# BLESSED TO

# TEACH

BROTHER TERENCE McLAUGHLIN, FSC

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**Brother Terence McLaughlin, FSC**
**2010**

COVER: *Brother Timothy McNary and his tutoring student, Yoni Voorhees, at De La Salle Blessed Sacrament Jubilee School in Memphis, TN, 2001*

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## DEDICATION

This book is being written to honor those teachers who once graced the classrooms of Christian Brother-Lasallian Schools in the Midwest through the years, some celebrated, others perhaps now quietly forgotten. This reading is also intended to honor today's Lasallian teachers who are engaged daily in such a noble and rewarding work.

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## THE AUTHOR

Brother Terence McLaughlin, now in his 70th year as a Christian Brother, has touched all the bases on the educational playing field through his years.

He attended both Catholic and public grammar schools, one of these, in a one-room schoolhouse. As a teacher he has worked the classrooms of high school, junior college, college and university. This tour of duty has led him to single-sex schools, co-ed schools, a co-institutional school and a dual-enrollment Catholic-Public school initiative in Chicago.

He has worn the title of assistant principal, principal, superintendent, director of education, and president. His teaching journey has taken him to four states and London, England.

Through this writing he is sharing some insights and stories that have enriched his life as a teacher. He feels that the retelling of these adventures may help other teachers to explore the riches which are the rewards of their chosen profession.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

*Introduction* ..... 9
*Beneath the Surface* ..... 11
*Reflection* ..... 12

1. The Teacher Creates the Classroom Climate ..... 14
    The Scan Sheet ..... 16
    Classroom Gridlock ..... 19
    Self Evaluation ..... 11
    Kathleen Parker ..... 24
    Brother Patrick Walsh ..... 27

2. The Teacher Creates the School Culture ..... 30
    Rituals and Ceremonies ..... 33
    School Identity ..... 34
    Patti Wiens ..... 40
    Kathy Kelly ..... 43

3. The Teacher Creates the Metaphors ..... 46
    Teacher Language ..... 51
    Image and Action ..... 52
    The Cold Within ..... 53
    Jean Garton ..... 54
    Don Maziarz ..... 56
    Brother Ed ..... 57

4. The Teacher Creates the Ethical Climate. ..... 59
    Moral Touchstones ..... 60
    Moral Education ..... 65
    Saints and Scamps ..... 70
    Brother Terence ..... 73
    Frank Brown ..... 76

5. The Lasallian School—Then and Now ..... 80
Brother John Johnston ..... 80
Brother Luke Salm ..... 81
Brother William Mann ..... 82
Brother Tom Johnson ..... 83
Brother Azarias ..... 84
Edward Fitzpatrick ..... 85
Adolphe Meyer ..... 88
Mortimer Smith ..... 90
Lasallian School ..... 91
Lasallian Diversity ..... 93
From Then to Now ..... 94

End Notes ..... 100

# INTRODUCTION

Every writer believes that there exist readers somewhere in the land who share the writers' vision and who speak a language that has a common meaning. In this case, the intended readers are those teachers who wish to look more deeply into their profession. The place where such teachers are expected to be found is in Catholic schools, principally, for this reading, in Lasallian high schools of the Midwest United States. It is with deliberate intent, however, that the term *Lasallian* does not appear until the final pages.

The themes developed in this writing are presented as an opportunity for teachers to reflect on the more meaningful aspects of their daily work. This may be called "below the surface teaching," or the kind of teaching that has the power to transform lives. Let the little boy's story of the apple *(see page 11)* be our inspiration for our reading.

Five areas of our professional work are developed in this writing. The Reflective piece introduces our reading. It is our anticipatory stance, the pause that permits us to get our thoughts together. The themes of Classroom Climate, School Culture, Teacher Language and Teacher Ethics address some powerful teaching moments for teachers. The stories that are interspersed in the reading are rich in meaning. These teachers have given us a treasured collection of rich teaching moments.

The Lasallian theme has been left to last. This is a practical look at what we, as teachers in a Lasallian school, should be doing. St. La Salle's life story is not reviewed. What is being presented is felt to be what this man's interest, temperament and enthusiasm for learning would be today if he were our mentor.

This book furnishes many possibilities for teachers. It may be a personal reflection, a change agent for the classroom, a stimulus for a faculty meeting discussion, or a topic for a teacher workshop. Whatever, it is

meant to remind us that what we are doing is special. It is a calling. This reading, it is hoped, will enable all of us to answer that call and realize that our work is really a special mission. We are missionaries to the teen-age culture of today.

*—Brother Terence McLaughlin, FSC*

# TEACHING BENEATH THE SURFACE

## WHAT COLOR IS AN APPLE?

A friend's son was in the first grade of school, and his teacher asked the class "What is the color of apples?" Most of the children answered "red." A few said green. Kevin, my friend's son, raised his hand and said white. The teacher tried to explain that apples could be red, green or sometimes golden, but never white. Kevin was quite insistent and finally said, "Look inside." Perception without mindfulness keeps us on the surface of things, and we often miss other levels of reality.

Joseph Goldstein
in *Insight Meditation* (1)

# REFLECTION

## A TRIFECTA FOR "BENEATH-THE-SURFACE" TEACHING

### A Spiritual Dimension
### SOUL

Teachers reveal who they really are when they appear before their class. As Parker Palmer said it so well: "Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life." (2)

It appears that somewhere along the line, a neutral stance for teachers has become acceptable in many schools. Teachers, in these instances, stand apart from their material and assume a deadpan neutrality stance relative to the material they present. This was not intended from the beginning in American education. The Northwest Ordinance, which preceded the Bill of Rights, the work of Thomas Jefferson and others, stated that "**religion, morality and knowledge"** being necessary for good government and for the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education forever be encouraged." (3)

### Knowledge and Wisdom
### MIND

The teacher needs to have a thorough understanding of the material to be presented and then gear it to the learning ability of the student. Fresh notes, clear power point displays, lively presentations, critical thinking, all need to be served in an organized manner.

Today's students are very much into the care of the environment, the greening of America and the protection of our natural resources

generally. What a wonderful opportunity to speak to students about the greatest natural resource that each of us possesses – our minds! Our minds can be used for greatness; our minds can be abused and dulled by alcohol and drugs. Yes, let's protect our natural resources.

## Flexibility and Understanding
## HEART

Teachers need to know when to hold and when to fold and to avoid some of the traps that may be of their own making by their rigid pronouncements. Teachers have to realize that different perspectives exist because student backgrounds today are so diverse. Teachers must be adaptable, able to listen, and gentle when conflicts occur.

Susan Ohanian, education writer, has some interesting advice for us: "I want to find out if the teachers are tough and loving and clever and flexible. I want to be sure that they are more nurturing than halibut. What do they do when a kid vomits all over those neat lesson plans? Or an indignant parent rushes in denouncing the homework assignment? Or the movie projector burns out, and the replacements have to come from Taiwan?" (4)

# CHAPTER ONE

## The Teacher Creates the Classroom Climate

Loren Eisley, the source of the quotes which follow, often wondered how his background shaped his future, and through his classroom teaching, how he might be shaping the future of others. He grew up as a very lonely child in a small Nebraska town. Neighbors shunned his family. His mother was stone deaf and could not communicate with him. His father did his best to escape the family environment. Since these early days he has often reflected on the people and forces which freed him to become a leading anthropologist and educator. He uses the metaphor of the teacher as sculptor.

"My own background.... The peculiarities of my own individual history may provide access to resources that free me to open rich and varied paths for myself and for others – or to close me off from great opportunities to help myself and others.

"And as a result.... In my teaching I can be a giver of life as well as a withholder of life for my students. The whole process of contemporary education is shot through with possibilities of action that can free the process of growth in my students, or can cripple and stunt them.

## Personal Reflections

"I am a teacher. I am the sculptor of the intangible future.

"There is no more dangerous occupation on the planet, for what we conceive as our masterpiece may appear out of time to mock us, a horrible caricature of myself.

"I, a teacher, may reflect about the subjects in which I have remained dwarfed all of my adult life because of the ill-considered blow of someone nursing pent-up aggressions, or words more violent in their

effect than blows.

"There are other subjects for which I have more ordinary affection because these are associated in my mind with kindly and understanding men and women – sculptors who left even upon such impliant clay as mine the delicate chiseling of refined genius, who gave unwittingly, in other words, something of their final character to most unpromising material.

"And I as sculptor, my stroke may go right; my stroke may go wrong. Each day by word or deed the chisel may fall true or blind upon the future of some boy or girl.

"We teachers, too, like the generation before us, are the cracked, the battered, the malformed products of remoter chisels shaping the most obstinate substance in the universe, the substance of the human.

"Someone has to do it, but perhaps, it might be done more kindly, more precisely, to the extent that we are consciously aware of what we do – even if that thought sometimes congeals our hearts with fear.

"If we were conscious of our task, would not our hands shake and grow immobilized upon the chisel? I do not know. I know only that in these late fainthearted years, I sometimes pause with my hand upon the knob before I go forth into the classroom."

(The source for these excerpts is Loren Eiseley's *The Mind As Nature.* (5)

**********

## And what do others say about the teacher?

**Mahatma Gandhi** "As I came into closer contact with children I saw that it was not through books that we could impart training of the spirit. Just as physical training was to be imparted through physical exercise,

and intellectual through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit was possible only through the exercise of the spirit. All the exercise of the spirit rests on the life and character of the teacher. I have always felt that the true book for the pupil is the teacher." (6) (Hindu Ascetic and National Leader of India)

**Douglas Steere** "When I think of the great teachers that I have personally known, they have all, in their teaching, seemed to be confiding things that you had already dimly sensed yourself. But they did it in such a way as to give you glimpses of so much more and of such new levels of meaning that even if they mystified you with their further dimensions of insight, they lured you on." (7) ( American Quaker, Teacher and Author)

**Sydney Harris** "Discussing a common school problem, a parent recently asked: 'How is it that some teachers are able to control classes with a light rein…while others get nowhere with the troublemakers?' I do not think the answer has much to do with teaching techniques or even experience, beyond a certain degree. I think it has almost everything to do with the authenticity of the teacher. A person is either himself/herself or is not; is either rooted in his/her existence or is a fabrication; has either found humanhood or is still playing with masks and roles and status symbols. And nobody is more aware of this difference than a child. Only an authentic person can evoke a good response in the core of the other person; only person is resonant to person." (8) (Teacher, Syndicated Journalist)

**William Ward** "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." (9) (Scholar and Writer)

## Anxiety Scan Sheet

Students, especially students new to the school, bring lots of anxiety baggage with them. School orientation programs help to break down some of these fears. However, the first- day class period may consist

of rules, regulations, and the teacher telling the trembling newcomers how important the subject matter is to their future.

The teacher preparation for this first lesson becomes a creative opportunity, a chance to relive one's own school days. The teacher thinks up all the fears that a student may have about the lesson, lists them for the student to look over and rate, and also asks the student to list some that the teacher may have missed.

### Classroom Anxiety Scan Sheet – Algebra I

**Instructions**: List in number order five of the A to J topics. #1 will be your most serious concern or worry about this class, and then down in order to #5. A space is left at the bottom of the page for a concern of yours that may not be mentioned on the paper. You do not need to sign your name. The papers will be collected in a short time. We will look for all the top items and clear up the most important concerns that you have before we even think of Algebra.

___ (a) This high school: It seems so big. I feel lost.

___ (b) Algebra: What is it? It scares me.

___ (c ) I did not do well in arithmetic. Is this the same?

___ (d) How is the teacher going to grade? Many tests?

___ (e) Will there be lots of homework?

___ (f) Can I use a calculator in class?

___ (g) How come we have to take this course?

___ (h) Can I get extra help? Any tutors?

___ (i) Is it true that our grades are sent home by computer?

___ (j) What if I fail?

Other _____

_____

It is interesting to note that each year teachers will be able tweak the listing of fears to suit what they have found from the previous class. The students will give us some good information so that better class morale and learning can take place immediately.

**********

I have found through the years that teachers, too, bring their anxieties and fears into the classroom. What follows is a scan sheet that may be used for new teachers. This is an actual scan sheet that was used in a Teacher Inservice Program with great results.

## Teacher Inservice Program

**Instructions**: List in numerical order five of the A to J topics. #l being your present greatest anxiety, down to your least, #5.

___ (a) Students: Their attitude; Will I be accepted by them?

___ (b) Faculty: My fitting in; Adjusting to; Getting to know them;

___ (c) My own subject area; Teacher load; Lesson preparation;

___ (d) School procedures; What to do? How to find out?

___ (e) Administration: Demands of; Knowing what to do;

___ (f) Classroom management/discipline: How strict to be?

___ (g) School policies; School philosophy; How enforced?

___ (h) The parents: Teacher/parent relationship; Conflicts;

___ (i) Just newness; Adjusting generally, Starting in a new school;

Other _____

_____

## Classroom Gridlock

Students fear teachers and this is a given. What is seldom admitted is that many teachers also fear the students. We can have classrooms where fear is the dominant feeling and maybe not realized. Fear is going both ways in some classrooms.

A story that relates to this reality I chanced upon in a casual conversation. A teacher was discussing his own high school days and mentioned how afraid he was of one of his teachers. Later, he, too, became a teacher and began his teaching career in the same school where his former teacher was now on the faculty. When walking the corridor he was not surprised to see this teacher's classroom more anchored in silence than in participation. What did surprise him, however, was that he was told that the teacher in question never ate breakfast before going into his morning class because he was too nervous. Here in this classroom, student fear and teacher fear clashed in what looked like a standoff learning situation. The teacher allowed but limited discussion in class and relied on writing assignments to fill the time period. Both students and teachers appeared satisfied with this approach because there was no face to face interaction involved. Scoreboard for the day: Fear 9; Purposeful learning 1.

A final note on fear in the classroom will be Parker Palmer's insightful

thoughts on teachers entering the classroom. "Day after day, year after year, we walk into classrooms and look into younger faces that *seem* to signal, in ways crude and subtle, 'You're history. Whatever you value, we don't – and since you couldn't possibly understand the things we value, we won't even bother to tell you what they are. We are here only because we are forced to be here. So whatever you have to do, get it over with, and let us go on with our lives.' This is the way we sometimes *interpret* the signals that our students are sending us, which in truth are signals of fear, not disdain. Until I learn to decode that message, I will be quick to cast too many of my students in the role of Student from Hell." (10) Teachers will never learn to decode student messages until they understand their own fear of the judgment of the young. The Student Scan Sheet to the rescue!

## Student Anxieties and Fears

> "There is his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,
> The village master taught his little school;
> A man severe he was, and stern to view;
> I knew him well, and every truant knew;
> Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace
> The day's disasters in his morning face."

A selection from *The Deserted Village* by Oliver Goldsmith

Teachers who take their vocation as teachers seriously desire to know if they are really good, effective educators. But how will they ever know? Will they have to rely on student evaluations, an occasional visit by a supervising teacher, or a quick encounter with the principal to find the answer? How about a self-evaluation to begin the process?

One way to look into our own personal performance might be done this way. We can reflect on our approach to our students through LOGOS (our words, by reason); PATHOS (our understanding, our feeling); and ETHOS (the person I am). The statements that follow

will help us to sort out our appropriate teaching styles within each category. This is the teacher's own report card.

## LOGOS: My words; Communication skills; Lesson plans

| | YES | SO-SO | NO |
|---|---|---|---|
| *I deal with specific content, and approved curriculum* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My lessons, as a rule, are well-prepared and organized* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My communication, oral and visual, is clear and concise* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My voice is modulated—not too loud, not too soft* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *I read widely and share selectively with my students* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Students, too, are encouraged to speak and to share experiences* | ___ | ___ | ___ |

## PATHOS: My enthusiasm; Understanding; Feeling

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *I understand and accept the struggling student* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My classes are generally free from tension* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My corrections are not sarcastic or demeaning* | ___ | ___ | ___ |

| | YES | SO-SO | NO |
|---|---|---|---|
| *I am enthusiastic about my classes and my teaching* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *I affirm students; give them hope; guide them* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *I have a feeling for parents and their concerns* | ___ | ___ | ___ |

**ETHOS:** My values; The person who I am

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *I attempt to implement the philosophy of this school* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My convictions are known; no deadpan stance on issues* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *I am able to share my faith experience with others* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *I participate in associated professional organizations* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Students feel that I am fair and that I can be trusted* | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *My colleagues regard me as a positive faculty member* | ___ | ___ | ___ |

After reviewing these three areas, I feel that my report card (rating the strongest area #1; the second #2; and the weakest #3) would look like this:

LOGOS _____ PATHOS ____ ETHOS _____

## Quality Performance –Student Growth

This personal scorecard will give us insights into our teaching style and can become the beginning of more serious self-study. We know where we are weak and where our comfort level is, but is this best for the student? We need to address purposely our weaker points and continue to develop our strengths. This chart does not let us glimpse our body language in the classroom, the distracting tics that we may have and which the students notice each day. A video of our lesson will also be most helpful in this self- study.

Becoming a really effective teacher will always be the goal of the serious teacher. But what constitutes being a good teacher? Is it the activist in the next classroom whose clothes are smeared each day with chalk dust after diagramming compound-complex sentences on the blackboard? Is it the teacher who has all the latest electronic equipment which brings new ideas to light? Is it the steady, quiet but determined teacher, who is known for great classroom organization and student response?

Whatever, we must remember that only time will tell. The results of a well-taught lesson may not be recognized by the students for years to come. And to put a dose of realism into our daily work, let us look at what is said to have happened to the world's greatest multi-method teacher. Christ used parables, dialogue, story telling, questioning, even scratching a visual aid in the dust, and something no one else can do, slip in a miracle every once in awhile. Would it surprise you to hear that one analysis of 186 of Christ's teaching encounters has the Gospel listing 32 cases of positive audience reaction; 19 negative reactions; and 135 cases where no response is mentioned? (11) Obviously, good teaching takes root and grows in the listener, and instant acceptance may be a rare happening –less than 20% of the time in this report.

We need to have a passion for what we are doing. Let's call it enthusiasm for the moment. Enthusiasm comes from the Greek, *enthous*, and means "having a god within or god possessing." The word "theology" comes from this source. We cannot be like news reporters who expected to

remain neutral about what they are telling the listener.

We teachers are missionaries as we enter the culture of the teenager in the classroom today. We do not really speak their language. Their minds are being formed with electronic media and that is something new in the teaching mix. Students live in a culture that is different from that which we teachers experienced in our lives. That is the reason why it is necessary to understand where the learners are (scan sheets) before we can take them someplace else through our teaching.

Before we move from our review of the climate of the classroom to the culture of the total school, two teacher stories appear. This break-in-the-action will occur at the end of each chapter. This is a good time to sit back, relax, and enjoy some powerful stories which , I feel, demonstrate the power of the everyday teacher in the classroom.

## KATHLEEN PARKER: *A Writer Remembered*

**Kathleen Parker's article appeared in the morning paper as I was making the final selection for stories to be included in this book. I felt that its arrival on the very day that I was finishing this phase of the writing was a little more that coincidence. Here is her story as it appeared in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal.* Kathleen is a syndicated columnist and a member of the Washington Post Writers Group.**

One of President Barack Obama's consistent educational themes has been the wish that every child cross paths with that one teacher who hits the light switch and changes one's life.

Each time he expresses some iteration of that thought, I suspect thousands or millions think briefly of the person who held that distinction in their life. The light master. Or, in my case, the one who extended an imaginary sprig of verbena and holding it to his nose,

inhaled deeply in a gesture of solidarity with William Faulkner.

The scene just described took place in my 11th grade English class, oh, a few years ago. The teacher was mine for only three months, but he changed my life in a flicker of light. I thought of him Monday when – if you'll grant me this small indulgence – I was awarded the Pulitizer Prize for commentary.

On such occasions, one is expected to recognize those who have helped along the way. But also on such occasions, one is likely to be a bit distracted and unable to remember one's own name, much less those that deserve mention. I would like to correct the record with one who stands out and who, as it happens, is celebrating his 59th year of teaching.

I materialized in James Gasque's class in March of the school year for reasons that will have to wait another day. Suffice to say, I knew no one and had come from a small high school in central Florida where, for some reason, no one had bothered to teach the diagramming of sentences.

Thus, my fellow students at Dreher High School were way ahead of me when Mr. Gasque finally called on me to identify some part of a sentence he had written on the blackboard. His back to the class with chalk in hand, he stood poised to write my instructions.

Every living soul knows the feeling of hopelessness when a crowd of peers awaits the answer you do not know. Whatever I said was utterly ridiculous, I suppose, because all my classmates erupted in peals of laughter.

I have not forgotten that moment, or the next, during all these years. As I was trying to figure out how to hurl myself into a fetal curl under my desk, Mr. Gasque tossed me a sugar-coated, tangerine-colored lifesaver from the Good Ship Lollipop.

He whirled. No perfectly executed pirouette can top the spin executed by Mr. Gasque that day. Suddenly facing the class, he flushed crimson and his voice trembled with rage.

"Don't. You. Ever. Laugh. At her again." He said: "She can outwrite every one of you any day of the week."

It is not possible to describe my gratitude. Time suspended and I dangled languorously from a fluff of cloud while my colleagues drowned in stunned silence. I dangle even now, like those silly participles I eventually got to know. Likely no one but me remembers Mr. Gasque's act of paternal chivalry, but I basked in those words in the thought that what he said might be true. I started that day to try to write as well as he said I could. I am still trying.

Mr. Gasque's even greater gifts belong to all who ever sat in his class. The sprig of verbena, a recurring theme in "The Unvanquished," stays in my mind because it also symbolizes the great passion Mr. Gasque brought to teaching and to the literature he loved.

During the 12 weeks or so in his class, we devoured "The Unvanquished" and John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men." I remember every word and sensation.

"I've always wanted to lean down from my back stoop and pluck a sprig of verbena," he said, inhaling deeply. Exhaling and tilting his head back, he closed his eyes and seemed to drift off into some lemony scented world where verbena is the smell of courage. I closed my eyes and followed him.

A couple of decades later, having moved to South Carolina, I went looking for Mr. Gasque, toting a pot of verbena. He didn't remember me, but upon hearing my tale, asked that I speak to his class. Afterward, he presented me with two lined pieces of notebook paper – my essay on

"The Unvanquished."

Obama is right about the power of teachers. Thank you, Mr. Gasque. (12)

## Brother Patrick Walsh: *A Teacher Remembered*

**I first met Brother Patrick in my sophomore year English class. My previous experience with prose and poetry was not a heart-warming experience, to say the least. In 8th grade we were served the long poem, *Snowbound*, by John Greeleaf Whittier. The mood was perfect for this unusually cold 1935-36 winter in Minnesota but 700+lines about country life in midwinter was just too much for city kids.**

Frosh year in high school gave us *Lady of the Lake,* by Sir Walter Scott. This poem could come to life for the student if the history background is developed along with the reading. Maybe I missed this part. During the next year, the emphasis seemed to be on reading, not an easy sell either, but it was the teacher who became the study for me.

Brother Pat was soft-spoken, a man who stressed good grammar and a teacher, we realized, who did a lot of reading and one who definitely loved books. He took us to the school library and passed a book out to each student as an early project for the year. I received *Oliver Twist,* but I guess I was too distracted to appreciate Dickens at that time for I did not do it justice. Since Brother did not speak much in class, and when he did so, you really needed to pay attention to grasp what he was saying. He was sort of a mystery/mastery type teacher. That was until we saw him play handball, a great intramural sport at the time. He was really a good player, driven and determined. We then realized that we must pay attention to this quiet man in class.

I next saw Brother Pat in action six years later when I was about to

enter the active life of a teacher. I was observing him in a religion class, as part of our practice-teaching program. As he introduced a new chapter to the class, he asked for thoughts on the symbol which introduced the chapter. The students reflected, gave responses here and there, and these were followed up with Brother asking the students to reach deeper. No hasty surface answers were accepted as final.

This following story was told to me by another teacher some twenty years after I had observed Pat teaching his religion class. The story, apparently, became a faculty room repeat, one that was used to describe excellence in teaching. Brother Patrick's class had been studying Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.*

Pat's lesson for this study took the class out of Room 301 and over to Calvary Cemetery, a short distance from the school. Each student, book in hand, strolled among the graves, silently reading the passages that moved them as they quickly fell into the mood of the writing. A few selected passages which the students reflected upon follow.

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
> The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
> Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
> Where heaves the turf in many a moldering heap;
> Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
> The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.
>
> Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
> Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
> Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
> Or waked in ecstasy the living lyre
>
> The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
> And all that beauty, all the wealth e'er gave;

Awaits alike the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

This brilliant poem in the hands of this great teacher defines a great teaching moment. Under Brother's careful guidance each nuance was explored; opportunities to talk about their deceased relatives; reflections on who we are and what is our future; discussions on what is of true value in their own lives today; and how they may or may not be remembered – at home or in some battlefield (these were war years).

Knowing Brother Patrick, I feel that he would have enlivened his class with some cheerful poetry and readings to balance this sad and reflective poem. He retired from the classroom much too early for the good teacher that he was. He allowed himself to become somewhat defeated and discouraged by the stressful school days of the 60s and 70s when many students seemed to care little for his classical approach, at least to the depth that he expected of them. He left the students, but the students who knew him in his prime will always know that they met a real teacher. (The author)

**********

The two lines of Gray's poem which can be used by teachers who wish to survey their total school approach to students might be: "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, And waste its sweetness on the desert air." Just as many beautiful flowers go unnoticed, so can many students in our schools. How many unnoticed students do we graduate each year? A reflection on these lines might let us know if our school is glorifying the already over-glorified students, while so many others attend school but are really not part of it. What if the faculty took just one week to seek out the unnoticed in the school?

# CHAPTER TWO

## The Teacher Creates the School Culture

Listen! The school is speaking to you, its first-time visitor. That feeling that you are receiving as you step into this new environment is most important, for it is the unspoken ambience that you are experiencing. It gives you a feeling of warmth, of coolness, or maybe it just gives you a blah feeling. The building, through its corridors and commons, speaks to you about school pride and responsibility. The personnel whom you meet are role-modeling pleasantness, purpose, or maybe passing almost invisible-like. The appearance of the students and professionals displays neatness, casualness or maybe even a touch of frowziness. That which you are experiencing in this visit is usually what perceptive students and their parents may also observe.

For you, who really want to make a difference in the life of your school, this is your cue card. It tells you that this is time for you to enter center stage. The opportunity is here for you to compliment the school community for its positives, but also to question the negatives. You, as newcomer, can be a powerful force in any organization, for you notice things to which others have grown accustomed and have over time accepted as part of school life. People new to an organization are the first to ask the *why* question. This is usually a good question, and something that old-timers have accepted and seldom questioned through the years, feeling perhaps, that this is the normal way to do things.

This prevailing tone that you have noticed has become what is known as the "school culture." It also becomes the school's image that the public perceives and which gives the school its positive or negative image; its reputation. The school handbooks may not be reliable indicators to describe the reality. It is the lived experience as shown in the everyday interactions and surroundings within the school setting that are true indicators of the school culture.

A school needs to state its values in a very clear fashion and then introduce programs and procedures to showcase them in performance. The school needs to state who its heroes and heroines are and to honor them in public. A school must be a strong culture. A school with muted tones and unclear messages forms a weak culture. When the school culture is weak, sub-cultures tend to arise and exert influence beyond acceptable standards. The result can be that students become confused as to what is truly appropriate school behavior. Teachers can readily slide into apathy and indifference.

Schools are places of learning and this characteristic must be evident in all areas of school life. The type of students who become the school leaders will tell which values the school holds in honor. The school administration, faculty, and staff, must ask themselves about the tone that they really want the school to display. Good ideas, practical ones, must be followed up with action commitments. The good things about the school must be identified and then strongly supported. Serious teachers can become change agents.

## School Culture Explored

Terrence Deal and Allen Kennedy in their writing on corporate culture highlight History/Mission, Values, Heroes, Rituals/Ceremonies as sources to describe the culture of an organization. (13) We will transpose these characteristics into the school setting.

### Recreating History – Describing the Mission of Your School

What are the values that every person in this school agrees to share? What are the essential features that this school wants the public to notice? What is special about this school? What values are the school freely sharing with those whom it wishes to serve? Each school has a story to tell about its roots and its realities. The early mission is brought into clearer focus through these stories. What is the present Mission Statement for the school? Is it written and then filed away or is it a part of the present publications? Who were the school leaders through the years? Why is this school so named? Was it a person

(Washington High); a place (Duluth East High); or a select group of people (Chippewa High)? What vision is surfacing for the school today? Where is this school in its life cycle? Is the school threatened by some out-of-school happenings which might determine its future, for example, neighborhood patterns or an economic downturn?

Deal asks us "to do some reflective brooding as we create a yeasty ferment for revitalizing the school culture." This exploration is the fun part, so enjoy the search. The difficult part will come later when you may wish to introduce some changes into what you may find to be the prevailing mode, the way of thinking. Remember, teachers are entering a sensitive area when they desire to question long-held practices. A rule of prudence here might be to follow the adage: "Select battles big enough to count, but small enough to win."

## The Shared Values of Your School

Look at your latest school publication, one that shows the public what this school believes itself to be. Then look at the school yearbook. Does it appear that the school values showcased in the latest publication are also honored in a significant manner in the pages of the yearbook? Which values are receiving the greatest emphasis in the yearbook? The yearbook recaps what is happening in the life of the school and is a good indicator as to whether or not the school is staying focused on its mission.

All schools state that they promote values, and this is so. But some schools stress certain values more than other values because this may be their mission or they are addressing a special need of the moment. Other schools, because of their religious background, are committed to Gospel values. Still others founded by a particular religious group or Order move a particular value to a position of preference, again in line with their mission.

This is the reason why a school's mission statement is so important. A public school in today's educational climate does not enter the

religious field; a private school may stress particular values because of the community that it serves. A religious school supports its doctrinal beliefs. Religious schools differ, not only across religious denominations, but Catholic schools or Baptist schools, for example, may differ from other schools in their same faith community, by putting stress and/or emphasis on different aspects of their own church teachings.

### Celebrating Heroes and Heroines in Your School

Usually a quick glance around the school corridors will give a clue as to who is held in honor in a school. Who is so-honored with pictures and plaques along the corridors? Is scholarship honored in a special way? How is student leadership expressed? Is creative teaching honored? Who and what should really good schools admire and how are these displayed to the students and to the public? If some areas of the school have been named to honor some particular person, do the students know who these people are or why they are given this distinction?

### Reinvigorating Rituals and Ceremonies in Your School

Rituals have the power to capture the soul, spirit, and mission of the school. This emphasis helps greatly to showcase the cohesive culture of a school. There can be religious, social, academic, cultural, civic and other activity rituals that each in its own way describes the tone of the school. All of these rituals have the power to bond the students and teachers into a mutually satisfying experience.

There will be serious ceremonies and fun activities. Both help to promote morale and a positive school climate. We must realize that educating youth is a thermostatic activity. The school activities should be monitored so that if overemphasis occurs in one area of school life and diminishes another area, changes may be made This becomes an opportunity to check to see if the school might be giving first-class allegiance to something that really should be of secondary importance.

All schools really struggle to set their values correctly, but they are often slow to explore new approaches to review them. Here is the

place where a serious teacher has a role to play. This teacher strongly supports that part of the culture that is good and meaningful, and seizes opportunities to change what appears to be of little value. A caution is advised here. When changes need to be made, a teacher is entering sensitive territory. The following pages will surface many ideas for this kind of teacher, but if teachers wish to be effective with their ideas, it is not wise to become zealots or crusaders. First, the entire faculty needs to buy into the idea before substantial change can become a reality.

## My School Identity

Sometimes in our efforts to put a face on our school for the public, we may fail to observe what we are on the inside. Let's take a look now at the body language of our school to see how we are really behaving. Our grid for this review will be Terrence Deal and Lee Bolman's work on the culture of an organization. (14) They identify four descriptors for the study of organizations. These can be very helpful as we take a look at our own school. Their wording, with a few slight changes, is: Structure, Personal, Symbolic and Political Models. As you begin this personal evaluation, the information in the following paragraph is very important.

**Good schools over time develop a rather consistent pattern of behavior. Schools are rather complex organizations. Their daily activities will include bits and pieces of all the models presented here. No one model will describe your school completely. Nevertheless, a dominant culture will prevail with parts of other models in lesser roles. With this understanding in mind, and with the following descriptors, you are now ready to take a deeper look at the workings of your school community.**

## Stating the School's Values

**Structure Model** Mission Statement prominent; teacher and student handbooks cited; organizational chart in evidence; regular system of behavior in place; dress code.

**Human Relations** "We are family" approach; meetings, discussions, consensus sets school direction; emphasis on the person rather than assignment.

**Symbolic Model** Symbols have power; displayed through rites, rituals, ceremonies, special events; values fortified by symbolic behavior.

**Political Model** Form alliances to promote values; competition; power dominates.

### Faculty Meeting Scheduling and Activity

**Structure Model** Scheduled on regular basis; formal setting; agenda; top down approach to information.

**Human Relations** Scheduled as needed; relaxed atmosphere; process is as important as results; facilitator, instead of school administrator to lead discussions.

**Symbolic Model** Symbols describe purpose of meeting; setting, timing and place are selected for desired effect.

**Political Model** Scheduled when action needed; sub-group sets agenda; hidden agenda feared; constituencies formed.

### Hiring Policies

**Structure Model** Hire person for specific assignment; new person to fit task; good interview process; qualifications very important.

**Human Relations** Tweak job a little to fit the person; compromises made to attract person; exceptions to standard procedures.

**Symbolic Model** Attractive décor: showcased values and events speak to person; visit special places in school; rookie visiting Yankee Stadium approach.

**Political Model** Friends suggested for positions; negotiating and bargaining; promotion from within: Old Boys' club may become active.

### School Activities

**Structure Model** Planned; organized; support school's mission; selected activities are part of the regular school program; volunteers carefully screened.

**Human Relations** Some activities planned, others depend on continuing presence of a moderator and therefore may come and go, not structured into school offerings.

**Symbolic Model** Embellished and promoted; powerful in calling attention to wider concerns – social justice, poverty, peace ideals.

**Political Model** Depends on who has the influence; some activities promoted, others touched lightly; depends on who controls facilities; space; keys.

### Day-to-Day School Look

**Structure Model** Routine; events happen like clockwork; things happen according to plan; class visitations; school has that library feeling; quietness. orderliness.

**Human Relations** Things just seem to happen; feeling of togetherness; pleasant environment; casual feeling; coffee cups in classrooms; friendly noise.

**Symbolic Model** Signs and symbols spread the word; art work on display; a pink or yellow ribbon message; Vietnam Wall type area possible – alumni honored.

**Political Model** Orderly; friendly and competitive alliances emerge; source of school's direction not easily identifiable to outsider.

## A Closer Look

Teachers always experience a feeling about their workplace, but maybe it has not been described in this manner. Bits and pieces of the above descriptors appear in all schools, but to the degree in your school is for you to decide. In some cases, you may feel that your school could become the poster child for some particular feature. Perhaps the best way to tell your story is to rate the four models as they appear in your school life. If you like what you find, great! If not, you now know what culture is too strong and what needs to be bolstered in your school environment.

The entire faculty and staff will need to experience some kind of process which will demonstrate for them the relationship of the school to the models. All kinds of new ideas may spring into play. The summary of all the faculty members' votes on the model arrangement in their school will lead to action. Which model is the faculty/staff selecting to describe the school? If they like it, fine. If not, they need to describe the school that they wish to become. This gives us a new model configuration.

Now it is time to study the models and to determine which qualities the faculty wishes to have in their school to a greater degree and which qualities they do not want to play such an active role. And in the process of making a change, the faculty will actually be using one of the models to get it done, for example, new political alliances to change a negative political model. To get a warmer climate in the school, a human relations approach will be needed to modify the existing behavior.

When changes are to be made, it is best that the procedures move in a steady manner, definitely not in haste. You are changing the climate of your school. We all know how sudden climate changes affect our lives. We are disturbed. This feeling will be avoided when the decision is being made by a large segment of the faculty/staff and therefore certain changes will be expected by everyone. Remember, both teaching and administering in schools are thermostatic activities. Change should be expected to be part of the program.

## Storytelling

Faculty lunch rooms are great places for teachers to share their stories. Most of these, humorous or otherwise, will center around people or events wherein one of the cultural models had a part to play. It may be an overemphasis on some aspect or an omission. Story tellers are important for they interpret what is happening in the school These stories will be told and retold over the years and will become part of the school history. Some will be moral lessons, others just good humor. Storytellers interpret what occurs in a school situation, many times with accuracy, sometimes for effect. Stories are wonderful vehicles for bringing life to the school.

## Structure – What Purpose?

A shop teacher bruised his hand when adjusting a piece of machinery. The principal advised him to go to the new clinic down the street. Later in the day the principal asked him if he got help at the clinic. The teacher told him how after entering the building he found himself in a large room with two doors, one marked "regular" and the other, "emergency." He took the regular door and found himself in another large room with two doors, one marked "illness," the other, "injury." He entered the injury door and found himself in a large room with two doors again, this time one was marked "fracture" and the other, "bruise." He chose the bruise door and again found himself in a large room with two doors, one marked "interior" and the other, "exterior" Since his injury was not internal, he took the door marked exterior and found himself outside in the alleyway. "You know," the teacher said, "they didn't help me a bit, but were they ever organized!"

## Political Implications – Winners and Losers

Bill and Joe are both strong teachers at Boundary Waters High in the Minnesota Northwoods area and are known in the school community for getting pretty much what they want. They were spending a school holiday relaxing on the shore after a rough canoe trip across the bay. All of a sudden they hear a rustle in the bushes and then see a bear running toward them. Both start to run, but Joe hesitates, and returns a few feet

to get his gym shoes. Bill yells, "Joe, hurry, those shoes won't help you outrun the bear." Joe's spontaneous reply: "Bill, I don't have to outrun the bear. I just have to outrun you."

### Tweaking the Structure – Human Relations of Sorts

The scene was a cooperative educational venture where a private school had some of its students taking courses in the nearby public school, courses the private school did not provide. This arrangement brought out a clear picture of the human relations and the structural models, as a by-product, not part of the intended program. Students easily exchanged classes in the mornings because both schools were on the same time schedule. The exchange practically came to a halt in the afternoon because the private school switched to 45-minute classes instead of the usual morning hour class time. The reason given by a teacher at the small private school was that most of their teachers were older and found the hour class period too tiring in the afternoon.

### More about Symbols

We must never underestimate the power of symbols for they speak of values and give direction. But from time to time symbols should be reviewed. In recent years we have seen universities like the U. of Illinois's Chief Illiniwek and the Ole Miss Colonel Reb called in for review. They are now judged out of sync with the culture. Marquette is no longer the Warriors and St. Mary's of Minnesota no longer the Redmen. Symbols, once unquestioned, now come in for greater scrutiny. Sometimes the school is ahead of public opinion and makes a change. At other times, public opinion forces the change.

## PATTI WIENS: *A Classroom Scene Remembered*

**I now share with the reader one of my most interesting class experiences. It is the story of Patti Wiens, a graduate education student. The happening that triggered Patti to take center stage occurred just after the class had listened to a tape of a presentation given by Anthony Compolo. The statement that caught Patti's attention and sparked her spontaneous outburst was this line paraphrased. "Children are more the product of what they commit themselves to be in the future, than the result of those things which may have happened to them in the past." Patti, a prim, polite, impeccably dressed woman, a lady whose classmates must have regarded as a very self-assured lady of means from an established family, half jumped out of her seat, raised, or rather waved her hand, and shouted: "That tape is me. May I speak to the class?" Patti, be my guest.**

Patti began softly, but gradually picked up volume. "That tape is my story. I was one of eight children. My father left home one day saying that he was going to work for the government in the Aleutian Islands. He never returned home. I remember my mother as a most beautiful woman who left our house one day and never returned." Now the class really came to life. They, like their teacher, were momentarily stunned.

The background for the story that Patti tells is a cold, snowed-in Minneapolis, MN winter. "We children stole our food and clothing and for a long time no one seemed to show us any care or concern." Patti continues: "But eventually the police came to take us to an orphanage. We were then farmed out, one by one, to foster homes in the area. I was quickly returned to the orphanage by two sets of foster parents because, they said, I could not adjust, that I was clumsy, and that I walked funny. I was ten years old. I was awkward, but more than that, I was a broken, fragmented child.

Finally in my third home, the father, a devout Baptist, took me aside and let me know in various ways that I was important. My life was

suddenly turned around."

Patti stood before the class, their eyes fixed on her every move and with an 'I don't believe this' look on their faces. Her voice was firm but with a touch of tremor in it as she described to them the dawning of her tomorrow.

"I have been abused many times", she said. "I have been raped many times," her voice becoming stronger. "But it is not my past that determines my present direction. It is the future that this person I still call, Dad, gave me in that humble foster home. I was given hope and love and religion. That has made all the difference in my life."

Patti concluded by telling the class that a few years ago she received a phone call from the Miami Police Department. They had found a derelict who had just died in a public park who checked out to be her brother. They asked her what she wanted them to do with this pimp and prostitute. Her response was immediate.

"I want the honor to bury my own brother," she told them. She and her husband prepared a special funeral service and made the ceremony a loving event. "You see," said Patti, "my brother never met anyone to help him turn his life around when he was young."

Patti went on to complete her Master's Degree in Educational Administration, and to become a principal of a Christian school which she co-founded in Minnesota. She later became a Christian Ministry speaker, consultant, and author of two rather recent books for early childhood religious education classes. She has also received the Lifetime Service and Achievement Award from the Association of Christian Schools International.

Teachers have such a wonderful opportunity to be tomorrow people for so many students. 'Tomorrow' to a confined patient carries the hope of regaining strength, returning home, and sharing with friends

the drama of sickness and injury. All of these become possible when the victim receives a human response from someone who cares – from someone who promises hope.

Teachers have such a wonderful opportunity to be tomorrow people for so may students. We are to be "people" people. We can see that those who are suffering can fall apart very easily when there is no one to come home to, no one with whom to share an experience. On the other hand, great things can happen if hope is in the future for these people. Patients can rally to stay alive when given a cause. Captives can survive torture when they know that someone is waiting for them with a better tomorrow. It may be that some of our students, not seeing "tomorrow" people in their lives, assume erratic behavior, sink into drugs, and even attempt suicide. Students, today, many of whom are coming to us from unstable family support, need more than a good dose of theorems, sentence structure, maxims and computer literacy. They also need flesh and blood people in the person of their teachers who promise them a future, and help them master the challenges they face today.

Christian educators need to care, to be ready to serve. Henri Nouwen has expressed it this way. "We, with all our human vulnerabilities, need to have the willingness to enter situations of sharing with others. The paradox of Christian leadership is that the way out is the way in, that only by entering into communion with the human suffering can relief be found." (15)

All teachers will develop a string of stories they wish to remember and repeat, stories that pack a wallop, stories that open up our thinking, clear our heads, shape our vision and move us to become more caring people. The teaching profession is rich in opportunities for us to help people at a deeper level. Ours is a special calling!

## KATHY KELLY: *From School to Prison and Beyond*

**I want to tell you about my good friend, Kathy. Her name today? Well, it depends. I first knew this ever smiling young lady as Kathy Kelly. Later she was to become known as Prisoner #04971-045, courtesy of the maximum security prison in Lexington, KY. Her women friends in prison, mostly African American and Hispanic, called her "Missiles", like in "Missiles, you ain't nothin' but a minute," because, to them, her one-year sentence seemed so short. To Studs Terkel, she is "The Pilgrim," a title he gave her in his book *Hope Dies Last*. I will settle for "Modern-Day Saint."**

Kathy received her high school education in the St. Paul/Kennedy Public program, a dual-enrollment arrangement in Chicago where students who attended St. Paul High would receive half their education in Kennedy public school. Kathy was a contributing member to both schools. She quickly became involved in service programs, especially tutoring in a nearby housing project. She remembers once in school being really moved by a French movie about the Holocaust, entitled *Night and Fog*. She remembers thinking, "I never, ever, want to be sitting on the sidelines or sitting on my hands in the bleachers and just watch some unspeakable evil happen."

"I was a late bloomer," she says. "I went through the Vietnam War like Brigadoon in the mist. I never got involved in anti-Vietnam War activities. I feel sorry and sad about that now, but I understand when people sit one out, because that was me. I still had this kind of fatalism that said you can't really do anything about these big problems. I would cry over the *New York Times*, and that was about it."

It was the time when Kathy moved to what she called a "do-gooder's ghetto," in Chicago that she met Karl Meyer, who was to become her mentor. He had sat with Dorothy Day and others in protest against civil defense air-raid drills. He even spent time on Rikers Island for refusing to take shelter during air-raid drills. What he was saying, along with his

followers, was that there is no place to take shelter from nuclear bombs and the best way to find security was to stop paying for these weapons.

Kathy soon became passionate about the peace movement. and this was just the beginning of a life of complete devotion to peace. While teaching in a Catholic high school, she asked that her salary be lowered to put it under the level of taxable income. She did not feel that she could give part of her salary to the government to buy weaponry. She continued her crusade for peace through the years and in 1986 was arrested on Good Friday for entering a missile silo near Holden, MO. She and her group hung a banner on a chain-link fence that read: *SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES, AN ACT OF HEALING.*

The stories she tells are so heart-warming, so emotional, so thought-provoking. When she was kneeling on the ground, handcuffed and awaiting the van to take her to prison, a young soldier held a gun to her head. She sensed that this young man knew he had a harmless person on her knees in front of him. Kathy asked him to join in saying a prayer, which he did. She then asked for a drink of water and he set down his gun and poured water from his canteen down her throat. As Kathy describes a later scene: "I saw that young soldier in court and I winked at him. I think if there's such a thing as mental telepathy, he was trying to say to me, "Please don't tell that story."

Kathy is a gifted story-teller. She even sings to the little children in Iraq in Arabic. Her language is so expressive, as in speaking of missile silos across the country: "There were one thousand of these silos in the Midwest, and one hundred fifty around Kansas City. You wouldn't even know that they're there. You almost have to train your eye to look for the white sticks that protrude from the ground. Eventually you get the hang of it. They are like razors in a loaf of bread, sewn all through the breadbasket of the United States – the place that's meant to grow corn and wheat and we are harvesting weapons of mass destruction."

Studs Terkel, writer of eleven books on Oral History, has this to say of

Kathy: "She has visited more countries, cities, and small towns not listed in Baedeker's guidebooks than anyone I have ever known. Her hosts have been men and women, and children whose homes have been under constant fire. Her pilgrimages have one purpose: to reveal the lives of war's innocent victims. Baghdad is the place where she is at the moment of this writing, on the eve of her country's preemptive strike on Iraq. (2003)

"She has been arrested by our government countless times. For all I know, she may have the track record. She has founded a peace group, Voices in the Wilderness. A good number of its members have followed her course. She weighs less than a hundred pounds, and is now in a hospital, still bearing witness."

"I just feel so lucky," says Kathy, "If my life had gone in another direction, maybe I would have been happy, I don't know, but the grass doesn't look greener to me right now. I've seen the kids in Iraq pull their parents beyond despair. I've watched them do that on the streets in Basra. These people in Basra have every reason to be severely depressed, but they've got these gleaming kids who are racing down the street with two pieces of plastic as their kites or their toys. I see them do that and I realize that that kind of hope can't be abandoned, and I'm not going to give up in despair." (16)

Kathy was greatly influenced by her teachers, the Sisters of St. Joseph and the De La Salle Christian Brothers at St. Paul High, her teachers at Kennedy Public High, and her teaching associates at St. Ignatius High and Loyola University.

As Kathy became well-known for her anti-war protests, some who knew her asked among themselves if, just maybe, if Kathy was going too far in her endeavors? It may be easier to say "yes," because then we do not have to face the lingering spin-off questions that might disquiet us. But as teachers, some more questions arise. Do we not urge our best students to seek new heights? Isn't Kathy taking us deeper into Gospel territory?

# CHAPTER THREE

## The Teacher Creates the Metaphors

Every student who ever had a good grammar teacher learned something about metaphors. These were taught as figures of speech, and very useful ones. These add spice to writing and conversation and increase the drama, and sometimes the humor. Metaphors contain the power to send our imaginations into high gear. A metaphor calls a spade a spade, and then some! "War is hell," said General William T. Sherman. There is no doubt about the way he felt! With this image in mind, he used the total war concept to scorch a path of destruction on his Civil War march through the South. Another metaphor, this a positive one: "You are the salt of the earth." The apostles were the people who were called to flavor the culture.

Similes were usually taught together with metaphors and these, too, were comparisons, but not as definitive as metaphors. Similes state that something is like something else, but not identical, as metaphors venture to say. "Peace is flowing <u>like</u> a river" is a simile in action.

It is the metaphor that is our concern here. The metaphor with its image gives one license to act in a certain manner. We are speaking about the power of metaphoric language and the actions that follow. The image that we have creates our reality and the actions that may follow. This is of particular concern for teachers, for we are the people who make our living by the words we use.

Teacher weary of your burden,
Oh! I pray you falter not.
For the classroom where you labor
Is a dear and hallowed spot.

Note the assumed metaphor: teaching is a burden; teaching is something to be endured; the teacher as martyr. The metaphor adds zip to the poem, but this kind of teacher certainly will add only misery

to the classroom. What must the students in such a classroom be going through? This little poem once appeared on a teacher holy card.

We teachers need to realize that our words have power. Sometimes teachers feel that words convey more meaning when they are shouted out in the classroom. At other times teachers have attracted student attention by speaking softly, so softly that the students needed to listen attentively to understand what was being communicated. We have always known the power of words, but it is the phraseology that often captures the effect that we desire. Great orators of the past controlled crowds with this mastery. Notice the power of the metaphor in this Supreme Court nomination hearing. Justice Clarence Thomas remarked during the proceedings that, for him, the process was a "high-tech lynching." This was more than putting zip into the language; it carried lots of emotional baggage with it. It had the power of persuasion, power to draw anger, ability to let a group of people recall past injustices and, for him, to appear as victim. When President Ronald Reagan called the Soviet Union "the evil empire," people were put on alert. Some felt it unhealthy and controversial, but it demonstrated rather emphatically how the President would be dealing with Russia.

A review of metaphors gives teachers who wish to effect change in their own lives and in that of their students an opportunity to reflect on their imaging, and their life structures. Michael Warren tells us that underlying any culture is a way of imaging the world. The cultural system and the life structure are themselves supported by a system of images. Get at that image system, and one has arrived at part of the inner core of culture. We could accurately say, "You'll know what is in their hearts by the images and metaphors they use to speak it." It is very difficult to shift life structures unless there is a parallel shift in the way one imagines the world. (17)

When we ask a people for their ideas, we usually put the request in a form such as this: "What is your viewpoint?" For a moment, I wish to change from the *what* to a *where* position, because I believe that

the viewing point is more important in forming the reply. I will use a concept that follows from a lesson that was sometimes taught in a high school drafting class. Students had explored the procedures for drawing an object in perspective and were now taking time to analyze their work. They had drawn a simple four-legged table and observed how it looked from different viewing points. Some tables were drawn in perspective with viewpoints to the left, near and far, and some from the right in the same manner. One was drawn head on, 90 degrees. Naturally, the table took on a different view depending on the position of the viewer, but it was the same table. By extending this line of presentation to a broader area, the class realized that things appear different depending on the place from where you are viewing it , not only in drafting, but in real life, too. The person who has the better vantage point has the truer perspective on a topic.

And when the drawing class was ended, another truth came to light. Perspective drawing, from any position, is not completely accurate. It can be said to be the true view as we see it, but the view itself is not true. A look at a mile of railroad track reveals this. In here, someplace, is the notion that people would be wise to hold some of their perspectives on life a little more loosely. So a more proper approach to finding what a person's view is would be to ask the person from where he or she is viewing it. When one gets into imaging, one enters very interesting territory. A proper understanding of images, and the way people arrive at them, is most important for teachers to learn. Oftentimes, our teacher language, too, will betray us and let others get a view of our own imaging, an area that we may not have explored well ourselves.

Teachers need to understand that their students are operating out of images. A youngster playing ball in the alleyways of New York City, who sees himself as a future college basketball player, will live his life a certain way. A boy nearby, who has the image of making money as a drug dealer, goes in a different direction. If the image changes for these youngsters, their lifestyle changes. What children commit themselves to be in the future will determine their present status even more than

what may have happened to them in the past. Teachers and parents will notice changes in behavior, for better or worse, when the students' image changes.

The images that teachers have for their students, their work, and their school are very important because actions and behavior follow. Let's see how people react to the presence of a simple tree, because of their viewpoint.

Joyce Kilmer, poet
Image: A tree is beauty.
Action: A beautiful poem of praise and reflection. "I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree."

A logger from the West
Image: A tree is cash.
Action: A tree is cut down and hauled away.

A plant nursery gardener
Image: A tree is nature's gift.
Action: The tree is nurtured –" think green" attitude prevails.

## The School and Teacher Metaphors

***A teacher sees the school as a factory.***
The language used by a teacher with this image in mind may send out clues to the perceptive listener as to what image of the school is in his/her mind. Words will pop out about a student being a product of this school. The school's forming and shaping and molding character will appear. Screening of applicants (best raw material for the product) might creep into the conversation What happens to the less-gifted who have somehow gained entrance into this teacher's classroom?

***A teacher sees the school as a zoo.***
The language used is along the lines of students being little animals,

untamed. "It's a jungle in here." "We need to train these wild animals." "This school's mascot is a tiger and whoever chose that, got it right."

***The teacher sees teaching as a battle.***
This is a war. "How are things in the trenches today?" T.G.I.F. signs are prominent in the faculty lounge. Summer vacation is a furlough. "We need combat pay."

***The teacher sees school as family,***
"We are one." Not to be confused with #1! Words heavy on feeling, like caring and helping, are common in conversation. Students are called by first names.

***The teacher sees teaching as a game.***
We're #1. Get on the ball. Kickoff meetings! You're out in left field. Entire class gets punishment for one student who is disruptive – like a team, when one player is off-sides all go back five yards; school has a good track record; smart student as game changer.

Again, the image promotes action. Language reveals the image. The action might be quick or reckless because of the image, or administered with more constraint. Some actions also happen because of role a teacher is expected to play, disciplinarian, prefect, dean.

Teachers, too, need to learn from student language just what kind of behavior they can expect to see. Remember, "By our students we are taught."

A popular student term now appears to be "we are going to party" not "go to a party." The language that a growing number of students are using to describe party-life tells us that violence and wildness are definite parts of this image. Their language goes along the following lines and varies from place to place, but somehow violence is part of the image. "It was a blast!" "We got bombed!" "I was wiped out." "He was blown away." "We crashed." " It was wild." "The place was destroyed."

## The Language of the Teaching Profession

Our teacher language reveals many images for the service that we give. Is this the same for other professions? Do other professions borrow from us as we do from them?

- Mortarboards are worn at graduations; Masters degrees are given. (Labor/Industry)
- Graduates process in caps and gowns (Law and Religion)
- Organizational charts display line and staff positions. (Military)
- We talk of good management procedures for the operation. (Business)
- We use descriptive words such as caring, healing, and internships. (Medicine)
- We speak of having to jump hurdles and winning honors. (Athletics)
- A Chicago school has renamed its homerooms "wards." (Political/ Government)

The important thing for teachers to remember is that at any given time, the image they are using will show in their language and give a feeling that it is OK to continue doing what they are doing. We need to understand the image from which we are working. Teacher, know thyself!

## Reflection

"Philosophers of several ancient traditions inform us that action follows thought. As we think, so we act! Contemporary Eastern – Hindu and Buddhist-based – traditions emphasize the need for mindfulness, while in the West, we tend to adopt the more externalized, Greek-based wisdom of rational, logical discrimination. Whether the perspective is religious, philosophical or cultural, all seem to agree that the quality of our external behavior largely depends on inner dispositions related to attentiveness, perception and understanding.

"Critics of contemporary culture agree and go on to suggest that humanity today suffers from an alarming level of external focus and fragmented identity. It is not that we have lost our capacity for interiority,

but we are bombarded with sensationalized media forces that aggravate our spirits and set us in pursuit of sensual satisfactions with addictive intensity. We tend to be carried along by consumerism and hedonism, suffering from a diminished capacity to make discriminate choices and think in terms of long-term benefits."(18) Indeed this is a challenge for beneath the surface teaching!

## Image and Action – Prompted by Metaphor

The scene: Noon hour in a high school cafeteria during the April spring fever time of student restlessness; two teacher prefects, each working from his image of school life.

Teacher A - He always felt that school was a zoo with wild kids to be trained.
Teacher B - He felt that school was family; we're all in this together.

A food fight breaks out, apparently instigated by a rather rowdy group of six to ten boys who sit together each day at the last table in the corner.

Teacher A rushes to the scene, red-faced, not appearing to investigate, but rather to punish. His language is not only tough; it is harsh. Anger is written all over his countenance. The non-involved students, while not approving of the student behavior, are now feeling that a student vs teacher reaction is developing. As a follow-up, the teacher feels that the school needs harsher rules of punishment so that such action will never happen again. He advises the dean of discipline of his feelings.

Teacher B hurries to the scene, a look of disappointment on his face, a "you should know better and we expect more from you guys." Appearance: His voice is a little higher than his usual moderate tone, and the nearby students somewhat feel his pain. This is out-of-place behavior. As a follow-up, the teacher wonders if the school needs to study the situation so that such occasions do not happen again. He

advises the dean of discipline of his feelings.

Teachers can certainly identify with someone, maybe themselves, in this situation.

## The Cold Within

(**Image and Action**) Six humans trapped by happenstance
In bleak and bitter cold,
Each one possessed a stick of wood
Or so the story's told.

Their dying fire in need of logs
The first man held his back.
For of the faces round the fire
He noticed one was black.

The next man looking cross the way
Saw not one of his church,
And couldn't bring himself to give
The fire his stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes
He gave his coat a hitch.
Why should his log be put to use
To warm the idle rich?

The rich man just sat back and thought
Of the wealth he had in store.
And how to keep what he had earned
From the lazy, shiftless poor.

The black man's face bespoke revenge
As the fire passed from his sight.
For all he saw in his stick of wood

Was a chance to spite the white.

The last man of this forlorn group
Did naught except for gain.
Giving only to those who gave
Was how he played the game.

Their logs held tight in death's still hands
Was proof of human sin.
They didn't die from the cold without
They died from the cold within.

(James Patrick Kinney) (Douglas C. Corlett)

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## JEAN GARTON: *A Mother Speaks to Teachers*

**With convention program in hand, I was deciding on which presentation to attend. The scene was a Catholic education meeting in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. I noticed that one of the speakers was a Dr. Jean Garton, Lutheran Minister's wife. This introduction sounded interesting, so that is where I took my place, not exactly knowing what to expect. How could I know then, over twenty-five years ago, that Jean's story would have such an attraction for me through these many years.**

Her story was about a boy named Dean. While walking down a Dallas, TX street, he heard the screams from a woman who was shouting for help in an alleyway. He stopped to help her but was blown away by a shot from the gun of the assailant who was attacking the woman. Dean, age 23, lay dead near the curb.

Jean described the mother's grieving at the wake for her lost son. She spoke of the way friends, acquaintances, and teachers all spoke softly to

the mother of his goodness, and of all that he had done for others. And in some cases these people asked in one way or another: "Couldn't Dean have just kept walking by?" "Why did he have to become involved?"

"Little did these people realize the extra burden that they were heaping upon this grieving mother," said Jean, "for she had taught her son to go that extra mile, to really get involved in helping other people. And now some of these people who were her support in that teaching, yes, even some teachers, were now questioning the action of the son who had followed their teaching so well."

"I know that this mother taught that boy these lessons," said Jean, as her voice rose in intensity. "You see, that boy, Dean was my son! He believed what I taught, and what teachers like you teach when you tell the story of the Good Samaritan. But when Dean carried this out in his life and died for it, so many who taught that story had not intended, apparently, that he take them seriously!" There was pin-drop silence in the hall.

The follow up to the Dean story is most interesting. At the trial, the woman whom Dean had tried to help, claimed that the shooter was her husband and that he shot Dean who was attacking her. Jean was beside herself as she watched the evidence switch against her son. Nearing the end of the trial, however, during one of the final morning sessions, the door of the jury room swung open, a mild commotion followed, but the new visitor, a young Black girl, demanded to speak to the judge. She had read in the paper what was happening at the trial and felt she just had to speak. She said that she was in a building nearby at the time of the shooting and that Dean was indeed trying to help but was shot in cold blood by the accused man. This young woman knew she had to do what was right. Her testimony convicted the man and Dean's name was cleared. She dared to become involved. Without her appearance in court, Dean's reputation would have been ruined and a guilty man would be back on the street. What a reflection for teachers in this Dean story!

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## DON MAZIARZ: *A Volunteer Truly Gets Involved*

**Don Maziarz, the man who became the 'Jamie Escalante' in the Back of the Yards Neighborhood in Chicago, was a retired businessman who had built his career in Puerto Rico. He was a restless fellow who wanted to devote part of his life in the service of needy youngsters. He found his labor of love at San Miguel. Don became a fund raiser, but especially a math teacher. This is one of his stories which describes the effect of violence in the neighborhood of San Miguel, Chicago.**

Don tells about an experience involving a San Miguel seventh grader, a boy we will call Jose, whose father was a suspected drug dealer and whose brother was a neighborhood gang-banger. Jose had been spending his life on the fringes of gang activity but was said to be mellowing, of late. Around 4:00 or 5:00p.m. one evening, Jose was standing on a street corner with an eighteen year-old gang member. A car with four or five youths pulled up to the curb to ask where they might find drugs of some sort. Perhaps something in the conversation went wrong, because one of the passengers reached out the window and gunned down the eighteen year old. Jose began to run as a stray bullet or two whizzed by him. As the car sped away, Jose went back to his companion who was beyond help. He was dead on arrival at the local hospital.

Don went to Jose's home to help him and his family figure out their next move. Jose, everyone knew, was a witness that both the police and gang-bangers would be seeking. The police, who had rounded up some suspects, asked Jose to appear at the police station to view a lineup. They said that protection would be given to him. The promise was a sincere one, but the police really cannot guarantee as much protection as is needed in gangland territory. The main responsibility of the police is to remove a killer from the streets. The safety of the witness, along with general police surveillance, rests to a great extent on family and friends. Jose was able to identify the shooter and the driver, and from

this moment he was a marked man.

It was decided that Jose's best chance for survival would be to leave the area for awhile. Don had friends in Wisconsin where Jose would be safe until things in the neighborhood cooled down, and to this Jose's family was in total agreement. About a month or so later some gang-bangers on the prowl drove by Jose's house, saw Jose's brother on the porch steps, and shot him dead. It is not certain if this was in retaliation for Jose's testimony or if his brother offended another gang member. Whatever the cause, the fear for one's life remains, for violence is ever present. Jose, his mother and her other children have moved out of the neighborhood, to another state, it is said. (19)

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## **Brother Ed:** *The Devil Has Dulled Our Senses!*

**"We buried another one of our parish this morning. Not just any ol' kid. Certainly not an evil kid. This was Julio Rodarte, a good kid and our eighteen-year old neighbor, who lived just two blocks away from our house and school. In his own confusion in life, he dabbled just a bit too much in the culture of the gangs. It cost him his life last Friday, as Julio was kidnapped and shot and his body dumped in an alley a mile and a half down the road. He was truly seeking love; he was truly seeking affection and understanding."**

Brother Ed Siderewicz, in his fourth year as principal of San Miguel in Chicago, had seen enough violence in the neighborhood and wanted to make his feelings known. He got the listener's attention with his opening line: "The Devil Has Dulled Our Senses."

"The devil is very alive and present in many ways here. Present in the art of luring, present in the numbness and the coldness to this tragedy because we – students and teachers – have insulated ourselves from the ugliness of this evil by going on with life seemingly as normal. The

death of Julio simply does not seem important to us, in fact, we have consciously chosen to not even engage this topic in conversation.

"The devil has succeeded in dulling our senses. It's very logical, yet totally imperceptible what this darkness is doing. It's logical because I feel we teachers have been lulled into simply trying to go on with the life of educating these wonderful children. In the process it seems as if we have created our own defense mechanism by insulating even ourselves from this violence. One of the layers of that insulation insists that life just goes on as normal. We don't like to think about these things. Had a similar incident happened in a different neighborhood, it would have evoked the outcry and displeasure of the entire community. I ran across this quote from an unknown source."

*It strikes me that if the devil can figure out how to get kids to die, receiving no grant from the Ford Foundation, having done no demographic studies in the neighborhood to figure out whether the market will work here – if the devil can figure out how to get a kid to die by giving them a value system of rewards and punishments, it strikes me that we can do the same thing.*

"It strikes me that Julio was laid out at his wake in his gang colors. It strikes me that the police had to intervene at the wake because some of the rival gang members were causing a ruckus. It strikes me that the only students I even heard talk about the incident were the few that asked to serve his funeral Mass because they were related to Julio. It strikes me that the church was not even half full for the funeral Mass. It strikes me because I know I am lured by the devil more that I realize or care to admit. The Devil Has Dulled Our Senses."(20)

# CHAPTER FOUR

## The Teacher and Ethics

Ethics are rules of conduct which are recognized as the correct rules or procedures that are proper for a particular group. We thus have such terms as medical ethics, Christian ethics, business ethics and such, too, for the other professions. Our concern here is educational ethics and these deal with the correctness, the rightness or wrongness of actions, and the goodness or badness of motives.

When teachers work with students they are engaged in moral education, the training of the mind and heart toward the good. Teachers specialize in bringing this type of education to their students. Our interest here is to look at the educational profession's values and habits because these are what the students witness each day. Moral education must affirm the central importance of moral example. This example must come from those of us in the educational profession. "It has been said that there is nothing more influential, more determinant, in a child's life than the power of good example. For children (students) to take morality seriously they must be in the presence of adults who take morality seriously. And with their own eyes they must see adults take morality seriously." (21)

There is an increasing interest in ethical concerns among school personnel because of the changes that are occurring so quickly in our lives today. Students need to know more about the "rightness" and "wrongness" of what is happening about them and then make decisions which will affect their lives into the future. What were once unseen realities come into their lives quickly through TV, cell phones, twitter, face books, and other electronic stimuli. An earthquake in Haiti or Chile, terrorism around the globe, the faux pas of anyone in leadership positions are news items that quickly become part of our daily reading intake. Students realize, perhaps for the first time, that what happens many miles from them, may soon affect their own lifestyle.

Too, schools today are serving a more sophisticated clientele. Gone are the days, except perhaps in pre-school, when the teacher was considered the authority on a wide range matters. Students want answers to some of the more complex problems of society. While teachers may not have all the solutions, they have the power to lead students into correct and critical thinking areas.

Teachers are also beginning to question some of the procedures, policies, and day-to-day structures of their schools. They wonder why things need to be done in a certain manner, in routines that once were productive, but now appear, just maybe, to have outlived their usefulness and service to the students.

Perceptive teachers are taking time to lead discussions with students in out-of- classroom sessions. They feel a need to look deeper at some of the problems that confuse teenagers. How does all the violence and bloodshed displayed on TV jibe with the peace studies?

## Moral Touchstones

It is over twenty-five years now since I began reading and writing on the topic of Ethics. I had been asked to design a course in ethics for school administrators, an assignment that brought me into contact with some really great teachers and writers. I was very impressed by one article in particular and decided to call the author. The writer happened to me a man named Paul Ylvisaker, a teacher at Harvard. His secretary put me right through and thus began a conversation with a wonderful, courteous and interesting gentleman. I did not realize until years later that Dr. Ylvisaker had been a champion for city planning for the urban underclass and a leader in President Lyndon Johnson's Model City Planning Program. I will now use a section of his article to introduce the topic of ethics to lay the groundwork for our ethics review.

"We arrive at an ethical decision and what ethics are, not by power, not by politics, not by market mechanism – although a lot of economics hides behind it – and not by compromise, but by some moral

touchstone that is not identical with law, not even a code of ethics, or religion, or custom. It is a standard that is constantly evolving. There's growth in our consciousness of what is ethical behavior. There is a sense that drives us to want to act nobly, to act in the general interest as well as in our own.

"It is easier to deal with ethics in dilemmas of virtue. That is, you know what you should do, but do not have the courage to do it. The principles are clear: Thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not advertise falsely in your catalog. But do you actually obey these clear commandments? For the most part, we tend to want ethical principles clear and explicit to avoid the anguish of uncertainty.

"But it is far more difficult to deal with ethical decisions called dilemmas of principle, where one is dealing with the right things to do when guiding principles are in conflict. Similarly, it is difficult to deal with principles still unsettled." (22)

Guidelines for ethical decision-making may exist but it is not the guidelines that will make the decisions for us. That determination will depend on many other factors, primarily personal ones. We can ask ourselves questions about our conduct before decisions need to be made. Let's take a look at decisions under ordinary conditions and decisions in times of crises, anticipatory ethics and crisis ethics.

*Anticipatory ethics* – Where do I put the weight in my usual day-to-day actions? What is my ethical stance on a regular basis? What are my values – on justice, sensitivity, fairness – before any real ethical dilemma occurs?

*Crisis ethics* - How do I usually decide under pressure? The dilemma – making choices when guiding principles are in conflict. Do I distinguish between "hearsay," anecdotal or neighborly forms of gossip, and information that is based on studied fact?

John Dryden, in his political satire poem, *Absalom and Achitophel*, gives an interesting description of Lord Shaftesbury, whom he saw as very unsteady on a day-to-day basis. His anticipatory stance seemed to be inconsistent. However, in times of crisis, he was a genius. The last two lines of this stanza are oft-quoted to show that there is a thin line between genius and madness.

> Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,
> He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,
> Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
> And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

This poem helps us to realize that some people may be good decision-makers in times of trouble, and that we may seek them out in times of crisis. In ordinary circumstances they can be avoided. But since most of our decisions will be made under ordinary conditions, we must look within ourselves to see what images are forming our anticipatory stance, and our actions generally.

**"Where does one ground the "ought" that obliges us to act?"**

Another way to pose this question is to ask ourselves what base are we using for a special decision. We must also remember that our base may change due to circumstances that present themselves. Let us observe a few of these sources for our ethical decision-making review.

**Basing our decision on consequences:**

The morality or immorality of an action is to be determined by its consequences. If I wish to know whether I am doing the right thing, I must decide this by looking at the consequences of what I am doing. I must also have some idea of what consequences it would be good to produce. The view of the consequentialist is that right conduct is that which maximizes the good, provides the most good, is good for the greatest number.

**Observation:**
A classroom example. After warning the class that only a well-written work will receive a passing grade, the teacher receives a terribly written paper, the work of a barely literate 10th grader who read and loved *The Pearl*, the book the teacher recommended. With the written report was a poorly written note stating: "This is the first book I read since third grade." (23). What are the consequences if the teacher follows through on the general statement to the class? For this individual student? For the class?

## Social Justice theory: (John Rawls)

This is a form of the consequence theory but with a twist of justice added. You would test the validity of your actions, not only by the universal or by the greatest good to the greatest number, but from the viewpoint of the weakest member of the community. We should treat equals equally, and unequals unequally. There exists in Thomistic writings someplace the statement that "laws are made to fit the properties common to the majority of the species and not to suit the accidental varieties of the individual." This social justice theory adds another dimension.

**Observation:**
Our schools are designed with staircases because this architectural arrangement fits the mobility needs of the vast majority of the students and teachers. What does this say to the weaker student, the student in the wheelchair? He also has to be taken into consideration. Now, by mandates, both State and Federal, buildings need to take care of these less mobile people by installing ramps and/or elevators. Of concern for educators might be, "why did the emphasis for such change come from the government sector and not from the educational center?" In many cases, schools were forced by law to help the mobile needy by this means.

## Categorical Imperative: Immanual Kant

Your decision-making in this theory is that the individual case you are making must be in accord with what can stand as a universal rule. This

ideal of universality means that there are no exceptions to moral rules, the moral laws are for everyone, and the decision does not depend upon circumstances. " Do not kill" is such a rule.

**Observation**:
A question asked in this theory is that if you are about to apply some moral principle to someone else, are you willing to have it applied to you in the same way? If you lie, are you willing to have someone lie to you? Another assumption in this theory is that we must treat people with respect because they are objects of intrinsic worth. (Consequentialists and categorical imperative groups think differently – the Right to Life issue as an example.)

## Perfectionism: Aristotle

Ethical behavior arises from the cultivation of certain virtues, for example, courage and honesty. The young are developed through education into persons who will possess these virtues and act in a moral way and be good citizens, just good people. Don't our schools use this model?

**Observation**:
Virtues may be thus culturally determined. A military society would extol the virtues of the battlefield. An aggressive society may not emphasize sensitivity or mercy and honor instead a more macho approach. A closely knit society may not see its own weaknesses. The school culture is such an important agent in forming student behavior into the future.

These are a few of the models for ethical decision-making that are good for teacher reflection. There are more models, too, such as: **Utilitarianism** in which the 'value' of usefulness is the benchmark: cost to repair a dam versus the cost of life and property lost if it were to break; **Ethical Egoism**; The highest good is that which gives the most pleasure to the most people. **Deontic Model**: Fixed rules guide us – Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, intuition, or the natural law. These

models are all needed for a more complete study of Ethics, but for our purposes, the four that have been briefly developed will give us enough food for thought and further action.

## Moral Education Extended

It is time now for some reflection on what all of this means for the teacher. The finest article that I have found to show the power of the teacher in his/role as moral educator is one written by Thomas Green in the *American Journal of Education.* (24) The title is "The Formation of Conscience in the Age of Technology." In this writing, moral education is construed as the educational formation of conscience. It is viewed as the elaboration and continuing comparison and contrasting of conscience as craft, membership, sacrifice, memory and imagination. The author feels that moral education is usually defined in too narrow a sense. It needs to be expanded in our thinking and in our language, to include what we now feel as non-moral matters; using time well, spending money well, taking better care of the earth, as examples.

Green feels that there is need for such a reflective article, especially for teachers. His reasoning: In an age of technology we might approach moral problems as though they are entirely subject to technical solutions; or that moral problems are educational problems needing another advancement in technology for their solution.

The following examples feature our conscience commenting upon our conduct. It is a self-judgment on everything that we do. Our conscience speaks in different voices, right or wrong , just or unjust, as wise, foolish, or skillful.

- Our conscience of **craft** speaks to us of prudence, what ought to be done.
- Our conscience of **membership** speaks to us of affection, membership in a group.
- Our conscience of **sacrifice** speaks to us of duty, even against our own inclinations.

• Our conscience of **memory** speaks to us of obligation, what we owe to others.
• Our conscience of **imagination** speaks to us of rising above principles, beyond duty.

These different voices exist side by side. They are present whenever summoned. These examples are presented as a new way of looking at our work as teachers, enriching our own lives and the lives of others. A new way, yes, and not presented as doctrine.

## The Conscience of Craft

***We are learning, growing as moral people:***
When we, either as novices or experts in a craft, adopt the standards of that craft as our own; when we respect standards;

Whenever we judge in our own case, saying that our own performance is good, bad, skillful, fitting, or the like;

Whether we are cooks, gardeners, mechanics, or writers we realize that there are standards for our craft;

When we realize that being a musician, for example, is more than playing an instrument, it is being able to judge one's own performance by the standards of musical taste and judgment as to what is good or unacceptable.

***Teacher/student conversation***: There are standards for everything that we do. Politeness is a skill. Rudeness shows a lack of skill. A poor homework assignment is the work of an unskilled student. What does a dingy school say about the teachers?

## The Conscience of Membership

***We are learning, growing as moral people:***
When we realize that conscience is formed for the sake of life within a group;

When we understand that all groups have social norms prescribing how members ought or should behave;

When we see that decisions and choices have to do with some collective - school, family, neighborhood - and have to do, not about what is good for me, but what is good for us;

When this search extends our sensibilities - the emotional flavor of moral distinctions enters the formation of conscience - the self may actually be transformed when our shift from the "I" to "WE" is observable.

***Teacher/student conversation***: Is this consciousness of membership being shaped within the school, or within a peer group, or outside the school? Student involvement in positive actions should be encouraged. What does school vandalism say about membership?

## The Conscience of Sacrifice

***We are learning, growing as moral people:***
When we sacrifice self-interest for others;

When we move from *numero solus*, to *numero uno*, to *numero secundo;*

When we keep promises, contracts, confidences, codes of ethics, even in difficult circumstances; "A promise made is a debt unpaid." (Robert W. Service)

When we perform acts of caring and kindness for others;

When we engage in social action programs because we ought to give others something even if we must have to give up something in order to do it;

***Teacher/student conversation:*** We have the opportunity to talk to students about taking responsibility, not when it is convenient or when

they feel like it, but because it is their duty, a sacrifice, perhaps. This is also a great chance to promote volunteerism. This is a time to discuss what we owe to others.

## The Conscience of Memory

***We are learning and growing as moral people:***
When we know our roots and become respectful of history;

When we realize that information that has been stored in the hearts of people affects their present day activities; when we encourage the sharing of such stories;

When we are able to recover lived history and understand story telling;

When we respect the history of others and quit uprooting others; listen to the stories of other ethnic, racial, or religious people;

When we realize that because of others, we arrive standing on third base – but we did not hit the triple that got us there!

***Teacher/student conversation***: We can speak of what we owe to other people who went before us. How does the Trail of Tears, the Native American reservations, slavery, and Jim Crow laws affect our lives today in the United States? Are these given emphasis in history classes? What things that we consider reasonable today, future generations might find wrong in our behavior?

## The Conscience of Imagination

***We are learning and growing as moral people:***
When we dream of what might be and are stirred by it;

When we envision a different kind of future;

When we consider the invitation to enter the realm of the possible

which transforms, and creates a new environment;

When we understand the role of great literature and creative activities;

When we understand how our vision can affect our lives and that of others.

***Teacher/student conversation***: We need to give our students a chance to experience awe and wonder and reach beyond duty. G. B. Shaw paraphrased: We dream of things as they are and ask "why." I dream of things that as they could be and ask, "why not?"

Thomas Green adds these closing comments about our institutions. "Our institutions must be flexible enough so that good and skillful persons who dream of what is not yet, but might be so, can be set free to decide and to act.

"But our schools must be sufficiently resistant to change so that those people of merely technical conscience and limited to skills of political management, but rootless of soul, may not do irreparable harm." Roots and vision are our hope!

## Reflections:

There is more to being educated than acquiring cognitive competencies. Technical thinkers may say that this conscience approach leads us to "squishy" results – they cannot be measured. But wasn't it Einstein himself who said: "Everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted." Our search for excellence in education is not rooted in technical interests. It is rooted in social and practical interests of a people, of a public. We are to shape consciences that inform policy choice. All of this is not a struggle over meaning; but a struggle over the public power to make meanings – to influence policy.

It is this kind of thinking that teachers who are looking for a deeper level approach to their teaching need to develop. Sometimes this

approach can be supported by quotes from thinkers of the past.

'Note what the great admired, they admired great things; Narrow spirits admire basely and worship meanly." *William Thackeray*

"The nobler thing just tastes better to us, and that's about it." *William James*

"The stamp of baseness on a building will sink deep into the souls of those it surrounds." *Plato*

## Gandhi's Deadly Sins

| | |
|---|---|
| Politics without principle | Pleasure without conscience |
| Wealth without work | Education without character |
| Commerce without morality | Science without humanity |

Worship without sacrifice

Remember, mediocre decisions will follow if the person who is making them is stunted in development along the scale of moral values. And also remember, there is a place for both students and teachers to bring about serious exploration and actions to follow. I once read an interesting comment that bears upon this topic. It goes like this: "Some can do great things directly; others, like the oyster, quietly produce pearls; still others can be like the grain of sand that irritates the oyster that produces the calcium carbonate which becomes the pearl." There is a place for everyone.

***Teacher reflection on our own work in the school.*** The source of these quotes is the book, *Saints and Scamps, Ethics in Academia*, written by Steven Cahn.

"A seemingly simple, yet significant matter is that students are individuals and appreciate being recognized as such by the use of their first names. Think how teachers would react if the principal did not

bother to learn their names."

"Students are entitled to assume that their instructors do not merely repeat stale ideas, but are able to provide an informed account of the most promising lines of thought. A degree does not entitle the teacher to a lifetime exemption from scholarship. A teacher who relies on tattered notes is as guilty of malpractice as the physician who relies on antiquated treatments. Both are candidates for early retirement."

"A simple but important rule is that teachers are obligated to begin all classes on time. There is no more obvious sign of lack of concern for one's students than that of coming to class late (or starting a class late) and thereby wasting the time of those who have arrived promptly and are ready to work."

"Students receive an official document known as a "diploma," from the Latin word which means "passport." The diploma states that its holder has completed an appropriate course of study. Those who sign the document have the responsibility to ensure that the claim is an accurate statement, as one from a physician to state that we are in good health. We need to let the physician determine the content of the physical examination, because it is his/her responsibility to attest to the substance of the document. Faculties must insure that the ingredients are in the student's program to guarantee that the recipient has obtained the essentials of a solid high school program."

"If teachers are to guide the learning process, they need to know whether students are making progress, and this is done by testing. It is by a test that students reveal whether they are in complete control of certain material, or possess only a tenuous grasp of it. Papers and readings, while good as assignments, are no substitute for testing."

"Discussions may not reveal depth, either. A student who wants to substitute another assignment in place of taking a test, or who wants to replace a test with an oral report, but who usually performs poorly in

examinations, lacks command of the requisite knowledge" (25).

A final thought for teachers: How do you react to this statement? "The greatest crime that we can commit against the learners in our classes is to under challenge them?"

**Discussion topic** – *Dilemma*

Father Leonard Feeney, a Boston priest, took to the street to preach "no salvation outside the Church." In so doing he condemned the Jews in vicious terms. He immediately became a controversial figure. His bishop, Cardinal Richard Cushing, was asked by both Catholics and others to silence him. But Feeney also had a group of strong followers. The dilemma for the Cardinal was that the teaching of the Church through the years was what Feeney was also teaching. The Church was now beginning to tone down its rhetoric, but Feeney did not. The Cardinal was not sure of his ground. In addition, he did not know if the Vatican would support his silencing Feeney for heresy. This was one horn of the dilemma. The other was that the Cardinal's sister was married to a Jew, and a person he really admired and liked. He could not believe that this good man, according to the old Catholic teaching, could not get to Heaven.

The Cardinal was elevating something above dogma; he was putting the pastoral before the doctrinal. He decided to silence Feeney by disciplinary order. Feeney would not obey. Feeney's Jesuit superiors transferred him out of Boston but he refused to go. The Vatican supported the Cardinal and the Order and Fr. Feeney was excommunicated, for his disobedience, not for heresy. Like the U. S. Supreme Court, the Vatican settled the case on narrow procedural grounds and didn't address the basic issue. (26)

This area of pastoral concern vs church teaching can be a murky area. It can be considered by some, as applying common sense to an impossible situation. By others, it is just a failure to follow the rules. Cushing had a moral insight that came to him, not from theology, but

from the experience of knowing that this good man, his brother-in-law, could not be condemned to hell because he was not of a particular religion.. Pastoral concern in individual cases, for serious reason, and as an exception, leaves the doctrine or teaching intact. Again, very murky territory!

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## BROTHER TERENCE: *Literally, on the Banks of the Wabash*

**The scene for this story is Central Catholic High School, 1960, in Vincennes, IN. This Central Catholic was once known as "Gibault High," and now is "Rivet High," named after one of the early priest missionaries and educators in the Indian Territory of Indiana. The school has the same address as George Rogers Clark Memorial Park; 2nd and Barnett. The school and Memorial Park are located across the street from one another. This Memorial to George Rogers Clark is a beautiful circular granite structure surrounded by sixteen fluted Greek Doric columns. Its majestic presence is always visible to the students.**

Central was a small school and allowed for much personal attention to students. This particular group of boys that I mentored really formed a multi-mix of youngsters who were struggling with reading and mathematics and were gathered in a multi-purpose classroom, one used as a lunchroom and classroom. The class that forms the basis for this writing is the math class, a mixture of arithmetic, algebra and geometry – sort of a home-made course that small schools have the freedom to create for the benefit of the student.

The class gradually became interested whenever they saw the possible application to a problem. Lines and angles, and their relation to one another forming geometric shapes seemed to draw their attention. When we were discussing triangles, I asked why farmers used three-legged milking stools instead of the usual four-legged chairs in general

household use. (The farm boys in the group were happy to hear that their teacher had actually used such a stool and my credit rating immediately rose.) I asked them one day if they thought that we could figure the height of the Monument without consulting the park brochure, or, God forbid, trying to climb it. Lots of opinions were expressed, and doubts mixed between negativity and certitude.

So we set to work with our lines and angles. They learned about vertical lines, horizontal lines, angles, a fixed point, you name it. All this in preparation for the red-letter day in early spring when we would go over to the park and do our field work and discover the height of the Memorial. They drew a vertical line to represent the height of the monument, a horizontal line to represent the pacing they would do to get to their fixed point, and then, with their trusty protractors (rusty would be a better word to describe this basic tool for some) measure the chosen angle for their site line. They had to learn about the various relationships between an angle of a triangle and its three sides. Of course, the trig table book was there to help them, something now replaced by just pressing a calculator button.

It was like a picnic day when they headed for the park with paper, tape measures, pencils, rulers, and protractors bulging from their pockets. Soon it was at the chosen fixed point at the end of their ground measuring that became the center of activity. It was here that they needed to get the most accurate angle possible to set their site line with the top of the monument. During the spring, this historic park rich in history attracted many visitors, usually adults who were interested in this special place, called "Old Fort Sackville."

What drew their interest this day, perhaps more so than the monument, was to see all these little rug rats crawling around the ground, faces almost one with the fesque, acting like explorers about to make a great discovery. And what was the teacher thinking? I was wondering how the mothers, who sent their boys to school that day with clean shirts and pants, would feel when these grass-stained explorers arrived home?

Back in the classroom all kinds of interesting figures surfaced. The height of the Monument varied by many feet, one or two posed a threat to the Washington Monument! (80 feet is the actual height). After many corrections, and the reasons for the wide reporting discussed, the class felt that this was really good stuff – and they were ready for more. We did not discuss what we were doing in language they would not understand but the principles of what we were doing were true to the subject. There was no lengthy study of tangent, sine or cosine, for these were just beginners, but definitely beginners on the move. They could be introduced to the scientific terms later.

The next question to them was: Do you think that we can determine the width of the river next to the monument without crossing over the bridge to the Illinois side and measuring our walk? Now they were much more sure of themselves because, hadn't they solved the Memorial challenge? So at a later date, their assortment of tools collected, they set out to measure the swift flowing Wabash River which was separated from the Monument by a floodwall. They set their site lines with a tall tree on the other side of the river, walked off whatever distance they wished along the bank, set the angle with the tree and went to work as they did before. This figure changes with the rise and flow of the river especially in springtime when flooding sometimes is a real problem to Indiana or Illinois. In those days it depended on whether the levee upstream broke on the Illinois or Indiana side to see which state was in for real trouble.

Wonder happened in this setting and curiosities created and satisfied. These youngsters' faces became brighter. They became more positive about themselves. I could just hear a farm lad saying to his father: "Dad, do you want me to figure out how high the silo is?" Or a city kid: "Do you know how wide the Wabash River was at the bridge last Wednesday?"

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No matter what you teach....

" 'My boy wants to spend five months at your school,' the farmer said to Professor Grundvig, founder of the famous Folk School in Denmark 'However, I've looked over your course of studies, and I see only such courses as history, literature, civics, geography, and science. Nothing about farming! Tell me, will my son be a better farmer after he takes the program with you?' Professor Grundvig was silent after a moment, then replied quietly, 'No, your son won't learn how to make better butter at our Folk School. But all his life he will be ashamed to make *bad butter*,'" (27)

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**FRANK BROWN:** *Learners came, "like pins to a magnet."*

**If I were asked to describe my college Sociology teacher, with a smile on my face, I would do it this way: Imagine the students all in place in the classroom when a man in his early 30s bustles in, smile of victory on his face, loaded up to his chin in books and giving the impression that he just looted the library. (He just may have for the library cards were still in their little pocket folders. This evidence told that they were not checked out.) He poured the books onto the desk, turned, stared at the class, rubbing his chin with his left hand, a habit that became routine. This indicated that some serious thinking was occurring in that man's head. Then, as though he just got a brilliant idea, he would single out a student and say something like, "Boy, have I ever got the book for you!" and out went one of the books. He continued this procedure, as long as his supply lasted. Each student got the feeling that this was a special treasure, and began to read books they would never otherwise explore.**

This man was Brother Austin, a professor at St. Mary's College (now University) in Winona, MN. He had arrived on the campus "on fire" in the late 1930s having completed his doctorate in Washington, DC

during the great years of labor reform. He told us about the labor struggles, the founding of the C.I.O and the A.F. of L, the beginnings of the Social Security Program and the Knights of Labor long before that time. This was not textbook stuff for he told us stories as though he was part of the action, definitely a street smart report. We got the impression that we were living part of that history with him. We were involved.

Shortly after his brief period of teaching at St. Mary's, Brother Austin left the Brothers. He became active in the movement for parents' rights in education as he sought alternatives to the present public funding for education to ease the financial burden for private school parents. He toured the country, visited the lawmakers in Washington to explain the concept of tax credits and vouchers. These could be used by parents who wished to choose the education that they desired for their children, outside the public school system. He also joined the faculty at De Paul University in Chicago.

Fast forward fifty years, from the 1940s to the 1990s. I was the administrator of Driscoll High School in Addison, IL. (A school that closed its doors in 2009 because of low enrollment due to cost of tuition). During one of our difficult financial times, I invited Jim Styka, Chair of the school's finance committee, to come with me to meet Bishop Joseph Imesch of Joliet. We were to see if we could arrange a new debt payment structure with the Diocese. Jim had boys in school, his wife was a grammar school teacher, and he, himself, was an articulate person for school needs. During our 30-mile trip our conversation centered on schools, and particularly good teaching.

I do not remember what prompted my telling Jim about my college days, but I mentioned my experience with Brother Austin and how this teacher motivated students. I told him that I felt that Brother Austin was the man who spun my thinking around about the great possibilities that existed in the teaching profession. He made me see the light by his zest for teaching and the respect he had for learning. I

learned that good teaching was an art.

Jim told me about his experience as a student at De Paul. He said that he had a teacher who was so good that he took as many of his courses as possible. As Jim described this teacher, something inside me triggered a quick question, for I was beginning to detect a coincidence. I asked Jim who this teacher was. He said, "Dr. Frank Brown." Lucky that I was not driving, for I was momentarily stunned. Frank Brown was the former Brother Austin! We were talking about the same man. Our conversation became more spirited, and continued at a fast pace until we reached the Bishop's door.

I visited Frank in his later years when he was wheelchair bound, and recovering from a stroke. His eyes still lit up when we spoke of tax credits for Catholic and other private school parents. Still later, I attended his wake and funeral. A great teacher was laid to rest but not his influence, nor his memory.

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## Culture – Preserved or Destroyed?

I had the opportunity in 1996 to visit the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Browning, Montana. Three of us Brothers were to explore the reservation to see if the request of Father Kohler to begin a new school could be honored by the Brothers. I had a very interesting conversation with Darrell Kipp, founder of the Pigeon Institute, a school for 25 students. His little school furnishes a curriculum and all associated activities in the Blackfeet language. Darrell and Dorothy Still Standing formed the Board of Directors.

Darrell's mission is to have his schools restore the Blackfeet language and self-importance to the Indian children. Darrell is very outspoken about the public schools on the reservation and the Catholic Mission Schools before them. He sees students in such schools " as not being

taught in their own language, attending world history classes where students learn about all cultures but their own, and in botany classes being able to identify a tree indigenous to the Yangtze River basin but they don't know the tree in their front yard, a land to which they are biologically bonded."

Jackie Parsons, a Blackfeet parishioner at Little Flower Parish and who is in charge of the local museum, feels otherwise about the Mission schools. Her view is that the Mission schools helped her tribe battle for survival and gave the children the tools to survive. To some, a culture is being uprooted. To others, a new way of life is needed for their survival. Can a new culture be introduced without destroying the old culture?

A touching moment came just before we left, Gertie Heavy Runner, a woman of wisdom and trust who had three sons who were killed in auto accidents, another son lingering in a vegetable state due to another accident, and a daughter fighting cancer, led us through the smudging ceremony. The smoke thus pulled over our heads and faces was a cleansing ritual. Father Kohler holds out hope for these people and Gertie is his visual aid.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## The Lasallian School

**Brother John Johnston, former Superior General of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, in a 1999 address at St. Mary's College in California, described the Lasallian mission in these terms: "It has quickly become apparent that the 'Brothers' School' model no longer makes sense. Despite several years of confusion and frustration, a new model gradually evolved. Today, we accept it officially and call it the Lasallian School model. The change in language is important. A 'Lasallian School' is a school that is energized, not only by the Brothers with lay men or women in a supportive role, but by the entire educative community in which the Brothers also participate." He continues:**

"Today we popularly call the Lasallian mission a 'shared mission.' We refer to participants as members of the 'Lasallian Family.' They are not only administrators and teachers – whether Brothers, lay men and women, priests or members of other religious Congregations – but also, all the other persons associated with us: parents, former students, board members, school staff personnel, benefactors, friends, and, of course, the students themselves." (28)

And while we are explaining the words that describe us, that is, all of us associated in these Lasallian schools, the reason for our using another descriptive term should be explained. Throughout the world where the Brothers of the order founded by St. John Baptist De La Salle run schools, we are known as De La Salle Brothers. Our official title is Brothers of the Christian Schools, but in the United States this has been shortened to Christian Brothers. This has caused identity confusion in cities where the Institute founded by Edmund Rice, the Congregation of Christian Brothers, also have schools, Chicago and Detroit, in the Midwest, for example. Therefore, we are now leading with the De La Salle title in many of our publications.

Something that should be stated at the outset to avoid confusion is that Lasallian Schools are definitely, Catholic Schools. It seems that in some localities, so much publicity is given to the Lasallian name that people are wondering if it has trumped Catholic, or if this is a new branch of loosely connected Catholic schools. I mention this because a few years ago a Bishop, who was supportive of education, mentioned that he was receiving questions from Catholic parents about this Lasallian concept. They had heard this new term used so often that they wondered what it really meant, and if those schools were still Catholic schools.

This section will now dwell on what it means to be a Lasallian School. The Lasallian mission will be emphasized as a reminder to what we are. When all that has been written in the previous chapters has been adopted by teachers in a school, and put into the special Lasallian focus, then that school will truly be a Lasallian School.

## The Lasallian Legacy

**Brother Luke Salm, in his delightful book, *The Work Is Yours*, tells us: "The legacy that is the Institute of the Brothers, which now extends to the entire Lasallian family, assumes its most concrete form in the schools and other educational enterprises conducted by the Brothers and their colleagues who share the Lasallian mission. It should not be surprising that the schools of the Brothers assume a distinctive quality, one that is often remarked but difficult to define, a quality derived from a long tradition of religious consecration to a specific apostolic mission carried on in association and brotherhood." Selected passages follow.**

"Religious and value-centered education has always been a high priority of the Brothers' schools. In the contemporary context, with the respect for religious freedom, the Brothers take into account the needs and experiences of their students to open themselves to gospel values."

"Sensitivity to social issues is an important aspect of the Brothers' school. That is what brought the Institute into being in the first place.

The Brothers continue to give priority to direct educational service to the poor where that is still possible. Where it is not, the Brothers try in all their educational endeavors to show special concern for the disadvantaged, and to make education for peace and social justice an important element in the curriculum and in extracurricular affairs."

"Finally, the Lasallian schools feature quality teaching with a practical orientation. One of the principal achievements of De La Salle was to elevate the despised function of the schoolmasters to the status of a vocation worthy of the dedication of a lifetime. Devoted exclusively to the work of education, the Brothers bring to the school a sense of permanence, commitment, and competence that they share with the teachers associated with them. The result is a quality school. The Brothers are justly proud of the reputation they enjoy for conducting good schools."

"This is not to say that many of these qualities are not to be found in educational institutions directed under other auspices. But somehow, all of them taken together seem to describe that elusive something that people everywhere who benefit from this aspect of the Founder's legacy can recognize as a Lasallian school." (29)

## The Lasallian School – Students and Curriculum

**Brother William Mann, former Vicar General of the world-wide De La Salle Christian Brothers, and presently President of St. Mary's University, Winona, MN, has some interesting comments to make about the curriculum in a Lasallian school. He describes how De La Salle adapted programs to meet the student needs. He mentions that "teachers were to meet the students where they were, to establish common ground, and to bring the students forward."**

"The curriculum was to be suited to the intellectual, cultural, religious, and vocational needs of the actual students in the particular school. The personality, the previous education, the behavior both inside and outside of the classroom, the essential elements of character, the family

background, and the surroundings of the student were all to be taken into consideration. How easy it is to forget the real needs of the students with whom we work! How occasionally appealing is the fantasy that we are working with some idealized, brighter, more highly motivated students! At no time could the students in the first Lasallian schools be so described. In fact, they were, at various times, characterized by De La Salle as headstrong, badly brought up, nasty, stubborn, insolent, opinionated and dull." (30)

Brother William continues the development of this theme on the lives of students today by adding a quote from Robert Kealey's address to teachers in 1988: " Students continue to come to us in all varieties: fast and slow; from intact and from broken families; from high socioeconomic and low socioeconomic levels; secure persons and unsure persons; outgoing and shy; drug free and drug dependent; happy and sad." (31)

## The Lasallian School – Open to the World

**Brother Thomas Johnson, present Vicar General of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, cautions us to avoid a narrowness in our Lasallian presentations, especially in terms of religious education.**

He mentions: "The Lasallian mission is to provide a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor. Education for the poor by itself is not the mission. Evangelization is part of the mission even when it has to be done only by example in places like Pakistan, which is 99 percent Muslim, but where there are Lasallian Schools. In Jaffa, Israel, we run the only school in the country that has students and faculty who are Israeli and Palestinian, and Jewish, Christian and Muslim. This is a wonderful model that these groups, brought together by the Lasallian mission, can live and work together. Sometimes in our conversation and at some of our gatherings, we lose sight of the evangelical aspect of our mission."

Brother Thomas continues with a most practical observation and

the priory bells when storms, tempests, or hail-showers threaten, and to sing in the said priory during Advent and Lent." (A quote from *Dictionnaire de Pedagogie*) (42)

These terms sound strange to modern ears, but they bring us nearer to, and throw light upon, other times and other customs. Azarias explains: "The outside services were distracting. They left little or no time for preparation of lessons. De La Salle, through much opposition and no small persecution on account thereof withdrew the Brothers from all distractions. He brought home to them that their calling was one worthy of their whole energy and their undivided attention." (43)

## The Lasallian School – A View from the Outside

**The views of the Lasallian schools thus far are revealing. They are views from inside the organization and from an outside student of De La Salle. Let us now see what a recognized writer on general education has to say about the early schools of the Brothers. Adolphe E. Meyer, respected writer and student of European education, will now share his insights on the work of De La Salle.**

"As a boy toiled up the steep hill of learning, he disposed of the common three Rs, besides spelling, penmanship, and composition. He introduced himself to reading the ABCs from a large chart hung from the wall – a practice which still obtains in various parts of the world. Next he tackled a simple reader, working his way through its mystery from one cover to the other. Once he managed to read aloud with an easy fluency and with suitable deference to commas, semicolons, and periods, his proficiency was pronounced satisfactory.

"The Brothers applied themselves with undivided earnestness to the teaching of penmanship, an art so greatly esteemed in those days, but now fallen into low estate. They drilled and rehearsed their wards relentlessly in every detail, from the correct method of pen stripping and body stance to the actual fabrication of the letters. After a boy mastered this delicate knack, he was put to work copying everyday

commercial forms, besides leases, deeds, and similar writs of practical enlightenment.

"As was neat and proper, a great stress was laid on manners and decorum. There were bowings aplenty not only before the holy cross, as is to be expected, but before the presiding master. By the same token the savant was expected to treat his pupils with courteous consideration. He was never to confront them with dubious titles, even when they were worthy of such honors. La Salle even provided a manual of arms on refinement for the students. Such handbooks on the punctilios of human comportment were quite common and, in fact, people like Erasmus had been distilling them by the keg. La Salle offered a concoction which was calculated to induce a conscious rectitude in such things as manners, hairdos, posture, table address, and the like, for none of which from time out of mind the young had ever shown an appreciative respect.

"Less conventional than La Salle's rules of etiquette were his views on discipline. The bastinado, to be sure, he did not ban; nevertheless, he deplored its all too frequent use. It is used, he said, only out of bad temper or weakness. For the birch is a servile punishment, which degrades the soul even when it corrects, for its usual effect is to harden. When a boy proved unamenable to law and order, his sentence might be dismissal. But since the teachers were also quick to recognize virtue, the righteous were frequently rewarded." (44)

Adolphe Meyer, has some other comments on the Brothers' schools. He found the emphasis on silence interesting, and described the classrooms as demonstrating "the muted stillness of a mortician's parlor." He mentions the teacher's use of the signal, an instrument to give a clicking sound to indicate the next student to recite, which was used to save the teacher's voice. He did not find a place for recreation or games in the seven-hour, five-day week He indicated that in this tough love approach, the students were respected and treated with dignity, His comments on the teachers that De La Salle chose is interesting.

He wanted men who understood boys and not necessarily scholars, "for teaching the very young required something more than a well-stuffed head and insight into the elusive mystery of the boy's nature and behavior would be of help. To provide such training De La Salle founded a seminary for teachers in 1685 at Rheims. Though this was not the first attempt to introduce teachers to the secrets of their trade, yet it was the first school of its kind, and therefore it was also the faraway ancestor of the teachers college, now in full florescence everywhere." (45)

## The Teaching Order of the Brothers

Another glimpse from an outsider reaches us in a rather indirect fashion. It appears in the biography of William Gaynor, the former Brother Adrian Denys of New York.The young William had been selected to be one of the group of Brothers who were to establish a new District in San Francisco. After traveling down the Atlantic to Colon, crossing the country by train and wagon, then boarding a Pacific sidewheeler to San Francisco, the young William was mighty homesick – so much so, that he set back on his own for New York. He later became a judge in the supreme court of New York, before becoming Mayor in 1909. This is the background for this review.

**Mortimer Smith, the biographer of William Gaynor noted that young William had been a member of the Christian Brothers Order. He did some research on the Order at that time and came up with the following description. It was not meant to be a study but rather just an interesting tidbit to his story.**

"The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, although founded as long ago as 1680 in France by St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, was, at the time young Gaynor attended Assumption Academy, Utica, NY, a comparative newcomer among religious orders in America, the first institute having been opened in St. Louis in 1849.(sic) The purpose of the founder having been to bring elementary learning to poor boys and artisans, his pedagogy laid greatest stress on practical

subjects and at first specifically excluded Latin from the curriculum as being a refinement of no value to plebians. Partly for this reason, that it was devoted to educating the simple poor rather than the intellectually elite, and partly because the Brothers, although committed to the monastic life, were without the authority of priests, the order has sometime had the status of an orphan, a very respectable orphan, but one whose intellectual raiment has sometimes seemed a little dowdy compared to the brilliant plumage of such an educational order as that of the Jesuits. But the Brothers have always believed that humility is also one of the Christian virtues and have been content to play their humble role in an unspectacular but often quietly effective manner. Many of the teachers of the order have been simple pietists, some have been genuine scholars, and almost all of them energetic men of action. (46)

### The Lasallian School — Today and into the Future:

Brother Thomas Johnson has cautioned us to avoid a too narrow dimension to the religion dimension of our work. Our clientele is becoming more religiously diversified each year. A good example of this changing pattern is Christian Brothers University in Memphis, TN. This university, a college in 1957, had an enrollment of 78% Catholic. In 2010, Catholics are 23%. Baptist membership is a like figure and an equal number list themselves as Christian. The largest single group, 25%, leave the question blank. As the population in the school becomes more diversified, changes in curriculum need to be explored also. Our Midwest District which is now preparing its future leaders for its Lasallian schools, is sending teachers and administrators to such programs as the Lasallian Leadership Institute, the Lasallian Studies Program in Rome, and the Buttimer Institute, and have teachers of the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish faith are among their members. The Lasallian school is definitely Catholic, but with great inter-religious sensitivity.

A second area where professional peripheral vision is important is in acknowledging that good teachers exist in schools everywhere. We

must not think that, because we possess the Lasallian label, that we have found a secret teaching formula that no one else possesses. This is not like Coca Cola having a secret syrup formula which only a few people will ever possess. Good teaching procedure exists throughout the educational profession. Good, sound teaching exists in every school system around the world. I am certain that each of us has experienced such teaching in our studies somewhere since grade school.

Then, what is special about a teacher in a Lasallian school? The Lasallian teacher is one who is a well-prepared teacher and who is driven by a spiritual dimension in his/her work. This teacher regards teaching as a calling, a vocation, and definitely more that a job. This teacher is one of a united faculty group who deliver the same messages to the students, having a special concern for the most needy students. Each teacher is supported in the mission by fellow teachers who have the same focus. Their lessons are seriously developed and geared to deeper meaning along the lines of the first five chapters of this book. Such teaching is part of a total school effort.

The Lasallian School is a traditional school in that it honors its roots, the seeds of which come directly from their Founder, De La Salle. The Lasallian School is a progressive school in that it grows and develops its curriculum to meet the needs of today's students. We do not uproot the old to bring in the new; we do not shun the new to preserve the old. We mesh the best of both to form a vibrant school of today with a proud history of accomplishment through the years. We are involved in something great!

De La Salle focused his programs on the poor, neglected, needy youth of the areas in which his school served. Sometimes, we can become so concerned today with focusing on the needy that we can forget the diversity that exists in our schools. It is interesting to look at the history of the Brothers schools as they began in the Midwest. We were definitely helping the needy and the lost, but we did not forget the bright and talented.

When the Brothers first went into St. Paul, MN in 1871 there was little indication that sometime in the future, this Twin City area would be home to over half the state's population. We were asked to come there because it had a wild west flavor with the children growing up as wild and free as the land. (47) Eight years later when the Brothers came to Dubuque, Iowa, the boys were wild, too, and it was reported that after one year of the Brothers' schooling the children were less noisy in the town and outside the church and that there were fewer broken windows in the town. (48)

We can become too narrow in our views of these schools and receive the impression that the schools were heavily geared to discipline above learning, or that the brighter students did not attend these schools. Let's look at the curriculum of St. John's School in Prairie du Chien, WI, which the Brothers opened in 1871. The program was divided into four sections, basic to superior. The program offered reading, spelling, arithmetic, geography, grammar, composition, U.S. History, German for three years, familiar science, commercial composition, bookkeeping, elocution, debate, English literature, commercial law, algebra, trigonometry, geometry, surveying, natural philosophy, Latin, writing and speaking, photography and four years of Religion. John Lawlor who invited the Brothers to the school truly envisioned setting up the basis for a college. (49)

And to show the Lasallian diversity, what better exploration exists that the work the Brothers of the St. Louis District did at Gray Horse, in the Oklahoma territory before Oklahoma became a state. It was here that an Indian school existed with the Brothers in charge. One government report shows that there were 22 full-blooded Osages; 7 half-breeds; and 11 from other tribes. They were described as easily managed and, as a rule, averse to mental and physical exertion. They are intelligent and some are fair students. They like music. Nothing pleases them more than hunting and fishing. They did not like the confinement of the classroom. The boys varied in age from 7 to 22. (50)

A glimpse into the school's diary of daily events tells about animals, fruits and vegetables, the climate, and even political observation. Here are some entries: "pigs loose – chased pigs for three hours – recaptured 15;" "beat snakes with a stick; caught a six-footer;" "strawberries ripe in southern patch;" "cucumber picking continues; winds scatter plums:" "early May blizzard, fires and overcoats needed:" and later in the summer – "sweltering day, not a move in man, beast or tree:" "Cherokees and Shawnees on a picnic, Osages played Rugby:" "we heard of Taft's election and the defeat of Bryan. How did it happen?" (51) The new Indian policy as Oklahoma entered the Union was to encourage Indians to attend the public schools on the reservation and live at home. The new policy, with its decrease in subsidy, spelled the demise of the Mission School.

This chapter is entitled, The Lasallian School Then and Now. We have showcased the "then" with much of this Lasallian writing and some of the "now" but in a rather general manner. Let's firm up the "now" by giving the teacher a chance to review his/her specific classroom work and the school in a deeper manner..

Again, we will begin with a story. "There is a wonderful Chasidic story about the child of a rabbi who used to wander in the woods. At first his father let him wander, but over time he became concerned. The woods were dangerous. The father did not know what lurked there.

"He decided to discuss the matter with his child. One day he took him aside and said, 'You know that each day you walk into the woods, I wonder why do you go there?' The boy said to his father, 'I go there to find God.' 'That is a very good thing,' the father replied gently. 'I am glad you are searching for God. But, my child, don't you know that God is the same everywhere?'

" 'Yes,' the boy answered, 'but I'm not.'" (52)

"But I'm Not." Can the students in this school say that they, too, have

a different perspective on life, on God, because they go to this special place, this Lasallian school?

The writings in this book began with the theme of "looking deeper." The tone, the emphasis on values, rituals, metaphors, moral touchstones, classroom climate, school culture all give the teacher a platform on which to build some creative classroom and school opportunities. The ideas on expanding our parameters of conscience opens up a wide array of possibilities for taking students to a deeper level. The teacher stories, in the words of a former TV commercial, showed us a way "to be all that you can be." The Lasallian writers showed us the power of a united delivery system for ideas of great value. But, as the kids in the back seat ask: "Are we there yet?"

We need to keep in mind the reason why a Lasallian school exists and then take a look at a few procedures that may help us attain that goal. It become obvious that a Catholic school which proclaims its Catholic identity needs to have in its curriculum, courses significantly different from the public school down the block. This Catholic identity must be evident across the curriculum, not only in the religion classes by the religion teachers and through the activities the campus minister. Those classes, sometimes highlighted as the "attitude building" part of the curriculum – literature, religion, history, sociology, cultural studies (a not all-inclusive listing) open up many opportunities for the students to see their religion from many perspectives.

Teaching has definitely changed over the years, not only with the technological advances, but also very profoundly in the attitude building areas and religion in particular. Years ago a good student was one who memorized and could repeat the reason why God created him/her. "To know God, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world and be happy with Him in the next." This is a general "us" answer and people seemed happy with it. Today we need to get the message across to students that God created each of them for a specific purpose. This school is here to help each find what God's niche is for them in

life. The school points out the gifts – be they intelligence, skill, care – those qualities each individually possesses and which are to be used in a specific manner. We are to ask each student what they think is their mission in life. The teachers can be wonderful role models by standing before their classes and explaining the mission which they feel God is calling them to express publicly.

I remember listening to a presentation by Colman McCarthy, peace activist, teacher and writer, many years ago. He mentioned that we should not ask students what they want to be when they are out of school, but rather: "How do you intend to be of service when you are ready?" The strong implication was that all must be of service and we need now to find out where that task may take us. It seems to be our responsibility, too, to make students realize that they have a God-given mission in life and this school can explore this together with them. In this way, when we see our graduates walk across the stage, we can say that we did our best to touch the minds and hearts of these students in a serious way, and really feel good about it. That diploma means more than having a headful of stuff, really good facts and figures, but also that the head and heart of the graduates are linked together in a common purpose.

Peter Steinfels, in discussing the move from the personal stance of teachers to a neutral stance by teachers at the university level, mentions that other areas of school life can help deliver messages outside the classroom. Teaching, whether personal or neutral, occurs through the quality of the school community and the character of the campus culture. More lasting lessons may arise from those sources than from classroom assignments. What is distinctive here about expectations in relations to the sexes? About compassion for the isolated and alienated? About creating an environment that treats moments of prayer and reflection – before eating in the dining halls (cafeteria), for example – as natural rather than eccentric, or that integrates the liturgical rhythms of the week and the seasons into campus life? Again, these are questions that should be answered in the ecology of specific schools,

their traditions, settings, student bodies, and so on. (53) The classroom presentations need to be supported by the total school environment, and we hope that in Lasallian schools they naturally go hand in hand.

## Helps to getting the message across

A tradition among the Brothers through the years has been the **Reflection** which began the religion classes. It is a one to two minute introduction to the religion class. It became so commonplace in these classes that each student not only expected them, but actually waited for the story of the day. Some of these stories centered around some news event of the day or maybe on some happening on that day many years ago. Let's look at a sample from Nicholas Hutchinson's, *Praying Each Day of The Year.* He is a teacher in Liverpool, UK. The date in September 1.

He opens by telling his students that in the southern United States, Helen Keller lost her sight and hearing through illness when she was only 2-years old. Annie Sullivan, who had herself been blind, taught the teen-age Helen how to speak and to read Braille writing,

On this day in 1904 the deaf and blind Helen Keller graduated with honors from Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Helen wrote the following words about using whatever senses we have.

"We differ, blind and seeing, one from another – not in our senses, but in the use we make of them, in the imagination and courage with which we seek wisdom beyond our senses.

"I have walked with people whose eyes are full of light, but who see nothing in wood, sea or sky, nothing in the city streets, nothing in books.

"What a witless masquerade is this seeing! It were better far to sail forever in the night of darkness, with sense and feeling and mind, than to be thus content with the mere act of seeing.

"They have the sunset, the morning skies, the purple of distant hills – yet their souls voyage through this enchanted world with a barren stare."

He ended with a prayer: "Lord, we pray that we may live in such a way that we value all that is good in our lives and never take anyone or anything for granted. Amen." (54)

A brief discussion may have followed, a question here and there, but one thing is sure. The class was in a serious mood for learning.

An essay by Andre Dubus in his interesting book, *Broken Vessels*, gives us a glimpse ofhow the Refection is remembered through the years by the writer. "From time to time I've read or heard a strange notion: many writers come from the South, because southerners have a tradition of telling stories. I did not grow up in the true South. I grew up in southern Louisiana, a place of Cajuns and Creoles and Catholics. In the neighborhood where I spent most of my boyhood, only a few girls and boys were Protestants. Most of us came home on Ash Wednesday with dark grey crosses on our foreheads. From the third through the twelfth grades I learned from Christian Brothers at Cathedral School in Lafayette. The first class of the day was religion, and the Brothers told stories: from the O1d and New Testaments and the lives of the saints, and they also told stories to show and dramatize morality. And through the rest of the day, in other classes, they told us stories, in their worthy attempt to teach us about the earth and its people, the living and the dead. They were also not southerners. Two were from France; and Pancho Villa had sent one out of Mexico in a freight train carrying nuns and Christian Brothers and priests. He told us that story too. (55)

I have often felt that one of the real occupational hazards for the classroom teachers is that they usually have to work alone. They are cooped up in one classroom for the year with the same students each day. Are teachers overlooking a great way to add excitement to learning by not **exchanging classes** with other teachers now and then? Certainly

the biology teacher has something to say to the religion teacher about God's beautiful creation. The literature teacher and the history teacher may have a common bond. In some schools the American Literature classes and the American History classes were taught the same year just for this opportunity to exchange ideas. The science teacher and the religion teacher in this day and age will find many ideas to share and strengthen the cause of each other.

Sometime during my administrative career I was given a good question to ask teachers during their yearly evaluation. I wanted to know what was happening in the classes over and above knowing the message of the textbook. I wanted evidence of freshness, of creative activity. The question to the teacher was: **"If you were a student why would you take your own class?"** In some cases, a quick response came. At other times it appeared that the teacher had not thought much about how the students felt. My warning generally was, textbook teacher beware – that book is just an outline. Classes need to be enriched by bringing in other sources and excitement – because, frankly, there are not many exciting textbooks out there.

There is adventure in teaching. Let us not ever lose it! When Christ approached the apostles who were having a bad fishing day, he told them to "let down your nets where you now are." There are tremendous possibilities for doing great things right where we are. What advice for us teachers! Remember that bold statement of Tom Wingo, a character in Pat Conroy's *Prince of Tides?* "There is no word in the language that I revere more than TEACHER. None! My heart sings when a kid refers to me as his teacher and it always has. I've honored myself and the entire family of man by becoming one."

# NOTES

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This book furnishes many possibilities for teachers. It may be a personal reflection, a change agent for the classroom, a stimulus for a faculty meeting discussion, or a topic for a teacher workshop. Whatever, it is mean to remind us that what we are doing is special. It is a calling. The themes developed in this writing are presented as an opportunity for teachers to reflect on the more meaningful aspects of their daily work. This may be called "below the surface teaching," or the kind of teaching that has the power to transform lives.

Brother Terence McLaughlin, the author, is now in his 70th year as a Christian Brotherss and has touched all the bases on the educational playing field through his years. He has worn the title of assistant principal, principal, superintendent, director of education, and president. His teaching journey has taken him to four states and London, England.

Note for this edition of the book:

Brother Terence passed away in May 2025 at the age of 102.