

**THE LASALLIAN SENSE  
IN MY ACTIVITIES  
IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL (1)**

Being in charge, together with a confrere, of the animation of the Catechetical programme and of the Christian School in the 23 primary schools of South Belgium, I can truly say that this animation is exercised in a Lasallian climate. If this climate draws its origin from the "practices of Jesus" it can not be less a spirituality of a disciple of Christ, John Baptist de La Salle, who lived his life in a very particular situation, that of a founder. And that marks out the *manner of living out my profession*.

I shall present here in the form of a small tapestry, sewed with several guiding threads and immersed beforehand in Lasallian spirituality. Looking at the different tableaux, we shall discover progressively these threads, which are the "soul of my work".

**Let us start with the first tableau:**

***A catechism incarnated***

Here we single out a group of Brothers and laymen listening to today's children, namely, the C.C.L. — Centre Catéchétique Lasallien. It has been meeting regularly since 1976 to delve into the existential movement proper to the "Catechetical Programme for Primary Schools" as elaborated by a Commission which had been set up by the Bishops of Belgium.

Let us draw nearer to the tapestry to better discover the profound life of this group.

*The Preface of this Programme contains an important passage: "The originality of this programme is manifest enough. It renounces a systematic plan, traditional before... It allows children to cast a tranquil glance on those who are alive and lets them discover at the same time, little by little, by reference to Christ the richness of the demands of their faith. Christian Education is rooted in a way in the habitual experience of children. Such a way is not always easy! But is it not thus with a truly evangelical pedagogy?"*

We wanted to take that seriously. Seven encounters a year, of exchanges in class of our experiences, of profound questions to the level of our faith, the fidelity of the group and its sense of graciousness... all this constituted an assembling of *life* in order to accompany the child to the very heart of his own life story and to help him slowly towards the total growth of his person.

The thread of years will lead us to weave together catechetical themes proper to each age and a framework of five ages: experience of life, enlargement of this life, a deepening of experiences, the enlightening of this life in the light of Jesus, and an appeal to change one's life.

***Lasallian Filigree:*** *With which Lasallian threads is this first scene woven?*

*\* At first by the profound desire of John Baptist de La Salle to "Procure for children the means of salvation proper to their age". (MTR 1,3).*

*\* But we also see here, the threads of years, this "living tradition of the Institute... attached to integrate the Faith in Jesus Christ in the daily life of the young". (Declaration, 40,2). I shall always remember the following text read at a meeting of the C.C.L., as the very expression of their everyday experience:*

*"The catechesis of the Brother thus takes root in life and it is oriented towards life... The Word of God does not fall from above, abstract, upon anonymous individuals; it always comes to reunite, to enlighten and to deepen a human experience". (D. 40,5).*

*\* I should like to add here, what seems to me essential in the framework of this article: The practice of a well determined catechetical step does not go by itself: it often poses a question and sometimes a doubt and discouragement. Two events — again life! — have however confirmed me*

*in this manner of evangelizing in the primary school! First, CIL 79/2 with its particular method of forming persons, and second, at Easter 80, the Symposium on Catechesis, at the Mother House in Rome. That also is "Lasallian".*

**Let us pass on to the second tableau:**

### **The animation of 23 schools**

What can be done to animate the schools interiorly so as to render them Christian... situated as they are in a consumer society of religious indifference, of individualism, which lacks a sense of graciousness, etc.?

The service of animation works three sectors at a time: they compose our tableau in three scenes. Let us look at the nearest one.

### **Scene 1: the annual catechetical day**

Organised for each school, this day affords a deepening of the numerous aspects of the Christian School.

The statement of the theme of the previous year will light up the tableau: the animation of the Christian school with a strong insistence on inter-personal relationship — our catechetical options — non-sacramental celebrations — what is faith? — what is religion? — to what temptations a school must not submit if it wishes to be christian?

A quest is hidden under each of these different themes: that of truth. To be true towards one's self, towards the children, towards God. And in knowing that the truth makes one free!

*Lasallian Filigree: Very modestly, I endeavour to rejoin St. John Baptist de La Salle: from the foundation of the Institute, he created a community of men so that he could form them to become adult in the faith and thus be able to educate children in the same faith in Jesus Christ:*

*"You are entrusted with reclothing them in Jesus Christ and his spirit. Have you taken care that before undertaking such a holy mission that you re clothe yourselves so as to be able to communicate this grace to them?" (MF. 189.1).*

### **Scene 2: meeting of school directors**

After 1981, days were reserved for these meetings. They pursued a double purpose: to promote a global unity of spirit in the Brothers' schools and to create, by inter-personal relationships, a common soul.

Some themes studied: the catechetical option — how to make a school a place of fraternal relations for "the well-being of all — favourable and unfavourable elements towards a fraternal relationship in the heart of a group of teachers — my personal relations as Director with the children found in my school.... with particular regard to the "poor". This simple list will allow one to determine just how much fraternal relationships are reflected on all levels of the school.

We should like to remark that more than a rediscovery, it was an opportunity of deepening Lasallian spirituality. In particular: the first meditation for the time of retreat, reading done without disengaging if from the present situation of children, parents and the students of today; the great spiritual attitudes of de La Salle, according to Brother Jean Pungier.

*Lasallian Filigree: Fraternal Relationship is one of the keys "for procuring the salvation of children":*

*"You exercise an employment which puts you under the obligation of touching hearts. You cannot do this except by the Spirit of God: pray to Him to procure the salvation of others". (MD 43.3).*

*It is evangelical. In following a certain Jesus "who goes through town and village in search of lost sheep who are awaiting a look of tenderness":*

*"Jesus Christ compares those in charge of souls to a good shepherd who takes good care of his flock; and one of the qualities which he ought to have, according to the Saviour, is that he recognise each one distinctly..." (MD 33.1).*

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