



## **THE BROTHER PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE AY 2021-2022**

**Dear LASSO Colleagues,**

### **WELCOME to SY 2021-2022!**

Allow me to convey to each one of you my heartfelt greetings and sincere wishes for a meaningful and fruitful new schoolyear.

I also wish to give a warm message of thanks and appreciation to Br. Ophel Fugoso AFSC, who completed ten years of dedicated service to the LASSO Family.

Let us also welcome Br. Felipe Belleza, Jr. FSC as our new Executive Director. Br. Felipe brings with him many years of leadership and management experience that will benefit our LASSO school communities, supervisors, and superintendents.

### **CONTINUING CHALLENGE OF COVID-19 AND ITS VARIANTS**

The previous school year, 2020-2021 was a very difficult year for all of us involved in education. But my heart goes out to our young people who were deprived of education because of the pandemic. UNICEF recently released the observation that “Filipino children continue missing education opportunities” due to another year of school closure.<sup>i</sup> In fact, the Philippines is among the last five countries that did not return to face-to-face classes. What are the consequences of this ban on face-to-face classes? According to UNICEF: “learning loss, mental distress, missed vaccinations, and heightened risk of dropout, child labor, and child marriage.” RAPPLER also reported another alarming trend during this pandemic. “Suicide incidents rose by 25.7% in 2020 compared to the previous year.”<sup>ii</sup>

Now, we face another challenging schoolyear. It will continue to be dominated by remote means of teaching-learning. Our schools will face the persistent challenges raised by COVID 19 and its variants. We cannot close our eyes to the negative effects of remote teaching-learning. While blended learning, or the combination of face-to-face and remote modes of teaching-learning, continues to be considered most appropriate for our present-day learners, the dangers posed by COVID 19 still pressure our government leaders to ban the re-opening of our campuses to our teachers and students.

### **RESILIENCE AND CREATIVITY**

So, I urge you to be resilient and creative in your plans and programs for SY 2021-2022. Make necessary adaptations to your mode of delivering the remote teaching-learning modality to avoid or minimize the negative effects mentioned by UNICEF, especially learning loss, mental distress, missed vaccinations, risk of dropout.

If these gaps in the effective delivery of teaching are related to the availability of digital devices or accessibility to the internet, what can your school, or parents association, or school benefactors do to help?



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To counteract the sense of isolation, helplessness, or loneliness due to prolonged periods of quarantine and lockdowns, I encourage our teachers to integrate more interaction sessions among your students. Use the applications that allow for group discussions or group work. Of course, students appreciate the opportunity to interact personally with their teachers, so please consider this in planning your class programs. Balance synchronous with asynchronous sessions in your subjects and monitor how your students find your new method of teaching. And, please make preparations for the re-opening of your campuses for face-to-face classes.

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

As the pandemic continues to test our physical, emotional, financial, and social resources, I ask our school administrators and leaders to monitor the mental health and wellness of our faculty, students, and staff. In many schools, the guidance and counseling office are taking the initiative for this important aspect of school life, and to offer activities and programs to promote personal and group wellness. But this is a matter of concern for everyone.

## **GUIDANCE AND GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Although we have concluded the celebration of the Mass of the Holy Spirit, let us continue during this school year to pray regularly to the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us with divine grace to face and overcome these challenges. We are also confident that St. John Baptist de La Salle, our Patron Saint, will intercede for the graces we need.

While the challenges are great, our Lasallian spirit of faith assures us that we can overcome them because of the Lord who called us to take care of the young people He has entrusted to our care.

God bless you.

**Live Jesus in our hearts, Forever!**

**BR. RAYMUNDO B. SUPLIDO, FSC**  
Chairman/President

10 September 2021

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/filipino-children-continue-missing-education-opportunities-another-year-school>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.rappler.com/nation/suicide-rises-philippines-pandemic-drags-on-2021>