

99. ZEAL

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John Baptist de La Salle was not only a model of ecclesiastical zeal: by committing himself with the Brothers to the establishment of the Christian Schools, he helped them to base their zeal on a living faith. As a consequence, most of his writings, while intended for the Brothers, can be applied also to Christian teachers in general. When the need arises, we shall point out where he is referring specifically to the Brothers, and where, because of a change in context, what he says needs to be interpreted somewhat differently nowadays.

1. MEANING OF THE WORD “ZEAL”

1.1. In dictionaries

According to Bailly’s Greek dictionary, zeal means “ebullition”, “boiling”, and hence, “ardour” and “emulation”. Zeal can become “rivalry”, that is, the object of envy, hatred or jealousy.

According to the 1704 edition of the Trévoux dictionary, published by the Jesuits, zeal is an ardent affection for something (*studium ardens*). It is used especially, when speaking of holy things, of pure and

enlightened attachment to the service of God. It can refer to the high ideals of country and religion: zeal for the glory of God, for the faith; zeal for the altar, for the salvation of souls. The dictionary speaks also of rash zeal not tempered by prudence; of blind zeal which does not seek the truth. The best arrangement can be spoiled by excessive zeal.

In poetic language, zeal is used to signify intense affection and ardent love for a cherished person or for

a friend. "There is Christian zeal, which Paul, as the friend of the Spouse, shows for the Churches entrusted to him. The purity which he defends in them is the preservation from all false doctrine" (*Vocabulaire de théologie biblique*, p. 1136).

1.2. A remark about its pejorative connotation

Sometimes "zeal" is considered to have a negative sense. The French expression *faire du zèle*, literally "to act zealously", means to show excessive or inopportune eagerness. In De La Salle's writings, zeal is never used in this sense, although it is by his biographers. Dom François Élie Maillefer writes: "M. Nyel's

zeal harmful to the schools. [...] His zeal consisted solely in trying to set up establishments without concerning himself with their improvement. Because he was obliged to move constantly from place to place in pursuit of his aims, he was unable to give the necessary attention to the problems which arose in his newly founded schools" (CL 6,39).

Jean Baptiste Blain, in his turn, speaks of "the bitter zeal of the zealots of the old strict ways, [...] these false Jeremiahs who accuse [...] the Church of laxity". These are the terms in which he speaks of the Jansenists, whose activities he condemned in vigorous terms in his various writings (CL 8,207f).

2. DE LA SALLE'S ZEAL

2.1. The views of the first biographers¹

Brother **Bernard** divides his life of De La Salle into four parts, each part concentrating on a particular virtue. The second part, dealing with "the establishment of the Institute" (CL 4,5), concentrates on zeal. Already in the first part, devoted to De La Salle's "childhood and accession to Holy Orders", and illustrating his piety, Bernard mentions the zeal of the future founder several times. He imitated his patron saint "by his zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls" (*id.* 11). Under Nicolas Roland's guidance, "he began to have great zeal for the salvation of souls" (13). When he was a young canon, his zeal led him to cause a priest to leave the town because he was failing in his duties (17). It was his zeal for the glory of God that inspired him to lodge the teachers in the same house (36) and later in his own home (37), overcoming the repugnance he felt in their presence: Pious persons were impressed by De La Salle's virtue, by "his zeal, his humility and his detachment from all earthly things" (79). The opening of the seminary for country teachers was "an opportunity for him to exercise his zeal and his charity" (85).

The moral portrait with which **F.E. Maillefer** ends the biography of his uncle emphasises his zeal for the instruction of youth: "He devoted his whole life tirelessly to it, and left his Brothers of the Schools and all those who knew him clear signs of his zeal and of all the virtues appropriate to an ecclesiastic" (CL 6,256). When he had to replace one of the Brothers in the

école St Jacques in Rheims, he put on his habit: "Several persons, including his friends, were convinced he was taking his zeal too far" (*id.* 72). During the famine of 1693, the Brothers reproached De La Salle for feeding too many people. His reply was: "If you are afraid that too great a number will overwhelm you, throw me out!" (112). The Carbon manuscript says that De La Salle replied "with zeal", while the Rheims manuscript notes "with fire". His determined zeal over a period of three months led to the conversion of a young Dutchman to Catholicism (122). His zeal for the glory of God made him open the boarding school for the Irish (134).

In his fourth book, *The spirit, sentiments and virtues of M. de La Salle*, **J.B. Blain** devotes almost 40 pages to his zeal, considering that "the second sign of his eminent charity [was] what he did for God". He adds: "The same zeal for the glory of God which burned in this holy priest, inspired him with a holy enthusiasm for the salvation of souls, for these two aims were inseparable" (CL 8,338). The zeal of the Founder of the Brothers was not limited to the schools. The biographer speaks of his giving a mission in a rural parish (*id.* 337), converting sinners (351f), Protestants (345f), unworthy priests (351f)... But it was, in particular, by associating himself with the school-teachers, and by living like them, that he showed "his truly pure zeal, which is seen only in Jesus Christ, in his Apostles and in those who wish to imitate them" (355). And hence also his zeal for the sanctification of the Brothers (363).

“He zeal often led him to visit [classes] to examine them and to see with his own eyes what happened in them. He gave his attention to both the pupils and the teachers” (359). And so when De La Salle speaks of the zeal of the Christian educator he is well qualified to do so.

2.2. Anonymous corroboration

The introductions to the first edition of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, and to the first edition of the *Meditations for Sundays and Feasts*, both say how these books reflect “the ardent zeal with which [this holy priest] burned for the instruction of children” (CL 13,5).

“An educated and very enlightened person, who was kind enough to take the trouble to examine at leisure the entire manuscript of these meditations before having them printed, admired in them with astonishment the ardent zeal of this apostolic person revealed in his simple and guileless language [...]. This holy priest has unwittingly revealed in this book the true spirit which animated him and which guided him in all his actions” (CL 12,1).

2.3. His own example

And so, for De La Salle, zeal was an attitude to life, based on his rich personal experience. He lived his life of faith intensely, and from the moment he

decided to undertake the work of the Christian Schools (1679-1682), he committed his own life and his whole future to it. He allowed himself to be moved to compassion by the way in which the children of the artisans and the poor in the French society of his day were abandoned. After his meeting with Adrien Nyel, he found himself involved in the establishment of the first schools for boys in Rheims. Step by step, he committed himself further to the newly born work of the Christian Schools, responding to what he saw as a personal call from God. In one commitment after another, he dedicated himself totally to this work and consecrated his entire life to it. He used his intelligence and his determination to ensure that the schools were well run, and that the Brothers who taught in them were trained. De La Salle recalls all this in the *Memoir on the Beginnings*, quoted by Blain: “God who directs all things with wisdom and gentleness and who is not accustomed to imposing his will on man, wishing to make me take complete charge of the schools, did so in an imperceptible manner over a long period of time, in such a way that one commitment led me to another, without my having foreseen any of this at the beginning” (CL 7,169).

De La Salle was convinced that there was “a very great need” for the Christian Schools for the service of the poor (RC 1,4), and that the efforts to strengthen them and to ensure they were well run, accomplished at the same time “the work of God” (CL 10,115 = EP 3,0,8).

3. THE ZEAL OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR²

3.1. A tentative definition

Taking his inspiration from Jesus and the Apostles, De La Salle sees zeal as an intense feeling — ardour, affection, passion — that the Brother of the Christian Schools has for a specific goal: the salvation of the children God has confided to him. In practical terms, his task consists in making them good citizens and good Christians (MF 160,3). This involves teaching them catechism, forming their conscience on the basis of Gospel values, initiating them into the Christian life and, at the same time, instructing and educating them, so as to enable them to exercise a profession, and to take their place in society.

In order to achieve this, the Brother has at his disposal the ideal means: the Christian school. His zeal

leads him to devote all his talents and energy to the Christian education of his pupils, and to organise his teaching in such a way that these aims are attained in an efficient manner.

Zeal is an interior force which infuses energy into all that a Brother does (LA 16,7; MF 87,1; MF 96,3); a force which gives meaning to the multiplicity of activities which fill his life: his prayer, his training and his professional work as a teacher, educator and catechist (CL 15,39 = R 8,2,21).

3.2. In order

“to procure the salvation of children”

Zeal is a virtue which characterises the Christian educator. With gravity, silence, humility, patience,

wisdom, prudence, reserve, gentleness, vigilance, piety and generosity, zeal is part of the image De La Salle has of the good teacher (R 5).³

But this is no ordinary virtue. Together with the spirit of faith, zeal is a primary characteristic of the spirituality and life of the Brother of the Christian Schools and of his Institute: "Secondly, the spirit of their Institute consists in an ardent zeal for the instruction of children, and for bringing them up in the fear of God, inducing them to preserve their innocence if they have not lost it, and inspiring them with a great aversion and horror for sin, and whatever might cause them to lose purity.

"In order to enter into this spirit, the Brothers of the Society shall strive by prayer, instruction, and by their vigilance and good conduct in school, to procure the salvation of the children confided to their care, bringing them up in piety and in a truly Christian spirit, that is, according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel" (RC 2,9-10).

Zeal, therefore, is an essential trait of the Lasallian teacher's spirituality, whether he is a Brother or a lay person. To the extent that men and women teachers consider their work "as a holy ministry", taking their inspiration from the spirituality of St John Baptist de La Salle, their zeal will become an increasingly important dimension of their lives and an interior source of energy. This is what gives meaning and unity to their professional work.⁴

When we speak of Christian educators, we always refer to Lasallian educators as a whole: men, women, Brothers and lay persons. By doing so, we do not mean to deny or minimise the differences that exist between Brothers, who are consecrated religious, and lay persons living in the world.

3.3. What is the source of this interior force?

1. **Its source is faith**, the spirit of faith, which makes us see young people and society from the point of view of a God who loves his people and desires its salvation.

"The Christian educator, imbued with the spirit of faith, contemplates in his prayer the mystery of Christ, the unique plan of God, a God who reveals himself in life and wishes to save all men in Christ. He sees the needs of young people, he participates intimately in God's salvific will and offers himself to the Father,

in the Spirit and through Christ, in order to contribute to the salvation of these young people, and to help them live according to the spirit of Christianity every moment of their lives".⁵

2. It is inseparable from the conviction that **it is God who established the Christian Schools.**

"One of the main duties of fathers and mothers is to bring up their children in a Christian manner, and to teach them their religion. But most parents are not sufficiently enlightened in these matters: some are taken up with their material needs and the support of their family; others, under the constant concern of earning the necessities of life for themselves and their children, cannot take the time to teach their children their duties as Christians. In his providential care, God has appointed others to take the place of fathers and mothers. He sends persons with the necessary enlightenment and zeal to help children attain the knowledge of God and of his mysteries" (MR 193,2).

God himself calls the teacher and chooses him for the "ministry" of education (MF 140,2; 146,2; 177,1; MR 197,3). His daily work in school is an expression of God's will, and is very useful for the Church. It is a great grace for the educator to have been chosen to educate young people.

So the teacher sees himself, in his relationship with the children, as a "minister of God" and an "ambassador of Jesus Christ" (MR 201,1-2; 193,1; MF 131,2). His profession as a teacher is rooted in the call of God, whose work must be accomplished. Because his work is a vocation and confers on him great dignity, he must prepare himself for it and devote himself to his pupils with generosity and great zeal.

"Since you are ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the work that you do, you must act as representing Jesus Christ himself. He wants his disciples to see him in you and receive your teaching as if he were teaching them. They must be convinced that the truth of Jesus Christ comes from your mouth, that it is only in his name that you teach, that he has given you authority over them. They are a letter which Christ dictates to you, which you write each day in their hearts, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God" (MR 195,2 quoting 2 Co 4,5).

"Let it be clear, then, in all your relations with the children who are entrusted to you, that you look upon yourself as ministers of God, acting with love, with a

sincere and true zeal, accepting with much patience the difficulties you have to suffer. [...] The zeal that inspires you is meant to give you these dispositions, recognising that it is God who has called you, who has chosen you for this ministry, and who has sent you to work in his vineyard. Fulfil your ministry, then, with all the affection of your heart, working entirely for him" (MR 201,1).

3. This force is inseparable from the desire to love the children and young people as God loves them.

"You must imitate God himself to some extent, for he so loved the souls he created that, when he saw them involved in sin and unable to free themselves, his zeal and desire for their salvation led him to send his own Son to rescue them from this wretched state" (MR 201,3).

It is in this sense that De La Salle offers the Christian educator Christ, his Apostles and saints as models they should imitate. He invites him to deepen his faith — the source of his zeal and the guiding principle of his spirituality — by his personal prayer, by contemplating the model life led by Jesus Christ and the saints (MR 201,2; MD 59,1; MF 98,3; 99,1; 102,1; 109,3).

Because the zeal of the Christian educator is rooted in faith and in God's own love for children and young people, it is ardent, active, lively (MR 201,3), tireless (MF 181,2; 109,3) and efficacious (MR 202,3). The teacher devotes himself totally to the work of educating his pupils, and especially, of educating them in the faith. He sacrifices himself for them, and is prepared to dedicate his whole life to this work (MR 201,3).

"The zeal you are obliged to have in your ministry must be so active and so lively that you are able to tell the parents of the children what is said in Scripture: «Give us their souls, keep everything else for yourselves», that is, what we want is to work for the salvation of their souls; this is the only reason why we have undertaken the responsibility to guide and teach them. [...] For this had to be the kind of ardent zeal you had for the salvation of those you teach, when you were led to sacrifice yourself and to dedicate your whole life to giving these children a Christian education, and procuring for them the life of grace in this world and eternal life in the next" (MR 201,3).

3.4. A virtue that has to be nourished and has to grow daily

Zeal is a virtue and an attitude which the Brother and the Lasallian teacher have to nourish and develop in themselves every day. To help them do this, De La Salle suggests some practical means to develop their personal relationship with God and improve their professional work as educators.

In the first place, according to De La Salle, the most important thing the Christian teacher has to do is to fill himself with God and his love in his prayer, and to live according to the Gospel. Zeal is a grace given by God, as is also the salvation of the children entrusted to him. For this reason, it is important to ask God for it with great insistence every day in prayer: "Beseech God to confer on you today the same grace as he gave the Apostles, so that after filling you with his Spirit for your own sanctification, he may confer it on you for the sanctification of others also" (MD 43,3).

The Brother nourishes his zeal by his personal relationship with God. In silence and in prayer, he fills himself with God and his love, following the example of St Remi who showed great zeal for the good of the Church: "Such is ordinarily the fruit of true retreat. Those who during it are filled with divine love, endeavour to share it with others when God, for the good of the Church, lays upon them the obligation of dealing with the world. It is then that these great men, filled with the Spirit of God, try with all possible earnestness to make others know and taste what they themselves experience; and animated with this zeal, they are very successful in helping a great number of souls to give themselves to God" (MF 171,2).

The Brother, like any other Christian educator, needs to base his life on Gospel values, and to preach by example throughout his life: "You are obliged by your state to teach the truths of the Gospel every day. Practise yourself what all Christians are held to comply with, before attempting to teach others to do so. If you do not have the special grace of being the Precursor of Jesus Christ, like St John [the Baptist], you have at least that of being his successor in his ministry. Be convinced that you will make it produce fruit in others only to the extent it has produced fruit in you" (MF 138,3).

In the second place, the Christian teacher has to take the most efficacious means he can to ensure that

his pupils are trained as Christians and citizens. The Brother must teach his pupils with great dedication, and constantly improve his own pedagogical skills and professional behaviour: "Your work requires you to exercise zeal not only for the good of the Church, but also for that of your country. Your pupils are already members of the State, and one day will be fully so. You will contribute to the good of the Church, when you make them true Christians, submissive to the teachings of the faith and the maxims of the Holy

Gospel. You will contribute to the good of your country by teaching them to read and write and everything else your ministry requires from an external point of view. However, you must join piety to your external efforts, otherwise your work will not be of much use" (MF 160,3).

This could hardly be better said. In what follows, we shall consider De La Salle's basic thesis in greater detail.

4. HOW DOES DE LA SALLE DEFINE A ZEALOUS TEACHER?

According to De La Salle, the zeal of a teacher is evident from his overall conduct. His whole person demonstrates it and it governs the way he is and the way he acts in his professional work. It has a direct influence on all his attitudes towards the pupils and on his relations with them, not only when he is teaching them catechism and educating them in the faith, but in all his work as an educator.

4.1. The integrated life of the Christian teacher

To understand this notion better, we need to bear in mind that De La Salle was convinced that "the person and life of the Brother" was characterised by "an absolute unity",⁶ a conviction that was the fruit of his faith-inspired contemplation.

The Brother sanctifies himself by never ceasing to deepen his spiritual life and his union with God in prayer and in the sacraments. At the same time, he does his daily work in school with competence, great zeal and total dedication.

De La Salle's personal experience of this integrated life enabled him to speak of it clearly and with authority, and led him to tell his Brothers that it was one of the most important characteristics of the spirituality he wished to share with them: "It is a good rule of conduct to make no distinction between the matters proper to our state and those which refer to our salvation and perfection. We can be certain that we can work out our salvation and acquire perfection in no better way than by performing the duties of our charge, provided that we accomplish them in view of the will of God" (CL 10,114 = EP 3,03).

"Make no distinction between the affairs of your

state and those of your salvation and your perfection" (CL 15,184 = R 16,1,4).⁷

For the Lasallian educator, such an outlook on life and work opens up for him vast opportunities to fulfil himself personally and to achieve salvation. De La Salle shows his Brothers how closely their own salvation is bound up with that of their pupils: "Have you up to the present looked upon the salvation of your pupils as the matter for your own salvation during the whole time that they are under your guidance? You have exercises which are established for your own sanctification. If you have an ardent zeal for the salvation of those you are called to teach, you will not fail to perform them and relate them to this purpose. By doing so you will draw down on your students the graces needed to contribute to their salvation, and will ensure, by acting in this way, that God himself will take responsibility for yours" (MR 205,2).

4.2. Integrated education, the purpose of the "Christian Schools"

This approach to teaching cannot fail to integrate the way a person working with young people acts, thinks and feels. What is more, it helps to do away with the dichotomy between the "secular" and the "religious", between teaching secular subjects and being involved in catechetical and pastoral work. The aim of the Christian school is to educate the individual under all his aspects: to make him a good citizen and a good Christian (MF 160,3; MR 205,3). All the activities of the school pursue this aim.

In a school understood in these terms, the educator fulfils his "ministry" through the multiplicity of his activities. He helps the pupils to grow as individuals, to increase their knowledge and their skills and so open

up for themselves opportunities in society. At the same time, he helps them to develop their faith and grow in their relationship with God. In this way, the educator contributes to the fulfilment of the plan God has for his pupils. Fired with zeal such as this, he devotes himself generously to the “ministry” of education, not wishing to neglect anything that can further the education of his pupils.

MD 33 mentions some of the consequences of zeal understood in this way, and in particular, the personal knowledge of pupils which enables the teacher to adapt his approach to the individual: “Such conduct depends upon the knowledge and discernment of character. This is a grace you must beg of God most earnestly, as being one of the most essential for you in the direction of those over whom you have charge” (MD 33,1).

4.3. The catechist educates his pupils in the faith

The Christian educator shows his zeal — his concern, his commitment, his creativity — in a special way when he teaches catechism to the children entrusted to him and educates them in the faith. The very essence of his role as a teacher of religion is to introduce children to the faith, and to set them on the path of knowledge. This is one of the reasons why Christian schools exist, and are a valuable means of evangelising young people.⁸

“The aim of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children, and it is for this purpose that it conducts schools. It entrusts the children to the care of the teachers from morning till night, so that, by instructing them in the mysteries of our holy religion and inspiring them with Christian maxims, they can teach the children to lead good lives, and in this way give them an education suited to their needs” (RC 1,3).

“Giving children a Christian education”, making them “true Christians” (MF 160,3) and “providing children with a Christian mentality” (MR 197,2), these are the terms in which De La Salle defined the primary objective of Christian educators. This objective can be considered under three headings:

4.3.1. The catechist gives a **solid religious formation** which teaches young people the truths of the Christian religion, helps them to clarify their religious knowledge, and gives their faith a solid foundation which will serve as an inspiration for their lives as Christians (cf. MF 145,3; 116,2).

This can be achieved only by an excellent catechist, that is, by one who combines a solid faith with equally solid religious learning (cf. MF 153,1; 120,1; 170,1). In view of this, De La Salle invites the Brothers to deepen their knowledge of the faith by daily study.

A more radical suggestion made by the Founder is that the Brothers should live lives inspired by these truths, and frequently resort to prayer to implore God to give them the grace necessary in order to undertake such a task: “You are successors to the Apostles in their task of catechising and teaching the poor. If you want to make your ministry as useful to the Church as it can be, you must teach catechism every day, helping your pupils learn the basic truths of our religion [...]. Like them, also, you must afterwards turn your back on your work and spend time reading and making mental prayer, so that you can become thoroughly conversant with the truths and holy maxims you wish to teach them and, through prayer, draw down upon yourselves the grace of God you need to do this work” (MR 200,1).

4.3.2. The catechist **introduces children to the practice of their faith** and particularly to prayer and the sacraments. He teaches the pupils to pray by themselves and introduces them to the rewarding experience of meeting Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. He shows them how to take an intelligent and active part in liturgical celebrations, especially the Mass. He prays for his pupils and in their presence.

“We should induce them [the children] to pray often and with attention. We should also teach them the holy dispositions with which they should receive the sacraments, and at the same time encourage them to approach them frequently in order to keep their conscience free from sin. [...] You should pray fervently for those whom you find are least inclined to piety, so that God may make them feel the importance of salvation. You act as mediators in their regard, God making use of you to teach them the means of salvation” (MD 56,3 quoting 1 Co 3,5).

If you failed to train your pupils “in piety and to love prayer, you would be false prophets for them. If they are distracted in church, not saying their prayers, people will see from their misbehaviour that you yourself are lacking in piety” (MD 60,3).

4.3.3. The catechist **forms their conscience** in order to help them base their ethical behaviour on Gospel values. He tries, in particular, to inspire them with

an aversion for sin and occasions of sin, and to strengthen their attachment to Jesus Christ in the daily events of their lives: "Inspire them with a love of virtue and fill their hearts with sentiments of piety. Endeavour to ensure that God never ceases to reign in them" (MD 67,1). "Often encourage your pupils to avoid sin with as much speed as they would the presence of a snake. Make it your first care to inspire them with a horror for impurity, for misbehaviour in church and during prayer, for stealing, lying, disobedience, lack of respect for their parents, and for other faults against their companions" (MR 200,1).

The catechist brings this about by prayer, word and example, by vigilance in school and in church (RC 2,10; MD 33,1; MR 194,2; MR 203).

The aim that De La Salle sets the educator in his work of teaching the Christian faith to his pupils shows the high level of spiritual life that could be attained by at least some of the poor pupils frequenting the Christian Schools: "Ensure that they often think of Jesus, their good and only Master, that they often speak of Jesus, that they aspire only after Jesus and that they breathe only for him" (MF 102,2).

4.4. A competent and effective educator

Zeal makes the Lasallian educator do his work competently, and respond effectively to the needs of the children and young people he teaches. Efficiency and professional competence are, among others, distinctive characteristics of Lasallian pedagogy.⁹ These are based on:

- Good professional training and ongoing formation to enable the teacher to fulfil his professional duties effectively (cf. MD 41,3; MF 120,1; 170,2).
- An efficient and realistic pedagogical approach, centred on the individual needs of children, taking into account their varying levels of knowledge, adapted to the speed at which individual children learn, and which tries to use methods tailored to the personal needs of the children (cf. CE 16,2). This approach aims to prepare pupils effectively for life and their place in society (CL 24,187 = CE 16,2,21).
- Constant revision of work by the teacher (CL 15,38 = R 8,2,21).

De La Salle invites his Brothers to adopt these professional practices in their work as educators. In his pedagogical writings, he provides them with a whole

series of guidelines, methods and techniques. He invites them to nourish themselves spiritually by adopting practices such as recalling the presence of God, and praying about the events of their life and work. He suggests also the practice of examining their conduct in the presence of God (MR 206,1; MF 91,3), and conversing with their Brothers (CL 15,62 = R 10,2,7).

4.5. Associated with other educators in the service of the poor

The Brother exercises his zeal and educates children as a member of a community of educators, and not as an individual. This is why, in association with his Brothers, he is a member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. De La Salle founded his Institute for the purpose of providing gratuitous human and Christian education to the children of the artisans and the poor. With this purpose in view, he recruited teachers, trained them, and established schools characterised by sound pedagogy and organisation.

"The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a society in which profession is made of conducting schools gratuitously. [...] The purpose of this Institute is to give a Christian education. [...] There is a very great need for this Institute because the artisans and the poor, being normally little instructed and occupied all day long earning their living for themselves and for their children, cannot themselves give them the instruction they need, nor provide them with a decent and Christian education" (RC 1,1-4).

This text emphasises two very important characteristics of the context in which, ever since the beginning of the Institute, the Brothers have exercised their zeal:

1. The community aspect. Together and by association, the Brothers fulfil their mission as members of a community, working in close collaboration with one another. Together, they educate children, sharing a common approach and pursuing common objectives. In the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, De La Salle offers an excellent and impressive educational blueprint, intended to serve as a basis for the team-work of the Brothers. This blueprint guarantees also the continuity and the follow-through of teaching programmes despite changes of staff.
2. Accessibility for the working classes. This is one of

the reasons for having gratuity. The schools are open to all, but special concern is shown in them for the most needy.

The *Conduct of the Christian Schools* mentions ways of teaching the children of the artisans and the poor, which are better suited to their particular needs

(MF 150,1; 133,3; 113,1; 166,2; 137,2): "You are under the obligation to instruct the poor. You should, therefore, have a great tenderness towards them and supply their spiritual wants to the best of your ability, looking upon these children as members of Jesus Christ and as his much loved ones" (MF 80,3).

5. SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE ZEAL OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR

For the Lasallian educator, therefore, zeal inspires a number of attitudes which together constitute a **particular way of being an educator**. Using some of the points mentioned previously in this article, we can summarise some of these Lasallian attitudes as follows:

5.1. Love for each of his pupils

A characteristic of the Lasallian educator is to relate to each pupil individually, to know him well, and to take his situation into account - his personal and family life, his talents - both while teaching him and when helping him to decide which courses to follow.¹⁰ Zeal leads the Lasallian educator to develop in himself an attitude of love for his pupils, of being close to them, and of being interested in all of them. This is the foundation of his work as an educator: "They will have a tender love for all their pupils. [...] They will show equal affection for all their pupils, more even for the poor than for the rich, because the Institute has entrusted the former to their care to a much greater extent than the latter" (RC 7,13-14).

5.2. Devotedness and dedication to his pupils

The zealous educator works for his pupils without asking for anything in return. He devotes himself to their Christian education without counting the cost either in time or effort (cf. MF 135,2; MD 58,1; MF 188,3; MR 198,2). He develops in himself an attitude of total availability, that of a teacher with a generous heart, who is disinterested, committed, accessible to everyone, full of concern, in particular, for those with the most problems. This dedication to the service of young people stimulates him to look diligently for the most appropriate and effective means to do his work (cf. MF 114,2; MR 200,1), means which are all the more effective for being shared by a group of educa-

tors inspired by the same values. Dedication to young people and diligence are not the result simply of a straightforward desire to be active and efficient: they are the consequence of love for children and young people; they are rooted in the faith which leads to zeal (cf. MF 166,2; 140,2; MD 70,2; MR 201,2).

5.3. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit

The work of education and, in particular, of education in the faith, is full of difficulties which can lead to discouragement. The Christian educator needs the outpouring of the Spirit to give him the necessary strength to face difficulties, to give him patience, constancy, energy (cf. MD 49,1; MF 140,3; 166,3; 182,3). Seen with the eyes of faith, difficulties stimulate zeal (cf. MD 78,3; MF 168,3) and can provide a firmer foundation for the work of evangelisation (cf. MF 126,2).

5.4. Exemplary conduct

We teach more by what we are than by what we say or do. We can teach only when words are backed up by example. The Lasallian educator has to become an example and a model for his pupils (cf. MR 194,3; MF 128,1-3). His own experience as an educator led De La Salle to insist on the importance of example for the teacher: "Example makes a much greater impression on the mind and the heart than words. This is especially true in the case of children, since they do not yet have sufficient capacity for reflection, and ordinarily model themselves on the example of their teachers. They are led more readily to do what they see done for them than to carry out what they are told to do, especially when the words they hear do not correspond to the actions they see" (MR 202,3).

The awareness that example is a powerful educa-

tional means (cf. MF 158,3) encourages the zealous teacher to live better in order to teacher better. Zeal

influences not only his teaching but also the depths of his personality (cf. MD 69,1; MF 178,1).

The history of the Institute since its foundation has always been the history of communities of teachers, of educational communities, formed of Brothers and other Lasallian educators, inspired by an evangelical zeal, putting their skills and their creativity at the service of the Christian school and its educational apostolate. Today this history has become that of a shared mission, characterised by the constant updating of the Lasallian educational approach to suit the specific circumstances of each school as it develops.¹¹

¹ See CL 9,191-193

² Apart from the texts mentioned below, see MR 201 which is entitled: "The obligation of those who teach youth to have great zeal to fulfil well so holy a ministry", as well as the commentary by M. SAUVAGE and M. CAMPOS (AEP 282f; CL 46,220f).

³ See the article *Virtues of the Teacher* by S. SCAGLIONE and L. LAURAIRE in the present volume.

⁴ Cf. PUNGIER J., *Une spiritualité pour enseignants et éducateurs*, Paris, 1980.

⁵ GALLEGO S., *Vida y pensamiento de SJBS*, Madrid, 1986, vol. II, p. 33. Cf. PUNGIER, *op.cit.*, p. 10f.

⁶ Cf. GALLEGO, *op.cit.*, vol. II, p. 27f.

⁷ De La Salle borrows this expression from the Jesuit Julien Hayneufve, which does not make it any less true.

⁸ Cf. CANTALAPIEDRA C., *El educador de la fe según SJBS*, San Pio X, Madrid, 1988; CHICO P., *Ideario pedagógico y catequístico de SJBS*, San Pio X, Madrid, 1988; PUNGIER J., *JBS, Le message de son catéchisme*, Rome, 1984.

⁹ The *Conduct of Schools* is the basic reference book of Lasallian pedagogy. See the article on this topic by L. Lauraire in the present volume, and the bibliography he provides.

¹⁰ The finest example of this pedagogy tailored to individual needs is found in the meditation on the Good Shepherd (MD 33). The *Conduct* describes specific methods based on personal attention to individual pupils.

¹¹ This concern to adapt to different times and places is shown by the numerous editions of the *Conduct* published between 1720 and the beginning of the 20th century. See the article on the *Conduct* in the present volume.

Complementary themes

Catechism	Example - Edification	Ministry
Child, Pupil, Disciple	Faith (spirit of)	Mission
Christian Teacher	Formation	Poor
Conduct of Schools	God's work	Prayer
Duties of a Christian	Gratuity	Pupil-teacher
Education	Hearts (to touch)	School
		Virtues of a teacher

Br Juan José BRUNET GUTIÉRREZ, Br Ferdinand BLAIS and Br Alain HOURS