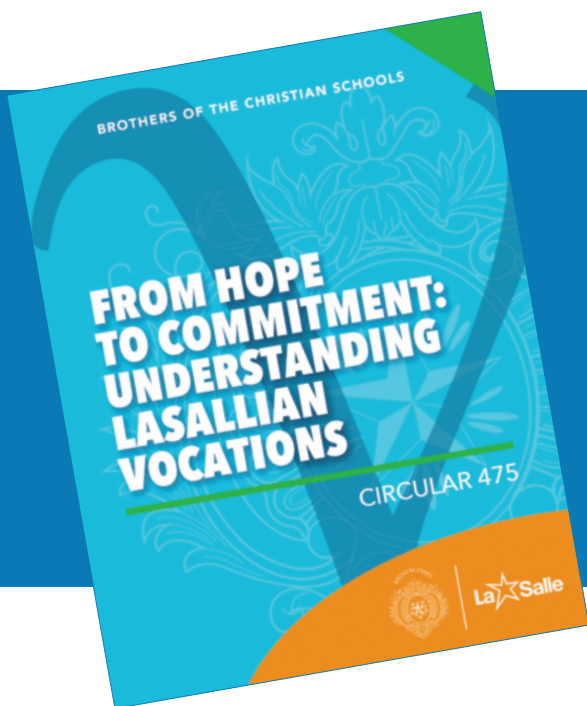


Exploring Lasallian documents.

Uncovering Lasallian research.

Sparking engagement to build a deeper understanding of mission and community.



Lasallian Essentials, a recurring feature in *De La Salle Today*, focuses on bringing Lasallian documents to life. This issue features Circular 475, *From Hope to Commitment: Understanding Lasallian Vocations*, with the aim of offering insights from the Circular and the opportunity to reflect personally, professionally and spiritually on key takeaways to bring to life as we accompany and serve those entrusted to our care.

There are numerous channels of communicating in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and Lasallian family. One of the traditional methods that dates to the time of the founding story is a message, called a Circular, from the Brother Superior (and his Council) on a given topic. They range in topic and style, such as administrative announcements of key events, biographies and theological and practical reflections.

# Engaging the Heart and One Another: Fostering a Culture of Vocation

By Chris Swain



The concept of vocation is one rich with meaning for each of us. Some might connect it solely in reference to those discerning religious life, while others might make it synonymous with career, and some may wonder: doesn't everyone have a vocation?

Beginning with Vatican II (1962-1965), a broader and more inclusive understanding of vocation has emerged in the Church, as well as in our Lasallian charism.

Circular 475, *From Hope to Commitment: Understanding Lasallian Vocations*, aims to capture a shared understanding grounded in contemporary experience and provide practices that make possible a hope-filled future.

The Circular is neither a how-to manual nor an exhaustive last word on Lasallian vocation or a "culture of vocation"; rather it is intended to promote continued dialogue to "generate creative insights and encourage new understandings that inspire hearts and nourish our shared commitment to serve God and one another." (Page 4)

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## Overview of Circular 475

The Circular approaches the concept of vocation through a Christian theological lens while acknowledging the multi-religious contexts within the global Lasallian family.

It emphasizes the importance of being attentive to the different contexts and nuances of language and history, while encouraging all to approach the Circular "with a positive attitude and an openness of mind and heart. The aim is to get to the core of the content with a view to adapting it to local contexts." (Page 7)

The opening offers three approaches for Lasallians to contextualize their lived experiences and the reality in which they find themselves. This situating of oneself is essential as it can "direct us towards an inspiring horizon from the specific place where we each find ourselves." (Page 5)

Embracing a "culture of vocation" is emphasized as it creates an environment that makes possible a setting where all can "live one's own life as a vocation" and all can "discover this common treasure we share." (Page 6)

The Circular defines Lasallian Vocation Ministry as how one's encounters and experiences of faith, service and community give direction to one's vocation "shaped by what is Lasallian." (Page 6)

The last two chapters focus specifically on the "fundamental life option" of those who are associated for mission and those called to consecrated community and service as Lasallian Brothers or Sisters.

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Chris Swain is director of the Office of Lasallian Vocation Ministry, which aims to foster a culture of vocation in the Lasallian Region of North America and promote the Lasallian vocation in its diversity of expressions, especially to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He served as chair of the Institute Vocation Commission, the group that supported the work of the General Council in the composition of this Circular.

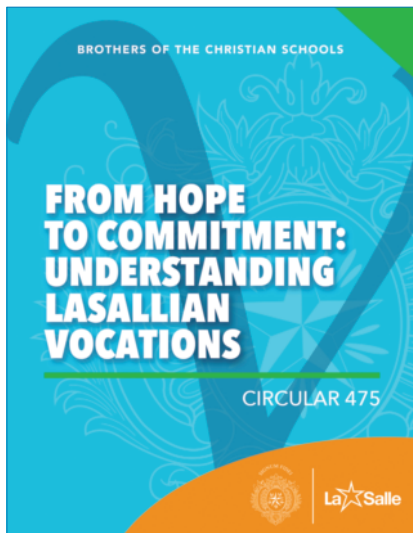
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## Five Key Takeaways

1. In settings where “we see that much emphasis is placed on all Lasallian vocations including the vocation of the Brother, we see diverse and enriched Lasallian communities emerge.” (Pages 15-16)
2. Everyone has a role in creating a culture of vocation, and “we need to open ourselves to an inclusive and universal vision in which all vocations are recognized, valued, and empowered and in which all are involved.” (Page 29)
3. Encounters and experiences of faith, service and community manifest a Lasallian Vocation Ministry that is “about offering personalized, welcoming, participative and dynamic programs with adequate pedagogy and explicit accompaniment.” (Page 42)
4. Affirming a vision of association for mission, many women and men engage in a process of “sharing the Lasallian mission in one of its many forms” and share an openness “to deepen the spirituality and community dimensions of the charism.” (Page 52)
5. A new approach for vocation ministry for the life of the Brother “can only be found today within the framework of a ‘culture of vocations,’ a Lasallian vocation ministry that is well-developed and in complementarity and mutual collaboration with a vocation ministry for Association.” (Page 65)

## For Reflection and Discussion

1. Each chapter of the Circular begins with a quotation and sharing a personal insight. As you reflect on your own journey, what invitations, encounters and experiences have deepened your own understanding of your life journey? Where did you see yourself in the text, perhaps thinking, “this is me they are talking about here”?
2. The Circular proposes that fostering a culture of vocation “demands a true conversion, a change of heart, both in mindset and practice.” (Page 26) Twice in chapter two, vocation is referenced as needing to be “transversal” and a commitment for everyone. What resonates with your experience, personally and/or communally, as you reflect on the three challenges of involvement, collaboration and intentionality that are posed?
3. What is one takeaway for you that has invited a new perspective of how you think about Lasallian vocation and a “culture of vocation” in your own life and ministry?
4. “Lasallian Vocation Ministry is about offering personalized, welcoming, participative and dynamic programs” so that each Lasallian “feels recognized, valued, encouraged, and loved.” (Page 42) How is this embodied in you, in your ministry? What might be a next step in ensuring and strengthening the ways in which you accompany and foster meaningful encounters of faith, service and community for your peers and/or those entrusted to your care?
5. “As Lasallians, we must make vocation ministry part of our own identity.” (Page 70) What concrete ways can you see this taking root in new and emerging ways? Who are you called to invite, encourage and walk with in their life journey? “With a perspective of hope, service, gratitude, and faith” what can be your next most faithful step to give shape to the ideas of this text in your life and in the lives of those entrusted to your care (adults and young people)? (Page 70)



“As Lasallians, let us ask ourselves: What is God’s call for me? How do I come to know God’s plan for my life? What does being Lasallian mean to me?”  
(Page 38)

## Ways to Bring Circular 475 to Life

1. Create spaces that are welcoming and encourage community-building, self-reflection and prayer, as these are foundational to understanding one’s vocation and accompanying others.
2. Express the authentic joy and hope of one’s vocation through sharing stories with colleagues and young people about one’s own life journey and call to serve.
3. Participate in a team approach within an educational community that can foster “culture of vocation” formative experiences, as well as develop specific plans of action.
4. Develop relational experiences of faith, service and community that include accompaniment and discernment.
5. Acknowledge and celebrate those who are living examples of vocation: educators, Brothers, board members, etc.
6. Dialogue and provide opportunities for those who desire to grow and deepen their association as Lasallians.
7. Create an inclusive community where life and faith are generously shared with youth and adults, where without fear of judgment all can explore their call in life.
8. Renew a commitment to vocation ministry activities, recognizing that the process includes creating space to promote, accompany, propose and discern.
9. Facilitate opportunities to make known the Brothers’ vocation through encounter, ministry with those in most need, prayer and sharing community.
10. Dream about new and next steps to address what is emerging in your life and educational community, perhaps including letting go of what is no longer effective and seeing with “new eyes and new intentions.” (Page 60)

Visit [www.Lasallian.info/LasallianEssentials](http://www.Lasallian.info/LasallianEssentials) to read Circular 475 and download a printable version of this section, along with the spring 2021 issue’s section on the *Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission*.