



Our Lasallian Heritage

Lasallian Education — Is It Worth the Effort?

The million-dollar question toward the end of May for most students (and parents, and teachers, and trustee members, and ...) is: **"Was all of that effort worth it?"**

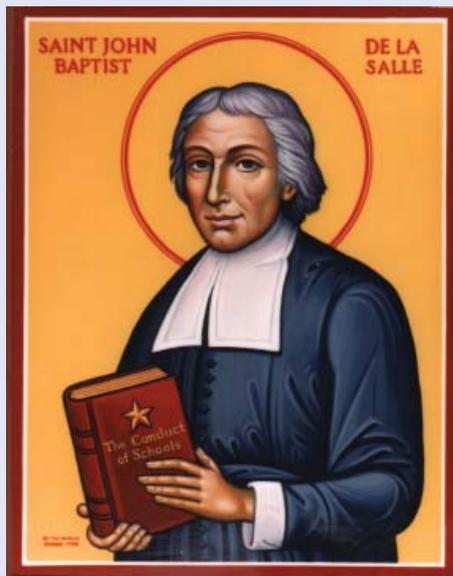
Graduation looms, memories grow in the telling, there's an eagerness to let go and to hang on at the same time. "Big picture" sentiments encountering real feelings of closeness tend to turn normal communication into a string of clichés. As an end is reached and one set of goals is left behind in favor of brighter and bigger ones, the **real mystery of consistent personal encounter** hits us like a ton of bricks.

And this is as it should be. If education is to be anything worthwhile, it should be something that is both **subtle and profound**.

Like family relationships, star-lit summer evening, and ocean tides, a good educational experience takes a long time to develop and a longer time to fully appreciate. Like staring at a leaf or repeating a single word over and over, the more you deal with it head on, the more of a mystery it becomes. You have to take these things piecemeal and in context. But sometimes, at the end of an experience - like a school year - we tend to begin to deal with something subtle and profound head on. Hence the ton of bricks.

Reflection Questions

- 1) What makes education at your educational institution a worthwhile experience?
- 2) In how many ways is a sense of real community fostered there? Are there specific examples?
- 3) Upon closer examination, where could / should more attention be paid to insure a worthwhile education?



A recent icon, or "window into heaven", of Saint John Baptist de La Salle by Monastery Icons (www.monasteryicons.com).

The mere thought of hundreds of teenagers gathered in one place with a relatively small number of adults would send most normally-minded people into a panic. Yet at Lasallian schools throughout the world, something quite different happens. Perhaps for the first time, students and parents and teachers and all sorts of folks begin to feel what it's like to **enter** into a community, to **partake** in a community, to **become** a Gosh-ain't-this-something community. With all of its struggles, pains, and challenges, a subtle and profound thing happens in a school that just doesn't happen anywhere else: **the word "community" takes on flesh**. No, it's not the ideal, and yes there are all sorts

of serious shortcomings. Nevertheless, what we hope for the rest of the world, we begin to experience in the school's microcosm – a serious, common effort towards education through **companionship, compassion, and community**.

St. John Baptist de La Salle in the 17th century would be fully at home in such an environment. His constant concern was that the schools "run well" and that students develop good relationships with one another and with the teachers so that they might **do the same in the world** of which they would become part. The mystery of the human person and the mystery of human relationships were the subtle and profound **true subjects of Lasallian education**, ones that bore unavoidably divine echoes.

For most of those who depart for other worlds at the end of the school year, the final answer to the question of "Was all of that effort worth it?" is yet to be uncovered. For now, clichés will have to do. Eventually, perhaps, it will be expressed by the efforts of an **authentic person**, or a **true relationship**, or even another **real community**.



“The end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children; it is for this purpose the Brothers keep schools, that having children under their care from morning until evening, they may teach them to lead good lives, by instructing them in the mysteries of our holy religion and by inspiring them with Christian maxims, and thus give them a suitable education.”

– *The Rule of 1705*

The purpose of this Institute is to give a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor, according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to it.

John Baptist de La Salle gave a new meaning to the school by making it accessible to the poor and offering it to all as a sign of the Kingdom and as a means of salvation.

The Christian school, which has always to be given new vitality, is the preferred field for the activity of the Brothers. The Institute also explores other possibilities for teaching and education more adapted to the needs of time and place.

– *The Rule of 1987*

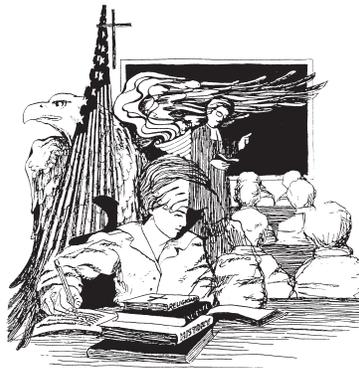
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Consequences for taking Lasallian education seriously:

To Introduce – *Explicit*: provide regular programs for teachers and parents on educational themes. *Implicit*: have a worldwide map of Lasallian institutions in the faculty room.

To Foster – *Explicit*: establish a Lasallian education discussion group that meets several times a year. *Implicit*: give out copies of any and all Lasallian publications to faculty and staff.

To Enhance – *Explicit*: provide faculty and staff scholarships to Lasallian formation programs. *Implicit*: seek out good teachers and administrators in a systematic way.



It is in view of its cultural value that the school is a privileged instrument of education. In addition, “by his very nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live, nor develop his potential” (*Vatican II, GS: 12, 4*). The school is one of the principal experiences of life whereby children and adolescents learn how to participate in human society.

– *Declaration, 44.2*

De La Salle

It is not enough that children be kept in school for most of the day and be kept busy. Those who have dedicated themselves to instruct them must devote themselves especially to bring them up in the Christian spirit, which gives children the wisdom of God that none of the princes of this world have known.
(*Meditations, 194.2*)

It was even entirely proper that Saint Joseph be, after the Most Blessed Virgin, one of the holiest persons to be found in the world at that time, so that he might have some conformity with Jesus Christ, who was entrusted to him and confided to his care. The Gospel also says of him that he was just before God, that is, holy in every way. We even have grounds to believe that Saint Joseph, thanks to a special privilege, was entirely exempt from sin.

You also have been charged, very much like Saint Joseph, with a holy work, a work that is very similar to his and requiring that your piety and your virtue be more than ordinary. Take Saint Joseph as your model, since he is your patron, and strive to make yourself worthy of your ministry and to excel in virtue after the example of this great saint.