



ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE'S MESSAGE TO TEACHERS

02-A-11

THREE NOTES CONCERNING THIS LEAFLET

I. On the reverse of this page is an extract from a book by Brother Jean Pungier which is to be published shortly under the title: "Message of St. John Baptist de La Salle to Catechists and Educators."

In about 150 pages, it examines the ideas of the Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on catechetics. It is not an exhaustive study, basing itself on only two of La Salle's texts on the subject.

One, which is fundamental, is taken from the "Meditations for the Time of the Retreat". The other, which is perhaps less original, is from the "Duties of a Christian towards God" by question and answer, (*Cahiers Lasalliens* 21). It contains some quite interesting points.

1) *John Baptist de La Salle's message to Catechists and Educators in the Faith:*

Chapter 1. You are the ministers of God.

Chapter 2. You are building the Church.

Chapter 3. Your God is a God of Goodness.

Chapter 4. Since you are disciples of Jesus Christ, bring disciples to Him.

2) *A Catechism by John Baptist de La Salle:*

Chapter 1. The Duties of a Christian towards God.

Chapter 2. A Source of these Duties: The Catechism by Jean Le Coeur.

Chapter 3. Another Source of these Duties: The Catechism by Claude Joly.

3) *A few Extracts from the Duties of a Christian towards God*
(with a short commentary).

II. At first sight, one is generally disconcerted by the texts presented by John Baptist de La Salle. They are written in the language of the 17th Century and the Founder concentrates on strict doctrine. They are, moreover very condensed as is the case for the extract from the Meditations for the Time of the Retreat (MTR 13,3) (see reverse) which seems to have been woven from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians, (4,11-16). An effort is, therefore required, but it is well worth while.

III. *Possible questions which would make this leaflet a basis for reflection, discussion and prayer:*

1) How would you describe for young people today their "Situation of Neglect"?

2) How would you, for yourself or for your group or educative community, rewrite "God's Plans" for these young people?

3) a) Looking through the eyes of faith at your life as a catechist or educator in the faith, can you say with John Baptist de La Salle that God has intervened in your life? That He has enlightened you? That He has called you or that you have offered yourself to Him with a view to realizing His plans for salvation?

b) "Minister of God". What is your understanding of this expression of the Founder? How do these demands, these responsibilities, affect you?

c) What role does the Holy Spirit play in your activities as educator in the faith? In yourself, in the young people committed to your charge?

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE'S MESSAGE

THE REALITY.

a situation of neglect

"Consider that it is a practice all too common among craftsmen and the poor to allow their children to live like vagabonds, going hither and thither, till they are of an age to find employment in some profession. This situation arises not only from their inability to pay teachers because of their poverty but also because, having to work away from home, they have perforce to neglect them.

This has disastrous consequences, for these unfortunate children, having become accustomed to doing nothing for many years find it difficult to accustom themselves to working. Moreover as they get into bad company, they learn to commit many sins which are very difficult to give up later on because of the bad habits contracted over many years" (MTR 2,1).

Between the Two Situations:

God intervenes in our lives:

"God has been so good as to bring a remedy for such a great evil by establishing the Christian Schools" (MTR 1,1).

"God Himself has enlightened the hearts of those whom He has destined to teach children His word, so that they may enlighten them by showing them glory of God" (MTR 1,1).

Men,

— who offer to work for God's designs:

"Admire the goodness of God who has provided for all the needs of His creatures and the means He takes to bring men to a knowledge of the real good (...) and offer yourself to Him to help the children He has confided to your care as far as you are able" (MTR 5,1).

— as responsible ministers:

"God has called you to your ministry to procure his glory and impart to children the spirit of wisdom and light in order to know Him and to open the eyes of their hearts. You will give an account of how you have instructed those under your care" (MTR 14,1).

— open to the Spirit of Jesus Christ:

"Hence you must ask Him for much, so that all the lessons you give them may be animated by His Spirit and that they may draw all their power from Him. Thus as it is He who enlightens every man coming into the world, it may be He also who enlightens their mind and leads them to love and practice the good you teach them" (MTR 3).

GOD'S PLANS.

a situation of salvation:

"When Jesus Christ made you responsible for the instruction of children and their formation in religious practice, he entrusted to you the task of building up his body which is the church.

Since children are the most innocent part of the church, and usually the best disposed to receive the impressions of grace, Jesus Christ desires that you fulfill your task of making them holy, that they all form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature, so that they are no longer like children tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine that originates from human trickery and skill in proposing error. They can be victims of such error in the companions with whom they associate, or in others who propose evil and lead them into falsehood. But you are to help them in all things to grow to the full maturity of Christ, the head, through whom the whole body of the church grows with the proper functioning of the members joined firmly together by each supporting ligament, building itself up in love. In this they share in the promises of God in Jesus Christ. (MTR 13,3).

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