



Our Lasallian Heritage

The Students Whom We Serve

In the time of De La Salle, primary schools for the lower classes were generally disorganized, haphazard affairs that showed little care for either student welfare or academic competence. The quality of one's educational life depended on the family's social standing, financial resources, and academic interest. Those without at least two of those benefits easily fell through very large cracks.

When De La Salle and the Brothers established their schools, they virtually cut through these determinant influences by insisting that all students be treated the same and as if they were sons of the King (social standing made no difference), by requiring that everyone receive their education gratuitously (no tuition or gifts were accepted), and by providing an education that cultivated academic engagement (focused on a practical-based curriculum). As a result, no one could easily categorize these

schools within the educational structures of the time, and many "educators" became upset with what they saw as intrusions into their livelihood.

Here were schools that appeared to take the Gospel seriously, teaching those whom society had labeled socially unworthy, financially undeserving, and academically inadequate. They were taught reading with a text by De La Salle that outlined how to become socially adept. They were accepted without reference to family wealth, while those of better means were encouraged to share their benefits with those of lesser means, both academically and practically. They were seen as academically rich in individual talents, with each student's gifts specifically identified by their teachers.

Hard work, a Gospel commitment, and an appreciation of God's manifest grace in the classroom came together to launch an educational movement that is as vibrant today as it was in a cramped school in 17th century France.

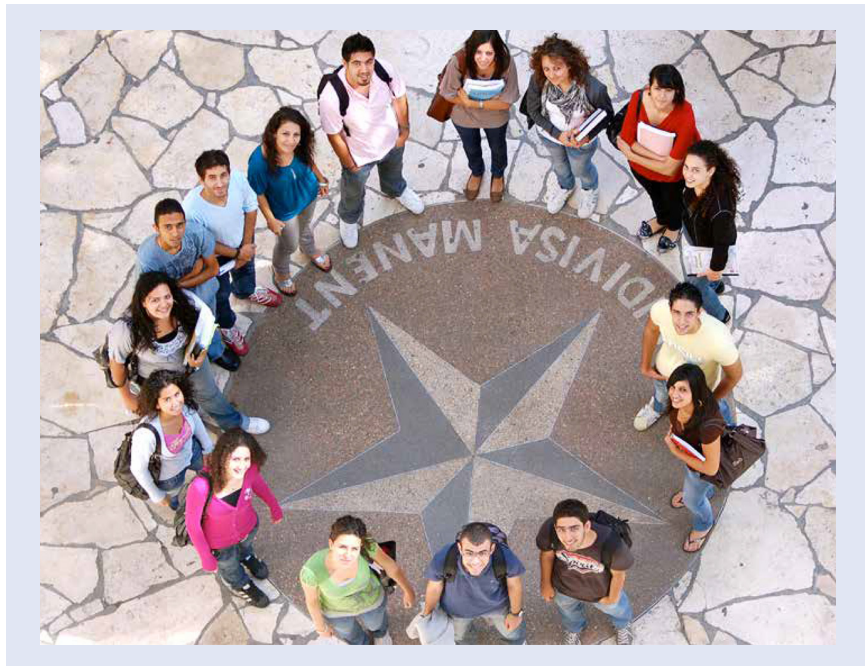


Reflection Questions

- 1) When I take a good look at the population of the place with which I am associated, what do I see?
- 2) What one group of individuals are most obviously "falling through the cracks" at my ministry or institution?
- 3) When was the last time I read or heard about the kind of population that currently lives in our area and those who may become our students or clients in the future?

“By combining Christian formation and good quality teaching, and doing so in a brotherly manner, they rendered an important and much-needed service to the Church and society. Today, the Brothers pursue the Lasallian mission in partnership with men and women who recognize the relevance of the Lasallian charism. They carry out their mission as a witness, a service, and a communion. The Institute’s primary concern is the educational needs of those whose dignity and basic rights are not recognized. By its mission, it seeks to make it possible for them to live with dignity as sons and daughters of God. The Institute establishes, renews, and diversifies its works according to the needs of the Reign of God.”

– Rule, article 13



“The Institute will find in its attentiveness to today’s youth and their need for salvation an indispensable source of renewal ... These needs are not less urgent than they were at the time of the foundation of the Institute.... The community effort to recognize and understand the problems of the youth of our time and to respond by a generous commitment is among the first of the objectives of the Institute.”

– Declaration, article 23

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De la Salle

“[O]ne of the main concerns of those who instruct others is to be able to understand their students and to discern the right way to guide them. They must show more mildness towards some, more firmness towards others. There are those who call for much patience, those who need to be stimulated and spurred on, some who need to be reproved and punished to correct them of their faults, others who must be constantly watched over to prevent them from being lost or going astray. This guidance requires understanding and discernment of spirits, qualities you should frequently and earnestly ask of God, for they are most necessary for you in the guidance of those placed in your care.” (*Meditation 33*)

“You will give account to God ... whether you have taught all... that your disciples should know according to their age and ability; whether you have not neglected some students because they were the slowest, or the poorest; whether you did not show favoritism towards others because they were rich, or pleasant, or naturally possessing more lovable qualities than others.” (*Meditation for the Time of Retreat 14.1*)