

**Justice in the World and the Mission of Lasallian Education Today:
Enacting the Common Good**

LACU Livestream Symposium

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“A conviction which we today share [is] that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others” (Laudato Si, 70).

The recent symposium on justice and Lasallian education provided the Lasallian Family with the opportunity to reflect on the personal and collective responsibility for ensuring Lasallian Catholic education is contributing to the promotion of justice. Recalling the words of *Justicia in Mundo*, the Church’s call is clear, “Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated” (#34). As Lasallians, this Christian love of neighbor is lived through our educational mission. The words of Circular 412: *Educational Service of the Poor & the Promotion of Justice* bridge this love of neighbor with the responsibility for justice when it states, “very evidently the school is a structure which, it is suggested, can be changed so as to contribute more toward the promotion of justice” (p. 59). So, where does one go from here?

First, it is important to consider the immediate reality before us. For many of us, that means looking at the educational environment that surrounds us and considering how justice is being lived institutionally in our educational ministries. Dr. Kevin Ahern, Ph. D. in his keynote during the symposium spoke to the possibility for a more just reality within the Lasallian educational mission by posing three critical questions: 1) Who do we teach? 2) What do we teach? and 3) How do we teach? We must take the time as educational communities to truly grapple with these questions and consider if our practices lift up the preferential option for the poor, contribute to the promotion of justice, especially in our efforts towards diversity, equity, and inclusion, and whether our structures reflect justice-oriented, mission-centered priorities. To quote Circular 412, our educational ministries “can offer the model of a different lifestyle, one which will help young people to adopt an attitude at once critical and constructive regarding the society in which they are called to live” (p. 59).

The second path I offer is to recognize the immediate needs beyond the school walls. What are the needs that surround us? Where can we bring a Gospel response to the needs of the poor and how are we empowering our students to advocate for a more just society? Dr. Carol Ann Gittens, Ph. D., in her response during the symposium spoke to the importance of living into the call for justice by being present and doing the hard work of cultivating self-knowledge. Here I am reminded of the words of Lasallian Reflection 6: You are Part of the Miracle, “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” (p.23). Where are we standing individually and collectively? With whom are we

standing? We must provide our students, and all who are part of our educational communities, with the tools to “see, judge, and act.” This means providing spaces to pray and reflect so that our doing is informed by our being. Our Lasallian heritage teaches us that our being needs to be informed by the holy presence of God and the Gospel as “our first and principal rule.” In the light of faith, we are more clearly able to see where we are called and for whom we are called.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle saw his immediate reality and was attentive to God’s providential guidance. De La Salle provided a practical response to the immediate educational needs of young people, especially the poor, and in doing so gratuitously, the Lasallian school came to provide an alternative to the structures that excluded. Dr. Jerry Kavorous, Ph. D., in his response during the symposium, offered the insight that this Lasallian vision of inclusive education is rooted in De La Salle’s vision of living “together and by association” with one another. As Lasallians, we have the roadmap to continue our commitment to the poor and the promotion of justice. The question is, *do we have the courage to respond boldly and creatively to the building up of a more just society?*