



**LA SALLE
BACOLOD**
BROTHERS COMMUNITY

DATE: **July 6, 2026**

TO: **THE LASALLIAN COMMUNITY**

FROM: **BR. IRWIN ANTHONY CLIMACO FSC**
Community Director, La Salle Bacolod Brothers Community

SUBJECT: **The Star That Leads**
Pastoral Letter on the 74th Founding Anniversary of the University of St. La Salle

Dear Lasallian Family,

In The Conduct of the Christian Schools, our venerable Founder reminds us that everything we do within our walls must be rooted in a deep motive of true charity and directed ultimately "for the salvation of the student's soul." A Lasallian school is never merely an institution of academic instruction; it is a sacred space designed for salvation.

As we celebrate the 74th Handumanan of the University of St. La Salle, we gather in heartfelt gratitude for the countless blessings God has bestowed upon our beloved institution. Seventy-four years is more than a milestone in history; it is seventy-four years of God's unwavering fidelity, seventy-four years of lives transformed through education, and seventy-four years of a community striving to become a beacon of faith, service, and communion.

The Star That Guides and the Meaning of Handumanan

Our anniversary theme invites us to look at the image of the star, a fitting symbol for a Lasallian community. Throughout Scripture, stars do not shine for themselves. They illuminate the path for others, offering direction, hope, and assurance even amid darkness. The prophet Daniel reminds us:

"Those who instruct others unto justice shall shine like stars for all eternity." (Daniel 12:3)

What a beautiful description of the Lasallian vocation. Yet, before a star can guide others, it must first know where it is anchored. This is why we celebrate Handumanan.

The word *handumanan* means remembrance. But Christian remembrance is never simply recalling the past. Throughout the Scriptures, whenever God's people remembered, they renewed their covenant with Him, reclaimed their identity, and recommitted themselves to His mission. We remember, not to remain in yesterday, but to rediscover the purpose that gives meaning to today and hope for tomorrow.

Remembering Our Pioneers

This Handumanan invites us to remember with profound gratitude those whose faith first planted the Lasallian mission on this soil. We honor our founding Brothers, Br. Dennis Ruhland, FSC, Br. Hugh Wester, FSC, Br. Felix Masson, FSC, and Br. Francis Cody, FSC, and Fr. Gratian Murray, AFSC, whose vision, courage, and sacrifice laid the foundations of what would become the University of St. La Salle.

They did not begin with impressive buildings or abundant resources; they began with pure faith. They believed that every young person deserved an education that would form not only the mind but also the heart. What they built was never simply a school. They built a community of faith and service, convinced that Christ Himself is encountered in the ministry of education. Our greatest tribute to these pioneers is not merely to remember their names, but to continue their mission with the same courage, generosity, and fidelity.

What Truly Makes Us Lasallian?

This milestone invites us to ask a simple yet profound question:

What truly makes the University of St. La Salle a Lasallian university?

Is it our seventy-four years of history? Our beautiful campus? Our accreditations and rankings? Our achievements and traditions? These are gifts worthy of thanksgiving, speaking of dedication and excellence. But these are not what define us as Lasallians.

Long before there were classrooms, laboratories, or international recognitions, there was a priest named John Baptist de La Salle whose heart was moved by the plight of poor and abandoned children. The Rule of the Brothers reminds us that De La Salle and the first Brothers committed themselves to provide a "human and Christian education" by making learning accessible to the poor and offering it to all as a sign of the Reign of God.

As our former President, Br. Gus Boquer, FSC, often reminded our community:

"A school is a place where the experience of God is lived and shared."

Education, then, is not simply a profession—it is a ministry, a vocation, and a direct participation in God's continuing work of salvation.

S74RS ALIGN: Aligning Management to Mission

This year's anniversary theme, **S74RS ALIGN: Serving, Transforming, Accompanying, Responding, and Striving** is far more than a commemorative slogan. It is a living description of what an authentic Lasallian community looks like when all its moving parts are perfectly aligned:

- **We Serve** because Christ first served us.
- **We Transform** because education changes lives.
- **We Accompany** because no one journeys alone.
- **We Respond** because the needs of God's people call us beyond comfort.
- **We Strive** because our dedication to the mission demands our utmost fidelity, excellence, and continuous growth.

As our University continues to grow, there will always be legitimate pressures to focus on sustainability, efficiency, competitiveness, and rankings. These have their rightful place. Yet, the true test of our identity lies in our ability to align our management to our mission.

When operations are detached from the charism, when processes overshadow people, or when efficiency is valued more than genuine encounter, we risk becoming an excellent corporation without remaining a profoundly Lasallian institution. Management, structures, budgets, and systems are never ends in themselves; they must be completely aligned to serve as instruments of grace. If we profess that Lasallian formation is at the heart of our identity, then this alignment must be evident in the time we protect, the people we empower, the programs we sustain, and the resources we willingly invest. What we consistently support reveals, more clearly than our rhetoric, what we truly believe.

Together and by Association: Our Shared Ministry

One of the greatest misconceptions about a Lasallian institution is the belief that its identity depends solely on the presence of the Brothers. The Brothers remain faithful custodians of the charism, but the charism itself belongs to the Church and to everyone who embraces this mission together and by association.

God does not call a single person; God calls a community. To every member of our Lasallian family, your work advances this sacred mission:

- **To our Leaders and Administrators:** Leadership in a Lasallian university must always transcend mere governance; it is a serious ministry of discernment. While professional management is indispensable, your principal charge is to guide our institutional gears so that they always vibrate with the spirit of our charism. Every policy enacted, strategy deployed, and decision made must be measured against a deeper, unifying question: *Does this align our institution to be a place where the experience of God is truly lived and shared?* Institutional success achieves its true meaning only when management remains perfectly aligned with the mission.

- **To those entrusted with Finance and Resources:** Stewardship is a sacred form of service. Budgets are never merely financial documents, nor are resources simply assets to be managed efficiently. They reveal what we value as a community. Every peso managed carries a responsibility to advance our educational mission, safeguard those most in need, and ensure that sustainability remains the servant of the mission, never its substitute.
- **To our Security and Safety Personnel:** Your vigilance and care create a sanctuary where our community can learn, work, and grow without fear. By ensuring an environment of peace and protection, you safeguard the very well-being of the lives entrusted to us. Your quiet presence is a profound ministry of care, allowing the experience of God to be shared in safety.
- **To those who care for our Facilities and Campus Environment:** The physical environment of our university is never neutral; it is the very first gospel our community reads each day. Every classroom prepared with excellence, every laboratory made functional, every meticulously clean restroom, and every safe pathway speaks of our deep respect for the dignity of every learner. Your dedication is a vital ministry of hospitality, preparing the sacred spaces where education, encounter, and human flourishing become possible.
- **To our Faculty Members:** We extend our profound gratitude to you, the absolute frontliners of this mission and the living instruments of formation. Every lesson prepared with intellectual excellence, every student encouraged, and every life patiently accompanied reflects the heart of our Founder. Yet, this critical role bears a tremendous responsibility. We challenge you to never settle for being mere transmitters of knowledge, but to be true "cooperators with Jesus Christ" in restoring human dignity and inspiring justice. May you continually renew your pastoral zeal, knowing that the spiritual future of the souls entrusted to your care relies daily on your faith, your example, and your love.
- **To our Non-Teaching Personnel:** Much of your daily work takes place behind the scenes, away from the spotlight, and is often unseen by many. But please know this: you are deeply seen, and your presence is profoundly valued. Whether you serve in offices, laboratories, libraries, clinics, or cafeterias, your quiet dedication is the engine that keeps our mission moving forward. Your kindness is often the very first experience of Lasallian hospitality a stranger encounters. You do not need to be in the front of a classroom to be a minister of grace; your hidden service proclaims the Gospel no less than words.
- **To our Students:** You are not merely recipients of an education; you are its living witnesses and the very heart of this university. The knowledge, skills, and values you acquire here are meant to prepare you not just for successful careers, but for lives of faith, integrity, and active compassion. We challenge you to let your light shine in how you treat one another. Let our campus be a true sanctuary of safety and respect, where

no one is ever marginalized, bullied, or made to feel invisible. True Lasallian leadership is found in building others up, never in tearing them down. Guard the dignity of your peers, stand up for those who are weak, and ensure that your everyday interactions reflect the love and inclusion of Christ.

- **To our Parents and Families:** Thank you for trusting us with the sacred care of your children. We recognize and honor your irreplaceable, primary role as the first and most indispensable formators of their hearts, morals, and character. This mission has always been a sacred covenant between the home and the school; we are here to partner with you, never to substitute for you. The values of respect, kindness, and integrity that are nurtured at home are what allow our classroom lessons to take root. We challenge you to continue walking closely with your children, actively modeling the behaviors of justice and compassion you wish to see in them, so that together we may form not just competent professionals, but truly compassionate human beings.

A Vision for the Future

As we celebrate seventy-four years of God's faithfulness, may we never measure our success only by numbers that can be counted. Instead, may we ask the question that mattered most to our Founder: **Have we become a place where young people encounter the living God?**

If we can answer that question with our lives, then we shall truly become what the prophet Daniel envisioned—true **STARS** who lead others toward what is right by Serving, Transforming, Accompanying, Responding, and Striving together because Christ remains at the center of all that we are and all that we do.

This 74th Handumanan holds a unique and sacred significance, for it stands as the gateway to a historic milestone. As we celebrate today, we are already gearing towards and preparing our hearts for our 75th Year, Diamond Jubilee next year. Let this year of alignment be our spiritual foundation, a grace-filled path of anticipation that readies our entire community to cross the threshold into our diamond year with renewed zeal, stronger communion, and a deeper commitment to the mission.

May our Handumanan remind us not only of where we have been, but of who we are, who God continues to call us to become, and where He is leading us as we march toward our Diamond Jubilee. May the University of St. La Salle always be a star that leads—guiding minds toward truth, hearts toward compassion, and lives toward God.

Happy 74th Handumanan to our beloved University!

May Saint John Baptist de La Salle and all our Holy Brothers continue to inspire us all.

Live Jesus in our hearts, Forever!