

**ADDRESS OF A FORMER
LASALLIAN STUDENT
to the New Zealand
Catholic Education Convention - 1996**

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Tena Koutu Katoa - Kia Orana - Malo e lelei - Fakalofa
lahi atu - Nisa Bula Vinaka - Talofa - Ka Nichiwa -

Goodmorning Ladies and Gentlemen .

My name is Falaniko Tominiko and I am a former student of De La Salle College in Auckland. Today I stand before you to talk about my experiences as a student of a catholic school. As already mentioned, I attended De La Salle College, a Catholic boys College from 1989 - 1995. De La Salle College is one of many schools around the world run by the Religious Order of the De La Salle Brothers.

I first embarked on my journey through Catholic education back in 1989. I thought the transition from Government education to Catholic education would be a difficult one for me but to my surprise, I fitted quite comfortably into my new schooling environment. The first thing I realised was how friendly and supportive the teachers were. It was comforting for myself and a 150 other new entrants to know that the teachers were there to help us and to guide us in the right direction. From day 1 my impressions of the staff were of a group of people who were not only there to teach but to be friends. When I look back I see that there was always a special bond between the teachers and students. The teachers did not put themselves above the students but were on the same level as the students and it was this teacher - student relationship that made learning for us the students much easier and enjoyable. I personally owe a lot to all the teachers that have taught me in the past and each and everyone, in their own way has touched my life. I believe that teachers are the foundation of the school and like a building, if the foundation is strong and solid, so will everything else and I say with utmost confidence that catholic schools of today have the strongest foundations.

I can remember the first time I put on my school uniform, with a badge in front which said «De La Salle College». Immediately I felt a sense of belonging and pride. It was the uniform that gave us a sense of identity. It was because of this that we always wore our uniform with pride and made sure we looked smart, shirt tucked in and socks up etc. This

showed everyone else that we were proud of our school and that we were part of a unique school. I am sure that every other Catholic student wore their uniform with pride.

Religion was a major part of my education at De La Salle. Everything was based around our Catholic faith. From the day we first entered to the day we graduated, we were constantly learning about our Religious faith. Religious Education was considered just as important as every other subject, and because of that it was compulsory right from Form 1 to Form 7. Religious Education helped us to understand more about ourselves thus helped us to become better people and increased our faith. Prayer played a major role in everyday life at school. Prayer was always said in the mornings, before each class, and in the afternoon before school concluded. Prayers were constantly said for members of the community in need of help and were commonly said before and after rugby games etc. Prayer became a spontaneous thing and it was common for us to pray to God to give us help in everything we did at school. Weekly mass was held every Wednesday and as a school, we always had masses to celebrate special days like founders day, dedication day, Easter, Lent etc. All these made our school a stronger knit community. «A family that prays together, stays together».

The one thing that differentiates us, Catholic schools from all the rest of the schools is the presence of Religious People, Priest, Brothers and Sisters. My school was run by the De La Salle Brothers who were founded in France in the mid 17th Century. I have found that the presence of Religious people in a school does make a difference. Ever since attending D.L.S, I have come to appreciate and respect the work that the religious people are doing for our school. At D.L.S, the Brothers are an inspirational group of people. Their lives are dedicated to helping the students and like Jesus, they live their lives to help others. The Brothers have always made the students their priority and have always been there to listen, to comfort, to heal, to give advice, to give spiritual guidance, and basically to be a Brother to all of us.

Like many other students, I have been positively influenced by the Brothers and have a special bond with the Brothers. Although I am out of school, I still regularly keep in touch with the Brothers. The Brothers also run a contact programme where they allow students past and present to stay with them for a few week at a time to experience the life of the Brothers and to get to know the Brothers better.

I myself am on that programme. This positive scheme is good because it gives the Brothers a chance to keep in contact with the students.

The Brothers give great leadership to our school. I have come to appreciate the exceptional leadership displayed in our schools. The leadership of the Brothers, teachers, Prefects and Senior students inspires everyone to work together and to give it their best in all that they do. In my seven years, I have been under the influence of two great leaders. Brother Pat Lynch (who was principal 1989 - 1992) and Brother David Hawke (1992 -1995) who have now both taken up higher positions, Brother Pat becoming the Executive Director of the NZ Catholic Education Office, and Brother David becoming Head Provincial of D.L.S Brothers in Australasia. Good leadership is a common trait in all Catholic Schools.

One group that shows great leadership in our school is the «Youth Ministry Group». This group was set up by Brother

Owen Mason in 1992, and was set up to serve the Youth of our school and community. The groups main aim is to support fellow students who come from violent, unstable homes, who are sick or who are just in need of a friend. This group of students run Prayer meetings and also run retreats for the school. The group have annually run retreat camps up north for the youth from Whangarei to Kaitaia and also go out to local Catholic Primary schools as part of their ministry. This group follows in the footsteps of the D.L.S Brother in going out into the world and touching the lives of others. I myself am a member of this group and it always makes me feel good knowing we made a difference to someone's life.

At D.L.S, we have what is called the Lasallian Spirit. The Lasallian spirit is the driving force behind many a victory. The Lasallian spirit gives us the strength to be the best that we can, and is the confirmation of the faith in our school. This spirit builds our character and transforms us into the proud D.L.S Family we are. It is this spirit that motivates us to achieve our maximum potential in our academic studies, Sports, Cultural Activities etc. This spirit helps us to live our school motto «BONUM CERTAMEN CERTA»: meaning «FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH». There is a saying we have back at school, «YOU CAN TAKE A BOY OUT OF DE LA SALLE, BUT YOU CAN NEVER TAKE DE LASALLE OUT OF THE BOY». the Lasallian Spirit will always remain within the students and although I have left school, I feel that I am still part of the school because I believe I still have the Lasallian Spirit in me. I believe that other catholic students have a similar school spirit.

One word describes Catholic Schools, and that is «FAMILY». Not only have I been a member of the D.L.S Family for the past 7 years, I have also been part of a bigger family, the Catholic Schools family. No other school is as strong and loyal as the Catholic School Family and I'm confident we will continue to grow stronger and stronger as a Family. I am so proud of being a member of this Catholic Schools family and it will always have a special place in my heart.

Before I conclude, let me leave you with this little story. «There was once an old wise man and a young smart man». One day the young smart man captured a small bird in the palm of his hands and he went up to the old wise man and said, «Old man, I have a small bird in the palm of my hands, is this bird dead or is it alive?» He was going to trick the old man. The old man thought to himself, If I say it is dead, then the young man would release it to fly away, thus proving me wrong, but if I say it is alive, he will squeeze it to death and again prove me wrong. After thinking about his carefully, the old wise man replied, «YOUNG MAN, THE LIFE OF THE BIRD IS IN YOUR HANDS»!.

Therefore I say to you, the future of our Catholic schools is in your hands and I pray that you are all given the blessing and strength to keep our Catholic school Family together so future generations can be part of the greatest family in the world.

May God Bless you and I wish you all the best. •