



Our Lasallian Heritage

"Centered In" & "Nurtured By" the Life of Faith

Perhaps more often than not, we tend to overlook the most obvious things. We notice what it means to live in the United States when we travel outside of the country; we notice our cultural / social position when we are placed in a radically different one; and we appreciate our deeper commitments to things when we find those commitments tested at inconvenient times. In the world of Lasallian education, the most obvious—and most easily overlooked—piece of the picture is the **fact of faith**; profound, deep, all-encompassing, vibrant faith.

What else but faith drove the young De La Salle to heed the words of Scripture, the needs of society, and the momentum of circumstances to take up the thankless, demanding, messy business of organizing marginally competent teachers for schools as poor and forgotten as the families they served? What else but faith fed his persistence in that work when all human indications urged him to abandon it? What else but faith led him for forty years to spend his time, energies, intellect, and personal charisma with individuals that in the society of his time were considered, at best, a workforce for the privileged class.

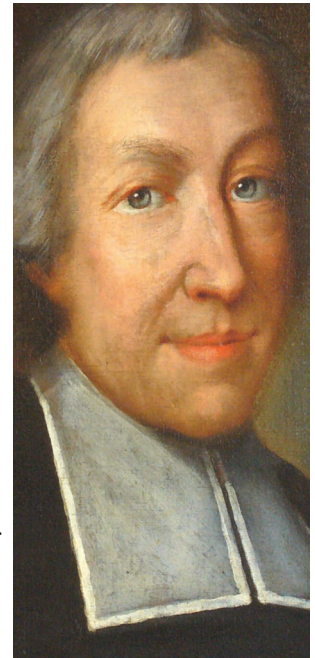
When you consider the prevalent societal notions in 17th century France, even given the vast charitable projects undertaken by many people, De La Salle stands out as someone who held the demands of faith higher than the demands of society. Where society insisted on class distinctions, De La Salle broke those distinctions by his admissions policies and class seating arrangements. Where society established strong educational limitations based on status, privilege, and connections, De La Salle kept his teachers tightly focused on the needs of the students. Where society provided education for the poor in order to keep them

under control and prepare them to enter society's workforce, De La Salle provided education as a means of liberating the poor, providing them with some measure of control over their own future in society. Where society saw things through its own lens, De La Salle had only the open eyes of faith.

Such a pervasive faith cannot be sustained unless it is combined with a vigorous life of prayer; not only the on-your-knees profoundly devotional kind of prayer, but also the at-your-side profoundly relational kind of prayer. If De La Salle placed a pebble on his prie-dieu so that when his head dropped down for lack of sleep he would instantly be re-awakened, he also wrote thousands of individual monthly letters to his followers, giving advice, urging them on, and sharing in their specific responsibilities. A realistic lived-out faith was always, and is always, part of a Lasallian prime directive.

In a contemporary environment filled with tremendous societal pressures, uncompromising scientific paradigms, exclusively therapeutic models of behavior, and a technological media-focused culture that permits transcendence only if it is couched in the miraculous, the innocuous, or the pharmacological, can we still bring true "salvation" to the young, especially the poor, by providing an education that is centered in and nurtured by the life of faith?

The untamed particularity of personhood that forces us to see the depths of mystery in one another tells us again and again that not only can it be done, it must be done. But it is a task that can only succeed



Reflection Questions

- 1) How do I sustain my faith-life? Do I *have* a faith-life?
- 2) What does it mean for me to "look upon everything with the eyes of faith, do everything in view of God, and attribute all to God"?

De La Salle

Be convinced that you will contribute to the good of the Church ... only insofar as you have the fullness of faith and are guided by the spirit of faith. (*Meditations 139.2*)

The main purpose of faith is to lead us to practice what we believe. ... Be convinced that the main conversion is that of the heart and without it the conversion of the mind is quite sterile. (*Meditations 175.2*)

It is in vain that you believe what Jesus Christ proposed to you in the holy Gospel if your actions do not give proof of your belief; in such a case your faith is in vain [James 2:20]. ... How do you show that you possess the spirit of Christianity? Be assured that to possess it your actions must not give the lie to the faith you profess, but rather be a lively expression of what is written in the Gospel. (*Meditations 84.3*)

Faith and charity; it is these two virtues which make us true Christians. Without them we can neither lead a Christian life nor be agreeable to God, nor even be happy. In fact, what a Christian needs to do in this world is to know God and to love Him. In this all his duties are summed up. We know God by faith, and charity makes us love Him. (*Duties of a Christian - Preface*)

The spirit of faith, far from substituting for professional or cultural qualifications, demands even greater respect for what is human: the realities of this world and those of faith find their origin in the same God.

– Declaration 48.3



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More than in any other domain, education to freedom is required when there is a question of instruction in the faith. The Christian school should be the freest of institutions; it suggests without coercion the infinite possibilities of life according to Christ; it announces the good news of the Gospel to each one insofar as [she or] he is ready for it, and with absolute respect for the freedom of all.

– Declaration 46.4

" Welcoming the will of God in his regard, John Baptist de La Salle transformed his entire life "from commitment to commitment" and through a succession of calls and failures, into a process of constant growth in faith."

– Rule: Article 78



Consequences for taking the life of faith seriously:

To Introduce – *Explicit*: provide good resources (all kinds.) on De La Salle and on Christian life. *Implicit*: treat all religious activities with seriousness and enough time.

To Foster – *Explicit*: have a yearly retreat, focusing on the life of faith. *Implicit*: invite faith-filled speakers to meetings.

To Enhance – *Explicit*: request volunteers, in turn, to lead the prayer. *Implicit*: listen to each other's stories of faith.