



Our Lasallian Heritage

Incarnating Christian Paradigms & Dynamics

A school in the Lasallian tradition cannot be separated from a school in the Christian tradition. The kind of educational community that characterizes a Lasallian school emerges solely with reference to the kind of faith community that characterizes the Body of Christ. Both the context and the substance of what occurs in a Lasallian school on a daily basis arises out of dynamics and paradigms that have a Christian character.

De La Salle delved into the work of educating the young in order to make the Gospel a reality in their lives. He came to see that his teachers were to “preach” an alternative way of life, becoming ambassadors for God’s incarnated Word through an incarnation of Jesus’ life within the lives of their students. By example, vigilance, instruction, care, and a well-organized program of Christian formation, the Gospel would have a chance to take root and those who were presently “far from salvation” would find it within reach.

The primary task of these Christian Schools (“Catholic Schools” in 17th century French terminology) was to bring the young to understand and enter into the “principal Christian mysteries” – the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption, and so on. In 17th century French spirituality, the Christian makes explicit



A devotional painting of De La Salle at Mass

acts of faith in such mysteries and incarnates the very being of Jesus by adopting actions and interior attitudes similar to those Christ first brought to reality by His every deed, His every feeling, His every outlook — in terms of their depth and effect, His every “mystery.” By entering into Christ’s dispositions, one enters into Christ’s mystical reality of salvation and thereby comes to act, and to be, more and more

like Him. Insofar as teachers and students lived out these same dispositions, they were formed into true Christians.

The other task of the Christian Schools was to bring the young into the fullness of life that was their inheritance as children of God. The practical maxims of the Gospel, along with the many details of school life that bore witness to a deliberate, Christian perspective, brought the reality of salvation into the classroom. Concern for “salvation” on the practical level went hand-in-hand with “salvation” on the spiritual level. Students grew into their faith in an environment that by its very nature and methods saturated their school lives with God’s life and its engagement.

In contemporary life, where success is a greater prize than faithfulness, a holy life might seem like an anachronism. Yet it is precisely the ends of religious education that best define the experience of those who are content and happy with their lives. A holy life that reaches through the whole of life is what the Gospel describes as “life to the full.” The challenge today is to take to heart James Joyce’s description of the church—“Here comes everybody!”— and De La Salle’s description of the Christian School—“Teach them to lead good lives, by instructing them in the mysteries of our faith and by inspiring them with Christian maxims, and thus give them a suitable education.”

Reflection Questions

- 1) How important is it to you that you are a spiritual person, a Christian, a Catholic?
- 2) What can you do on a regular basis that would make a small initial impact on your life and a large impact on another’s life?
- 3) Where would you look in your school to find Christianity at work?

De La Salle

In His providential care, God ... sends persons with the necessary enlightenment and zeal to help children attain the knowledge of God and His mysteries. According to the grace of Jesus Christ given to them by God, they are like good master-builders who give all possible care and attention to lay the foundation of religion and Christian virtue in the hearts of these children, many of whom would otherwise be abandoned. (*Meditations, 193.2*)

No one knows who God is save the Spirit of God, and it is this Spirit of God who penetrates everything, even the deepest and most hidden mysteries in God. Pray, therefore, the Spirit of God to make known to you the gifts that God has given you, as Saint Paul says, so that you may announce them to those whom you are commissioned to instruct. (*Meditations, 189.1*)

It is surprising that most Christians look upon decorum and politeness as merely human and worldly qualities and do not think of raising their minds to any higher views by considering them as virtues that have reference to God, to their neighbor, and to themselves. . . Children should do these things out of respect for God in whose presence they are. . . to show others those signs of consideration, honor, and respect appropriate to members of Jesus Christ and living temples of God, enlivened by the Holy Spirit. (*Book on Politeness, Preface*)

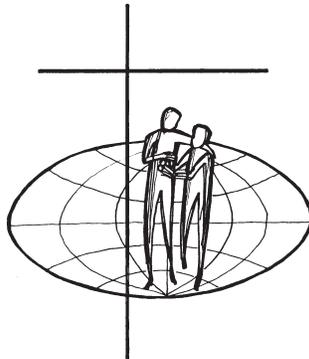


It is apostolic to awaken in students a serious attitude towards life and the conviction of the greatness of man's destiny; it is apostolic to make it possible for them, with intellectual honesty and responsibility, to experience the autonomy of personal thought; it is apostolic to help the students to use their liberty to overcome their own prejudices, preconceived ideas, social pressures, as well as the pressures that come from disintegration within the human person; it is apostolic to dispose students to use their intelligence and their training in the service of their fellowmen, to open them to others: to teach them how to listen and to try to understand, to trust and love; it is apostolic to instill in students a sense of trustworthiness, brotherhood, and justice.

– *Declaration, 41.2*

“By its organizational structure and the climate that it engenders, the Christian school makes catechesis possible. This catechesis should be lively, centered on the person of the student, in touch with life as it is, based on Scripture and the liturgy, attentive to the teaching of the Church, and concerned with an integral presentation of the Christian message.

– *Rule, Art. 15a*



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Consequences for taking Christianity seriously:

To Introduce – *Explicit*: begin the first interview of a new teacher with a prayer. *Implicit*: provide opportunities and resources for discussing and learning about Christianity.

To Foster – *Explicit*: utilize Lasallian prayer forms and foster increased awareness of theology, morality, and so on. *Implicit*: provide guidelines for class prayer along with accountability.

To Enhance – *Explicit*: make school-wide Eucharistic services fully participative on many levels. *Implicit*: provide a prayer and a Christian life resource area in the school.