

**YOU ARE
PART OF
THE MIRACLE**

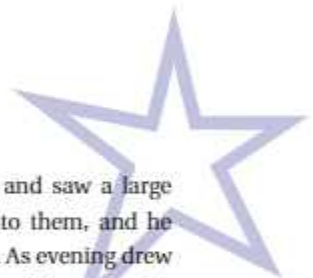
**Our Vision.
Our Passion.
Our Future.**



La Salle
General Council

1.

OUR VISION



"When Jesus came ashore and saw a large crowd, his heart went out to them, and he healed those who were sick. As evening drew on, the disciples came up to him and said, 'This is a remote place and the day has gone; send the people off to the villages to buy themselves food.' Jesus answered, 'There is no need for them to go; give them something to eat yourselves.' 'All we have here,' they said, 'is five loaves and two fish.' 'Bring them to me,' he replied. So he told the people to sit down on the grass; then, taking the five loaves and two fish, he looked up to heaven, said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied; and twelve baskets were filled with what was left over. Some five thousand men shared in this meal, not counting women and children" (Matthew 14.13-21).



**The Lasallian vision is seeing abundance
where others see scarcity, and bringing
nourishment where there is none.**

People are weary and hungry as the day draws to a close. Jesus' heart is moved with compassion for them. The disciples are told, "Give them something to eat yourselves." Their first thought is to go and buy food, but Jesus is showing them how to invite the presence and power of God into creation. He takes what, at first look, are meager resources. He gives thanks and the food is shared. After the meal, there is a surprising abundance. Their misery and his mercy meet in a miraculous embrace.¹

The disciples counsel, "send the people off to the villages to buy themselves food." The irony is that they are speaking to Jesus, the bread of life, about not having enough bread. Jesus tells them to risk, even in the face of a seemingly hopeless mathematical situation. It is miraculous that so many are filled when there isn't enough to begin with. It is in Tabgha in Galilee, a deserted place, that Jesus transforms scarcity into abundance.

The lesson Jesus teaches the disciples about what is "enough" is echoed in the challenge he issues to the Lasallian community: "Give them something to eat yourselves." See the presence and power of God in creation, and make possible the abundance God offers.

Once the disciples' eyes were opened to mystery and miracles, human history has not been the same. The same can be said for the history of our origins, for once De La Salle and the first Brothers developed eyes open to the mystery of the presence and power of God in creation, their mission was transformed.² It would not be an overstatement to say that the 340-year history of the Institute and Lasallian mission is a history of miracles. The Lasallian vision is seeing abundance where others see scarcity, and bringing nourishment where there is none.

¹ John Shea, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (2004), pp. 241-245.

² "Deeply moved by the human and spiritual distress 'of the children of artisans and of the poor,' and in response to the call of God, John Baptist de La Salle and his first Brothers made a lifelong commitment to God to provide these children with a human and Christian education . . ." (*The Rule*, I).

Once the disciples' eyes were opened
to mystery and miracles, human history
has not been the same.



2. OUR PASSION



There are living examples of this history that we would like to highlight in this reflection that illuminate the divine process of human transformation.³ The following educational works show the same movement of God's presence and power that touched people on that warm Galilean evening.



"His heart went out to them"

Centre lasallien Saint-Michel in Montréal (Canada)⁴ originated in a desire of the District of Francophone Canada to establish a community of associates, Brothers, and laity in service to the poor. The District's heart went out to young people living in an immigrant community struggling with the forces of socio-economic difficulties and cultural isolation. This educational community, born in a church basement and as a heart-felt response to the poor, now enjoys the space of a new building dedicated to pastoral, cultural, and joyful activities in an environment of faith, fraternity, and service.

De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde in Manila (Philippines)⁵ began as a night college for working students and those seeking second chances. Over time it became apparent how many students were excluded from tertiary education: those with disabilities, such as deafness or blindness, those with mental health issues, those living without familial support. The heart of the educational community was moved with compassion, and the college doors opened wider to those beyond the doors and to their gifts and interests as well.

The Utopia Project of La Salle University of Bogotá (Yopal, Colombia)⁶ was born in a time when there was only talk of war and military solutions to a decades-long conflict. The first recruits to the violence were often the vulnerable young peasants in the Colombian countryside. Yet, there were hearts convinced that hope should drive history rather than political immediacy. From humble beginnings as a PowerPoint presentation, an agricultural school was brought

³ Of course, we could echo John the Evangelist in saying that if every example were written down we suppose that the world itself could not contain the Lasallian Reflections that would be written!

⁴ <https://www.centrelasallien.org/>

⁵ <http://www.benilde.edu.ph/>

⁶ <http://www.utopia.edu.co/Inicio-Utopia>

Educational works that show the same movement of God's presence and power.

into being through a collaboration of De La Salle University, Brothers, and Partners. Its graduates are agronomists, but also builders of peace and social transformation.

CasArcoBaleno in Scampia (Italy)⁷ was created in response to the educational and spiritual needs of young Neapolitans and Roma living in grinding poverty, vulnerable to threats and pressure from crime organizations. Besides their social isolation, even meeting basic needs such as clean drinking water were daily struggles. Hearts that could not contemplate these daily affronts to human dignity were moved. This educational community exists on the margins for those on the margins, offering a dynamic space for intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth. However, there is no poverty of love and laughter in the educational center or at the community's table.

St. John Baptist de La Salle School of Kirenge (Rwanda)⁸ was founded on farmland for children who had no access to education, and for families who had nothing to offer but

the contribution of their service. The heart of the Delegation was deeply moved by families who desired schooling for their children, and step by step, a preschool, primary, and secondary school has been built into the mountainside. The school is now an integrated community of agriculture, animal husbandry and education, transforming the area much in the same way as the terrace farming has transformed the country.

Fratelli Project⁹ came into being as Lebanon braced to find room for the estimated 1.5 million Syrian and Iraqi refugees of war and religious persecution. The hearts of the leadership teams of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and Marist Brothers of the Schools went out to them. They founded two educational centers to provide formal education for youth (3 to 15 years old), psycho-social support, vocational and life-skills training for young adults, and sports activities. The Lasallian and Marist Brothers and their volunteers form a community that is the human and spiritual reference point for the Fratelli Project.

⁷ <http://www.occhiaperti.org/casarcobaleno/>

⁸ <http://www.rclaf.info/>

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/FratelliProject/>



COMMUNITY



“There is no need for them to go”

CasArcoBaleno in Scampia and Fratelli Project in Beirut could not turn their backs or close their hearts to the young who had no place to go. Though it wasn't immediately apparent from where the resources would come in places of such scarcity, the counsel of the Founder could be heard: “Providence performs miracles daily, and they cease only for those who have no trust.”¹⁰ The District of Italy and generous donors and volunteers have provided financial and human resources to ensure these young people have a place to grow.

“Give them something to eat yourselves”

Jesus taught his disciples to see abundance rather than scarcity, and to participate in the miracle with him. This meant setting aside their fear and reclaiming their passion for God's people and saving work. St. John Baptist de La Salle School in Kirenge and Utopia in Colombia turned to the abundant land to feed the dual hungers for education and peace. Each educational community continues to grow, evidence of the slow-growth miracle of God's providence. Each is now a nourishing ecosystem of sustainability and solidarity for young people and their families.

“Jesus said the blessing, broke the loaves and gave them to the people”

The average age of the Brothers in Francophone Canada at the founding of Centre lasallien Saint-Michel was 78 years old. Most of the Brothers in the District lived in retirement and in the nursing care community. They didn't allow infirmity to define them. Rather, they said the blessing—that is, they thanked God for their abundance, took the resources they had, and dedicated them to the next generation. In the same way, College of Saint Benilde's blessing meant developing the school's capacity to enroll and support students from poor indigenous communities, those who were economically challenged, and those who had physical disabilities or special learning needs.

¹⁰ Jean-Baptiste Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, Book One, Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 2000, p. 106.

“[Thousands] shared in this meal”

The initial miracle in these Lasallian communities was that hundreds were fed; the ongoing miracle is that thousands are now fed. In addition to communities, Districts, Delegations, and the Center of the Institute, there are donors, foundations, and non-government organizations making possible the miracle of multiplication, and making possible a sustainable future.

Centre lasallien Saint-Michel is no longer an independent presence in a single neighborhood. Its influence has extended beyond its doors. By networking with neighborhood and civic organizations, such as for the arts and sports, it has become a hub of activity. It has become a catalyst for youth formation in a Lasallian key, and drawn others into a partnership such that it may be said that there is an abundance for young immigrants where once there was scarcity.

College of Saint Benilde has linked its inclusion to innovation. Before graduating, each student is involved in at least two projects addressing the alleviation of poverty and sustainable development. For example, interior designers learn their craft as they transform spaces in poor urban areas into daycare centers for early childhood learning; industrial designers create solutions for pedestrians navigating the flood waters that submerge Manila; theater majors use their productions to draw attention to emotional health issues and bring to light the struggles of those suffering from autism; and, fashion designers use

recycled materials for popular clothing. In a context of broken economic, political, environmental and cultural systems, students bring the life-giving and redemptive work of God.

Utopia's graduates return to their place of origin and establish an agricultural production project. Their knowledge leads to improved practices so that production increases using sustainable and ecologically compatible techniques. Their training helps to lift their families out of poverty and even to contribute to the transformation of municipalities and populations. Many campesinos would have enlisted in para-military or army forces were it not for opportunities to become rural entrepreneurs or agricultural engineers or municipal secretaries of agriculture. As one said, “Here we have learned to look to the future with hope and not to anchor our life in the past with hatred.”

CasArcoBaleno is a daily source of love and laughter for young people, but also for the growing number of groups, nationally and internationally, whose lives are impacted by the community. Scouts and school, parish, and religious groups that spend time in the educational center also gather around the table. At that table one is no longer a visitor, no longer one who is “coming to help.” One now participates in the Eucharist—a time to give thanks for the love that transcends differences and barriers. People move from that table fellowship to share the experience of communion in their own communities.



During the severe winter of 1684-85, Saint John Baptist de La Salle used his inherited wealth to supply bread for Reims' suffering citizens as well as those from outlying areas seeking refuge there. It was the beginning of a life of poverty for himself and the community, and a total dependence on the presence and power of God. When the worst was over, De La Salle reminded the Brothers that though they too suffered, in their reliance on Providence they had enough. In a similar way, St. John Baptist de La Salle School (Rwanda) provides for the daily physical and educational needs of its students. Its integrated system of nourishment for body, mind, and spirit ensures no one goes without, even though the students cannot, and do not, pay. The story of a school that transforms scarcity into abundance has traveled far and wide, and now the requests for enrollment outpace the available space. Yet, facilities continue to be made available by those who want to provide for its growth.

Fratelli Project has built a "culture of encounter" in two lasting ways: first, by inviting Lasallian and Marist young volunteers, scouts, families and others to learn about each other, develop relationships, and deepen solidarity; second, by providing training for professionals working with youth who experience the traumas of war, family instability and social exclusion. Each of these has a multiplier effect. The dialogue, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence practiced by the Fratelli educational community moves out in expanding circles of influence within Lebanon and beyond.



RESPECT

3.

OUR FUTURE



When Jesus tells the disciples to “Give them something to eat yourselves,” he is teaching them to see as he sees, to see an abundance provided by God. He encourages them to cease looking to fill up what is lacking through purchase, and to look with gratitude at what is already given. He is teaching them, and us, how to work the miracle of human and spiritual transformation. The process, at once simple and profound, unfolds in this way: first, see and know what you have; second, give thanks for what you have; and third, give freely to others what you have been freely given. This sets in motion a life-transforming cycle of gratitude and giving in the community.”¹¹

In an echo of Jesus’s encouragement to the disciples, Saint Paul wrote to the community in Corinth, “We are fellow-workers in God’s service” (1 Cor. 3.9), a passage De La Salle referenced many times in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.¹² His guiding words to the early community echo in our own: “Fear nothing. God has never failed to help those who hope in him. Everything is granted to a lively faith and perfect trust, even miracles if they are needed.”¹³

¹¹ John Shea, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (2004), pp. 244.

¹² Brother Miguel Campos states that this passage “constitutes a pivotal thought in *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.” See M 59.3, 62.1, 67.3, 193.2 and 3, 196.1, 196.2, 199.1, 205.1.

¹³ Jean-Baptiste Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, Book Three, Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 2000, p. 571.

The Lasallian community's raison d'être is to cooperate with God's grace, and that includes working miracles.



"What are these among so many?" (2020)

By Ryan Carreon Aragon and Boranno Rufino (concept). It is inspired by the work of the DOG2 Indigenous Peoples Education Initiative of De La Salle Philippines that supports indigenous peoples schools in different parts of the country.

It is no less true today that the Lasallian community's raison d'être is to cooperate with God's grace, and that includes working miracles. Our shared miracle stories remind us that ours is a living tradition that continues to call us into a courageous and creative future. Internationally, we see our abundance and give thanks for present signs and wonders giving us courage for that future:

- ▶ publications to support participation in and growth of the charism¹⁴
- ▶ tercentenary year dedicated to Lasallian vocations
- ▶ educational works responding to the call to go beyond the borders
- ▶ strategic leadership of Regional Mission Councils and the International Council for Lasallian Association and the Educational Mission (CIAMEL)
- ▶ coordination of international volunteers by the Secretariat of Solidarity and Development
- ▶ expansion of higher education initiatives in Africa

We see our abundance and give thanks for emergent trends within the Institute and Lasallian family that are nudging us into a creative future:

- ▶ burgeoning influence and leadership of women
- ▶ increasing numbers of formation sessions and programs
- ▶ strengthening of association for mission, grounded in vocation and community
- ▶ increasing awareness of Saint John Baptist de La Salle's legacy and our 340-year heritage
- ▶ expanding openness of Brothers to live their fraternity in intercultural communities

During our term as Superior and General Council, we have offered annual reflections on the supporting themes introduced in *Circular 470* following the 45th General Chapter. Our intent has been to spark local conversations on matters of universal concern. We have witnessed Brothers and Partners, not to mention young people, deepening their response to the gentle persistence

¹⁴ "Lasallian Identity and Vitality Criteria"; "Declaration on Our Lasallian Education Mission in the 21st Century"; the annual Lasallian Reflection; "Lasallian Formation for Mission: The Pilgrim's Handbook"; and "From Hope to Commitment: Understanding Lasallian Vocations" (*Circular 475*).



of God in the educational community. We have witnessed a multiplication of graces in the growth of association for mission. The Third International Assembly of the Lasallian Educational Mission (AIMEL) will deepen this growth in September 2020, following the theme, “Identity – Vitality – Transformation: Together, We Make It Possible.” Taken together, we discern that our experience and trends are pointing to a life-transforming cycle of gratitude and giving in the community.

How you see will always determine what is possible. If we dare to imagine the presence and power of God in creation, we will deepen our advocacy for the most vulnerable among us. For us, as it was for Jesus, it is not only about taking the right stand on issues—it is about standing in the right place.¹⁵ This is our vision: Compelled by pressing needs, enlightened by the Gospel, inspired by our living memory, we transform lives through quality education for all.¹⁶

We will stand with those who have been forcibly uprooted, and especially with the young who have had their dignity and rights stolen by violence.¹⁷ We will stand with the young, who increasingly live in diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic settings.

We will provide meaningful spaces for mutual learning, sharing, and enrichment so that they can hear the loving voice within. We will stand with one another in communion—as Brothers and Partners, with other congregations and charismatic traditions—and accompany one another in the mission entrusted to us. This is our passion, and these are the right places. The 46th General Chapter will amplify these stands following the theme “Building New Paths to Transform Lives” in May 2021.

The disciples began with seven (five loaves and two fish) and ended with twelve (baskets of leftover fragments), sacred symbols of God’s mysterious presence and power. Responsive to Jesus’s insistence to work miracles, ours will be a future in which those who are fed in love and laughter soon choose to be cheerful givers. Ours will be a future where God will “swell the harvest of our benevolence.”¹⁸ We are called to this miraculous work so as to show how the world is meant to be. Our work is God’s work.

Five years ago we proposed a prayer to unite us in God’s work.¹⁹ We invite you to share this prayer as we engage in this work as a community.

¹⁵ Adapted from a statement by Fr. Greg Boyle, SI, founder and director of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles (USA), a gang-intervention, rehabilitation and re-entry program.

¹⁶ Circular 470, p. 20.

¹⁷ <https://www.lasalle-relem.org/la-salle-commitment-for-displaced-people/>

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 9.7-12

¹⁹ Circular 470, pp. 63-64.



In faith, Lord, we believe that:
Your work is our work and we are a vital part of it.
You have granted us the gift of spreading the Gospel to all
but especially to the poor and the young.
A Gospel adventure uniquely experienced by each person.
A Gospel pilgrimage open and receptive to the different
creeds and cultures of our world.
We want to be Lasallians without limits.

Difficulties and challenges confront us
just as during our Founder's time.
Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus,
we may be slow of heart to believe.
Yet, you Lord, still believe in us, question us,
challenge us and send us,
making our hearts burn within us.

We Lasallians, regardless of our age,
are filled with hope and joy for the mission.
We rejoice as the mission expands
through the ever-widening circle of Lasallians.
We celebrate new educational initiatives
and ministries reaching out to the poor.

Yes, Lord, we have been witnesses to your great love
since the time of our charismatic founding.
That event has convinced us that great things are still possible.
We thank you for having called and sent us again and again,
to return to Jerusalem, to live the promise of vitality,
to live our vision, our passion, and our future
for the mission you have entrusted to us. Amen.





QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE AND REFLECTION

1. The educational communities highlighted in this reflection are young. Spend time learning about the history of your educational community. What signs and wonders can you identify in the story of your origins?
2. Spend time reflecting on the daily life of your educational community. What signs and wonders of God's presence and power are at work even now?
3. What does it mean for you and for the community to see with eyes that are open to the mystery of the presence and power of God in creation?
4. In the spirit of "cheerful giving," apply the method of human and spiritual transformation to your own work: first, see and know what you have; second, give thanks for what you have; and third, give freely to others what you have been freely given—what happens?
5. Consider the miracle of peace that can be worked in your local setting. How might you, personally and communally, help transform the violence that exists, and promote peace, brotherhood, and sisterhood?



LASALLIAN REFLECTION

PREVIOUS ISSUES

2015 - 2016

1. "A Gospel Adventure"

2016 - 2017

2. "One Call, Many Voices"

2017 - 2018

3. "Lasallians Without Limits"

2018 - 2019

4. "Lasallians: Hearts on Fire"

2019 - 2020

5. "Great Things are Possible"



To know more about the initiatives which
are responding to "YOU ARE PART OF
THE MIRACLE. OUR VISION.
OUR PASSION. OUR FUTURE."

see www.lasalle.org

and our social networks.

Share your experiences. Send
information on your activities to:
comunicazione@lasalle.org



All photographs are of Lasallian schools and works
from different parts of the world that are sent by the
Districts to be part of the archive of the Service of
communications and technology of the Institute and
of the Secretariat of Solidarity and Development - Rome.

Logo: "You are part of the miracle".

Special thanks to the District of ARLEP for designing
this logo for all Lasallians of the world.

It is available for use at : www.lasalle.org