



De La Salle
University
DASMARIÑAS

Every Beginning is a Grace

University President's Pastoral Letter for the Opening of Academic Year 2026–2027

Dear Lasallians,

Every beginning is a grace. As I reflected on the opening of a new academic year, I thanked God for the many ways He has blessed our University. A new school year always fills me with hope. It reminds me that God continues to entrust to us the lives of thousands of young people and, with them, the privilege and responsibility of helping shape their future.

Before we look ahead, however, it is only right that we first look back with gratitude.

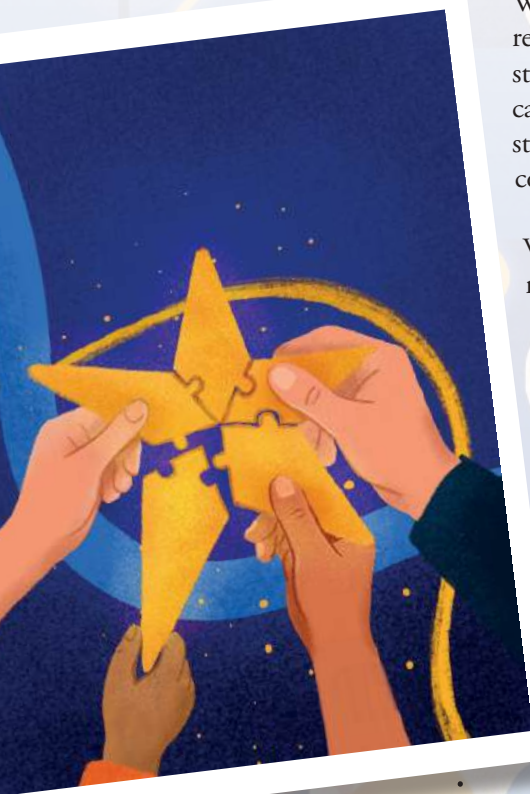
When I think about the past academic year, I do not immediately think of awards, recognitions, or rankings. I think first of our people: our teachers who accompanied students, our staff who kept the University running each day, our administrators who carried responsibilities with dedication, our students who persevered despite personal struggles, and our alumni who continue to make us proud. They remind me that God continues to bless De La Salle University-Dasmariñas.

We also thank God for the many milestones He has allowed us to achieve. Our recognitions from accrediting and ranking bodies, the strengthening of our formation and academic programs, and the accomplishments of our students and employees are all reasons for gratitude. They are signs of God's providence and the fruits of a community that continues to see education not simply as a profession but as a ministry.

Gratitude, however, also invites us to hear what God is asking of us next. For this reason, I invite every member of our University community to read the attached **Lasallian Reflection No. 12, Building a Fraternal World. As I prayed over this document, one word remained with me: fraternity.**

The reflection asks what is most important about the Lasallian Educational Project. The answer is simple: *"the first word that came to mind was FRATERNITY; a very short word, but one with great meaning."*

This is an important reminder as we begin another academic year. We live in a time when people can be connected yet feel alone. We live in a world where success is often measured more by achievements than by relationships. We live in a society where busyness keeps us from noticing one another. Universities are not immune to these realities.



One of the things I enjoy most is walking around our beautiful campus. Between meetings, I see students spending time with friends and colleagues sharing simple meals together. These moments rarely appear in reports or presentations, yet they reveal something important about us. They remind me that education is built one relationship at a time.

The document continues: *"The spirit of fraternity encourages us to see every person we meet and never to be indifferent to someone who is suffering or in need."*

This is one of the great challenges of our time. Some of our students quietly carry anxiety, family concerns, financial difficulties, or uncertainty about the future. The same is true for many who work beside us every day. We often see one another's smiles without seeing the crosses they carry.

Fraternity begins when we choose to notice. It grows when we listen before we speak. It develops when we choose understanding before judgment. Sometimes the greatest gift we can offer another person is simply the reassurance that they do not have to walk alone.

The reflection describes this way of living through one of the most beautiful words in our Christian tradition: Agape. The document says: *"What characterizes Lasallian fraternity and sisterhood is that unconditional and universal love which the Greeks called Agape... characterized by the pursuit of the greatest good for the person, even at the cost of one's own sacrifice."*

Agape asks something practical of us. It asks whether we are willing to inconvenience ourselves for another person. It may mean staying a little longer with a student who needs someone to listen, encouraging a discouraged colleague, or extending patience when it would be easier to become impatient. Love often reveals itself not in extraordinary actions but in ordinary acts repeated faithfully every day.

The reflection also reminds us that *"An important aspect of the pedagogy of fraternity is accompaniment."* How do we accompany our students beyond the classroom? How do we ensure that no one feels invisible? How do we accompany our colleagues during moments of disappointment?

Another question is equally important: Who accompanies us? None of us is meant to carry this mission alone. We all need friends who encourage us, colleagues who challenge us, leaders who listen, communities that pray with us, and companions who remind us why we embraced the vocation of education.





Perhaps the most challenging question in the reflection is this: *“How do we ensure that the Lasallian school becomes a ‘laboratory of fraternity?’*” I hope this question stays with us throughout the year. Our buildings, research, rankings, and plans are important, but they are not the mission itself. Years from now, our graduates may forget our lectures or activities. However, they will remember the people who believed in them, welcomed them, challenged them, forgave them, and helped them become the person God was calling them to be.

The reflection also challenges us to *“address new forms of poverty, so as to discover there the place where God awaits us.”* Some of today’s poverty cannot be measured by income alone. It can be the poverty of loneliness, the anxiety of young people wondering whether they are enough, or the discouragement of someone who feels unseen.

As I reflected on this document, I found myself asking a simple question each morning: Whom is God asking me to notice today? Perhaps that is a more important question than simply asking ourselves what we have to accomplish.

I also realized how closely the reflection speaks to the direction we have chosen as a University. Our commitments to Fidelity to Mission, Synodality in Spirit, and Co-Responsibility in Action call us to live the Gospel together each day. As the reflection reminds us, *“The community is responsible for ensuring environments of fraternity, but we must remember that the community is all of us.”* (p. 21)

Every beginning is a grace. I do not know everything this academic year will bring, but I begin it with confidence because God has been faithful to our University in the past, and He will continue to walk with us in the future.

Live Jesus in our hearts, forever!

Peace,

Br. Inigo Riola FSC

President De La Salle University-Dasmariñas