

**"MOVING FORWARD"**  
**Reflections**  
**(2/2)**

**Brother Raymond Bondarnaud**

*If this is to happen*, each Brother, each community must make it possible

- for each and everyone to pray, contemplate, meditate, listen to the word of God, penetrate himself with it so as to live it and make it bear fruit;
- for everyone to question himself about his faith, speak to others about Faith and Zeal, accepting others' differences in charity and faith;
- for everyone to be able to find in his prayer and his encounter with the Lord the joy of discovering him in the centre of his life, of his relationships, of his work, especially of his community, composed as it is of a variety of temperaments, characters, talents due to birth, education, social background, culture, health, skills for manual, intellectual or apostolic work.

**\* Living according to the light received**

- The Light of God received in contemplation is the light of Life. It does not exist simply to be spoken about: it is there for us to live according to it. A soul thirsting for light is:
  - a soul that lives according to the light it receives;
  - a soul which has opened its doors wide to Christ so that it can live by him: "It is not I that live, but Christ who lives in me", said St Paul;
  - a soul which allows Christ to mould its behaviour, its mentality, the way it acts in community, society, in its profession and in the Church;
  - a soul that has in its heart the same sentiments as Christ.

**\* In fact**, accepting the Light of Jesus Christ, being a Believer, having the Faith, being a religious does not mean simply accepting or admitting a doctrine, a catechism, a rule of religious life. Rather it means:

- allowing oneself to be questioned by the Light of Jesus Christ, by Jesus Christ himself, by one's community, one's educational team;
- adopting an evangelical, Christian and religious way of living, acting and loving;
- allowing the light of faith to penetrate into one's personal, professional, family, parish, trade union, community and missionary life;
- wanting one's life and actions to be enlightened and motivated by faith and love;
- The fact that faith inspires a Brother's life as a man and as a religious means that, without knowing it, without wanting it, he is already a light for the world. This is both magnificent and consoling. It is a reason to give thanks to the Lord in our

prayer of praise, adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and petition.

**\* Light of the world, salt of the earth, leaven of hope**

- The faith of the Brother bears witness to his life in Jesus Christ, to his fidelity to Christ. It bears witness to the transforming presence of Jesus Christ at the centre of human and religious life, and promoting its progress.
- Living one's faith is a question of fidelity to Christ and to oneself; and fidelity and humility with regard to others, to those seeking the truth, asking questions; with regard to adults, but especially with regard to young people who do not accept the hypocrisy of a faith that is not life and does not transform life.
- And so it seems to me that every group of Brothers, every community should be a place where one can learn to live one's faith, to make faith part of one's life and, even more so, make life part of one's faith.
- If the Brothers do not teach young people to live according to Jesus Christ together, how can they individually be witnesses to Jesus Christ among others? One can give only what one has, and one gives also what one is. And if the young (and less young people) who come in contact with the Institute are going to be taken seriously in and by the Church, it is important to enable each one of them to live according to Jesus Christ, and to give to each one of them the quality of a life lived with Jesus. The school is a special place for training our students in a Christian manner and, indirectly, reaching and helping their parents.

**\* Ready to serve**

Everyone aspires to be happy, to succeed, to find fulfilment in life. This is normal, but people and religious have in addition other aims which are moral, religious, political, trade union and apostolic, each according to his vocation in the Church, serving his family or his Institute.

**The first conviction** we must have and must pass on is that none of the numerous natural or spiritual riches we have been given is for our own personal and selfish happiness. Everything was given to us freely in order to be shared through the service of others. Each person has the responsibility to serve, to be useful to others and, in the case of us Brothers, to fulfil our personal, community and Lasallian mission in the service of the Church.

**A second conviction:** Service is carried out among sick people adults, lonely people, persons in difficulty, couples, parents of pupils and through other humanitarian and charitable institutions. In the case of our Institute, and this is why it exists, its mission is to serve young people, but at the same time *it encourages these young people to serve other young people*. It chooses to do this at the invitation of Mary, the perfect handmaid of the Lord and of men, who herself wished to imitate Christ who had come to serve.

- While the life of a person who gives service is already of very great use to others, the life of a Brother who, following the footsteps of St John Baptist de La Salle, offers service, is:
  - a precious life: it is a life filled with light, the presence of Christ in the midst of the world;
  - an opportunity: it is an opportunity for friendship and love shared with everyone;
  - a creation: it creates a new world, a brotherly world, a more social world, one especially that is more just for those who are most penalised by not having good health, money, work or evangelisation;

– a source of edification: it breathes charity into the lives of people, it builds a community that is more living, a Church that is more missionary.

### A final conviction

Adults are often blamed for the evil that occurs, for lacking charity, for not bearing witness by their lives. This is sometimes true, but who is without shortcomings?

It has to be said also, however, that there are adults, marvellous married couples, who are very competent in their apostolic and charitable work, who promote the renewal of prayer life, family life and care for others. So let us not judge too swiftly, and let us show tolerance and kindness.

It is undeniable, however, that young people have a very great capacity for generosity, disinterestedness and the gift of self. They are capable of giving in both the big and small things of daily life. Their eyes are open and sad in the presence of all that society considers valueless. They are drawn to care for people who do not fit in society, the rejected, the elderly, the sick, handicapped children. They feel a close affinity for little children, poor and marginalised people. They are prepared to devote themselves, to serve when called for and offer personalised service. We should see the work they do in the midst of all the misery of this world as a powerful witness.

It may be true that, when we look at this world with its almost 6 thousand million inhabitants, we see many bad things such as the decrease in religious practice, failure of marriages, divorce, sexual licence, lack of moral constraint, Aids, violence, unemployment, drug abuse, religious sects, material, moral and, for many, spiritual misery, the lack of vocations which, perhaps, need to be deserved, but we note also, in spite of this black picture, a religious and charismatic renewal in most parts of the world.

Given the large number of secular institutes in the world, of late vocations to the priesthood or the monastic or apostolic religious life, the new evangelisation seems to be bearing its fruit among the many people searching for God. And so, we need to continue to show courage and trust the God of love who knows of the needs of the people here below who pray to him.

Youth everywhere live in this difficult world which has lost its sense of direction, which seems confusing and often in revolt. And yet, young people continue to believe in beauty, the importance of solidarity, of giving, of the greatness of giving per se, and in this they are close to Christ, they are the brothers of Jesus and the brothers of everyone else.

And so, as far as possible and on the basis of our personal and collective experience, our Brothers' communities, our

educational teams and other groups have a duty to be places of listening, available to everybody, where justice, generosity, acceptance and the gift of self are learnt and practised; places where it is possible to do something generous and gratuitous. It should not be forgotten, however, as was the case in the past in some religious houses and elsewhere, that the right to wages and social benefits must be respected. In order to do everything legally and openly, respecting the Truth, each community must listen to each of its Brothers, to its school, to its staff, to its town district, to its town, to the often neglected country areas, to industries, to businesses, to families, to the professions, to Collective Agreements, to the nation, to the world, to its Institute, to the Church, so as to hear their calls and be ready to do something useful, to be conscious of the needs of our fellow human beings. As Cardinal Marty used to say: "There is always something to do somewhere, because everywhere workers are sought and taken on".

Each school, group, factory, office or community must succeed in becoming a place where service is thought about, where it is organised for the betterment of everybody and the success of God's plan for mankind. Perfection is never attained and the work never ends. That is why we must always seek to improve things by "going forward".

Here below, everything consists in:

- the need to be "more"
- progression towards becoming "more"

This is the law of Christian life, of religious life, because what makes us men, women, Christians and religious is something ahead of us. But to go ahead in order "to go forward", we must disencumber ourselves, free ourselves, lose ourselves in giving of ourselves. We must work, pray, love. This is the condition that will enable us to rediscover ourselves fully, to share our joy, to experience happiness and attract the souls it is our duty to lead to God.

If we want our community, sector or pole meetings to be celebrations of this progress, we must, from now on, in simple mutual acceptance, constantly "go forward".

"Go forward": in contemplation, in real life, in professional life, in apostolic life, in sharing where possible, in service, pedagogy, education, in the human and religious formation of young people and adults, in collaboration with our employees, our lay teachers, the educational team, our associations, our parishes, Lasallian movements and others.

Let us go forward with Jesus, through Mary and like Mary and St John Baptist de La Salle, in the service of children, young people, adults, families and fellow human beings.

To all I say: "Go forward!" because all the flowers of the future are present in today's seed. •