

REFLECTION

after the Gospel

at the Closing Liturgy of the Fourth Session of the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies

(St. Mary's College, Moraga, California)
July 14, 1989

«And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it is written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him. And he began to say to them: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"» (Luke 4:14-21).

This particular segment of the gospel of Luke is situated immediately following the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan (Luke 3:21-22) and the great temptations of Jesus in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13). It is in the wake of these great experiences of affirmation, of self-clarification, and of empowerment that Jesus goes home... that Jesus goes home to Nazareth, the town "where he had been brought up."

For many of us here at the Buttimer Institute, these past three weeks together have been an extraordinary

experience. For many of us, these three weeks have been a powerful experience of re-foundation... of increased self-understanding... of re-dedication to God's holy work. And so it is today, with Jesus, that we pack our bags, ship our packages, say our good-byes, and prepare to go home.

There is another way, however, to look at this issue of "going home." For some of us, hasn't the whole of these three weeks, or perhaps even for others the whole of these past three summers here at the Buttimer Institute, been a kind of going home? Hasn't this experience been a kind of going home to the real John Baptist de La Salle... a more human, a more accessible, a more inspiring and loving father... a going home to the foundational vision, the gospel call, the initial dream... home to that time when God's most Holy Spirit raised up our new family in the Church in order to bring the Good News to youth who found themselves cut-off and without access to the promises of the Covenant... a going home to the deepest and best in ourselves... a being re-called, re-claimed, and re-challenged by that same God, who De La Salle assures us, is so good that he always takes the necessary means to make himself known (MTR 1)?

In the wake of this Buttimer Institute experience, we leave here with a clearer sense of having been chosen once again... sent once again... empowered once again. We return home more aware that "the Spirit of the Lord God is truly upon us"... sending us to challenge the darkness of ignorance... sending us to set free those imprisoned by self-doubt... sending us to be the compassionate presence of God leading back

those who are alienated and spiritually abandoned... those cut-off from the Truth in a society where, more and more, the teaching of religion is like the teaching of a second language.

How fitting it is then as we prepare to go home... how appropriate it is that we gather here at the table of the Eucharist as we prepare to leave... that we pause and remember as we gather around this table of the Lord's Supper that we do not go home alone. The Father so loved the world that he sent his only Son to bring us home (John 3:16)! The Father so loves the poor... the abandoned... those without access to the promises of salvation that he sends us to bring them home!

The great apostle Paul says that it is not I who pray... it is not we who pray... it is the Spirit of Jesus praying in us (Romans 8:15-16). It is the Spirit of Jesus in the depths of our hearts crying out, "Father, bring me home! Father, help me bring them home!" I believe that this is the scriptural foundation of what John Baptist de La Salle meant when he told us to get in

touch, in the first place, with that interior movement in the depth of our hearts... to get in touch with that inner stirring of God's Holy Spirit murmuring, "Father, bring me home" (MSF 62 & CL 15, p. 103). I believe that this is also why he told us to be equally attentive to that same Holy Spirit murmuring in the hearts of those most abandoned and spiritually cut-off... in the hearts of the young people with whom we work... and through whom that very same holy Spirit cries out in prayer to us, "bring me home" (MTR 37).

And so tonight as we prepare to leave... as we celebrate this new beginning..., I urge you to keep in mind these words of our beloved Founder and to pray for the grace to be faithful on your journey. De La Salle writes: "Entreat then this God of hearts to keep your heart and the hearts of your brothers and sisters one in the heart of Jesus" (MSF 39).

Brother William Mann

The Buttimer Institute was founded in 1986 as a study project of the United States-Toronto Region. Conducted at St. Mary's College, Moraga, California, groups of 30 to 40 Lasallians educators come together for 3 consecutive summers to examine the foundations, pedagogy, catechetics, and spirituality of John Baptist de La Salle and the Christian Schools founded by De La Salle's Brothers.