

**MAKING A WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN
A PRAYER SERVICE OF UNITY**

PREFACE:

Reader:

This morning [this afternoon or evening] we join *in communion* with 140 Lasallians—students and educators from Lasallian secondary and higher education ministries across the U.S. and Ontario, Canada—who are gathered at the world headquarters of the United Nations in New York for three days.

The Lasallian Convocation at the United Nations aims to provide information, education and formation towards achieving a world fit for children. The Convocation is an exciting opportunity to reflect on our evangelical and prophetic witness before the world of the need for justice and peace enveloped by Christ’s love; to renew our attention to the Institute’s call to have the rights of children as a major concern of the Lasallian mission; to earnestly move towards leading our Lasallian educational ministries to wed charitable service activities and social justice initiatives, with the Rights of the Child as the framework through which we can actualize our Lasallian numerical power on behalf of social change.

Brother John Johnston, FSC, former Superior General, puts forward the challenge to act: Lasallians must establish “a culture of action on behalf of the rights of the children and youth, a culture that will *shape the way we see, the way we think, the way we judge, the way we decide, the way we act* as individuals, as educational communities, as Districts, as regions, as international Lasallian association.” [italics added]

OPENING PRAYER

As people of faith, as an educational community in the Catholic Lasallian tradition, we call upon the God of mercy to give us the grace to welcome with love all children and to respond to the needs of children, especially those who are impoverished and marginalized, through direct educational service as well as advocacy for social justice and societal transformation for the common good. We offer this prayer in Jesus name. Amen.

READING(S) (one or both)

From the *Book of the Gospel of Matthew*, 18, 1-5, 10, 12-14

“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Jesus called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, “Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever

humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.”

brief pause if using both texts

From the *Bulletin* of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools
No. 249, 2004

The prophetic and liberating power of the gospel is at work in the lives of both teacher and student through their shared struggle to discover the ways of justice. In a world characterized by injustice, service [to those who are] poor invites the discovery of methods of acting that will help free the oppressed and the oppressor from the enslavement of injustice. Search out the causes of poverty with the young or aiding them in an analysis of the systems that institutionalize the poverty many endure is one expression of the zeal characteristic of the Lasallian education. The mutual efforts of teacher with student to challenge the forces that perpetuate injustice join them in the shared mission to establish the Reign of God initiated by Christ, our Savior.

PERIOD OF SILENCE

For reflection (optional if this prayer of unity is prayed over a public address system for a whole school):

How will we as individuals and as community respond to the call of Scripture, the call of the Church, and the call of the Institute to act on behalf of justice, creating a world more fit for children everywhere?

CLOSING PRAYER OF SOLIDARITY

We are the world's children.
We are the victims of exploitation and abuse.
We are street children.
We are the children of war.
We are the victims and orphans of HIV/AIDS.
We are denied good-quality education and health care.
We are victims of political, economic, cultural, religious
and environmental discrimination.

We pray for respect for the rights of the child:
We pray for governments and adults having a real and
effective commitment to the principle of children's rights

and applying the United Nations Convention
on the Rights of the Child to all children.
We pray for safe, secure and healthy environments for
children in families, communities and nations.

St. John Baptist de La Salle,
Pray for us.

All Lasallian Saints and Blesseds,
Pray for us.

An enduring challenge for Lasallians, especially in the USA/Toronto Region, is to actualize our numerical power—over 67,000 students, 9,000 teachers, administrators, and other professional staff in over 100 schools, Pre-Kindergarten to College, and other centers of education, of striking diversity—or put another way, to advocate and commit for the long-haul by affirming children’s rights, safeguarding all aspects of children’s development, and mobilizing human and material resources so that each and every child has opportunities to reach their full potential.