

**THE EVERYDAY REPETITION
OF ACTIONS AND TRANSPARENCY
IN THE LASALLIAN MINISTRY
OF EDUCATION
(1/2)**

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"Pray to him (God) fervently too, that he will be pleased to make your Institute grow and bear fruit *day by day*" (MTR 207,3; cf. R 141).

Introduction

The expression "every day" is often used by the Founder in his writings: it can be found in the Conduct of Schools, in his Letters, in the 1718 Common Rules, in his catechisms...

The Lasallian Vocabulary (Volume 4) indicates that the expression "every day" is used 232 times and "each day" 16 times.

Let us try to discover the significance of this repeated use.

Many of the instances quoted refer simply to chronological listing or indicate the frequency of activities.

There are others, however, that have a deeper meaning and which reflect a specific plan. They imply a fundamental message the meaning of which is completed by sentences that follow. For example:

"The end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children; it is for this purpose that schools exist, so that the children being under the care of the masters from morning until evening..." (RC 1,3)

This is what provides an answer to and counterbalances the day spent in working which, as the Founder and the first Brothers noted, made it impossible for "the working class and the poor...occupied all day in gaining a livelihood for themselves and their child-

ren...(to) give their children the needed instruction and a good and Christian education" (RC 1,4).

The every-day nature of the apostolate - which we will call the quotidian ministry - is what determined the lifestyle, the spirituality and apostolate of the Brothers of De La Salle who constantly invited them to see in their daily lives the transcendence, the unexplainable, the mystery of salvation in action.

**1. THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR
THE QUOTIDIAN MINISTRY
OF THE BROTHERS**

The theological reflections of St. John Baptist de La Salle in his Meditations for the Time of Retreat (193 to 208) can be considered as an analysis of the nature and of the ways of fulfilling the Lasallian ministry of education day after day, hour after hour.

The Founder saw clearly the importance of this every-day nature of the ministry and wished to pass it on to his Brothers as a precious spiritual bequest meant not only for them but also "for the use of all persons who are engaged in the education of youth" (subtitle of the MTR).

But it is in one of his Meditations (MTR 200) that De La Salle stresses particularly and repeatedly this quotidian ministry.

He takes as his point of departure some quotations from the Acts of the Apostles:

"They preached every day...and the proclamation of the Good News of Christ Jesus was never interrupted" (Ac 5,42).

"Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved" (Ac 2, 47)

The logic of De La Salle's explanations is impressive:

What the Apostles did was to simply imitate Jesus Christ who..."taught in the Temple every day" (Lk 19, 47) and who "would spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives" (Lk 21, 37).

The conclusion follows logically:

"You are successors to the Apostles in their task of catechising and teaching the poor...you must teach catechism every day...In this way you will be following the example of the Apostles and of Jesus Christ himself, who devoted himself daily to this ministry" (MTR 200, 1).

What are the results of the Brother's quotidian ministry?

The fulfilment of the plan of salvation which God has entrusted to the Brother and to the community to which he belongs.

The result of this is that the quotidian ministry becomes "sacramental" because of the outlook of faith which enables the Brother to see the will of God in all that he does, however simple it may be, and which in its turn transfigures him, conferring on him spiritual greatness and a power to reveal: a "transparency" perceived by all who benefit from the Brothers' ministry of education.

This faith dimension in the daily work of education makes the charism of the Brother visible and tangible, and enables him to make it operative: it makes it effective from a pastoral point of view.

According to De La Salle, to discover this spiritual greatness and this sacramental transparency in the work of every day constitutes a grace from the Spirit. The Brother must ask for it with great insistence, otherwise the "terrible quotidien" will crush and devour him.

2.. THE EVERYDAY REPETITION OF ACTIONS IN PRACTICE

This is what Saint John Baptist de La Salle writes in his Letters:

"One of your main preoccupations, my very dear Brother, should be to apply yourself to prayer and to your classwork, for these are your two principal occupations" (Letter to Br. Hubert, May 5th 1702).

He says the same thing eight years later:

"Your spiritual exercises and your school require all your care" (October 2nd 1710).

He writes to the unstable Br. Mathias:

"You must carry out not only your class duties, but also the other exercises, for classwork without the spiritual exercises will not do" (April 13th 1708).

These quotations reflect what we read in Meditation 198 and show the total coherence of De La Salle's spiritual experience, as well as the pendulum-like movement of the Brothers' life: "to go up to God every day...then come down to them (the children)" (MTR 198, 1).

In practice, the repetitive aspect of the Brother's life is lived on two levels:

1. On the level of his spiritual and community life:

"All the exercises will be made in common from morning till evening" (RC III, 1).

"We ought frequently, and even daily, to thank God" (M 126, 1).

"Thank God for it every day" (M 182, 1; cf. M 89, 1).

"You should renew this donation every day" (M 104, 2).

"Read it (the Word of God) carefully every day" (M)

"The Brothers should love the holy exercise of mental prayer very much and they must look upon it as the first and principal of their daily exercises...They will be careful to make it every day" (RC IV, 1).

2. On the level of his educational, human and Christian activities

"You are obliged by your duty of state to teach the truths of the Gospel every day" (M 138, 3).

"the words of salvation you address them each day" (M 39, 2).

"a letter...which you write every day in their hearts" (MTR 195, 2).

"You must teach catechism every day...Jesus Christ...devoted himself daily to this practice" (MTR 200, 1).

"You must, of course, teach catechism to your students every day" (Letter to Gabriel Drolin, May 12th 1710).

"The teacher must visit all the writers every day" (Conduct 60).

Who benefits from this repetitive activity?

1. The Brothers themselves:

"the ordinary everyday actions which you perform in common with your Brothers" (M 69, 2)

"...because one is not satisfied with the conversation one has every day with one's Brothers" (R 58, 9).

2. The pupils:

"You are daily with the poor" (M 189, 1).

"It is your daily duty to instruct the poor" (M 166, 2).

3. The community surrounding the Brother:

"When you are outside the house, let your conduct be such as to be an example to all and a source of edification. This is all the more necessary as you are called to save others, and should therefore begin by giving good example in order to attract souls to God" (M 92, 2).