

Faith in the Presence of God

The Five Core Principles



Earth is crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes - The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

What Does This Phrase Mean?

Faith is something both precious, personal, and prayerful. It is precious because those who see things with the eyes of faith see within/beyond/through what is sensed and encountered. These are the ones who are able to be focused and doubtful, confident and expectant, realistic and genuinely hopeful. The expression of such faith attends to, looks for, and reflects the presence of God.

Faith is something personal because it is uniquely lived and made manifest. It is as multi-faceted as biology and as solid and common as gravity. Faith rests in personal relationship.

Faith is something prayerful because it cannot survive without being revealed and demonstrated. It bubbles up with joy because it is a interior and visceral celebration of God's life in our midst, a connection to the pulse of the universe. Prayer is the vehicle of faith's expression, and the "presence of God" is how we best point to and celebrate the reality of that presence within and around us.

Faith in the presence of God, then, invites the cultivation of the precious, the personal, and the prayerful vis-a-vis God as present.

Why should I care?

St. John Baptist de La Salle found that the awareness, the growth, and the celebration of the presence of God was a key element of his personal faith, and this is what he desired also for his followers and for the students in his care. There was nothing more precious that he could share with them, as his letters, writings, and meditations show.

If this was so important to him and to Lasallians throughout the ages, then we may also wish to attend to God's presence in our lives.



The Holy Presence of God - A Reflection [From an essay by Br. Luke Salm, FSC]

1. De La Salle's Prayer

If there is one prayer that is familiar to Lasallians everywhere, it is "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God."

This invitation comes from Saint John Baptist de La Salle himself, who prescribed that it be invoked at certain times throughout the school day as a reminder that sharing the mission includes sharing the constant awareness of the presence of God in whose name the mission is carried out.

2. Let us remember implies that we have forgotten something. In the rush of running a classroom or a school, God can hardly be at the forefront of our immediate concerns. Time out, then, to remember what and Who is central to the entire enterprise.

3. We are in the holy presence refers to a personal presence to each of us individually and as a community. Personal presence is different from being present to things (e.g., furniture or in a crowd). It is a genuine presence, and it is holy or "awesome" since

the Person to whom we are present is holy, and we are made holy by recalling it.

4. The holy presence of God invites us toward the God who is absolute mystery and the very ground of our existence, who is outside of space and time, and whose very self is communicated to us who are God's rational creatures.

5. Doing Theology This prayer invites us to reflect (logos) on the mystery of God (Theos). It can be sophisticated or simple, biblical or magisterial, intellectual or personal. None can be adequate to the reality of the God that is its object. Yet the invitation is to reflect on God in whose presence we find ourselves when we use the words "God" and "presence" in the same breath.

6. God's Spirit lies behind each experience of prayer, not human ingenuity and effort alone. And once the Spirit has enabled us to pray in God's presence, it is the same Spirit that will give efficacy to our work in the Lasallian mission.

Ways of Recalling the Presence of God (From De La Salle)

We can consider God present in three different ways:

- 1) **In a place**, either because God is everywhere [Ps. 139:7-10], or in the community gathered in God's name [Mt. 18:20].
- 2) **In ourselves**, either as sustaining us in existence [Acts 17:28], or by grace and the Holy Spirit [1 Cor. 6:19].
- 3) **In church**, as the house of God [Ps. 93:5], or by reason of the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

**This I believe, O my God,
that wherever I go
I will find you,
and there is no place
not honored
by your presence."**

- De La Salle -

What Difference Does Faith Make?

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen. [Hebrews 11:1] "Trust" is very often used as a synonym, because it seems more familiar and personal. Trust is something I experience and know in my life.

Faith is what trust seeks to be in its deepest, widest sense. Faith is trust thrown into the universe.

Children, the old, and those at the edges (and who of us have not felt those edges?) grow their capacity for faith because this is what engages life's meaning best, either through innocence, experience, or necessity.

"As we enter into a mystery, we enlarge our capacity for understanding it." [Herbert McCabe, O.P.] Faith grows roots. Faith in

the awesome presence of God connects our deepest desires with our greatest mystery.

Daily, consistent, habitual attention to the ever larger, ever deeper, ever more connected, God-infused networks that constitute our lives cannot but bring us to the place where our capacity for God fully engages God's presence in us.

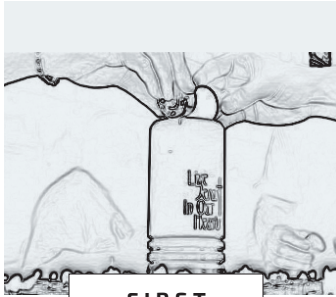
Five Core Principles



• Faith in the Presence of God •

GROUP REFLECTION

On this sheet are the three suggested movements for thoughtfully considering the topic and guiding questions that were provided to you as part of your board packet.



FIRST

REMEMBERING GOD'S PRESENCE

Let us remember that we are in the Holy Presence of God

"We can consider God present in the place where we are, because our Lord says in Saint Matthew's Gospel, For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (De La Salle)

[PAUSE]



SECOND

REFLECTIONS & CONVERSATION

- What ideas or parts of the INFOSHEET caught your attention?
- How do you this "Faith in the Presence of God" applying in terms of your responsibilities for this community?
- What struck you about the quotes on the other side of this sheet?

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious and loving God. All of us at this school work to make the loving and saving presence of your Son, Jesus Christ, a living and effective reality in the lives of those who are entrusted to our care. Be with us in all that we talk about and do, so that all those involved with Lasallian education here may discover your presence in their midst and come to hold dear what we hold dear. It is your work that we do. Help us to be worthy of the task. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



THIRD

FURTHER EXPLORATION

De La Salle used to make an effort to remember the presence of God each time that he walked through a doorway into a new space. Is there a modern version of that experiential prompt that might work for us today? For you?



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SACRAMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Taken from "What Makes Us Catholic" - by Thomas Groome

Life as Meaningful and Worthwhile

Have you ever worked hard and achieved something, only to realize that it came as a gift? Pull back the veil a little, and we discover that life in the world is like that. Imagine recognizing that every day is a gift to be lived with gratitude instead of a problem to be solved or a burden to bear. What a life-giving attitude! My grandmother would often say, "Every morning you wake up, stretch out your arms and don't feel the side of a coffin, that's a great day." Granny had a Catholic imagination about life in the world. - Pg. 81

God's Presence Makes Life Worthwhile

The dominant attitude of society is that our worth depends on what we do, possess, or achieve. Christian faith, by contrast, holds that the worthwhileness of life - like its meaningfulness - does not depend on our efforts alone. Rather, life in the world is worthwhile because of God's providence, presence, and partnership with us. Within God's sustaining love, life is worthy for its own sake, regardless of our accomplishments or accolades. We give glory to God just by being alive as reflections of the divine in the world. What more worthwhile purpose could we have? - Pg. 83

The More in the Midst of the Ordinary

As a rule of thumb, we can say that sacramental consciousness amounts to being alert to *the more in the midst of the ordinary*. True, it looks *at* the world, but also looks *through* it, convinced that there is always more than meets the eye. A sacramental consciousness recognizes and responds to the Transcendent in the everyday, the Creator in the created order, the Divine in the human, the Supernatural in the natural, the Cosmos in the grain of sand, and the connectedness of all in God's Spirit. A sacramental consciousness helps us to responsibly participate in everyday life as a divine-human partnership. - Pg. 92

Thin Moments

People with a sacramental consciousness are able to "pull back the curtain" (*revelare*) on God's presence and grace in the everyday... On occasion, "the more in the midst of the ordinary" may be patently obvious. A couple stand holding their newborn child have a felt sense of Loving Mystery ... Such immediate experiences are what Celtic spirituality calls "thin moments," when the veil between human and divine become gossamer-thin - almost lifted. But for more ordinary moments, we need imagination to recognize "the more." Otherwise, grandmother's hug and the baby's smile can be missed as God's love in our lives. - Pg. 93-94

A LASALLIAN REFERENCE



"It is to you especially that Jesus Christ addresses these words: Seek first the kingdom of God. ... For this present life you should not be concerned about anything except to make God reign in your heart by his grace and by the fullness of his love. It is for him that you should be living; it is the life of God himself that ought to be the life of your soul." (Med. 67.1)

"When a person abandons himself to the Providence of God it is like a man who puts himself out on the high seas without sails or oars." (Med. 134.1)

De La Salle