



Latin American Congress of Lasallian Education
19 – 21 October 2019
México

Good morning!

Thank you for inviting me to greet you at the start of the Second Latin American Congress of Lasallian education.

The 5 themes you have chosen for this Congress will provide you with ample opportunity to reflect on the fundamental values that sustain and guide Lasallian education at all levels.

- 1. Lasallian pedagogical thinking is rooted in John Baptist de La Salle's Gospel-driven encounter with the sons of the artisans and poor. Through them he experienced the unsettling presence of God that, little by little, inspired the founding of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.**

“As in de Salle's day, we face social forces that threaten and attack the dignity of the human person, especially those most vulnerable: young people living in poverty” (Lasallian Reflection 2, One Call Many Voices, p. 2. General Council, 2016-2017.)

During your time together, I invite you to reflect on your own experience of God and how it is enriched through personal relationships with poor people.

- 2. The purpose of the first Christian schools was two-fold: to provide the sons of artisans and the poor with the means of salvation (the practical application of the maxims of the Gospel and a conscious participation in the sacramental life of the Church) and to inculcate in them the duties of responsible citizenship.**

In contemporary societies we are challenged to empower vulnerable groups such as women, migrants, and indigenous peoples with skills that will enable them to be active and equal participants in the quest for a more compassionate and just world.

Lasallian education is based on the premise that commitment to Jesus' project for the Reign of God is a sure way to move vulnerable people towards security and social stability.

3. "Let us remember the holy presence of God": this Lasallian prayer inspires us to discover manifestations of God's goodness in all peoples, places and events. Today we are urgently called to nourish revelations of the divine in all of the eco systems that, with us, share the Earth – our common home.

"Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'* (13), reminds us that, 'The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change'. " (Lasallian Reflection 1, A Gospel Adventure, p. 6. General Council, 2015-2016.)

All Lasallian educational communities must strive to form students, teachers, administrators and support personnel to be proactive guardians of our forests, rivers, oceans and the air we breathe. We must also do our part to insure that those who live on the fringes have access to nature's resources, including potable water and clean air.

4. Lasallian education, in all its varied expressions, is intended to be an experience of Christian community. In other words, the poor are to be preferred; the last are to be first. More than places of simple peaceful coexistence, our communities should be characterized by fraternal concern, mutual understanding and unity in diversity.

Uniting all members of the educational community is our belief that every person is created in the image and likeness of God. We affirm that a first class, rigorous educational program that treats all persons as essentially equal, contributes to a more merciful and equitable society.

5. **Technology and rapid, and at times overwhelming, technological advances are part of the fabric of life. Technology per se is morally neutral. The use of technology, however, has a moral dimension. Our task is to insure that technology is employed to procure the well being of all peoples.**

Jesus' project for the Reign of God envisions a world in which every person has access to clean water, healthcare, education, dignified housing, social media, sufficient food and security. How can your Lasallian educational community incorporate technology in such a way that vulnerability decreases and well being increases? How can your community form members of the Lasallian Family to harness the wonders of technology for the common good?

The variety and complexity of contemporary Latin American societies means that there cannot exist one single plan of action for all to follow. Rather, gathered in God's presence at this Congress, your conversations, reflections and insights can contribute to a common understanding of the Lasallian educational mission. This shared vision can assist you as you continue to develop concrete strategies for making the world a better place for all.

Thank you!