



01-C-03

**LEARN TO LOOK AT REALITY
EXAMINE WHAT IS SAID
LISTEN TO WHAT IS NOT SAID**

It all began because St. John Baptist de La Salle and his first Brothers were able to see all around them the real misery of youth.

Everything: their personal vocation, their creations.

The following paragraphs tell how, in our own day, a community of Brothers (at Garges in a Paris suburb) observed the young people who lived near them and how they reacted:

TO SEE THE HIDDEN DISTRESS AND HEAR THE SILENT APPEAL

There is no need to travel thousands of miles in our affluent society — over equipped and over informed — yet adept at hiding its misery — in order to find spiritual loneliness, cultural deprivation and religious confusion.

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"In our town of 40.000 inhabitants there are more and more abused and battered children. Tragedies due to unemployment and alcohol. It is often urgently necessary to place families in care for short periods so that the children can breathe and sleep peacefully free from fear and without having to separate father and mother in the middle of the night. Can you do anything about it?"

(Statement of a social worker dealing with family allowances)

Children, young people disillusioned with life, who have seen too much...

Refugees, deportees, what can we offer them so that their lives be not passed in a state of misery and apprehension.

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"Look...

In this area there are more than forty of us who know nothing and can neither read nor write. Something must be done. We can't go on like this. It's not just...

We don't want to go to school... Get us a school...

(Youths aged 12 to 15)

What kind of school do they need?

What kind of teaching? For what kind of men and women of the future?

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"You know we attended a Technical High School. From the age of 17 we gradually became drug addicts.

Why? What happened? Tell us what's wrong with us. How do we get out of this mess? Our ties are broken... We don't want to work. What have we got to live for?"

(Young people aged 22-23)

Shipwrecks from elsewhere...

How can we be with them, close and discreet, in order to be, at the right moment, that attentive ear which catches the cry for help.

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"Brother, in this area there are little gypsies who want to go to school. Our public school made a great effort to help but it quickly came to nothing because the local authorities chased them from the site. Our structures are too rigid. Could you do something for them?"

(Departmental Inspector of Education)

Tracked down, chased away. They're different. Aren't they...

How do you provide them with the means of expressing their difference and thus enriching our common heritage...

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"Since I came to this school my father listens to me and takes an interest in me"

(A boy of 14 years)

"Oh, you know a child is like a puppy. He just grows"

(Father aged 40 years)

"Tell us what goes on in a child's head. My baby does things with his hands and feet and I don't know why."

(Young mother aged 15)

Parents are confused, crushed by life, helpless in the presence of their children.

How do you get them to take heart again and come alive.

**TO LISTEN ATTENTIVELY TO THE HEARTS OF MEN
TO GET INVOLVED IN THEIR CARES
DEMANDS GREAT INTERIOR SILENCE...**

- * to listen to all the noises arising from modern planning and hear behind its clanging and rationalisations the strangled cry of those who can no longer speak;
- * to let pass again through our minds and hearts the little acts, the little things seen and heard and felt and then forgotten which — in the long run — are going to become the flesh and blood of our own conversion.

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SUGGESTIONS:

- * to each one of us individually: take time to observe young people and question those who know them.
- * to our communities and lasallian groups: take as your objective to get to know a group of young people in an area, in a street, in a parish, in their families... then draw up a viable plan of action or take part in a community service already in operation.

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