

THE CELEBRATION OF THE MYSTERY OF GOD IN MENTAL PRAYER

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The Lasallian encounter with God cannot be dissociated from the encounter with the Word of God in Holy Scripture NOR from the encounter with the God who calls and speaks through the lives of people.

Mental prayer has its source in this encounter and takes place in it. We have to try to make life an echo of the Word of God.

The poor: the context par excellence where God speaks to me

This is an experience shared by De La Salle and his Brothers. The encounter with the living conditions of children and of the poor is the point of departure for both the *Rule* and the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. It is also always the point of departure whenever the Institute renews itself.

We should, however, keep all sentimentality out of our considerations: the poor are not saints because they are poor - a point De La Salle made very clearly. It is nonetheless very clear also that it is among the poor that the Word of Salvation, the Word of God, prefers to work.

The poor are the context in which the Brothers must pursue their ministry, and also, therefore, the one in which they must pray.

We use the term "poor" in the normally accepted sense. This is not the time and place to go deeper into the question.

Who were the people, the children, that the Founder and the Brothers admitted into their schools? It was something they agreed among themselves, as was also the approach they adopted in their teaching. Those who came to De La Salle's Christian Schools knew the kind of social level and the style of education they would find there.

The Brothers made their own decisions, such as complete gratuity, for example, and were prepared to

live with them, even to the extent of risking the future of their community. It is worth noting that, in the eyes of De La Salle, the Brothers did not go looking for the poor: it was the poor who came to them. "Only the poor come to us" (MF 86,2,2. Christmas).

The Word of God is at one and the same time Holy Scripture and the young people who have become Words of God for me.

We must read and study assiduously so that we understand Holy Scripture perfectly (MF 116,2,2 St Mark; MF 159,1,2. St Bartholomew).

But the Word of God exists also in young people and in the poor. This is the meaning of MR 193,2 and 194,1, and of the articles of the 1718 Rule on the End and Necessity of the Institute. This description of the world of the poor where God speaks and calls through the situations in which these families and young people live, this also is the story of God's Salvation at work.

For the Brother, the Word of God is also the person of these young people transformed by the Gospel, living as true Christians and as witnesses to Jesus Christ (MR 207,1,1 and 2).

The History of Salvation is being accomplished for me in my life today.

This History of the coming of God into our history, to save us, is not past history, history that is out of date. God continues to come into the History of mankind, and particularly into the history of those he has chosen, called and sent to reveal it to young people.

In prayer, I am called to become deeply aware again of the traces, actions and visitations of God in my life.

When I do this I recognise God as being present; I live by the spirit of faith; I accept that my life comes from another and that it is open to another; that it is a gift of God and a gift for others.

It is a new way of looking at life (MD 44,1,2 Whitmonday)

Discovering that I am the Word of God for young people so that they can live from the Word of God.

This happens when the Mystery of Jesus is lived out in the Ministry.

MR 195,2 expresses this process very clearly: the Brother, the ambassador of Jesus Christ, communicates to the young people the Holy Spirit who makes them live according to the Gospel.

Identification with Jesus Christ involves sharing even his intentions and plans for oneself, but also for the young people entrusted to the Brother (MR 196,3,1 and 2).

The aim of the Institute of the Brothers is to make children live in a Christian way (RC 1,3).

Chapter II of the Rule on the spirit of this Institute describes it explicitly as being rooted in the Gospel in order that the young people may live according to the Gospel.

"In order to enter into this spirit and live up to it:

1. The Brothers of this Society shall have a most profound respect for the Holy Scriptures; and in proof thereof, they shall always carry the New Testament about them, and pass no day without reading some of it, through a sentiment of faith, respect and veneration for the divine words contained therein, looking upon it as their first and principal rule".

"In order to enter into this spirit, the Brothers of the Society shall strive by prayer, instruction, and by their vigilance and good conduct in school, to procure the salvation of the children confided to their care, bringing them up in piety and in a truly Christian spirit, that is, according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel".

The connection between the Word of God and the Ministry is expressed in the same terms: in order to enter into this spirit. The Brothers live according to the Gospel and make their children discover and practise it.

And then I shall discover that the young people God has entrusted to me have become Words of God for me, and that they evangelise me.