

**LASSCA--Panel of District Mission/Education Officers
February 25, 2014**

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to share with you some thoughts and insights on challenges faced by Lasallian schools from the perspective of a District Mission officer. Although my perspective is influenced by our apostolates in DENA, I believe my comments will be applicable to all.

My intent in this short time is to focus on the essential elements of transmitting our Catholic and Lasallian Mission and Charism in order to ensure the continuation of both in the current and future generations working in our apostolates. This intent reflects not only transmission from the Brothers to Partners (not a handing-over but a sharing) but also from one Lasallian generation to the next.

My comments are based on on-going research into mission transmission; professional observation, work, and experience; Lasallian education and formation over an extended period of time; and, my lived reality as a Lasallian for 37 years.

My premise is that mission and charism can be successfully transmitted. Research indicates this can be accomplished but it is not easy nor guaranteed. Two other beliefs evident in current research are: First, that mission and charism cannot be transmitted by the founding congregational members and second, that the religious congregants are not essential to the transmission process as long as there are Partners who are committed to the mission and charism. Respecting the latter two I hope that none of us hold either of these beliefs but are committed to successful transmission of mission and charism.

Let me say too that our Lasallian mission and charism must be viewed within the context of our Catholic identity. To put it into terms that we all resonate with--Catholic is our identity and charism is our "brand". Our charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit for service in the Church and therefore is not our exclusive birthright. While we may struggle with the Church in different ways we need to understand our educational apostolates in this context. What is more important is how do we take our mission of providing a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor and not only preserve and transmit it, but use this gift appropriately, responding continuously to the emerging needs of the young and their families. Scott will talk in more depth about Catholic identity in his presentation.

Over the last 40 years the permeation (or osmosis) model of mission transmission, as we have previously understood it, has eroded and died. This model was based on large numbers of Brothers who were the heart, memory and guarantors of mission. By being in their presence and observing them as models we "got" mission. As this erosion occurred we implemented (and continue to do so) various measures that could be categorized as stop-gap, albeit important and necessary actions, but won't in the long-

run contribute to the on-going effective transmission of mission and charism. Some of these include reserve powers, animators, VP's for Mission, and Lasallian inservices.

The scope of this topic is by nature far more complex than what I have time. However, let me share my current thinking on the essential elements, with minimal commentary, and for which I believe we need to be exceptionally attentive to if we expect to successfully transmit our mission and charism to succeeding generations. The order presented does not imply priority.

Essential Elements

1. **Community:** Community is the over-arching context of our Lasallian Mission and charism. We mark the beginnings of the Institute from when De La Salle brought the young teachers into his house. The centrality of community is paramount. The community must be welcoming, invitational, have a clear sense of belonging, and meet the needs of its members. Without a well-formed and functioning community, the mission and charism will not take root and eventually wither and die. Charlie will have more to say on community subsequently.
2. **Apostolic Dimension:** Our schools are apostolates, not just "schools". We are Catholic and our mission calls us to provide a Christian education. As much emphasis needs to be placed on the apostolic dimension and its health as we do with the business, pedagogical, and extracurricular ones. Our Religion Departments and Campus Ministry programs should reflect a strong commitment to them by leadership and the community but accompanied with the understanding that all are engaged in the evangelizing mission of Jesus' message of the Good News.
3. **Leadership:** Leadership provides the vision and direction necessary to accomplish mission. While leadership at different levels needs to be developed and encouraged it is the chief administrator and trustees who are the linch-pins in the transmission process. Decision-making (e.g hiring for mission, accessibility, vision) must be approached from the perspective of mission. If the key leaders are not dedicated and committed to the mission then the mission and charism will not be transmitted.
4. **Association:** We are all familiar with our mantra of "together and by association". Association is the first and primary vow the Brothers take. It too must be an unofficial vow of a significant core group of Partners in each apostolate. We associate for Mission or we don't associate! (i.e leave the school and/or close the school) How we foster and care for this constitutive concept within our local setting and across our District, Region and Institute, will significantly influence how successful we are in mission transmission.
5. **Formation:** Formation comes to us in a multiplicity of ways. Formation programs and experiences must be approached from the perspective that there are three doors of entry into the Mission: faith, service, and community. It must be differentiated, on-going, reflect creative fidelity, and be relevant to the needs of its

participants. Additionally, our Founding story is central to successful formation and must be told, shared, and referenced over and over. And, in this formational journey individuals must be accompanied by Brothers and Partners. Chief administrators and Boards must have a strong commitment to formation, providing the necessary resources, environment, and accompaniment. Finally, particular attention must be centered on our Young Lasallians, many of whom will have had minimal contact with Brothers. How we invest in this younger generation will significantly and directly impact our ability to sustain the charism and advance the mission.

6. **Relationship:** As Lasallians we are relational. On a personal level we are the older Brothers and Sisters to the young. We are called to bring them to salvation both on earth and in heaven. This is an integral part of our identity. Supporting, fostering and living this ideal is crucial to mission and charism. Additionally, the personal relational dimension extends to all members of our community but with focus on the young people in our schools. At an institutional level we must be connected to other District ministries, with the District through a covenant relationship, with the Region, with the Institute, and with our brothers and sisters in ministries across the world. We must understand that we are part of something greater than ourselves.
7. **Co-Responsibility:** While an emerging concept in our Lasallian world we must embrace it as an essential and central component in our ability to transmit Mission and Charism to succeeding generations of Lasallians. Since 1986 we have evolved in our thinking from the Lasallian Family to Shared Mission to Shared Charism and now we talk of co-responsibility. As we continue to explore, discuss, and better understand this concept and its implications, especially for Partners, we need to agree that the responsibility for our Lasallian mission and charism is everyone's responsibility.
8. **Lasallian Vocations:** We need vocations to the Brothers of the Christian Schools and we need vocations to Lasallian education. Our Brothers have a unique calling and serve as the leaven for our Lasallian community. Committed Partners are called to this mission and play an invaluable role. Together they offer authentic witnessing to our Lasallian vocation and to the Apostolic mission of Jesus. Together we must encourage, foster, and develop our respective vocational callings if we are to be the heart, memory, and guarantors of the charism and advance the mission into the future.
9. **Vision:** Our vision of the future of our Lasallian mission must be one that is strategic and clear and articulated frequently to the members of our community and beyond. Our vision must be one of bold audacity and creatively faithful to our founding story. As called by Vatican II, the Brothers have re-discovered the founding charism and now it is our responsibility, together and by association, to sustain it into the 21st century with a vision that is dynamic and life-giving.
10. **Lasallian Spirituality:** We frequently remember that we are in the Holy presence of God. This constant reminder should first challenge us to be attentive to our

personal spiritual development; second, recall our Founder who relied on Providence to guide him in all things; and, third, inspire us to touch hearts and bring the young people to salvation. Our spirituality is one that takes place in the educational setting and with a spirit of faith and zeal. In this context, we must encourage and foster the spiritual and faith development of all members of our community and provide the appropriate space and time for developing and cultivating our personal relationship with God. For our Brothers and Partners this space and time must support their individual efforts in their on-going discernment as to how they are being called to live out this gift of Lasallian charism.

Considering these ten elements there are two operative principles that must be followed--intentionality and consistency. These operative principles are foundational. We must proceed deliberately, consistently, and strategically. Haphazard and/or inconsistent efforts in respect to all of the essential elements will result in an incomplete or failed transmission of mission and charism. Like the Founder and early Brothers who developed a Conduct for Schools, we need to develop a coordinated "blueprint" for the Conduct of Mission and Transmission of the Charism in the 21st Century.

I appreciate the opportunity to share some of my research findings and lived experience. This is a work in progress but I believe our attentiveness and intentionality to these essential elements will bode well for the successful transmission of our mission and charism from one Lasallian generation to the next. While not easy we do have as our inspiration the example of Jesus' mission shared with and transmitted through his Apostles more than 2000 years ago, that remains with us today.