



INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE LAY MARIST VOCAATION

STAGE II
July 2021 - June 2022

WELCOMING, NURTURING, LIVING AND SHARING OUR VOCATION.

Sheet 4 - Annex 2
Legal structures

ITINERARIES AND PROCESSES OF FORMATION AND MENTORING - SHEET 4 / 2

POSSIBLESIBLE LEGAL STRUCTURES FOR THE LAITY

Annex 2

DE LA SALLE “ASSOCIATES” AND “SIGNUM FIDEI

1. A brief history of the founder and the charism of the Congregation

Saint John Baptist de La Salle felt moved by God to found a community of persons who associated themselves as Brothers in order to live their vocation and to respond to the needs of young people who were “poor and far from salvation”. The Mission Association has existed since the origins of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools but, at the present time, it has developed in an unprecedented way, giving rise to new Institutes, Fraternities, Associations and groups.

2. The name of the Association or Group.

There are two Movements :

Signum Fidei, an association of people who identify with our charism.

Lay Associates (they can also be priests) who are associated with our educational ministry.

3. Beginning and growth of the Association.

Signum Fidei, in existence for 40 years.

In the 1970s, some lay Lasallians officially requested to be able to live and share the Lasallian spirit, charism and mission. Thus, was born this Lasallian Fraternity, which from the beginning has borne the name SIGNUM FIDEI. In 1976 the first consecration of lay Lasallians took place in the city of Rome.

The 42nd General Chapter affirmed that the Signum Fidei Fraternity “constitutes for the Districts (Provinces) a path of spirituality well suited to lay people - especially teachers - who draw their inspiration for their lives from Saint John Baptist de La Salle”. The 43rd General Chapter recognised

the organic relationship between the Fraternity and the Institute. Its members are officially “Associated” with the Lasallian Mission. In 2006 the first international Signum Fidei Assembly took place in Rome.

Identity:

The *Signum Fidei* style of Life offers a way of faith and life open to all persons who wish to live the values of the Gospel in the context of the Lasallian Association.

They understand that Signum Fidei is not the only way for lay people to live the charism. (At times, there is a certain



tension because of the different groups that exist).

Mission associates

At the beginning, the Association was limited to the brothers. Later it was extended to the laity. It is linked to mission, to charism and to Lasallian spirituality. Experience shows that our mission is only possible when there is a community of persons who guarantee and give stability to the educational project.

The Lasallian charism today brings different people together to form a new fraternity, the Lasallian fraternity, where Brothers and lay people, men and women, Christians and non-Christians, commit themselves to provide together an educational service of the poor and from there to all children, young people and adults, in the style of De La Salle.

Associates are people who recognise the Lasallian charism as a fundamental dimension in the development of their own life journeys and strive to live according to the values that this charism proposes. They follow a process of ongoing formation which helps them shape their identity, according to their vocation as people of faith.

There is a public commitment with a prior period of preparation of one to three years. The process is facilitated by the district leader, and involves : Communion with other associates, Dedication to the poor, Ministry of Christian education and evangelisation, Accompaniment for authentic discernment of life in the light of the Spirit.

4. Statute and foundational Documents.

Signum Fidei. Style of Life. Approved by the 2nd International Assembly, 2013.

Chapters:

1. Our identity.
2. The spirit of Signum Fidei
3. Vocational call
4. Mission
5. Community
6. The life of faith.
7. Consecration
8. Signum Fidei and its family.
9. The Lasallian Family
10. Formation
11. Statutes. Leadership and Government.

Prayer of Signum Fidei

Towards a Community Plan for a La Salle Christian Community: SIGNUM FIDEI.

Guidelines for joining the ARLEP. (in the 90's). Association of laypeople in lasallian education ministry

V Lasallian week. The different forms of Lasallian life as ways of living one's vocation in today's society, 2014.

5. Organisation, Structure, Animation

Communities function within the framework of districts (provinces). There is no body at the international level.

There is an international Brother advisor, and also a local Brother advisor, appointed by the Superior General or by the Brother Visitor respectively. Both guarantee the links with the District and the Institute.

Each community is led by a lay leader and accompanied by a Brother Advisor. He/she is elected by the community for a period of two years, renewable once.

In the District there is a District Coordinator elected by the Lay leaders. The term of office is three years, renewable once.

Regional Assemblies made up of all the Lay Coordinators and Brother advisors of the District or Sector.

At the international level: an International Council, composed of the Coordinators of the Regions and the international Brother Advisor. The International Assembly elects the President. The President represents the Fraternity in the International Council of Lasallian Family and Association. Term of office: 7 years, renewable once.

The International Signum Fidei Assembly is the sovereign body of the Signum Fidei Fraternity. The International President together with the International Brother Advisor convenes this Assembly at least one year before the ordinary General Chapter of the Institute and in connection with the International Mission Assembly.

The emphasis is not on structures, or on an international identity; it is up to the Districts. There is a pluralism of forms and processes. The Link Councillor is only present in aspects of animation.

It is not a canonical association. It depends on the laity,



although with a Brother Advisor.

A charismatic fraternity is composed of a group of communities, each with 15 to 20 members.

The Institute is strong on Mission Assemblies and Mission Councils.

There are no lay representatives at Institute level. There are at Province level.

There is no international Signum Fidei Council.

6. Membership. Presence by countries. Internationality

It is spread throughout the Institute, but in different ways.

Works well in the Philippines, Latin America. Needs more development in Europe.

Around 3000 or 4000 worldwide.

Most of them are teachers.

There are not yet any lay people who have made themselves internationally available. They serve more at the Province (District) level.

7. Formation Processes

Each community plans the means and the people for the formation of its members. They are invited to District or Regional formation programmes.

The initial formation period normally lasts two years and takes place within the local community. Personal accompaniment.

The main themes: study of the Word of God, theology of the sacraments, Church teaching on laity and history, Lasallian spirituality and pedagogy, as well as the Style of Life.

8. Financial Support of the Association

Each fraternity is autonomous in regard to its finances.

A Fraternity may manage or run its own centres.

9. Community Dimension

Constituted in communities of at least three people. Personal project and community project. Community meetings. Animation by a consecrated lay person, chosen by the community. A Brother Advisor appointed by the Brother Visitor.

The *Community Life Plan* is a plan of action drawn up by a community in view of exercising a common ministry in a spirit of Association and to help all members to grow as Lasallian Christians. It specifies how to live the Gospel in our concrete reality and encompasses those aspects of the Personal Life Plan which refer to the common mission of the community.

A variety of community experiences: Communities of lay people. Communities of brothers and lay people. A lay woman has been the "superior" of a community.

10. Seeking new members

From mission projects. Strength of commitment to the mission.

Acceptance of new members is the responsibility of those in charge of the province.

Mission Councils decide who becomes an associate.

11. Promises or commitments. For a set period – for life

The Signum fidei consecration is a reaffirmation of baptismal consecration which commits people to live the demands of the Gospel radically. Made before the community, it is the starting point of a life dedicated to the service of God for the edification of the Church according to the charism of St. John the Baptist. Religious vows are not taken.

Consecration is normally made for a period of one year and renewed annually. After a period of ten years, those who wish may apply to the Brother Visitor for authorisation to make it for life.

**The formula:**

I Publicly renew my baptismal consecration and I consecrate myself entirely to you, to procure your glory and do whatever you require of me. I join with my brothers and sisters in the Signum Fidei Community to live, together and by association, a Style of Life founded in the person of Jesus Christ and I associate myself with them for the Lasallian mission in favor of education for the poor, by participating in the Lasallian spirituality and charism.²⁶ My specific apostolic commitment is: I commit myself to carry out this project, either individually or in community, trusting in the support and prayer of all, and invoking the intercession of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. I associate myself to the Fraternity for a period of one year. In faith I have affixed my signature in (place), on (day) (month) (year).

Such expressions of bonding or commitment only occur at Province level. Not at Institute level.

12. Members of other faiths.

The members of the Signum Fidei Fraternity welcome and collaborate willingly with Lasallians of other Christian confessions and religious creeds in areas such as formation or mission (Style of Life 23).

13. Relationship with De la Salle religious

The Brother Visitor, after consultation with the Mission Council, may close a community or exclude any of its members.



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