

ARTICLES

The Evolution of “Association” as a Model for Lay/Religious Collaboration in Catholic Education, Part II: The Emergence of Shared Mission as a Ministry Paradigm, 1986-2000

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The second in a two-part series, this article reviews the recent struggle of the Christian Brothers to develop the concepts of Lasallian schools and shared mission as a means to invite and incorporate the full and active collaboration of lay men and women in the ministry of Catholic education.

In Part I of this two-part series (published in the March 2009 issue), the author traced the evolution of the Brothers of the Christian Schools’ (Christian Brothers in the United States) understanding of how they related to the lay people with whom they increasingly shared their apostolate of Catholic education. From a stance of wary distance in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Brothers increasingly accepted the reality of the presence of lay teachers in their schools by the middle of the 20th century. In the wake of the renewal occasioned by Vatican II, the Brothers began a process of self-examination and reflection on their apostolic identity and finality that dealt directly with the question of their corporate relationship with the laity that increasingly staffed and administered what were now called Lasallian schools.

In the second part of this series, the Brothers’ 41st General Chapter of 1986 is the starting point for a detailed analysis of how they developed the paradigm of shared mission that has radically reshaped the Brothers as a congregation and the landscape of relationships within the institutions they help to animate. This conceptual framework has profound roots in the theology of the apostolate of the laity described at Vatican II (Vatican Council II, 1966) and is embraced in the Brothers’ own documents of renewal (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1967/1994). It offers a powerful example of theological reflection and apostolic action for lay people and vowed religious who today share the mission of Catholic education.

Shared Mission:

A New Model of Relations between the Brothers and the Laity

The 41st General Chapter and the Laity

The 41st General Chapter of 1986, even as it spent the bulk of its time on the creation of the new text of the Brothers' *Rule* (Salm, 1992), also addressed questions about identity, mission, and association with lay people that the realities of school life throughout the Institute had been presenting so insistently since the late 1960s. In the words of the new Superior General, Brother John Johnston (1986-2000), the Chapter explained this experience of association with lay persons as a "call from the [S]pirit in our day" (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1986, p. 42). The Chapter as a body understood this phenomenon as a "call from God to us Brothers to change our perspective and our way of fulfilling the ministry the Church has confided to us" (p. 13). The Chapter saw the integration of Brothers and lay people as a positive development that would enhance the overall quality of the schools and of their service to the Church, echoing the insight of the *Declaration on the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the World Today* 20 years earlier (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1967/1994).

The Chapter affirmed that the Brothers "continue to be the mainstay of the Lasallian experience" (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1987, p. 13), but the Brothers should now be ready to help those lay people who wanted their work as teachers in "Lasallian" schools (schools inspired by the vision and spirit of Saint John Baptist de La Salle) to be a form of ministry in the Church. This openness was directed only at Catholic teachers at first. How it would apply to other Christians or to non-Christians had yet to be worked out. The Brothers further committed themselves to a mutual evangelization, a willingness to learn from the experiences of their lay colleagues as ministers in Christian education (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1986).

The Rule of 1987 and Shared Mission

This new understanding of Lasallian ministry was put into a particularly solemn form in the new *Rule* adopted by the Chapter as the summation of the experimental period begun after the 39th General Chapter in 1966. Article 17 of the new *Rule* was entitled "A Shared Mission" (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1987, p. 34), the first time this term was used in an official Institute document. It was a distillation of the Brothers' thinking on the role of the laity in their mission before 1986, and it pointed to trends that are only today being fully actualized.

The article noted that as lay religious and as educators, the Brothers had always promoted the laity, especially those who wanted their teaching to be ministerial. Thus, the Brothers now would “gladly associate lay persons in their educational mission. They provide, for those who so desire, the means to learn about the Founder and to live according to his spirit” (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1987, p. 35).

Moreover, the Brothers stated that their apostolic work occurs “within an educational community in which all the functions, including positions of responsibility, are shared” (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1987, p. 35). To ensure that the school achieves its purpose of Christian and human education, the Brothers “foster a spirit of collaboration among all the members of the educational community” (p. 35) and they

make known to the rest of the educational community the essential elements of the Lasallian tradition. The Brothers offer to those who desire it, a more intensified sharing of Lasallian spirituality, encouraging such persons to make a more specific apostolic commitment. The Brothers join in the formation of faith communities which are witnessing to the truth of what the Brothers profess. (pp. 35-36)

These articles of the *Rule* were in one sense nothing new, for they restated and elaborated the notion of welcome collaboration with lay people that the *Declaration* called for in 1966. However, they were pregnant with meaning in that they oriented the Institute, at the local and international levels, in two new directions. First, they signaled a desire to share the heritage of the Institute and the legacy of De La Salle with those lay teachers who now dominated what had been Brothers’ schools. Second, they directed the Brothers to be active in forming communities of faith among those who voluntarily wanted to give a deeper spiritual foundation to their educational work. Both of these commitments required programs of formation at all levels of the Institute to make these mandates of the *Rule* come to life. Article 146 of the *Rule* crystallized the initial implications of shared mission for the future direction of Institute policy regarding the members of the Lasallian family:

The spiritual gifts which the Church has received in St. John Baptist de La Salle go far beyond the confines of the Institute which he founded. The Institute sees the existence of the various Lasallian movements as a grace from God renewing its own vitality. The Institute can associate itself with lay people who want to lead the life of perfection that the Gospel demands, by living according to the spirit of the Institute and by participating in its mission. The Institute helps them

achieve their proper autonomy. At the same time it creates appropriate ties with them and evaluates the authenticity of their Lasallian character. (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1987, p. 150)

Promoting the Lasallian Family

The members of the General Council of the Institute (1986)—advisors to the Superior General—almost as soon as they were elected by the Chapter of 1986, issued a circular letter in which they declared that promoting what was described as the “Lasallian Family Movement” would be a priority of the generalate of Brother John Johnston, through personal advocacy of the movement by the Councilors and the Superior General and by their participation in planning meetings that would further this end. The Councilors indicated that they needed to grasp the situation in the local provinces of the Institute to get a sense of how the Lasallian family was or was not coming to life around the worldwide Institute.

In this early enthusiasm, the Council defined the Lasallian family quite broadly, including everyone from teachers, to alumni, benefactors, students, the families of the students, and even to the parents and friends of the Brothers. This definition of the Lasallian family highlighted the ambiguity surrounding its implementation. The addition of shared mission as a category of Lasallian family membership did not seem to clarify the issue much. More work would be needed to hone these categories so that they would be meaningful to the Brothers and their lay colleagues.

Likewise, Brother John Johnston (1987, 1988), the newly elected Superior General, made it clear that the promotion of the shared mission would be a major theme of his generalate. Johnston (1988) indicated that “Lasallian school” was now the appropriate term to define what had been “Brothers’ schools,” as the Brothers and their lay colleagues together redefined their schools in light of the events of the prior decades and in reference to future needs. These renewed Christian schools would be Lasallian because they would be defined by the vision of De La Salle, a vision shared by the many different kinds of people on their staffs. An articulation of new roles for lay Lasallians and Brothers was necessary for this renewal to occur. Johnston noted that a new aspect of the Institute’s role in the context of shared mission was the fostering and formation of various Lasallian groups (teachers, parents, alumni, students) around the world.

The Post-Capitular Message: Defining the Lasallian Family

In the post-capitular “Message to the Members of the Lasallian Family” that the Chapter of 1986 had mandated, there was some greater specificity added to a term that before had been quite vague. The Chapter defined the “Lasallian Family” as “that body of persons who make up those movements and groups all of which have been forming according to the spiritual and pedagogical experience of St. John Baptist de La Salle” (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1986, p. 29). The Brothers were, as before, described as the heart and faithful memory of the Lasallian spirit. The Lasallian family was defined as inclusive of lay Christian educators, families of students, Lasallian youth groups, Lasallian volunteers, an association of lay teachers who make a formal act of consecration to Christian education known as *Signum Fidei* (Sign of Faith), benefactors of the Institute, a lay group of catechists founded by an Italian Brother known as the “Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and of Mary Immaculate,” various Lasallian associations, alumni organizations, the families of the Brothers, and groups of lay and religious women, priests, and a Third Order located in France. This definition of Lasallian family was meant to be inclusive, a goal that would be revisited in the next General Chapter in light of subsequent events.

In this message, the essence of the Lasallian heritage was defined as a charism inspired by the Gospel, rooted in a spirit of faith and zeal, expressed in Christian education, directed with a love and preferential option for the young and the poor, united with the Church, founded on Lasallian spirituality and in relationship with a Lasallian community. It encouraged non-Christian educators in Lasallian schools to share in this heritage to the extent possible, and recognized them as valued partners in the educational enterprise, who could bring valuable insights into the Lasallian school from their own religions (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1986). The message concluded with a call for lay teachers and Brothers to work together to meet the challenges of modern times, so that the mission of the Institute would continually be renewed and flourish. The message stressed the commonality of a lay vocation as the basis for unity between the Brothers and lay teachers, a relationship that could be fortified by the common heritage of Lasallian spirituality.

The Letter to the Lasallian Family: A Statement of an Evolving Concept

This message was followed in 1989 by a *Letter to the Lasallian Family* that the 1986 Chapter had asked the General Council of the Institute (1989) to compose. Mueller (1994) observed that this letter was unprecedented in that it addressed both Brothers and lay colleagues of the Brothers. In this letter,

the General Council of the Institute (1989) synthesized the official thinking of the Institute since 1966 on the role of lay teachers, and pointed toward the future simultaneously:

[Lay teachers] share directly with the Brothers the apostolate of the Institute to educate and evangelize. We are very much aware of the extent to which their work with us is competent, energetic, creative, and of their willingness to help. We are pleased to see an increasing number of them willing to occupy positions of responsibility for the sake of continuity and the good of the school. Their presence in the school and their work are a constant source of enrichment for us. The Institute, in its turn, is conscious of its responsibility towards them in the matter of training and guidance, tasks already undertaken by a number of Brothers.... What is being called for here is a change of mentality and of attitude towards lay people; it is a response to the call of the Holy Spirit at the present time. (p. 26)

American Responses to the Lasallian Family

In the United States, these calls for the creation or strengthening of the Lasallian family at the international level found echoes from American Brothers, even before the 1986 Chapter. Mueller (1985) stressed the need for formation to help lay teachers take their rightful place as real colleagues in Lasallian schools. Gaffney (1985) indicated that the Brothers and their schools were still trying to establish a new identity for themselves through a reconceptualization of the Lasallian charism 20 years after the 39th General Chapter. For this to occur, Gaffney claimed, the Brothers needed to build partnerships with the laity as real colleagues. The combined result of these initiatives and calls to action was the creation of formation programs for Brothers, lay teachers, and administrators alike, such as the Lasallian Educators' Workshops (Christian Brothers Conference, 1999c), the Lasallian Leadership Institute (Christian Brothers Conference, 1999b), or in the expansion of previously Brothers-only programs to include lay educators, such as the Buttimer Institute (Christian Brothers Conference, 1999a) and the Huether Workshop (Christian Brothers Conference, 2000).

The most ambitious of these initial programs was the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies, begun at Manhattan College in New York City in 1986. This program, now located at Saint Mary's College of California in Moraga, California, extends over 3 summers, and is an in-depth treatment of the life, spirituality, and pedagogical vision of De La Salle. Initially begun for the updating of Brothers in these areas, it has since been opened up to lay

participation, and is now a primary means for the formation of lay educators into the Lasallian heritage in a systematic and deep way. Its faculty consists of world-renowned experts in Lasallian spirituality, pedagogy, and the life of the founder (Christian Brothers Conference, 1999a). Individual districts also created their own programs for use by individual schools or at district-wide gatherings (District of Baltimore, 1988; District of San Francisco, 2000; Mann, 1991). These sessions were designed for a wide range of Lasallian constituencies: teachers, administrators, campus ministers, trustees, even admissions officers, either as individual cohorts or in heterogeneous groupings.

Continuing Struggles for Clarity: The Contemporary Meaning of “Association”

At the end of the 1980s, despite the accomplishments made by Brothers in the United States and around the world to respond to the signs of the times and the exhortations of their Chapters and Superiors, it was becoming evident that the term “Lasallian Family” was so broad and all-inclusive that it was a cumbersome or even a problematic framework for understanding the relationship between lay people in Lasallian schools and the Brothers. For some in the United States, the implications of authority roles in the “Family” dimension of this concept were troubling, as they seemed to contradict the Brothers’ stated intention of treating their lay colleagues as equal partners in the Lasallian mission.

McGinnis (1990) highlighted these difficulties when he observed that this new form of Lasallian association was still in its infancy. Although he did not claim to know precisely what its outlines or complete content would be, McGinnis insisted that this new association must be a two-way relationship, a relationship of mutual evangelization between lay people and the Brothers, not the handing down to lay people of an ideological package defined by the Brothers alone, as a privileged group immune from critique or outside influence. The Brothers needed to leave this concept of association open to change, even as they attempted first to understand it and then pass it along appropriately to lay people. The possible permutations of the Lasallian family inherent in the seeming plasticity of its definition were highlighted by Clark (1990). He advocated the expansion of the traditional Brothers’ notion of “vocation” as the call of young men to the life of the Brother, to a “Lasallian vocation” that includes several distinct vocations: the vowed life in community, married life, single life, or some combination of these.

As a result of this critique of the Lasallian family as an omnibus category of association between the Brothers and lay people, the Institute, at least at

the level of the General Chapter and the General Council, moved toward a sharper and clearer articulation of the members and roles within the Lasallian family. This was done through increasing focus on the concept of shared mission first described in the *Rule* of 1987, and the implications of this idea for the mission of the Institute and the relationship between the Brothers and lay educators in the apostolate of the schools (Johnston, 1993a).

The *Report of the Brother Superior General to the 42nd General Chapter* (Johnston, 1993b) illustrated that these issues were a preoccupation of the higher Superiors of the Institute during the Intercapitular period. Brother John Johnston noted here that the *Letter to the Lasallian Family*, mandated by the Chapter of 1986 and cited above, was not published until 1989 because of the difficulties in drafting a message to all Lasallian groups as a body, given their very different memberships and purposes. He noted approvingly of the work across the Institute to form and integrate lay teachers into the Institute's educational mission, given the reality of ever-increasing lay involvement in both teaching and administration of the schools.

The nature of the association shared by the members of this family required clarification. The acceptance and implementation of this concept was not uniform across the Institute, because it raised almost as many questions as it answered. How did lay people fit into what until now had been a "Brothers-only" concept? Where did the Brothers fit into this new scheme?

McAuley (1990) observed that there were two characterizations of this new associational model among the Brothers: threat and opportunity. Many Brothers were grudging at best in their acceptance of this new paradigm, as it encroached on what they believed to be a private domain exclusive to themselves. Alternately, other Brothers were enthusiastic in their embrace of the Lasallian family as a welcome dimension of the Institute's renewal. McAuley further established a third, intermediate position between the two extremes: these developments were an attempt to give life to a dying Institute, or to go beyond the Institute's present to a new stage in its life. Brother John Johnston (1993c) emphasized the resultant need this confusion and diversity of attitude created:

The meaning of the word "association," which is being used increasingly frequently, needs to be studied thoroughly at the District level and by the General Chapter....The question of association deserves, then, to be given serious consideration, for it has to take into account the respect and recognition due to the specific identity of the Brothers as well as to that of Lasallian lay people. (p. 41)

In his personal commentary on his own report, Brother John Johnston (1993a) noted that the 42nd General Chapter needed to clarify the identity and role of the Brothers in the shared mission, and, by implication, the role of lay educators. Clearly, there was a sense that the Institute was moving somewhere, but it was unclear where it was going, or how the parties involved in the journey were to relate to one another, or conceive of their identity in the first place.

The 42nd General Chapter and Shared Mission: A Decisive Moment
A New Structure for a New Concept of Association

The 42nd General Chapter took up the Superior General's challenge in his report, and made some bold statements that added clarity to the Lasallian Family/Shared Mission concept. It did so by first breaking with a tradition of the Institute since its foundation. For the first time, lay persons came to the Chapter as consultants, to share their perspectives as lay Lasallian educators on the issues faced by the Chapter (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993b). The Chapter sent two messages, one to the Brothers only and the other to the Lasallian family worldwide. To the Brothers, the Capitulators declared that

sharing the mission is an unmistakable sign of the times. The modest sub-title—"A Shared Mission" in article 17 of the *Rule* is now seen as the bold title of a new chapter in the history of the Institute [and] that a way of looking upon ourselves as the only authorised [*sic*] agents of the Institute's mission is obsolete. In our unified commitment to mission there is diversity of vocations. (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993a, p. 8)

To the Lasallian family, the Chapter noted that this moment of an expanded consciousness of those called to fulfill the Institute's mission was irreversible. The Chapter called on lay Lasallian educators, now referred to as "Lasallian Partners," to take an equal and complementary place with the Brothers in the execution of this mission. In a critical passage, the Brothers in Chapter summed up the movements of the previous 20 years, and cast them in terms of apostolic finality:

In light of the experience of the last twenty years, the 42nd General Chapter reaffirms the irreplaceable role of those men and women—laypersons, priests, religious—who carry out this mission. The Institute brings them together to work in association "to procure a human and Christian education for young people and especially the poor." (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993a, pp. 13-14)

Shared Mission within the Lasallian Family

The 42nd General Chapter moved away from speaking about the Lasallian family in the broad terms of its predecessors in 1976 and 1986. Instead, it focused its concept of the role of lay educators in Lasallian schools in terms of what they and the Brothers had in common: the mission of Christian and human education. This was done without abandoning the term Lasallian family in the process. It was redefined to include all those associated in some way with the Lasallian enterprise, but it was particularly focused on those who wanted their involvement in it to have a ministerial dimension (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993a). Their lifestyles were radically different, yet the point of reference for all involved in the Lasallian enterprise was the inspiration of De La Salle and his commitment to the salvation of the young, especially the poor (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993a). In his message to the lay chapter consultants, Brother John Johnston (1993b) (reelected as Superior General) referred to this association as a “communion of persons, united in God, with each other, and for the mission of Christian education” (p. 63).

Categories of Association and Formation for the Lasallian Mission

The Chapter (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993a) identified four major types of association for this common mission:

- Consecrated religious bound by vows (i.e., Brothers, Lasallian sisters, catechists)
- Lay people committed to a formal kind of lay association (i.e., *Signum Fidei*, Third Order)
- Lay people committed by virtue of their profession only (i.e., teachers, other educators)
- Lay people committed for only a limited time (i.e., Lasallian volunteers)

The shared mission was premised on the theological basis of the call to ministry of all baptized Christians. All persons were called to share in the Church’s mission to spread the Gospel (Vatican Council II, 1966). Given that reality, lay teachers could also share in the Institute’s mission of evangelization by virtue of their baptism alone. This was a corollary to the insight of De La Salle, who understood the Brothers as full participants in the Church’s evangelical mission despite their lack of priestly ordination (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993a; Sauvage, 1962/1991). Differences in specific vocation and lifestyle could be successfully integrated into this mission, for each brought complementary gifts that advanced this educational and catechetical mission.

The 42nd General Chapter thus expanded the boundaries of the Brothers' vow of association, making it the basis for an association that could now accommodate lay educators similarly inspired by the vision of De La Salle (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993a).

The Chapter called the Brothers to view this new concept of association not as a threat to their identity, but as a "call from God to maintain our place as consecrated lay persons in the religious life, alongside our colleagues in a common mission that is shared" (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993a, p. 42). Specifically, the Brothers were to be the heart and guarantor of the authenticity of the various Lasallian movements throughout the Institute, as the *Rule* had established in 1987 (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1987). It was to them that the Church had entrusted the charism given to it by the Holy Spirit in the person, life, and teaching of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. They were now called upon to share their gift with those lay people who also felt called to the ministry of Christian education. Thus, to provide the conceptual clarity that previous discussions on the Lasallian family and shared mission had lacked at times, the 42nd General Chapter drew out the implications of Articles 17 and 146 of the 1987 *Rule*, and used them as the foundation for its vision of the roles of Brothers and lay people in the Lasallian mission.

The Chapter built on this foundation by calling on the Districts of the Institute to make shared mission the conceptual framework in which the work of the Brothers and their partners was carried out. Apostolic planning, allocation of personnel and resources, and the creation of new structures where Brothers and lay people would plan and work together for the sake of the mission were specific requirements of the Chapter through the creation of a shared mission plan. This especially applied to Lasallian formation, which was made a "fundamental priority" of the Districts of the Institute, with the goal of bringing to fruition in the schools a "community of faith" (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993a, p. 47).

New American Initiatives for Promoting Shared Mission

The American Districts of the Brothers, as they had done in response to earlier chapters, produced a document and a new program that applied these norms of the international Institute to American needs. The document titled *Shared Mission*, produced by the Regional Education Board (REB) of the Christian Brothers United States-Toronto Region (1995), described how this idea of shared mission would be fleshed out. The REB articulated six steps in this process:

1. Inviting and welcoming: All who espouse the Lasallian Mission are partners in this venture. Each has an appropriate role.
2. Building the foundation: Formation in the Mission is an essential process for all who attempt this work.
3. Sharing the challenge: All accept the challenge and bring their gifts and abilities to the service of the Mission.
4. Making Shared Mission work: This is the everyday reality of accomplishing the Mission. Together we share good times, and difficult times, supporting one another as brothers and sisters in hope and courage.
5. Growing together in faith: Faith is the cornerstone of the Lasallian enterprise. It was recognized by St. John Baptist de La Salle as an essential that was both personal and communal.
6. Expanding our horizons: The task is as wide as God's vision. It is replete with timeless possibility that does not stop at differences or limits.

Integral to all of these facets of the process is a sense of rejoicing when mission and community are ritualized and celebrated. (p. 7)

The document specified concrete steps for the accomplishment of these objectives. Each individual district developed individual responses to these goals, some very detailed and comprehensive (District of San Francisco, 2000) and others more focused on teachers and administrators rather than others less immediately connected with the work of the schools (District of Baltimore, 1988; Mann, 1991). The crucial point here is the stress of this American document on the same issue that the Roman *Shared Mission* document insisted upon: a proper and comprehensive formation in the Lasallian tradition for those lay people wanting to become more involved in the Lasallian project.

This stress on formation intensified the efforts of the American districts to provide lay formation, and stimulated the creation in 1996 of another national-level formation program: the Lasallian Leadership Institute (LLI). The LLI is a 3-year program of Lasallian studies, specifically oriented toward those persons (the vast majority of whom are lay people) who already have or will in the future take leadership roles in Lasallian institutions. It is more pragmatic in its orientation than the Buttimer Institute, stressing the kinds of Lasallian topics that a school leader would need for effective work in the educational mission. Its 3 years cover Lasallian spirituality, Lasallian educational leadership, and Lasallian leadership in the management of a school community of faith (Christian Brothers Conference, 1999b). The United States districts now had two major national programs that could complement the many district- and school-based formation programs. This array of programs was crafted to provide the kind of formative experiences that lay educators would need if they were to participate in the Institute's mission on a collegial level with the Brothers.

A New Paradigm of Association and Shared Mission: The 43rd General Chapter

The Prelude to the 43rd General Chapter

In the years following the renewal Chapter of 1966-1967, the Brothers' pilgrimage had taken them on a journey none of them could have anticipated when it began. Concepts of association and the nature and role of those who would carry out the Institute's mission had been stretched into entirely new forms. Pope John Paul II (1996) encouraged this kind of experimentation in designing new means of collaboration between religious communities and the laity. He declared:

Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these institutes. We may say that, in the light of certain historical experiences such as those of the Secular or Third Orders, a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity....The participation of the laity often brings unexpected and rich insights into certain aspects of the charism [of an institute], leading to a more spiritual interpretation of it and helping to draw from it directions for new activities in the apostolate. (§§54-55)

As he ended his generalate at the close of the 1990s, Brother John Johnston continued his advocacy of the shared mission model of association between the Brothers and the laity. Johnston (1999) indicated that the trend of diminishing numbers of Brothers was continuing as it had been since 1966. Yet the Lasallian mission was expanding across the world in new and creative ways, as shared mission was implemented across the Institute.

Brother John Johnston observed that there were four basic responses of the districts to the mandate of the 42nd General Chapter to create a shared mission plan, as a blueprint for shared mission activities and formation in their locales. Some districts had no plan at all, while a second group had no plan but their district policies conformed to the general outlines of the 1993 Chapter's decisions. A third group had a plan, which was focused on some specific aspects of their educational work (campus ministry/pastoral work, student activities, classroom instruction, and administration). A fourth group had a plan and were implementing it in every aspect of the district's life, and creating the structures for collaboration with lay people necessary to achieve this end.

Brother John Johnston (1999) further indicated that different kinds of formation programs and shared mission activities were needed to account for the widely divergent contexts of the Institute's work around the world. There was no "correct" way to implement shared mission. This reality was also highlighted by the Institute's *Bulletin* devoted to shared mission in 1996 (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1996).

Throughout the Institute, Brother John Johnston (1999, 2000) indicated that there was a desire for closer links between the Brothers and their lay colleagues, for new forms of association for the mission. To accommodate this, new structures were needed for shared mission to blossom fully (Johnston, 2000), as the *Rule* indicated in article 146, quoted above. Johnston argued that this shared mission must have as its ends the following constitutive elements: (a) announcement and promotion of the Reign of God, (b) education of young people in the faith, (c) pastoral ministry organized around faith, service, and community, with a view toward awakening a sense of vocation in the Church, (d) education of the poor as an effective priority, (e) advocacy for social change, and (f) defense of the rights of children.

This reconceptualization and reform of the Brothers' identity and mission as described by Brother John Johnston (1999, 2000) in terms of the search for new forms of association clearly had a dynamic that was difficult to contain, even as it revealed concepts like Lasallian family and shared mission that were not always easy to define initially, and that continued to defy easy categorization. That this dynamic process had a life of its own, that it was by no means spent at the 42nd General Chapter, would become amply clear by the results of the 43rd General Chapter in 2000.

A New Role for Lay Lasallians in Association with the Institute

This latter Chapter took shared mission to its next logical step, and called the Institute to redefine itself as far as its mission was concerned, to create institutions and structures at all levels for lay Lasallians to have a voice and vote on mission-related matters (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2000). As with prior chapters, the Chapter of 2000 framed its notion of shared mission in terms of the expanding notion of association across the 300 years of the Institute's existence. The Chapter noted that just as De La Salle and his first Brothers had made lifelong vows of association for the sake of the mission without knowing the consequences, "there is no way we can measure today the full impact that the decisions that were made [at the Chapter of 2000] will have on the future" (Rodriguez et al., 2000b, p. i). Lay consultants also had a voice at this Chapter, as in 1993. They played an important role in the

formulation of propositions that the Chapter would deliberate upon after their consultation period had ended. The interplay between these groups would have a powerful effect on the outcomes of the Chapter.

The Modern Mission of the Institute

The Chapter recognized that this dynamic process of shared mission was not one that could or should be boxed in prematurely by the creation of rigid structures, but it did attempt to give greater clarity and precision to shared mission and the nature of belonging to it. First and foremost, it gave a definition of the mission for the new millennium when it declared unambiguously that Lasallians must be concerned above all with the human and Christian education of the young, especially the poor (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2000). This mission was framed as the Institute's adoption of a stance as a worldwide movement working in defense of the rights of the child, in all respects.

Specific Roles in the Shared Mission: Brothers, Partners, and Associates

The Chapter then defined the various roles of those associated in this common ministry of the Institute. First, it identified the Brothers as vowed and consecrated men living in apostolic communities for the sake of the mission. The Brothers' vow of "association for the service of the poor through education" is "the source of Lasallian associations of lay persons and religious who wish to be a part of the Lasallian mission. This is where new forms of association for the mission have their origin" (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2000, p. 3).

Levels of belonging to the mission as a concept were broached as early as the Chapter of 1976. This theme was developed further by Brother John Johnston and the General Council of the Institute in 1997 (Johnston et al., 1997). The Chapter of 2000 built on this foundation laid in the 1997 document, which was the first systematic treatment of shared mission in light of the work of the General Chapters from 1956 through 1993 and of the experience of the Institute at all levels of the previous three and a half decades.

"Partners" were defined as those who share the Brothers' mission in "its multiple educational, catechetical, apostolic, and professional aspects" (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2000, p. 4). They make it possible for the work of the schools to be accomplished. "Associates" then, were a deeper form of partnership. These are people who "feel a call to deepen the charism, spirituality, and Lasallian communion in which they wish to participate. In particular, their lives are already marked by a number of distinctively

Lasallian characteristics” (p. 4). Associates could be individuals, or intentional groups of people, who come together for this purpose. Some groups have institutional links to the Institute (i.e., *Signum Fidei* and the Third Order) or are independent juridically (i.e., Lasallian Sisters [from Vietnam], Hermanas Guadalupanas De La Salle [Lasallian sisters from Mexico], Union of Catechists). Others could emerge whose natures were not foreseen. Such groups should be authenticated in their Lasallian character by the Brothers through their district structures, but should also be permitted maximum autonomy and allow for combinations of Brothers, lay Catholics, non-Catholic Christians, and non-Christians (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2000). In particular, the Brothers are obligated to provide these groups, especially their associates, the kinds of formation experiences that they needed to become authentically Lasallian. Once again, formation for this shared mission would be a top priority of the Chapter and of the districts for the subsequent 7 years (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2000).

New Structures for Implementing Shared Mission

What is even more remarkable is that the 43rd General Chapter called on the districts of the Institute to create structures to involve lay Lasallians in policymaking about the nature and extent of the district’s apostolic activities and commitments, giving all involved a deliberative vote (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2000). This action was revolutionary, in that it proposed to alter fundamentally how the Brothers operated in their institutions, and it offered lay Lasallians unprecedented access to processes of decision-making that until this point had been exclusively controlled by the Brothers. It raised many questions about the very structure of the Institute that have not yet been resolved. Most importantly, it underscored the transformative effects of the concept of shared mission on the Brothers’ Institute and for the mission they had committed themselves to with tens of thousands of lay men and women throughout the world.

The old world of association for the Brothers alone was gone forever. In its place, Rodriguez and colleagues (2000a) highlighted the hoped-for consequences of the 43rd General Chapter, and this reconceptualization of association it produced, as the Institute faced the twenty-first century:

Our hope and prayer today is that the reception of the 43rd General Chapter, in the weeks and months ahead, might be for each of us and for the whole of our Lasallian family a “Pentecost” kind of experience...giving us a renewed hope in our future and the courage and zeal needed to face together and by association the great challenges of the 21st century. There can be no doubt that the Reign of

God, the proclamation of the Good News, the service of the poor, the defense of the rights of children, and ongoing renewal of our Lasallian educational mission will call for continual conversion. And, yet, what each of us might fear to attempt alone is possible, by God's grace, when we commit ourselves in faith to do it together. (p. 82)

Note

Select letters, rules, constitutions, and historical texts of the Brothers of the Christian Schools that appear in the references below are available from the Casa Generalizia, Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiani, Via Aurelia, 476, CP 9099 (Aurelio) 00100, Roma, Italia.

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