



## **SIGNUM FIDEI'S VISION: A FAITH-FULL RESPONSE**

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In a beautiful example of the way scholars can build on and refine each other's work, the writer unfolds a vision through a review of the life of St. John Baptist De La Salle, the founder and inspiration of the Signum Fidei Association, selected documents of the Church and the Institute of the Christian Brothers.

St. John Baptist De La Salle's life is a glowing example of deep faith and profound dedication. As one goes through the stages of his life, he can systematically draw-out the processes he had gone through in developing that kind of faith. A review of his life explains the schema that led the founder to be a man of faith and zeal. Consider the following highlights in his life which moved toward relevant dimensions in building and extending his work:

- Known as wealthy young French priest he gave away his fortune and abandoned his promising career in church;
- People misunderstood him, maligned him and many of those who were his friends deserted him. Often discouraged, nonetheless he never lost faith;
- A few supporters who later became his disciples understood what he was trying to do. He called them his brothers and trained them to become good teachers;
- With his trained teachers he established several schools open to everyone at a time when education was a privilege for the rich;
- As a leader he ably encouraged his disciples to follow him. He did all this because he felt called by God to give the poor and the young the good news that God loves them. His life is what it means to live the gospel.

Following the patron's journey, important implications easily surfaced which are related to the problems of today's world. The analysis below show some important components necessary to build that vision.

- A radical decision in one's life is a real challenge if one takes the responsibility of following Christ and serving this disordered world.
- Conflicts should not in any way discourage one to continue to lead. Prayer is a must; indeed an essential part in this process. Acting in faith is the response of a person to God who reveals himself in the twists and turns of life.
- Good leadership and good followership including a good organization can help deliver good results.
- A prayerful life and increased apostolic commitment are ingredients for greater faith and service.
- Members' modeling of perseverance, dedication and confidence are characteristics to be considered if one wants to succeed in recruiting members to the Signum Fidei Association.

Citing passages from Church documents like «Gaudium et Spes», «Populorum Progressio», other Vatican II documents, directives from local Churches, conferences of bishops and inspired priests will help strengthen the point being stressed here - the great lack of faith. A situation where the most serious threats weigh on the fundamental values. Man has accomplished much in scientific knowledge and technology but at the same time is confronted with serious problems of materialism, power struggle, economic disorder, injustice and social imbalance. On the other hand, on the spiritual side, attacks on human liberty and dignity, rise of atheism, and the wave of secularization are getting more and more prevalent.

In the light of all these circumstances the writer traces some attributes and traits of the founder that can help alleviate this situation. He demonstrated faith and zeal in his life. There are two dimensions of faith to be considered, they are the development of:

- faith in the ability of ourselves and others to improve and grow;

— faith in God, that He is at work in this world. That man discovers the Lord when he discovers what is best in himself; and when he discovers other persons and give them the chance to live, grow, and develop.

Of particular interest are some statements from the documents of the Institute of the Christian Brothers. Directions are seen to be directed toward the organization of a project that will help the Institute and the Church.

— Schools must be aware of the ubiquitous, political, social and cultural changes taking place and consequently are given us no other alternative except to update themselves in their objectives, programs, and methodologies.

— The Brothers strive continuously to «awaken a greater sense of universal brotherhood among individuals and peoples». As such they will do all in their power so that the young who live in affluence and good fortune understand their responsibility to share their resources with those who are poor, deprived, oppressed, and exploited.

The La Sallian family or the La Sallian Brotherhood lives in the ideals of St. John Baptist De La Salle. These are notably, the Signum Fidei, members of a young association solicitous of promoting Christian education.

La Salle schools can act as the nucleus, the center for the development of the Spirit of Faith needed in the world today. Through innovation of school programs and projects, the La Sallian teachers, parents and students can emerge as leaders in propagating the association in this troubled land. Important events that will involve a greater role of the Signum Fidei, Philippines are envisioned; to wit,

— An innovative school will emerge and take the lead in building, and propagating the work of the founder.

— Programs and projects for teachers, parents, and students will be launched as basic tools for the development of faith.

— A strong nucleus will take a radical stand that will bring forth good leadership and good organization.

— Conflicts which are inevitable will not discourage the majority of the members because of their deep faith in God.

— Organized activities will be launched inviting other schools to participate. National and international assemblies will also be witnessed.

— Various chapters will be organized in different La Salle schools and will even spread to other non La Sallian schools and parishes.

— Cooperation between the Christian Brothers and the Signum Fidei will be felt more in almost all areas of the Brothers' apostolate.

In conclusion, there are several interpretations yet to be considered, particularly with respect to the growth of the association and these are being addressed by other La Sallian associations. This analysis will help the members to continue the search and build stages of developing and extending the work of the founder. At this point, the work of the Signum Fidei seems clear. There can be no further doubt that the association can and will be able to accomplish what God and the founder would want the believers in his ideals to do. Lastly, this association deserves favorable attention from all those who are in search of the propagation of faith that leads to the salvation of mankind.

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