of Lasallian Association: Tradition, Transition, and Transformation. In a work of art, we represent our experience as tradition (our roots), transition (the seed ready to sprout), and transformation (a new plant with branches reaching for the sky which will eventually bear great fruit). It may serve as an "icon" to aid us in reflecting about our personal experience of being associated for mission as well as the experience of association in our regions, districts, cities, and individual ministries.

In our **tradition**, we understand that the first Lasallian community composed of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the early Brothers, "together and by association," are our main point of reference and inspiration because based on their faith and their radical commitment the mission was born: to give a Human and Christian education to young people, especially the poor.

We draw upon our past in which three heroic generations of Brothers first, simply worked together; second, created a fragile community which was supportive and formative; and third, developed the necessary structures to sustain the mission for over 300 years.

Transition has been an ever present characteristic of our history. De La Salle and the early Brothers responded creatively to crisis after crisis. The Institute has responded similarly to the crises of history. During times of crisis, we need community discernment: "We must see with eyes wide open and feet firmly set on the ground, but with the heart also full of the Gospel and full of God." (Monsignor Oscar Romero, 27 August 1978)

Today we are experiencing another momentous challenge which calls for another **transformation**. We, as Lasallians, are in a moment of grace in which we are challenged to transform our traditions through great personal and communal effort under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and our Lasallian history. Each of us must let go of something and contribute something to the transformation. We discover those things through observation, reflection, and action. We affirm the vision of De La Salle and the founding Brothers; the need for the Lasallian mission of education, especially of the poor, is very great. Thus the need for every Lasallian is great.

We Look to the Future with Hope

We are keenly aware that certain parts of the Lasallian World are in need of particular support. This includes areas where governments, cultures, gender roles, and religious traditions do not provide a supportive environment for Lasallian Association. Association is for the entire Lasallian World, and so, we invite all to participate and support one another. As we experienced in these three weeks, our international association can provide the support needed to overcome these challenges.

We must be prophets who transform the present, who “together and by association” see with imagination and creativity a future that has never existed before. Our way of being knows no limits except those of the Lasallian charism, a charism that drives us to transform the world through various Lasallian educational works. These works respond creatively to our reality. We must be faithful to Gospel values, true to human relationships, see the world through the eyes of young people today, and take advantage of the technological advances which promote the exchange of experiences and knowledge in order to improve society.

We Commit to Associate for Mission

We commit to promote a Lasallian mission that addresses the needs of the poor and marginalized even beyond the school, to explore new understandings of vocation, and to take steps appropriate to our local circumstances. We commit to formation, accompaniment, and association for the mission!

During this period of movement from transition to transformation, we associate for mission by gathering locally and with other ministries (physically or electronically) to:

- Pray and share faith
- Socialize
- Celebrate
- Grow in our commitment
- Share our history, traditions, and cultural diversity
- Study/work to improve our ministries to better adapt to the needs of students
- Tell the Lasallian story and our stories of being Lasallian
- Accompany one another into the Lasallian tradition in open communities
- Discuss, discern, and identify mission priorities
- Develop creative initiatives of community life and ministries which respond to the new needs of the poor

These and other formation activities are ultimately in the service of the Lasallian Mission of Education of the young, especially the poor.

Conclusion

We want to accompany those already journeying in the Mission, to fan the flickering flame of those who are questioning, and in every work, place, action and environment to be a sign of hope. We move forward, joining efforts, enthusiasm, and excitement.

We are aware of the great “co-responsibility” entrusted to us to be the “heart, memory and guarantor” of the Lasallian charism, but we have De La Salle’s assurance that as St. Paul says, “The Lord who has begun the work, will see it to its successful completion.” (Philippians 1:6)

Live, Jesus, in our Hearts. Forever!