

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

John Baptist de La Salle discovered poverty through his encounters with the poor students and teachers. He saw that the education was a microcosm of the French society at that time.

Are our Lasallian schools responding to the social realities of our current time? Do we inculcate our Christian values in all our schools' undertakings? We encourage our educators to dedicate their expertise in exposing social ills to our students; to be present to our students' needs and accompany them to open their hearts and develop authentic relationships with others; and to provide safe spaces where one can express his or her fears and vulnerabilities without being judged.

It is our hope that by providing such an environment for our students, they can also offer the same empathic spaces to the last, the lost and the least. Our Founder asked the same questions that invited the transformative process of shifting patterns, practices and norms of the schools. His education was not just of the mind, but of the whole human person. This perhaps is our Lasallian spirituality, creating conditions of grace, to look at the crucial current events as a time to innovate and to respond.

Three hundred years after the death of our Founder, Lasallians continue to be committed to alleviate the different forms of poverty through our Lasallian Mission, expanding to all our Lasallian institutions across the world. Social justice and academic rigor go hand in hand in our schools.

Circular 412 challenges us to see education as having a renewal of heart, a renewal that is based on the awareness that sin has individual and social manifestations. The Lasallian community in the Philippines is active in speaking out against social injustices, human rights abuses and extra-judicial killings. We provide spaces where students can express, reflect and pray about these issues alongside the guidance and discernment of their teachers and De La Salle brothers. The experiences of attending rallies, prayer vigils, reflection sessions, webinars and seminars give rise to a new generation of Lasallians who can respond to social issues with critical minds and empathic hearts.

In De La Salle University Manila, social justice is woven in the academic curriculum and in the overall student experience. Through immersion programs, we provide opportunities for our students to identify and understand social issues, analyze the problems and reflect on responses through evidence-based researches. We have the Lasallian Reflection Framework (LRF) that aims to inculcate the values of critical thinking, meta-analysis and designing of strategic solutions to problems in society. Lasallians are taught to reach out to others and put themselves in the shoes of another person. When our students go and visit the margins, they are encouraged to develop relationships with their host families and community organizers. They ask relevant questions, speak to the families, spend time in the community they serve and more than anything, listen. The relationship Lasallians establish with their partners provide an opportunity for a rich and meaningful life experience. This is our Lasallian prayer made manifest – living Jesus in our hearts.

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