

LET US EVANGELIZE

In wishing to evangelize the teachers John Baptist de La Salle is evangelized by them

1) His desire to evangelize the school teachers, made him take their situation seriously and impelled him to tell them his own convictions regarding the faith.

11. He drew near to them, put himself at their service for he wished to see their undertakings succeed.

* What do we do personally and as a community to be close to our lay colleagues, the most deprived youths? (Visits, receiving, sharing...).

* Can we make a list of the concerns of each of the Brothers in our community — of each of our lay teachers — of the young people we know, of the most deprived — of the priests with whom we work...?

12. His solicitude for the teachers disrupted his life as a Canon. He took risks for them with regard to his friends, he kept quiet about his personal repugnances, risks in family relations...

* With whom do we share our preoccupations as Brothers?

* How do we accept, personally and as a community the important preoccupations of the poorest youth and of our colleagues? How do we share with one another in community? Within the Church? With the city officials?

* How have these preoccupations changed our personal and community life styles? In what way?

13. In order to strengthen the first teachers in the faith, John Baptist de La Salle risked in their regard his own convictions about believing.

* What words of faith do we dare to say to our colleagues, to the young, to the most abandoned youths?

Under what circumstances have we told them these things and why?

2) John Baptist de La Salle was reproached by the first teachers.

21. The teachers were able to make reproaches which had a basis.

* What would a lack of well-founded reproaches in our regard on the part of our colleagues, youth, and the poorest people signify?

* What reproaches have been addressed to us?

What reproaches have been given to us in response to words of faith? Did these reproaches seem to be well founded?

22. John Baptist de La Salle consults Father Barré.

* How do the reproaches which we meet become the object of seeking guidance, of reflection, of discernment?

23. The reproaches which he suffered became for him food for prayer.

* What about us?

24. Following these reproaches, John Baptist de La Salle opted for conversion by distributing all his goods to the poor and by relinquishing his Canonry.

* Can we say that the young, our colleagues have led us to opting for conversion? In what way?

* Can we say that we have accepted the same Gospel as those whom we have striven to evangelize.

Allow yourself to be educated and evangelized by the poor

Like John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers of the Institute, we believe that the Gospel is the first chance for life and human success for the most neglected children and youths and we have set our heart to bringing the gospel to them. But the Gospel is not a remedy, nourishment, or lifebuoy which is external to those who wish to bring it to others. It is the word of God which profits those who bring it as it does those to whom they wish to bring it. The Gospel is as prime for the missionary who wishes to be sent by Him as it is for those to whom he is sent. And this Good news understood by the missionary as the source of salvation for those to whom he wishes to give it, becomes also for him the Good News of salvation if he really sets about taking the means of making it understood by those whom he wishes to help; and the poor whom we wish to save become through the Gospel agents of our own evangelization.

"I would have to remain silent and would have no right to speak about perfection with regard to poverty if I myself am not poor; nor about

abandonment to Divine Providence if I have financial resources protecting me from want; nor on perfect confidence in God if a good income frees me from any anxieties". (Blain 1 p. 131) "having established his schools on the Foundation of Providence, he would give all his goods for the sake of the poor while saving nothing for the Brothers' community... He gives all his savings away. Those who witnessed this magnanimity were struck by astonishment to see a man so full of confidence in the resources of Divine Providence..." (Maillefer p. 103-104).

In order to announce the Gospel to the teachers, who were just as poor as were the pupils, John Baptist de La Salle makes himself materially poor with them. He understands that "nothing can attract hearts to God as the poor and humble state of those who wish to lead them to Him". (Meditation for Christmas 3rd P.). "The Brothers, by his example, are so strengthened against mistrust and inquietude that they abandon themselves completely to Providence..." (Maillefer p. 105).

At the heart of all his riches, John Baptist de La Salle had the heart of a poor man. He took to heart bringing this Spirit to the teachers who were deprived of riches by risking the words of faith. This providential encounter had the double effect of bringing the benefits of material poverty to the missionary and to the others the discovery of the spirit of poverty within the depths of their privations.

This evangelical lesson of our Founder is an illustration of the mystery of the Incarnation: the Son of God became man so that men in their turn could become Sons of God by adoption. Those among the young who have the least chance of

succeeding at making their human lives into the image of God are very numerous and these are the very ones who are inviting us the most to make this teaching of God, which providentially is the foundation of our religious life, come alive. The appeal to live as poorly as possible is an invitation to us to reactivate ourselves in the source of our religious life. By accepting for the sake of God to become poor among the poor, to announce the Good News to them, we make the Gospel fruitful for them and for ourselves and we follow along the road to exaltation as did the Son to the Glory of God the Father (cf. Phil 2, 6-12).

Something to pray over

God will make Himself known to us more and more with each passing day if we try to live in His fulness (Cfr. John 17, 3).

By being accepted into His love, we have become participants of the manifestation of his Love for men in Christ (cfr. John, 4, 9); we are called in the same Spirit to the holiness of God and we have been sent to sanctify other people.

And the means by which he sends us to serve the lives of those whom he confides to us, and especially the poor for whom he has a preference, are those by which he leads our own lives in Christ. The more we set about serving the life of those confided to our care, and especially those who are the least alive, the more we will dispose ourselves to grow in the life of God.

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