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THE PLACE OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER (Reflections of a lay teacher working with the Brothers)

★ WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO?

As a Christian teacher — man or woman — working in a school under the patronage of St. John Baptist de La Salle or as an employee in the same school, I find myself faced with three problems:

1) I love my pupils and apply myself to my work to the best of my ability but what can I do to be more responsive to the young, especially those who are in trouble (scholastic failure — family difficulties).

In other words: how to be a true educator?

2) I teach one or several subjects as well as doing some secretarial work and looking after maintenance etc. I do this wholeheartedly but am aware that I must do more to help young people to find Christ.

In other words: become an apostle in my school.

3) I mix every day with the Brothers of the Community or if they are not there I meet them frequently. But, in spite of all this I feel so different from them.

In other words: how, in my situation, can I get into communication with the Brothers and live according to the spirit that animates them?

★ WHO ARE WE?

The three problems outlined above can be reduced to one and the same question: What is the place of the Christian teacher in the school?

Let's hear three statements which are also answers:

ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

"You are engaged in a ministry wherein you have to touch hearts. But you cannot possibly do this without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Beseech God to confer on you to-day the same grace He gave the Apostles, so that after filling you with His Spirit for your sanctification, He may confer it on you for the salvation of others." (Meditations 43,3).

*POPE JOHN PAUL II
(a friend of the lasallian family)*

"Be faithful to the charism of your Institute. Be faithful to your original vocation as "apostles of the school." A really arduous vocation, which involves renunciation and sacrifice, total dedication to the mission of education, inexhaustible confidence in the young and great love of the Lord, nourished by assiduous prayer because only God can give growth." (Message to the lasallian family, 1982)

JEAN GUITTON: Another friend of the Brothers

"The teacher is a prophet who should inspire prophets: The prophet is one who continues Christ, in so far as Christ was a traveller, speaking to each individual and awakening in him or her the sense of being and the sense of God." (Conference at Passy-Buzenval, May, 1965)

"Obligation to touch hearts," but it can only be done by the Spirit of God.

"A great love for God, nourished by assiduous prayer."

"Only God gives growth."

"To be a prophet and inspire prophets."

Our horizon begins to light up, doesn't it?

★ WELL THEN?

Let's look again at the questions asked at the beginning: Basically the first question asks that I have **the spirit of faith** (availability, attention to others, to the action of God in my life).

The second question: "the spirit of zeal" (be aware the God calls me to collaborate in His plan of salvation, in my own small way).

The third question: "the spirit of love." (Give God an important place in my life: have a sense of community and brotherhood).

The spirit of faith, the spirit of zeal and the spirit of love are the three great characteristics of lasallian spirituality.

★ WHAT SHOULD WE DO? SIX PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

1) Become a man (or woman) of prayer, possessed by the Holy Spirit (a time set apart each day for prayer and meditation... a short annual retreat). My relations with others will quickly change.

2) Become gentle, affable to all, discreet and respectful to others. Blain, biographer of St. John Baptist de La Salle, notes that the young seminarist was an example of virtue in the seminary of Saint Sulpice but that his teachers did not realise it to later on: true virtue is discreet, unrecognised, perhaps despised.

3) Live as much as possible among the young: recreation and other activities...

4) Have a sense of togetherness, of community (educative community, various groups, movements, charitable activities...).

5) Nourish myself regularly from the Gospels for: "We have one master, Jesus Christ."

6) Examine often, alone or with a spiritual director, how God guides my life, what signs He gives me (chance meetings, failures). God will make known to me whether He wants me to take a position of responsibility in the school or whether He wants me to work in anonymous obscurity.

★ HOW FAR SHOULD I GO?

At one time or another I must consider the question of my station in life:

★ If I am single, does God want me to consider the religious life — Brother, Sister, priest? I must give the question serious consideration and the Holy Spirit will enable me to say yes or no.

★ If I am married and committed for life does the Lord want me to join the hundreds of Signum Fidei who, throughout the world, try to live the spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

★ PRAYERS

Here are two prayers which will help each one whether in the context of private meditation or while taking part in public celebrations.

"Oh God, who conducts all things with wisdom and gentleness and who does not force the will of man, wanting me to dedicate myself totally to the care of schools You led me imperceptibly from one undertaking to another without my having foreseen it from the beginning." (St. John Baptist de La Salle)

"Oh God, Trinity whom I adore, help me to forget myself completely so as to rest in You, calm and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity! Let nothing trouble my peace nor cause me to depart from You. Oh my unchanging God, let each moment carry me farther into the depths of your Mystery. Set my soul at rest and make it your heaven, your beloved home and the place of your rest. Let me never leave You alone there, but let me be entirely present there in living faith and adoration, completely submissive to your creative action." (Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity)

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