

**Justice in the World and the Mission of Lasallian Education Today:
Enacting the Common Good
LACU Livestream Symposium
April 7, 2021**

Culture of Justice, Culture of Encounter – Bro. Dylan Perry, FSC

It is without question that within our ministries we are striving to work for and educate about justice and the common good. It is clear to me that there are a lot of ways that we can respond to the needs of the world, and to respond we must first feel them. After participating in the recent Justice and Education Symposium, I have been left with a great feeling of hope and excitement for the role of the Lasallian Family in making a more just society. As Lasallians we must be people that allow ourselves to feel the pain of those on the many margins that society creates, and to feel we must open ourselves to encounters with others.

A question that this symposium has brought into focus for me is: How do Lasallians foster a culture of encounter?

I draw great inspiration from the first line of the Rule of the Brothers. The Lasallian movement was started when De La Salle was “Deeply moved by the human and spiritual distress” (Rule 1.1.1) The word “moved” speaks to me because it means that we are impacted emotionally, AND that impact pushes us to action. I think that is what it means for Jesus to live in our hearts. In the world today, we have to be intentional about going outside of the various literal and figurative walls in our lives, and once we are there we have to be vulnerable enough to allow ourselves to be touched by that encounter – this type of encounter does not happen naturally or by accident. How do we as individuals, communities, ministries, and networks organize to intentionally encounter those who may be on society’s margins? How do we train, educate, and facilitate that meaningful encounter with and for those entrusted to our care?

As Lasallians we are not called to learn about the poor and marginalized, we are called to be with them, learn from them, and allow those relationships to crack open our hearts and minds to new possibilities in response to our neighbors. When we prioritize the encounter, we make room for human connection, for relationship building, for listening, for being with another in their struggles. It means being ready for the unexpected by putting away our preconceived notions and expectations.

Any and all of our students may find themselves marginalized in some way, and they will undoubtedly be in relationship with marginalized individuals. Lasallians are called to BE the love of Christ to everyone we encounter AND to teach others how to do the same in their own context. Practically, I am suggesting two things: modeling relationship-centered spaces and teaching others to participate in relationship-centered practices.

To strive for justice, Lasallians must authentically model our vision of a better world. Our relationships, classrooms, ministries, institutions, communities, and networks must strive to

model the ideal society that we hope to create. We should examine how some educational conventions may contribute to or exacerbate marginalizing those we walk alongside, those in our care. Additionally, we should examine how the systems that we create may train students to behave in ways that are counter to a just and loving society. Just a few ideas that may be useful to explore for this work: the application of restorative practices in school settings and methods for more intrinsic motivation of learning such as project or inquiry-based initiatives. These practices give students greater agency within the school environment and teach them to responsibly exercise that agency by modeling a more just environment and teaching them the skills to thrive in such an environment.

Lasallians are people who let themselves be moved, seek out spaces where they will be moved, and help people to find those places of moving encounter. When we engage our ministry through this lens, we will not only work for justice, but we will also act more justly and model a more just society.