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DE LA
SALLE

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MAGAZINE

De La Salle

The Founder and
His Mission



cover story



The Founder and His Mission

The following is the first in a nine-part series examining St. John Baptist de La Salle, his mission, and its relevance in today's world. Future issues will explore such topics as the growing importance of lay leadership at Lasallian institutions, the expansion of the mission around the world, and how St. La Salle's spiritual guidance continues to inspire modern educators. The articles in this issue, which provide a historical perspective on the life and teachings of St. La Salle, were adapted from a commemorative edition of *Signs of Faith*, the former magazine of the Brothers of the Christian Schools' District of San Francisco. The staff of *La Salle Magazine* extends a special thank-you to Brother George Van Grieken, F.S.C., Ph.D., guest editor.

IT IS APRIL 1679. A YOUNG PRIEST waits on the doorstep of a convent in Reims, France. He has come to call upon the Sisters of the Child Jesus, a new order whose work is the care and education of poor girls. The young priest has helped them in becoming established, and now he serves as their chaplain and confessor. His name is John Baptist de La Salle. The eldest son of a wealthy professional family in the city of Reims, not quite 28 years old, he has been ordained for a year and is about to receive his doctorate in theology. He is a canon of the prestigious Cathedral Chapter at Reims, which is a traditional breeding ground of bishops and cardinals. A man so gifted and so positioned might well become an important member of the Church hierarchy or a distinguished professor. This young canon, thoughtful, cultivated, and kind-hearted, will certainly become notable in church circles and a pious influence at the comfortable and powerful level of society that is his natural world in 17th-century France.

Now it is April of 1719. That young priest, now old, racked by asthma and chronic rheumatism, is at the end of his earthly journey. In the early morning hours of Good Friday, he lies in his bed, attended by the men whom he calls “Brothers.” His wealth has long ago been given away and the privileges that were his by birth are long since surrendered. His church connections are mixed at best. Some church leaders admire him, but many powerful pastors

and bishops have treated him and his work with contempt or hostility. His journey has been down paths he could not have imagined 40 years earlier. And what are the final results of his life’s work? A small community of some 100 men that calls itself the Brothers of the Christian Schools but is not yet recognized officially by either church or state, and a set of mostly parish-based schools for poor boys, schools fully appreciated only

for him, he would not have even begun the task.

The foundation was established in his early life. While it might have been expected that he would follow in his father’s footsteps as a magistrate of the presidial court, De La Salle chose to pursue the priesthood and underwent an official ceremony at the age of 11 to confirm his intention. At 15, he received the distinguished position of canon, a title that brought

“If my work does not come from God, I would consent to its ruin. I would join our enemies in destroying it if I thought that it did not have God for its author, or that he did not will its progress.” —John Baptist de La Salle

by those who attend them. Early on that Friday morning, as De La Salle begins to breathe his last, Brother Barthélemy, his successor as Superior of the Brothers, asks him if he accepts his sufferings. De La Salle responds: “*Oui, j’adore en toutes choses la conduite de Dieu à mon égard.*” (“Yes, I adore God guiding me in all the events of my life.”)

And so John Baptist de La Salle dies. He has not become a distinguished professor or an important churchman. He has only become a founder of a religious order and a saint. More than 350 years after his birth, it has become ever more apparent that the life he lived was the life God led him to live. At one point, De La Salle wrote that if he had known what was in store

with it both church responsibilities and church benefits. At age 19, De La Salle studied at the Sorbonne while residing at the Seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris. St. Sulpice was notable for a rigorous lifestyle and intended to produce priests capable of self-sacrifice and self-discipline. Mindful of the needs of the poor, a regular task of the seminarians was to teach catechism to the poor.

When he was compelled to return to Reims 16 months later upon the death of his parents, his vocation began to develop in ways he would never have anticipated. The 21-year-old seminarian became head of the household, with four brothers and two sisters to take care of. In the meantime, he pursued his studies

Timeline of Events

1651: John Baptist de La Salle is born at Reims.

(Facing Page) John Baptist de La Salle meets schoolmaster Adrien Nyel at the doors of the convent of the Sisters of the Child Jesus in Reims in 1679. This chance encounter begins De La Salle’s involvement in starting free schools for poor boys in Reims. Painting from Gerlier’s engraving in Gaveau’s 1886 *Life of the Founder*. (Right) The childhood home of De La Salle in Reims.



and his path to the priesthood and became a priest on April 9, 1678.

The beginning of his involvement in the world of education—at least the visible beginning—came at that convent door of the Sisters of the Child Jesus in April of 1679, where he happened to encounter another man coming to call on the Sisters. Adrian Nyel was a layman who had worked in Rouen for many years providing schooling for the poor. A wealthy widow had asked Nyel to see about founding a charity school for boys in Reims. Nyel's first call in Reims was at the convent of the teaching Sisters. Following their meeting, De La Salle invited Nyel to stay at his home while he brought together various people in Reims who could help Nyel to start the proposed school for poor boys.

De La Salle's help was effective, and a school was soon opened. Shortly thereafter, another wealthy woman in Reims told Nyel that she also would endow a school but only if Monsieur La Salle would help. De La Salle agreed and gradually began to help support the teachers, even renting them a house to live in. Now he found himself becoming drawn into a world to which he had been a stranger, the world of the poor—a world of disadvantaged students, uncultured teachers, and parents chronically oppressed by poverty. De La Salle could not deny the needs he saw so immediately before him.

De La Salle knew that the teachers in Reims were struggling, lacking

leadership, purpose, and training, and he found himself taking increasingly deliberate steps to help this small group of men with their work. First, in 1680, he invited them to take their meals in his home, as much to teach them table manners as to inspire and instruct them in their work. In 1681, De La Salle realized that he would have to take a further step—he brought the teachers into his own home to live with him. De La Salle's relatives were upset, his social class was scandalized, and they thought he was carrying the Gospel a bit too far. But De La Salle could not shake the conviction that he was doing something in accordance with God's will for him.

When, a year later, his family home was lost at auction because of a family lawsuit, De La Salle rented a house into which he and the handful of teachers moved, a house that would come to be called “the cradle of the Institute.” One biographer has called the walk across town to this undistinguished home in the poorer part of town De La Salle's personal Exodus. It was here that those who had joined this new enterprise with De La Salle first began to call themselves “Brothers.”

Community life became formalized, teaching and procedures at the now-three schools became more regular, some men left and new candidates came.



Preserved at the Hotel de La Salle in Reims, this painting shows young Canon de La Salle at about the age of 18.

Within a year, in 1683, the Brothers became concerned about their stability and their security as part of this untested enterprise. De La Salle urged them to trust in God, but he was a wealthy man by birth and a canon with a large annual income, while they were poor men with no skills and no prospects.

De La Salle considered donating his personal wealth to endow the community. But after praying deeply and consulting widely, he decided that the Holy Spirit was leading him along a different path. So, in 1683, he resigned his position of canon at the cathedral and, in the winter



1666: Following the resignation of Pierre Dozet, John Baptist de La Salle is named Canon of the Cathedral Church of Reims.

1669: John Baptist de La Salle earns his master's degree, with highest honors.

(Left) Reims Cathedral, begun in 1212 and finished in the 14th century. John Baptist de La Salle was a canon of this cathedral and celebrated his first Mass here, on April 10, 1678.

of 1683-84, he gave away all that he had to feed the poor during a particularly severe famine in France. Thus he joined his Brothers in true poverty and broke down the barrier that separated him from them. Now, they would all be fully dependent on God.

For a person of De La Salle's background and position as a priest to accept barely literate laymen as equal

to begin to develop without leaning on De La Salle's constant presence.

As the work began in Paris, first at one school and then at several more, a new challenge appeared. Schools for the poor such as those that the Brothers ran were meant to be restricted to the certified poor. However, the Brothers did not distinguish in their admissions between poor and non-poor. All were

and expanding the already flourishing schools and communities and providing for the young candidates asking to join. De La Salle spent time writing various texts, both for the schools and for the Brothers, including everything from a student reading text on politeness and decorum to a detailed method for the Brothers' interior prayer.

Between 1694 and 1709, many new schools opened, several others closed, and legal battles raged on. In Paris, as lawsuits were decided against him, he began to wonder if the welfare of the community and the prosperity of the work required his personal withdrawal from the scene.

De La Salle journeyed throughout the south of France for more than two years, visiting schools, teaching, and spending personal time in retreat. His physical health was poor (his rheumatism was chronic); his long labors had worn him out; the difficulties in Paris continued to be a personal challenge, and the future was not clear. He pondered the continued usefulness of his presence within the Institute that he had worked so hard to establish.

His prayers for guidance were answered when the Brothers summoned De La Salle back to Paris. As the Brothers in Paris opened the door to him, De La Salle said, "Here I am. What do you want me to do?"

“Since it is your responsibility to teach your students about God, you must first become aware of the action of God in your life. Teach by example. Put into practice what you want your students to believe.”

—From John Baptist de La Salle's Meditations

colleagues, as his Brothers, was quite unheard of. Yet, early on, De La Salle realized that the community had to govern itself from within, rather than from the outside, whether by a bishop, a parish priest, or even himself. At the Brothers' General Assembly in 1686, a distinctive habit was approved, a vow of obedience was taken, and the name "Brothers of the Christian Schools" was officially adopted.

In 1688, he and two Brothers traveled to Paris, where in short order they revitalized the school for the poor in the parish of St. Sulpice. This work was important because it established the group's autonomy and freedom from direct diocesan control, and it allowed the Brothers in Reims

welcome to their free schools, and many wanted to come, including those whose families were not on the parish's Poor Register. The fee-taking teachers filed suits for infringement on their business and violation of the established regulations. This hostility, in suits, harassment, and even violence, continued in Paris for the next 15 years.

In 1694, the first assembly to be known as a General Chapter was held, at which perpetual vows of obedience and association for the educational service of the poor were taken for the first time by De La Salle and 12 Brothers.

De La Salle and the Brothers began to fortify their Society, strengthening

1670: John Baptist de La Salle enters the seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris.

1672: John Baptist de La Salle's parents die within eight months of each other. He leaves the seminary and returns to Reims to be head of the family and guardian of his six brothers and sisters.

1678: John Baptist de La Salle receives a licentiate in theology and is ordained a priest, having continued his studies in Reims.

1679: A chance encounter at the convent of the Sisters of the Child Jesus on the Rue du Barbâtre with schoolmaster Adrian Nyel, who had just arrived from Rouen, involves John Baptist de La Salle in starting free schools for poor boys in Reims. John Baptist de La Salle invites into his home on the Rue Sainte Marguerite both Adrien Nyel and his 14-year-old apprentice.





De La Salle—An Educational Pioneer

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE WAS NEITHER A LOUD AND vocal revolutionary, nor a reformer with an abstract program of his own devising. He was an unassuming, quiet French upper-class gentleman, a cultivated priest who found God moving him to care in concrete ways for the education and salvation of the ones whom Jesus had called “the least of these.” Gradually, he became, somewhat to his own surprise, an educational pioneer. The following are some examples of his innovations in the world of education.

PRACTICAL CURRICULUM

The curriculum addressed the practical needs and realistic options of the poor. The average student in a charity school could not stay more than two or three years, since by age 14 many of them would have to be at work. Students were grouped by ability, and teachers made sure that a student had mastered one level before moving to the next.

FRENCH NOT LATIN

De La Salle saw that the charity school students needed facility in reading and writing the everyday language of business, commerce, and catechesis, not a language that they would little use.

SIMULTANEOUS INSTRUCTION

In De La Salle’s age, teachers customarily would privately engage one student at a time in a classroom of dozens of students. Instead, the Brothers’ new method was to divide a large class into small groups according to their level of learning and to involve whole groups in the lesson. The goal was to engage every student every day in as many ways as possible.

TEACHER TRAINING

De La Salle not only established pedagogical training for the Brothers,

but he also created centers for the training of lay teachers who would serve in rural parish schools.

PERSONAL OBSERVATION

De La Salle and the Brothers studied each child’s capability, character, and needs and passed their notes on to the next teacher when the student moved on. This sort of psychological observation is now habitual.

BENDING SOCIAL BARRIERS

In their charity schools, the Brothers charged nothing, accepted no gifts, and allowed no distinctions between those who could afford to pay and those who could not. As more children of families who were better off came into the schools, boys from bourgeois families studied, played, and prayed with poor boys.

CIVILITY AND MANNERS

De La Salle wanted his pupils to learn how to act in the larger world. As the Brothers taught the boys reading and religion and math, so they taught them social and civil virtues, virtues very much De La Salle’s own—politeness, fairness, self-control, graciousness, prudence, and self-discipline.

De La Salle’s presence and insights did help eventually to resolve most of the difficulties that had been besetting the Brothers. After a year in Paris, De La Salle moved to Rouen, home of St. Yon—which housed the novitiate, a boarding school, and a juvenile center. The Brothers now constituted 23 houses and 34 educational establishments throughout France, with 100 Brothers and some 18 novices.

At four o’clock in the morning on Good Friday 1719, De La Salle made an effort to rise from his bed as if to greet someone, then joined his hands, raised his eyes to heaven, and died. He was buried on Holy Saturday in a side chapel of the local parish church, St. Sever. Throughout Rouen, and soon throughout the Society, word spread that “the Saint is dead.” But the providential extension of his life, work, and influence was just beginning.

A thorough but accessible biography of De La Salle is The Work Is Yours by Brother Luke Salm, F.S.C.; a more comprehensive one is De La Salle: A City Saint and the Liberation of the Poor Through Education by Brother Alfred Calcutt, F.S.C. For a compact introduction to De La Salle’s life and times and achievement, and an analysis of the meaning of Lasallian education today, see Touching the Hearts of Students: Characteristics of Lasallian Schools by Brother George Van Grieken, F.S.C.

1680: John Baptist de La Salle receives his doctorate in theology.

1680: John Baptist de La Salle takes the struggling group of school teachers into his home for meals, meetings, and prayer. This is considered the founding of the Institute.

1683: De La Salle joins the Brothers in their poverty and dependence on God by resigning his office as Canon and using his personal fortune to feed the poor during a famine.

1686: First General Assembly of the Brothers, in Reims. A distinctive habit and the name “Brothers of the Christian Schools” are adopted, and a vow of obedience is taken.

1688: In response to a request by Claude de La Barmondie, the parish priest of St. Sulpice, the Brothers assume direction of a school in Paris, their first enterprise outside of Reims. The Brothers are feared as competition by the for-profit educational establishment. Lawsuits, conflicts, and harassment will continue for two decades.



A Saint For Teachers

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE TAUGHT and exemplified, in a way that no one before him had done, that teaching is a religious act and that the teacher has a religious vocation. He guided into being a community of teachers devoted to living out that truth. Clearly, the enduring movement he began for “human and Christian education” is not only educational but also spiritual, a movement that has the school as its setting, the teacher as its focus, and the salvific potential of education as its inspiration. The following is an overview of the main tenets of De La Salle’s spirituality.

DRIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

For De La Salle, the Holy Spirit was as real and alive as the students who gathered in the classroom each day. He urged his teachers to pray constantly for their students and to bring all their daily teaching concerns to God. He told his teachers that they should look upon their students as Jesus would.

WITH THE SPIRIT OF FAITH AND ZEAL

De La Salle came to understand his work and the work of the schools as an expression of a single spirit that consisted of two parts, faith and
(Left) Cesare Mariani’s painting of the Founder teaching class. On the occasion of the beatification of St. John Baptist de La Salle in 1888, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools presented the painting to Pope Leo XIII. The painting has been on display from time to time in the Vatican Museum and in the Motherhouse in Rome.

- 1690: There are defections and deaths among the Brothers, opposition from authorities, and a near-fatal illness for De La Salle. The Brothers open the establishment at Vaugirard, outside Paris, including the first formal novitiate.
- 1691: De La Salle and two Brothers swear a “heroic vow” to establish the Institute even if all others leave, and they are reduced to begging for their bread.
- 1694: At the first General Chapter, De La Salle and 12 Brothers make perpetual vows, and the first Rule is adopted.
- 1699: The Brothers open a school in Chartres; schools are opened in 18 more cities in France over the next two decades.

(Right) In June 1686 at Reims, John Baptist de La Salle and 12 Brothers make for the first time the vow of obedience for one year. The following day they went to renew this vow at the shrine of Our Lady of Leisse near the town of Laon. Painting (detail) by Giovanni Gagliardi (1901)



zeal. The spirit of faith is the spirit that lets us look at situations from God's viewpoint rather than our own. We begin to find new insights, new talents, and new challenges as this spirit of faith becomes habitually exercised. The spirit of zeal describes a kind of drive that animates a person who is fully committed to Christian education. Zeal makes sure that whatever needs to be done will be done. Such zeal is found each day in classrooms, offices, and sporting fields throughout the Lasallian world.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF SCHOOL

In De La Salle's day, the quality of one's educational life depended on social standing, financial resources, and academic interest. De La Salle and the Brothers bypassed these determinant influences by insisting that all students be treated the same and as if they were sons of the King (social standing made no difference), by requiring that everyone receive their education gratuitously (no tuition or gifts were accepted), and by providing an education that cultivated academic engagement (the curriculum was practical).

DEPENDING FULLY ON GOD

De La Salle's trust in God's continual and loving care shaped the educational enterprise that he developed. His surrender to the designs of God's Providence was a conscious, continual decision, a daily recommitment. His constant response to all was "God be blessed." His deep



The dying Founder gives his last blessing to the Brothers. Painting (detail) by Giovanni Gagliardi (1906)

conviction was that God's Providence spoke to him in the events of his life.

ACCESSIBLE AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

The more De La Salle became involved in education, the more needs he saw and tried to fulfill—needs for

terminal primary schools, continuation schools, teacher-training schools, and more. The schools were to be accessible to all. Students were treated alike in terms of opportunity and treated individually in terms of capacities. The education that De La Salle and his followers provided paid attention

- 1705: The Brothers open the establishment at St. Yon, near Rouen, including a novitiate, a boarding school, and a home for delinquent boys. Formal permission is given to print all the works prepared by De La Salle for use in the schools.
- 1712: De La Salle withdraws from Paris to visit the Institute's establishments in the south of France and to make an extended retreat.
- 1714: Summoned back to Paris by his Brothers, De La Salle obediently does as requested, preparing the next General Assembly and helping to revise the Rule.
- 1717: The second General Chapter elects Brother Barthélemy the first Superior General.
- 1718: De La Salle lives at St. Yon, writing and ministering, but becomes increasingly ill.
- 1719: On Good Friday morning, De La Salle dies at St. Yon, aged nearly 68. The word is passed through the streets of Rouen: "The Saint is dead."
- 1725: Papal bull of approbation is issued (Brothers are recognized as an Institute of Pontifical Right with Simple Vows).

to the heart of all education—integrated lives in right relationship with reality, which includes the reality of God.

EDUCATION AND THE POOR

Commitment to the education of the poor works hand in hand with a commitment to the Gospel itself, and for Lasallians, it is a great legacy and a great challenge. De La Salle established educational institutions that directly addressed an ingrained and debilitating societal cycle in 17th-century France. The “poor” of his day were the vast majority of the population, limited in resources, abilities, and security. De La Salle’s response was to provide well-organized schools with caring, dependable teachers who provided a comprehensive, free, and faith-centered education.

A CHRISTIAN AND CATHOLIC SCHOOL

De La Salle’s followers called themselves “Brothers of the Christian Schools” because their focus was the school. One of the major tasks of these Christian Schools was to bring the young to understand and enter into the fullness of life that was their inheritance as children of God. Concern for “salvation” on the practical level went hand-in-hand with “salvation” on the spiritual level.

The schools were solidly schools within the Catholic tradition. The context of a vibrant Catholic heritage provided the means for developing what we today would call a “faith community.”

A PRACTICAL APPROACH

De La Salle did not write about educational philosophy—he wrote educational handbooks and textbooks on everything from French syllables to Gospel maxims to the rules of politeness. The schools were eminently practical: written work concentrated on contracts and ledgers; arithmetic lessons dealt with finance and business; young men who worked

all week could attend classes on Sunday, an opportunity unique to Lasallian institutions at the time, to learn mathematics, drafting, and commerce; and schools on the seacoast included classes on navigation and seamanship.

WITH CREATIVITY AND COURAGE

Courage? De La Salle gave up his inheritance, social position, and chances of ecclesiastical preferment; he distributed his fortune to feed



The statue by Aureli of John Baptist de La Salle in the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. Part of the gallery of founders of religious congregations, it stands some five meters in height and weighs 23 tons. It is often picked out by Lasallians by means of the guiding outstretched arm and is one of the few statues in the gallery of St. Peter’s that includes children.

the poor; he took an “heroic vow” to establish the Institute even if they had to live on bread alone; he withstood years of relentless attempts to destroy or co-opt the young society of Brothers.

Creativity? De La Salle and the Brothers came up with innovative

methods for teaching reading, handwriting, mathematics, and religion, and for grasping each student’s needs by means of a personalized record of strengths and weaknesses, family relationships, and the approaches that worked best.

TOGETHER AND BY ASSOCIATION

De La Salle realized that the schools would be successful and stable only if the teachers were united by a common vision, a shared dedication, and a supportive community. From the first retreat that he gave them in his house in 1681 to his last General Assembly with them in 1717, he worked to knit his teachers into a religiously animated group of Christian educators who worked in, with, and through association.

A LAY SPIRITUALITY

The Brothers’ vocation is a vocation to educational ministry, not to sacramental ministry. It is a lay vocation that has more in common with the people in the pew than with the pastor in the parish.

De La Salle established a teaching order of men who were to be neither “seculars” nor “clerics.” They were to be dedicated to teaching as “Brothers.” Their ministry lay in their encounter, as teachers, with students and parents. And the value of the teaching encounter is what Lasallian educators today still use as a touchstone.

This lay character allows for, encourages, and empowers the sense of companionship, the down-to-earthness, that characterizes the relationships found within a Lasallian school. There is a care for one another like that of an extended family. There is a sense of solidarity among all Lasallians, who know from daily experience the many modalities of the lay vocations that have sprung from the spiritual inspiration of John Baptist de La Salle.

What Made Lasallian Schools so Unusual and Desirable?

De La Salle's intervention in the French educational system was truly and quietly revolutionary, thanks to two fundamental contributions. First, he revealed that teaching has a religious as well as a human dimension and that divine love is at the heart of all teaching. Second, he guided into being a stable community of Brothers vowed to associate together for the purpose of keeping schools for the poor.

De La Salle brought discipline, order, and focus to schools and devised a curriculum appropriate to the needs of their particular students, including training in basic academic skills (reading, writing, and arithmetic), social skills (politeness, leadership, and cooperation), and instruction and involvement in the Catholic faith (catechism, daily prayer schedule, and regular Mass attendance).

The Brothers answered the crying need for stable and competent teachers who were trained to their task and dedicated to their students. In the Brothers' schools, the teaching was done by men who worked as a community and in association, neither for prestige nor for pay but for the glory of God, the salvation of the poor, and the fulfillment of their vocation as part of a community. De La Salle's direction to the Brothers was: "Regard your students as the children of God himself. Have much more care for

their education and for their instruction than you would have for the children of a king."

Perhaps De La Salle's most fundamental contribution to education is his conviction that at the root of true teaching must lie an authentic love for the students and for the vocation of teaching. In his writings, he pointed out how such a relationship is enacted day by day: "By love and patience, win over the hearts of those whom you teach."

The Brothers' schools became places where the young were able to develop intellectually, socially, and spiritually, where they were able to determine where and how to advance in their capacities, and where they experienced an affection and respect not commonly bestowed on the young by the general society of the time. Along with well-organized practical lessons taught in common, there was instruction in social manners and a host of classroom responsibilities, from ink-distributor to key-keeper to bell-ringer to prayer-leader. At each hour of the day,



the bell-ringer would stop all activity for the prayer, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God."

For good reasons, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, with its essentially independent, non-clerical character and its mission-based, communal ministry of education, has been recognized by historians as a unique addition to the history of education.

1888: On February 19, De La Salle is beatified.

1800s



(Right) Bronze relief sculpture of St. John Baptist de La Salle by Leonard Baskin (1922-2000) from the La Salle University Art Museum.

1900: On May 24, De La Salle is canonized.

1950: On May 15, St. John Baptist de La Salle is proclaimed Patron of All Teachers of Youth.

1900s

Web Resources for Further Reading

For more information about the Christian Brothers' global mission, visit www.lasalle.org.

For more information about the work of the Christian Brothers Conference in the United States/Toronto Region, including an online bookstore with several titles referenced in this issue, visit www.cbconf.org.

To learn more about Lasallian schools in the Baltimore District, visit www.fscbaltimore.org.

De La Salle's Written Works

FOR THE SCHOOLS:

The Conduct of Christian Schools (in manuscript form until 1720)

Exercises of Piety for the Use of the Christian Schools (1696)

Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass (1698)

Teaching French Syllables (1698)

How to Go to Confession (1698)

Prayers for Confession and Communion (ca. 1698)

The Rules of Christian Politeness and Civility (1702)

Spiritual Canticles for the Use of the Christian Schools (1703)

The Duties of a Christian (1703)

Christian Public Worship (Volume III of *The Duties*, 1703)

David's Psalter and the Office of Our Lady (1706)

FOR THE BROTHERS' COMMUNITY:

The Common Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (1705 and 1718)

The Collection of Short Treatises for the Use of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (1705, printed in 1711)

The Rule of the Brother Director of a House of the Institute
Meditations for All the Sundays of the Year and for the Principal Feasts of the Year

Meditations for the Time of the Retreat

Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer



During the famine of 1683-84, John Baptist de La Salle distributes his wealth by providing food to the poor of Reims. Painting (detail) by Giovanni Gagliardi (1901) at the Generalate in Rome.

Carrying on the Mission

Five La Salle graduates are serving as Lasallian Volunteers at sites around the country in 2006-07.

- John Patrick Schultz, '06, is in his first year at La Salle Yakima in Yakima, Wash. He is teaching two sophomore English classes and a homework class, working in campus ministry, and involved in immersion trips in Tijuana, Mexico, and Browning, Mont.
- Brendan Bradley, '05, is in his second year at San Miguel Back of the Yards in Chicago, Ill., where he continues to teach seventh grade.
- Matthew Joram, '05, is in his second year at San Miguel Tulsa in Tulsa, Okla., where he continues to teach sixth- and seventh-grade classes.
- Victoria Kline, '05, is in her second year working at Holy Family Catholic Worker and has started tutoring and mentoring students at St. Stephen's School in Kansas City, Mo.
- Bridget Lilly, '05, is in her second year at LEOCenter in Oakland, Calif., where she works at the tutoring center and programs field trips for the students.

Did You Know ...

- Whenever something unexpected occurred in John Baptist de La Salle's life, his response often began with the exclamation "God be blessed!" Whether he was in pain, had failed somewhere, or received a gift, this exclamation remained. On many occasions, the words "God be blessed!" were tied to events or situations that demonstrated to him that God's provident care was clearly leading him on.
- John Baptist de La Salle's mother, Nicole Moët de Brouillet, was of landed gentry by birth, a member of the family that still produces Moët & Chandon Champagne. She lost her claim to nobility by marrying Louis de La Salle, a bourgeois.
- Since its founding in France more than 300 years ago, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools has expanded to 80 countries and has grown to include more than 73,000 lay associates who, together with the Brothers, teach more than 900,000 students.
- In early Lasallian schools, teachers tried to avoid speaking unnecessarily in the classroom, except when asking a question or when, once a day, they shared a "reflection" on some religious theme in order to inspire the students and speak to them "from the heart to the heart."
- John Baptist de La Salle maintained a deep appreciation for the restorative power of gardens. De La Salle would find gardens for the Brothers to use for prayer and relaxation, if their house did not have a garden attached to it. He realized through his own experience that gardens were a privileged means of restoring one's capacity for the difficult work that the Brothers did each day in the school.



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This feature is the second installment in a nine-part series examining St. John Baptist de La Salle, his mission, and its relevance in today's world.

“Brother”

BY BROTHER EDWARD J. SHEEHY, F.S.C., PH.D., '68

IN A CABLE SERIES ENTITLED *ROME*, the hardy veterans of the 13th Legion often refer to each other as “brother.” We see the word used in such varied material as the Bible and “golden oldies” music. De La Salle Christian Brothers sometimes are asked, “Why a Brother, not a priest?” In some ways, the answer remains a simple one. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia has begun an advertising campaign based on “answering the call.” Every person has a “call,” a vocation as it were, in both employment and relationships. Brothers were “called” to be Brothers. Perhaps our introduction to the term may come from another television series—in a most real sense, we are a “Band of Brothers.”

John Baptist de La Salle, the Founder, looked at 17th-century France and saw religious schools for the wealthy. He acutely observed that the need in that time and place remained for a group of teachers to focus on middle- and lower-class boys and their academic and vocational upbringing. He called

his teachers “Brothers” for many reasons. I suspect the fact they lived in a community or family (never to be fewer than three, according to the rule), and served as mentors, teachers, and “big brothers” to their students, were important factors then as now. At first, De La Salle wanted to have a few of his followers ordained, to provide priestly services for his communities, but when his first choice died unexpectedly, the Founder took that event as a sign from the Lord that his Order was to remain lay.

When we think of the best traits of an “older brother,” in our families, I suspect, we reflect on someone who is a listener, present for us, and an example. In the late 1960s at Calvert Hall College High School in Baltimore, the student government focused on a one-word theme, “respect.” “Brothers” in our families or as members of the Order “respect” us and others, and by their leadership and diligence, show us how to respect learning, maturity, and

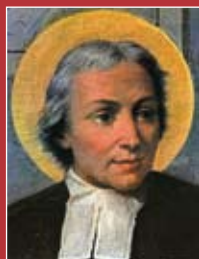
life at all levels. Curiously, members of the larger community often refer to Brothers by shortened first names, Brother Tom, Joe, etc., as a sign of familial respect, not familiarity. Moreover, the mission of the Christian Brothers always has included other members of the “family”; as a “big brother” involves other siblings in activities, the Brothers share responsibilities with dedicated associates, both lay and religious.

The largest male religious order of Brothers in the Church, the De La Salle Christian Brothers have focused on one mission: education. While that view has broadened to include the myriad of activities outside of actual classroom instruction, the primary purpose has remained the same. In the face of at least two crises that threatened the existence of the Order in France, during the French Revolution and late in the 19th century, the commitment of the Brothers to both “faith and zeal”

In the Words of the Founder

“Consider that you are working in your ministry for the building of the church through your teaching of the children whom God has entrusted to your care. These children are becoming a part of the structure whose foundation was laid by the holy apostles. For this reason you must fulfill your ministry as the apostles fulfilled theirs. ... You are successors to the apostles in their task of catechizing and teaching the poor.”

—from *St. John Baptist de La Salle, Meditations 200.1*



De La Salle

Further Reflections

“Brotherhood is a horizontal model that implicitly rejects the paternalism in the vertical model of fatherhood. The Brothers of today want to share with their associates in the educational mission these values implicit in their tradition of brotherhood. Nor do the Brothers consider as excluded from the brotherhood our clerical colleagues who participate in the Lasallian educational mission; as a famous Brother once put it: There isn’t any reason why a priest can’t be a brother. Perhaps for that reason, there is a certain lack of pretentiousness in a Lasallian institution of higher learning. This isn’t so much emphasis on pomp and circumstance. The value placed on association in brotherhood tends to produce a certain atmosphere of informality and friendliness that prevails on a Lasallian campus. This aspect of the Lasallian tradition ought to be pervasive enough to transform an impersonal educational institution into an authentic community where persons meet persons, where mind speaks to mind and heart speaks to heart, where the learning experience is shared



Brother Edward J. Sheehy in the classroom.

(spirit of the Order) has made them true “teachers.”

“Brothers” teach academic subjects, it is true. But, perhaps more fundamentally, all teachers actually show “who they are” in the classroom. And so, a values-based education remains at the heart of a “Brothers school.” My dad graduated more than 65 years ago from Bishop Loughlin in Brooklyn, N.Y., and—like so many others proud of a Christian Brothers’ education—still remains committed to those values learned long ago: “respect,” “responsibility,” and “readiness” to serve the Church and society. A “Brothers’ education” extends beyond the classroom. Students, parents, and graduates may see a Brother at La Salle University, for example, moderating a fraternity, a sport, musical activities, dramatics, etc. This “presence” and “involvement”

provides other examples of the special meaning of “Brother” in the educational apostolate.

A Brother by vows, including “association,” witnesses to the continuing presence of God and God-given values in our lives. For centuries then, Christian Brothers and their colleagues have helped older and younger adults advance their personal and professional lives through teaching with passion and compassion.

Br. Ed Sheehy has been an associate professor of history at La Salle for nearly 20 years. He is also Vice President of the La Salle Corporation and serves as the faculty moderator of La Salle’s men’s basketball and football teams.

We invite feedback on this issue and welcome ideas for future installments of the series. Please contact Marian Butcher at butcher@lasalle.edu.

with persons who call each other friends.” —*From a talk given by Brother Luke Salm, F.S.C., one of the preeminent Lasallian historians, on the occasion of the 130th anniversary of the founding of La Salle University, on March 18, 1993.*



The Brothers’ vocation is a vocation to educational ministry, not to sacramental ministry. It is a lay vocation that has more in common with the people in the pew than with the pastor in the parish.

De La Salle established a teaching order of men who were to be neither “seculars” nor “clerics.” They were to be dedicated to teaching as “Brothers,” consecrated to procuring God’s glory and the salvation of the young through the ministry of Christian and human education while keeping some distance from the hierarchal structure of the church. Brothers were not to be involved in any way in clerical affairs, from knowing Latin to leading the singing in parishes. Their place was with the students. The Brothers’ communal prayer was not the recitation of the Divine Office but rather those prayers recommended by the church for all its members. —*From Touching the Hearts of Students: Characteristics of Lasallian Schools, by Brother George Van Grieken, F.S.C.*

Timeline of Events

The continuing story of the Lasallian Christian Brothers, 1719 to 1805

On Good Friday 1719, St. John Baptist de La Salle dies at age 67 in Rouen, France.



The dying Founder gives his last blessing to the Brothers. Painting (detail) by Giovanni Gagliardi (1906)

In 1725, Pope Benedict XIII formally approves the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools with a Papal Bull, validating its educational mission and its contribution to the Catholic Church by stating, “John Baptist de La Salle ... founded an Institute known by the title of the Brothers of the Christian Schools for the glory of God and the relief of the poor.”

From 1725 to 1792, the Brothers train teachers for work in country and city parishes throughout France and in early schools in Montreal, Canada.

From 1792 to 1805, the Institute is legally terminated during the French Revolution. Only a small group of Brothers in some of the Papal States of Italy and in Rome continue to function officially.

Adapted from The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education, A Shared Mission, by Brother John Johnston, F.S.C., Superior General of the Christian Brothers from 1986 to 2000, and the members of the General Council, April 30, 1997.

This feature is the third installment in a nine-part series examining St. John Baptist de La Salle, his mission, and its relevance in today's world.

Sustaining the Spirit of Faith

BY MICHAEL SMITH, PH.D.



Michael Smith

I DIDN'T COME TO La Salle University to be an evangelist.

I came to teach communication in the country's fifth-largest media market, a welcome change from the Indiana backwaters where I had taught before. I came to

teach at a place that valued teaching, where small class sizes would allow me to work more closely with students.

But I didn't come to be an evangelist.

After 14 years, though, I have come to understand St. John Baptist de La Salle's reflection that "in an imperceptible way and over a long period of time ... one commitment led to another in a way that I did not foresee in the beginning." And while I don't list "evangelist" as the title on my business card, these commitments have transformed the way I view the connections between my teaching and my spirituality.

This "retrospective sense-making" represents one important aspect of Lasallian spirituality: recognizing God's hand in the choices that we make, and trusting in God's providence as we commit ourselves in service to students.

Throughout St. La Salle's writings, other aspects of his spirituality emerge: the constant presence of God; the role of zeal "for the instruction of children and for bringing them up in the fear [awe] of God ..."; and a view of teaching as vocation that seeks to "... inspire God's love in the hearts of those whom you instruct."

Whoa. This is pretty profound stuff for a guy who just came here to teach communication. It's one thing for a community of Brothers to commit themselves to these ideals. But how do we sustain the spirit when we go home, not to a community of Brothers bound by vows of association, but to families where spouses constantly remind us of our matrimonial vows and children who, while reminding us of God's holy gifts, can also be holy terrors to their siblings?

In my life as a Lasallian educator, sustaining the spirit of faith involves seeing the practical connections between one's life and one's work.

One of my heroes, the singer-songwriter-activist Harry Chapin, sang "all my life's a circle." For those who commit themselves to living Lasallian values, the connections between spirituality and our educational role circle around our lives, each nourishing and animating the other. I come from

a family of educators, where both my grandmother and great-aunt, a School Sister of Notre Dame, taught in Catholic schools for more than 50 years—about the same length of time that my dad practiced public relations. You might say I joined the family business. Being a cradle Catholic helped me understand La Salle's roots in the Catholic Church, but Lasallian spirituality is "catholic" in its universal appeal to those from a variety of faith traditions, with a number of Lasallian institutions serving largely Muslim and Buddhist communities. My formal introduction to Lasallian spirituality started at home, when my wife gave me the book *Praying with St. John Baptist de La Salle* by Brother Carl Koch. Finding a way to connect one's life and vocation helps to sustain our spirituality and allows us to "minister" to our students.

Lasallian spirituality is an active, practical spirituality. While reflection nourishes the soul, faith without action is lifeless. Brother Gerard Rummery wrote, "Lasallian spirituality is lived through the ... activities which are typical of an educator's day." Lasallian educators practice their spirituality through everything from the preparation of classes to the interaction with students. I don't preach when I teach.

Timeline of Events

The continuing story of the Lasallian Christian Brothers, 1805 to 1900

In 1829, the Teachers' College on the Lower Seine in Rouen opens to provide training for teachers.

Between 1830 and 1848, 48,500 workmen become students in the Brothers' evening classes for adults, a system that the French government imitated.

During the 19th century, the Brothers continue their pioneering

work in France with boarding schools, homes for troubled youth, and instructional work in prisons.

The Brothers' first efforts overseas were based in French-speaking countries. They then moved into Asia and Singapore in 1852 and learned Spanish



However, some of my courses require students to complete projects for community organizations, which not only helps them learn more effectively but also raises their awareness of how their academic training can be used for the greater good. When Lasallian spirituality animates both our lives and our work, both are sustained.

The educational philosopher Parker Palmer noted that we don't just teach what we know; we "teach" who we are. St. John Baptist de La Salle understood this 300 years ago, and it's that connection between our hearts, our souls, and our minds that helps us sustain the mission and our spirituality.

Michael Smith, Ph.D., is an associate professor of communication and directs the graduate program in Professional Communication. An alumnus of the Lasallian Leadership Institute, he was named La Salle University's Distinguished Lasallian Educator in 2005.

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Further Reflections

The nature of spirituality assumes different characteristics in different vocations. However, Lasallian spirituality is specifically defined in the life and works of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

"When one looks at the *Lasallian* part of Lasallian spirituality, two things are immediately evident ... 1. Lasallian spirituality is a spirituality that has the school as its setting, the teacher as its focus, and the salvific potential of education as its inspiration. De La Salle's writings show that the Lasallian educator's life with his or her students constitutes the very center of his or her religious experience. For the Lasallian educator, the school is the privileged place where God is to be encountered.

"There is no separation between the professional journey and the spiritual journey. Both are aspects of a single vocation and commitment to education. ... 2. The Life of Christ lying at the core of De La Salle's commitments also lies at the core of Lasallian spirituality. ... Christ is to be found in the teacher ... in the student ... in the work of education ... in the prayer of education." —*From Touching the Hearts of Students: Characteristics of Lasallian Schools, by Brother George Van Grieken, F.S.C.*

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 "God himself calls the teacher and chooses him for the 'ministry' of education. His daily work in school is an expression of God's will. ... So the teacher sees himself, in his relationship with the children, as a 'minister of God' and an 'ambassador of Jesus Christ.'" —*From Lasallian Themes 3, by Christian Brothers Generalate, Rome, 1997.*

In the Words of the Founder

"That which is of the utmost importance, and to which the greatest attention should be given in an Institute, is that all who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it; that the novices apply themselves to acquire it; that those who are already members make it their first care to preserve and increase it in themselves; for it is this spirit that should animate all their actions, and be the motive of their whole conduct..."



—*From The Work Is Yours: The Life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, by Brother Luke Salm.*

De La Salle

to open schools in Ecuador in 1863. Under Brother Phillippe Bransart's leadership as Superior General, the Brothers opened 1,002 new Lasallian schools and institutions from 1838 to 1874.

By 1900, the Christian Brothers' ranks had grown from 160 in 1810 to nearly 15,000 around the world, and 10 percent of them were teaching in 35 countries.

Adapted from The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education, A Shared Mission, by Brother John Johnston, F.S.C., Superior General of the Christian Brothers from 1986 to 2000, and the members of the General Council, April 30, 1997.

Lessons for Real-World Students

LASALLIAN EDUCATION has a passion for the practical, a passion for being carefully attentive to the real world of students and to the real needs of students. Our ministry is one that integrates the life of faith with this zeal for the practical. The maxim of St. Augustine is our own: “Pray as if everything depends on God, and work as if everything depends on you.”

St. La Salle set the example. He was never one to avoid the practical; indeed, he embraced it. St. La Salle did not write about educational philosophy, he wrote educational handbooks, textbooks, and meditations for teachers. His textbooks focused on everything from the pronunciation of French syllables to Gospel maxims, the duties of a Christian, and the practical rules of politeness for inner-city boys—with a whole chapter on “Yawning, Spitting, and Coughing.”

The schools themselves were eminently practical. Writing practice



Br. George Van Grieken, F.S.C.

concentrated on contracts and ledgers, while math skills dealt with the French monetary system. Once students learned the basics of reading, his book on politeness was the reading text, published in an ornate script so as to acquaint students with the popular style. Students who had to work during the week were taught mathematics, drafting, and commerce on Sundays. Schools on the seacoast included classes on navigation and seamanship. In his letters, St. La Salle insisted that the schools be well-run and its teachers be well-trained. Everything was done to insure that these poor and working-class students would succeed in French society and become mature members of the Church.

Such a commitment to the real needs of students was not without its

BY BROTHER GEORGE VAN GRIEKEN, F.S.C.

difficulties. One might almost call the first schools “subversive.” When the Guild of Writing Masters, in effect, sued the Brothers for teaching writing—and won—St. La Salle ignored the judgment and found other ways of teaching writing, because he knew that it was a vital practical skill. When the local bishop in Chartres, a friend of St. La Salle’s from seminary days, challenged St. La Salle’s practice of teaching reading by starting with French instead of Latin syllables, St. La Salle held his ground, writing

“The practical and spiritual welfare of the students entrusted to his care remained a primary focus throughout De La Salle’s life.”

—Brother George Van Grieken, F.S.C.

a detailed response on why his method was a much more realistic approach. The practical and spiritual welfare of the students entrusted to his care remained a primary focus throughout his life.

Timeline of Events

The continuing story of the Lasallian Christian Brothers, 1900 to present:

By 1904, 10,626 Christian Brothers live and work in France; 4,806 are outside of France.

Between 1901 and 1912, anti-religious secularization laws in France forbid the religious to own property, wear religious habits, or live in community. As a result, Brothers left France to establish communities in Southern Belgium, Canada, and Spain, and they laid the foundation for new districts in Brazil, Panama, Mexico, North Africa, and Australia.

Between 1936 and 1939, 165 Brothers are put to death during the Spanish Civil War.

In 1956, the General Chapter convenes and begins to revise the Christian Brothers’ *Rules and Constitutions* by encouraging a critical study of the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle and an investigation of his spirituality.

By 1966, 2,784 Christian Brothers live and work in France; 13,951 are outside of France.

The General Chapter of 1966–1967 is propelled forward by the sweeping changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. The Chapter works to reaffirm the identity of the Brothers, to rededicate itself to its mission of “service of the poor through education,” and to recognize the valuable contributions of lay teachers in schools around the world and the need to fully integrate laypeople into the lives of schools.

Today, the Christian Brothers, along with 73,000 lay associates, serve more than 900,000 students in 80 countries.

Adapted from The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education, A Shared Mission, by Brother John Johnston, F.S.C., Superior General of the Christian Brothers from 1986 to 2000, and the members of the General Council, April 30, 1997.

This down-to-earth practicality is found today in Lasallian schools throughout the world, from street kids in Vietnam who are taught to repair motorcycle engines to students in the United States who are familiar with service-learning, retreats, and education for life. Lasallian education pays practical attention to the real relationships between people, to the purposeful integration of budding personal convictions and talents, and to the persistent cultivation of genuine human principles. Such are the deeply held convictions (the faith) and the practical sensibilities (the zeal) that continue

to make this educational enterprise so necessary and so successful.

—Br. George Van Grieken, F.S.C., is Director of Vocation Ministry for the San Francisco District of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He is the author of *Touching the Hearts of Students: Characteristics of Lasallian Schools* and served as guest editor of the Winter 2006-07 issue of *La Salle Magazine*.

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In the Words of the Founder

You should remove your hat: 1) in a place where there are important people; 2) when you greet someone; 3) when you give or receive anything; 4) when you are being seated at table; 5) when you hear the names of Jesus or Mary; 6) when you are in the presence of persons to whom you owe great respect.



—From *Rules of Decorum*, by St. John Baptiste de La Salle

De La Salle

Further Reflections

The Teacher

The master teacher taught a class.

At the end of the year

Most of the students were astounded at the growth

They saw in themselves.

Others noticed it as well.

They said that it must be a gift,

The work of God.

Some of them asked the master teacher;

“How do you do it? What’s your secret?”

The master teacher replied:

“I am a person like everyone else.

I have no secret. There is only this:

When I begin to think about the task I’ve been given,

I guard my soul and don’t worry about details,

All the trifles that are not to the point.

I go away in order to set

My heart at rest.

After a few days of solitude

I’ve forgotten goals and objectives.

After a week

I’ve forgotten praise or criticism.

After ten days

I’ve forgotten myself

With all my hopes and plans.

By this time all thoughts about the school,

About organization and administration have faded away.

All that might distract me from the work

Has vanished.

I become collected in one single thought,

Teaching that class.

Then I go into the community

To see my students in their natural state.

When the particular students show up before me,

The teaching appears in them; clearly, beyond doubt.

All I have to do is to reach out

And begin.

If I had not met those particular students

There would have been

No teaching at all.

What happened?

My own collected thought

Encountered the hidden potential in the student;

From this live encounter came the work

Which you describe as a gift from God.”

—By Br. George Van Grieken, F.S.C., 1990,

Adapted from Lao Tzu’s *“The Woodcarver”*

“Good Kids Who Make Bad Decisions”

BY BROTHER BRIAN HENDERSON, F.S.C., '81

AT TIMES, SOMEONE ASKS ME in reference to my past work as Dean of Students and my current work as Director of Saint Gabriel's Hall, a residential program for juvenile delinquent boys, “How are you doing with those bad children?” I always respond, “They are not bad, they are good kids who make bad decisions.”

As a Christian Brother of 28 years, I have primarily served inner-city teenagers, working frequently with the wayward, lost, and ultimately marginalized youngsters of schools and our society. Throughout, I have found these youngsters to be down to earth—what you see is what you get—finding underneath their demeanor a good soul of God and heir to heaven.

The experience of St. John Baptist de La Salle heartens me. He discovered within himself, and thus inspired our Institute of Brothers along with a wide network of colleagues, an appreciation for the goodness within the children characterized as “poor” in his time. De La Salle wrote in his meditations, “Recognize Jesus beneath the poor rags of the children whom you have to instruct. Adore him in them.” St. La Salle did not see these children as poor so much as they were of poor circumstances.

The teenage boys at Saint Gabriel's Hall are good kids afflicted significantly by what St. La Salle observed as emotional trauma that leads to their moral deterioration, which directly contributes to their emotional and behavioral impairment. St. La Salle further linked trauma, deterioration, and impairment with the struggles of families to free themselves from poverty, sacrificing attention to a more adequate family life, which further afflicts youngsters.

These realities described by John Baptist de La Salle are realities today.



Brother Brian Henderson, F.S.C., '81

However, St. La Salle also pointed out the importance of what I continue to discover and reaffirm during my ministerial work everyday, “The first and basic transformation that occurs in the lives of youngsters—especially those who are in need—is that adults are interested in them, seek them out, and recognize them as persons.”

Some accomplishments of former youngsters of poor circumstances whom I have encountered inspire me. Just recently, while preparing to attend a board meeting at St. Frances Academy, an inner-city Catholic high school in the second-poorest area of Baltimore where I served as Dean of Students 10 years ago, a former student I encoun-

tered frequently as Dean tapped me on the shoulder. He greeted me warmly and informed me that he could not talk long because he now does what I did—keep kids out of trouble and in the classrooms! Currently, St. Frances Academy employs four fine faculty members who were students during my tenure there, all of them having overcome difficulties. A particularly potential marginalized soul when he came to St. Frances, he not only graduated from high school but also from college in Pittsburgh. I once witnessed him presenting to an auditorium of high school students from low economic areas of Pittsburgh, where he said, “You must work to become

a product of yourself, not of your circumstances.” I was astounded by the wisdom of his words, quite proud of him, and glad to have worked with him during his time of struggle.

St. La Salle possessed a clear and great love for children of poor circumstances. His writings, even for the audience of today, are keenly insightful and accurate descriptions of what creates poor circumstances that afflict children, and they offer effective prescriptions for solid comprehensive education and transformation.

I continue to be proud of the “troubled” young people who are now “capable” young adults shepherding the next generation of “troubled” youngsters as credible witnesses of becoming a product of themselves, not of their circumstances. This, to me, is the ultimate outcome of faithfully living the mandate of St. John Baptist de La Salle, “To touch the hearts of your pupils and to inspire them with the Christian Spirit is the greatest miracle you can perform and one which God expects of you.”

—Br. Brian Henderson, F.S.C., '81, is Director of Saint Gabriel's Hall in Audubon, Pa., which provides a long-term, multi-service residential program for delinquent male youth. For additional information, visit www.saintgabrielssystem.org. In addition, Br. Brian is Chair of the Board for St. Frances Academy, the nation's oldest African American Catholic high school, in Baltimore, Md. He is a former Dean of Students and Assistant Principal at St. Frances Academy, and he graduated from and previously taught at West Catholic High School in Philadelphia.

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In the Words of the Founder

“The more affection you show for [the poor], the more you will belong to Jesus Christ.”

“You should look upon the children you are charged to teach as poor, abandoned orphans... This is the reason God places them as if under your guardianship. He looks on them with compassion and takes care of them as being their protector, their support and their father, and it is to you that he entrusts their care. This God of goodness places them in your hands.”

—From *Meditations*, by St. John Baptist de La Salle

De La Salle



Further Reflections

“The Brothers have always in view the promotion of justice in the light of the Gospel and either the direct or indirect service of the poor as the preferred aspect of their ministry of education. They work directly for the poor by providing an education for the economically deprived, victims of social injustice, delinquents, and those neglected by the rest of society.”

—From *The Rule of Brothers of the Christian Schools*, 1987

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“We express solidarity with poor children when, by word, action, and quality of presence, we manifest to them profound love and reverence. In solidarity, we strive to help them grow in ‘resilience.’ Experts on the care of disadvantaged children describe resilience as the capacity to do well in spite of stress or adversity. Resilience resists destruction of the human spirit. It cultivates the capacity to construct a positive life in spite of difficult circumstances.”

—From *the Pastoral Letter of Brother John Johnston, F.S.C., former Superior General*, 1999

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“We are Lasallians because St. La Salle’s story is ours. In April of 1714, one significant episode of that story unfolded. Troubles in the schools in Paris led the Brother Directors and Principals to recall St. La Salle to the city. Upon his arrival in August, St. La Salle responded to the call. ‘Well, here I am. What are your wishes?’ This is a response full of faith in God’s holy presence, ‘Here I am.’ It is a response full of zeal and a readiness to respond to the real needs at hand, ‘What are your wishes?’

“In a world that often doubts that truth can be known, and in a time when the poor long to find signs of God’s holy presence while hungering for prophets of authentic justice and lasting peace, the tradition of St. La Salle is our guide. Education for justice—both works of mercy in service to the poor and social action leading to long-term change—are two expressions of our shared ministry. With the presence of Jesus in our hearts we can with confidence follow in the footsteps of St. La Salle to respond with confidence, ‘Here I am. What are your wishes?’”

—From *Educating in Justice, “Justice: A Characteristic of Lasallian Education,”* by Kevin Regan and Edward Sirois, La Salle Academy, Providence, R.I., 2004

Finding Inspiration in St. La Salle's Teaching

BY DEBORAH S. YOST, PH.D.

AS A PROFESSOR, TEACHER-EDUCATOR, researcher, and parent, I think deeply and often about the status of education today, sometimes with despair. However, my work with teacher candidates, as well as my recent exposure to the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle through the Lasallian Leadership Institute, has reinvigorated my resolve that the educational system holds promise for the future. Nearly 300 years ago, St. La Salle's pioneering work with teachers benefitted children whom society deemed uneducable. His vision has empowered me to strive for similar dispositions among my teacher candidates.

A major aspect of St. La Salle's innovative ideas is that disenfranchised children have the potential to learn and be saved. At that time in 17th-century France, society viewed poor children, delinquents, and orphans as unworthy of educational consideration. More recently, humanistic and cognitive theories recognize that all students have the potential to achieve. Contemporary views on diversity also encompass a broader range of groups, such as students with disabilities, students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and students for whom English is a second language.



Deborah S. Yost, Ph.D., talks with Gabrielle Joiner, '08.

St. La Salle's writings emphasize that education is about relationships and touching hearts, which is an idea that has reemerged in education today. St. La Salle believed that students who are disenfranchised are less open and therefore more resistant to learning. This is true of many students today who are challenged by disability, poverty, language, and cultural differences. My students and I have personally witnessed many issues facing these students every day. The 12 virtues

developed by St. La Salle for his teachers (gravity, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, reserve, gentleness, zeal, vigilance, piety, and generosity) help to create positive and caring learning communities.

The challenge is to instill in our teacher candidates a positive disposition toward diverse students, much like St. La Salle did for his community.

In a junior-level course that I teach, for example, students learn to develop and teach a unit of instruction to their urban field placement students. Teacher candidates are taught about culturally proficient instruction and classroom management while engaging in the teaching/learning process. These experiences have sharply heightened my students' awareness of the inequities that exist between and within schools. As a result, many have been instilled with a strong desire to work with students who are less fortunate or less able.

Lasallian Brothers viewed their work as a vocation and thus dedicated their lives to reaching children on both spiritual and academic levels.

In the Words of the Founder

"One of the main concerns of those who instruct others is to be able to understand their students and to discern the right way to guide them. There are those who call for much patience, those who need to be stimulated and spurred on. ... This guidance requires understanding and discernment of spirits, qualities you should frequently and earnestly ask of God, for they are most necessary for you in the guidance of those placed in your care."

De La Salle



What distinguished early Lasallian schools from traditional schools was the idea that schools should meet the needs of students, instead of students conforming to the rigid structure of schools. For example, students were taught first in the vernacular, French, instead of traditional Latin. Moreover, the curriculum was adapted to meet the vocational needs of the community. Thus, in addition to learning how to read, write, and do arithmetic, students in seafaring towns were exposed to navigation.

We are experiencing a similar paradigm shift in education that builds the skills, dispositions, and attitudes of teachers to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. Schools have had to adjust to higher demands for achievement and, simultaneously, embrace the needs of an increasingly diverse school population.

As I reflect upon St. La Salle's life work, I realize how much of an influence St. John Baptist de La Salle's writings and life work have had on me personally and, more broadly, on the field of education. His then-novel approach to education of the poor and disenfranchised has established a strong foundation for the emergence of a new educational standard.

—Deborah Yost, Ph.D., is a professor in La Salle's Education Department and a past Chair of the department. She has participated in the Lasallian Leadership Institute, which introduces lay people to the teachings and spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

We invite feedback on this issue and welcome ideas for future installments of the series. Please contact Marian Butcher at butcher@lasalle.edu. Previous installments of the series are available online at www.lasalle.edu/stlasalle.

Further Reflections

Education Professor Deborah Yost's students reflect on their roles as aspiring teachers in the tradition of St. La Salle:

"It is said that to teach is to touch one's life forever, but you cannot have a true impact in the life of children if you know nothing about them. Each child is unique and special; therefore, they deserve to receive an education that reflects their cultural individuality as well as one that empowers them to continually strive for excellence."

—Ashley Sulzbach, '09

"Diversity, to me, means knowing your students and their needs. It is adjusting lessons and the classroom environment to meet the needs of all students. Too often, teachers want students to adapt to the classroom they have already established..."

—Corey Druding, '09

"As a teacher it is important to pay attention to all your students' values and beliefs as well as their learning styles. When doing so a formation of trust and belonging will develop between teacher and students as well as between students and students."

—Heather Pierce, '09



St. La Salle: Educational Pioneer

French not Latin

Although it was customary to teach spelling and reading in Latin, St. La Salle saw that the charity school students needed facility in reading and writing the everyday language of business, commerce, and catechesis. He wrote *Teaching French Syllables* to teach reading in the native tongue. The syllabary is credited by French historians as one reason for the eventual standardization of French pronunciation throughout the country.

Simultaneous method of instruction

It had been customary for teachers to engage one student at a time in a classroom of dozens of students. St. La Salle began a new method by dividing large classes into small groups according to their skill level and to involve whole groups in the lesson. The goal was to engage every student every day in as many ways as possible.

Psychological observation

St. La Salle wrote, "All minds are not attracted in the same way and it is necessary to know how to deal with each in order to lead it to give itself over to the task." The Brothers' practice of studying each child's capability, character, and needs and then passing their notes to the student's next teacher became widespread in the 18th and 19th centuries and is now habitual.

—Adapted from an article by Brother George Van Grieken, F.S.C., Ph.D., in *Signs of Faith*, the former magazine of the Brothers of the Christian Schools' District of San Francisco

The Lasallian Education Movement Alive in the World

BY RAYMOND RICCI, '67



Raymond Ricci, '67

THROUGHOUT THE history of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, the Institute has passed through critical thresholds when its future was in doubt. At each of those moments, the Brothers have forthrightly addressed the needs of the world through a remarkable process of renewal. Understandably, they have won a hard-earned reputation for adaptability, a characteristic they have now ingrained in their lay colleagues.

Today, the faith and compassion that St. La Salle exhibited in his life have not only lived beyond his lifetime but also beyond the borders of his imagination. Collectively, the geographic scope and range of Lasallian ministries show imagination and resilience, qualities so necessary to produce new life. Lasallian ministries continue to find new ways to focus on those most in need of their work. The Lasallian educational movement is flourishing in the world.

Such a brief glimpse cannot possibly show the extraordinary range of the Lasallian network. There are traditional schools operating at all academic levels—more than 800 elementary, middle, and secondary schools, a host of child-care agencies, and 64 colleges and universities. Here is a sampling of the creativity that Br. Alvaro has called for:

- In the Philippines, the De La Salle Health Sciences Institute houses the College of Medicine plus other health-related colleges. De La Salle University Medical Center is a principal teaching hospital.
- In Mexico, Universidad La Salle has 14 campuses with programs in business, education, architecture, engineering, medicine, and law.
- Universities in Spain, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, the United States, Indonesia, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Palestine, and elsewhere.
- Spirituality centers in Ireland, Great Britain, Spain, Canada,

“Our mission invites us to have our eyes open before the inequalities created by our society and to be creative in our response to new needs.”

—*Brother Alvaro Rodriguez Echeverria, F.S.C., Superior General*

France, Sri Lanka, Australia, Switzerland, and elsewhere.

- Technical training centers for adults in Madagascar, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Eritrea, and elsewhere.
- Centers for street children in Rwanda, Kenya, Brazil, Mexico, Pakistan, Vietnam, Thailand, and elsewhere.
- Teacher training and the creation of novel teaching methods and materials in Panama, Guatemala, Kenya, Rwanda, Peru, France, Spain, and elsewhere.
- Lay formation programs in Italy, France, Argentina, Colombia, Belgium, the United States, Egypt, Lebanon, and elsewhere.
- Centers to help families and teenage mothers in India, Australia, Ireland, and elsewhere.
- In San Gabriel, Bolivia, an adult learning, distance education system serving 2 million Aymara Indians. Radio San Gabriel provides practical, life-related content and education based on the Aymara's needs. The program received the United Nations Noma Prize for literacy.
- In the Kimberley Region of Western Australia, the Luurnpa Catholic School in Balgo Hills and Wirrimanu Adult Education Centre serve the Aboriginal community. Instruction is in both English and Kukatja.



Teaching children at a Lasallian school in Ecuador.

The Brothers' Mission: By the Numbers

- In 80 countries throughout the world
- More than 900 schools, educational centers, and child-care agencies
- More than 900,000 children and adults served
- 2,200 Christian Brothers in active ministry
- More than 75,000 laymen and laywomen



Students playing at a Lasallian school in Sudan.

- In the United States, 20 new Lasallian schools have opened since 1988, most San Miguel-type schools, independent schools for at-risk children who have significant social, economic, and academic needs. The San Miguel model was envisioned first by Brother Lawrence Goyette, F.S.C., who opened a middle school in Providence, R.I., in 1993. There are now 17 elementary and middle schools using the San Miguel model, providing an extended school day and school year to impoverished children in some of America's poorest places.

All of these are examples of new institutional life being born across the world. In the words of one observer, "If it doesn't exist, (the Brothers) will invent it." These programs are the product of thousands of Brothers and laypeople joined in their commitment to the Lasallian mission. This same sense of purpose is a continuing force for La Salle University.

Political observer Alexis De Tocqueville wrote that when Americans face a problem, they pass a law. In today's world, in terms of the social mission of the Church, laws won't do. Lasallians work to achieve a level of social intimacy derived from a shared view of what students need, should know, and can do. On this campus, Brothers and lay people have for many years connected with each other for the sake of the mission. Today, they do that in ways that I would have never dreamed of when I began my life here. These twin concepts—the act of associating together for mission and the process of lay formation—are the keys to preserving the University's sense of itself and will be addressed in the final two installments of this series, which will appear in the following two issues of *La Salle Magazine*.

—Raymond Ricci, '67, is Special Assistant to the President for Mission Integration, advising La Salle President Brother Michael J. McGinniss, F.S.C., Ph.D., '70, on issues related to the University's mission. He has been

In the Words of the Founder

"Cherish poverty and honor the poor. ... Learn to see Jesus Christ beneath the rags of the poor children whom you teach."



De La Salle

Further Reflections

"The Brothers have demonstrated permanency by providing for over three centuries an astonishing array of activities from the most basic literacy learning to the most complicated technological learning for both children and adults ... so that they can be fully integrated into community and society."—United Nations UNESCO Noma Prize citation

a member of the University's administration for more than 40 years, including 17 years as Vice President for Enrollment Services. Ricci has participated in the three-year Lasallian Leadership Institute and serves on the Mission Council of the Baltimore District of the Christian Brothers and on the Mission and Ministry Committee of a new, unified eastern district of the Christian Brothers. He is also on the board of La Salle Academy, a San Miguel school in North Philadelphia. He was honored with La Salle's Distinguished Lasallian Educator Award in 2004.

We invite feedback on this issue and welcome ideas for future installments of the series. Please contact Marian Butcher at butcher@lasalle.edu.

From Foundation to Refoundation

BY BROTHER MIGUEL CAMPOS, F.S.C.

FROM THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COMMUNITY OF THE De La Salle Christian Brothers until today, our Assemblies and General Chapters have been understood as the most important expression of “our association for the educational mission” entrusted to us.

The 44th General Chapter that took place in Rome from April to June 2007 was an unprecedented event in the history of those gatherings. This Chapter had been preceded by not only the usual global consultation of all the Brothers, but also of lay Lasallian educators from 80 countries. In the five years prior to the General Chapter, more than 1,000 Lasallian educators had met in local, national, and regional assemblies leading up to the first International Assembly, held in Rome in 2006 with broad representation from 50 countries. The 42 languages among the participants showed clearly the international dimension of the Lasallian world.

These assemblies point toward something “new” all over the Lasallian world. Something is changing. In the process, all Lasallians feel challenged to respond to the urgent new educational needs of our times, reinventing our identity and the purpose of our association for mission. Some structures of the past will be replaced by new structures in which our passionate commitment to education will generate new life.

From its beginning, the Lasallian “association for mission” has expressed its bonds of communion and its work in education as a dynamic process.

Canon J.B. Blain, one of the first biographers of St. John Baptist de La Salle, gives us insight into the Founder’s life by speaking of “crossroads” that emerged unexpectedly during the common journey of St. La Salle and his associates [see “Crossroads” sidebar, below].

During each new crossroad, something died and something was born. Their growing identity, personal and corporate, was embraced as a task and a gift as they responded to new situations and educational needs. In the process, they were challenged to remain attentive to an uncertain future.

Through these crossroads, St. La Salle and his companions experienced God calling them to open up to a wider horizon—the salvation of all, particularly those who were marginalized.

This foundational story is not simply one of nostalgic remembrance of the heroic steps of St. La Salle and his



Brother Miguel Campos, F.S.C.

Key Crossroads of St. La Salle’s Life

From “individual teachers” to “community of the Brothers of the Christian Schools” (1681–1691)

In 1682, St. La Salle and the first teachers moved to Reims, where they became recognized as “Brothers” and established gratuitous schools for the poor. Individual teachers running individual schools emerged into a community of “lay” Brothers with a common educational project.

From the “community of Brothers” to “the Society of the Brothers of the Christian gratuitous schools” (1691–1705)

In 1691, the crossroads was more dramatic, with a decreasing number of Brothers, tensions within the community, opposition from existing educational structures, and, most of all, the issue of hierarchal authority. The Brothers embraced the crisis by consecrating themselves to God together and

by association in order to maintain the network of gratuitous schools of their “Society of Christian Schools.”

From a “Community and a Society of Brothers” to “Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools” (1705–1719)

Without Church or civil approval, St. La Salle and his Brothers experienced legal entanglements with educational corporations and authority figures. It was imperative for the Brothers to unite in a common spirit and passion for educating the poor. St. La Salle led them to embrace by faith and zeal what they discerned as God’s demands. What emerged was a spirituality in the Church for men and women in education to understand and manage the educational project and experience of community.

In the Words of the Founder

"Union in a community is a precious gem."

De La Salle



companions. A critical study of the history of the Institute of the Brothers demonstrates that it has not remained uncritically faithful to rigid structures and organizations of the past. It has evolved through numerous periods of transition [see "Transitions" sidebar, below].

Roughly speaking, every 100 years, the Brothers have crossed new thresholds, embracing startling and unexpected crossroads in faith, each time with an undeterred passion for God and for our educational mission.

In this 21st century, the Brothers and all Lasallian educators are approaching a new crossroads that asks new questions regarding the identity and role in a larger association of men and women who share in the Lasallian educational mission.

At the 44th General Chapter gathered in Rome in 2007, Brother Superior General Alvaro Rodriguez Echeverria, F.S.C., successor of St. La Salle, linked our foundation and re-foundation stories with the urgent educational needs of today. Drawing inspiration from a passage of the prophet Isaiah, he invites us to enter this new crossroad as a new Exodus:

"Thus says the Lord Who opens a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters...

Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not.

See, I am doing something new,

Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

—Br. Miguel Campos, F.S.C., is the Distinguished Professor for Lasallian Mission at La Salle University. Br. Miguel has worked, researched, and conducted seminars all over the world. He had been an associate professor at La Salle University and Associate Director of the International and Multicultural Center. He was also a visiting professor at other Lasallian institutions and at several international centers in Latin America. As former General Councilor of the Christian Brothers in Rome, he was liaison to the Americas.

We invite feedback on this issue and welcome ideas for future installments of the series. Please contact Marian Butcher at butcher@lasalle.edu.

Key Transitions for the Institute of the Christian Brothers

From a "charismatic Institute" led by the Founder to an "approved and institutionalized" religious institute" (1725)

After the death of St. La Salle in 1719, the Bull of Approbation of 1725 became an important transition for the Brothers' understanding of their identity and purpose. At that point, something new was born: a religious congregation in the Church whose members had to assume the responsibility and leadership in defining their dual identity as consecrated lay religious also committed to the ministry of education.

From a "small religious congregation" in pre-Revolutionary France to "unprecedented growth" after the restoration (1804)

After the French Revolution, the Brothers became significant, active agents of education in 19th-century France.

An unprecedented growth of the Institute took place in terms of the number of Brothers, their geographical expansion, and the diversification of their works.

From a harassed "Institute under siege" to an "international religious institute" for the education of the poor (1904)

The early 20th-century secularization laws in France forbidding religious congregations to be involved in education led to the further expansion of the Institute, as thousands of Brothers remained as lay teachers in France, while thousands of others took the road of exile, in order to remain faithful, in their estimation, to their identity and purpose. As a result, the Institute was implanted on all the continents, thus enabling the integration of many races and languages.

Discovering the Mission Together

BY BROTHER KEVIN DALMASSE, F.S.C., '81

IN 2006, DELEGATES REPRESENTING every facet of the global Lasallian educational mission gathered in Rome for the first International Assembly for Mission and Association. Participants assessed Lasallian education worldwide and offered recommendations for action.

The convocation was truly unique and historic. Of the nearly 120 delegates, one-third were Brothers and two-thirds were the Brothers' partners in mission. The

International Assembly gave significant voice to all called to serve the Lasallian educational mission, Brother and Partner alike, and accomplished it in a manner never before undertaken by any religious congregation in the Church.

The Lasallian educational mission "provides a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor," according to *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*. This mission is fulfilled by the collaborative efforts of the Brothers and their Lasallian Partners—laymen and women, priests, and other religious—who are drawn to and excited by that mission. Brother Miguel Campos, F.S.C., Distinguished Professor for Lasallian Mission at La Salle University, interprets the relationship between the Brothers and their Partners through the story of the disciples' journey on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35).

The story is of two disciples who are in despair over the crucifixion of Jesus and confused by reports of his

resurrection. They meet a stranger on the road who seems unaware of these recent events. The stranger listens to the disciples and interprets their account through Scriptures and the words of the prophets. When the stranger blesses and breaks bread during dinner, the disciples recognize him as Jesus, whereupon he vanishes. "Were not our hearts burning inside us," they said, "as he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"

The Gospel story creates a beautiful paradigm of the Brothers working in association with their Partners. In Luke's story, one disciple, Cleopas, is named; the other is not. Br. Miguel contends that Cleopas represents the Brothers, who, through historic status in the Church and by virtue of Canon Law, are disciples with a "name." The unnamed disciple symbolizes the Brothers' Partners. It is *together* that they journey on the road, experience perplexing and uncertain times, and encounter and discover the risen Christ who gives life and meaning to their mission.

The Brothers have long appreciated their companions on the journey. The Second Vatican Council courageously and prophetically fostered this relationship in two ways.

First, new structures allow the Brothers and their lay colleagues to collaborate in decision making. The establishment of District mission councils, in combination with long-standing boards of trustees, illustrates this growing partnership.

Second, Brothers' and Partners' shared responsibility for mission answers the call of the Second Vatican Council

Living St. La Salle's Vision

Anna Allen, '80, M.A. '02

Interim Dean of Students at La Salle University
Lasallian Leadership Institute, 2003–06



A Lasallian lay leader integrates the mission and messages of the Christian Brothers into her everyday work. It is someone who is observant of and challenges the daily activities of the University, the faculty, staff, and students through the unique lens of St. La Salle's vision. The mission is a reminder to recall God's presence in my life and in the students' lives. It's challenging and rewarding to know that we all play a role in our students' growth as people.

Frank Cervone, M.A. '04

Executive Director, Support Center for Child Advocates

Lasallian tradition is rooted in the vision of St. La Salle to live an experience of faith and see, in all, a sign and invitation



of the Holy Spirit. This is a way to live our faith through interpersonal activities that religious writers call ministry. God is alive in the world, and we're invited to join that experience, where we find personal fulfillment and spiritual salvation. The Christian Brothers spread the Good News by making the Gospel message accessible. We're changing lives in a local way and taking the message to heart.

Dave Cichowicz, Ph.D.

Director of the Forensic Studies Program and
Professor of Biochemistry at La Salle University
Lasallian Leadership Institute, 2006–09



By working with the Christian Brothers, we continue the Lasallian mission and create an atmosphere that makes our education distinct. The Lasallian Leadership Institute created a much clearer understanding of the roots of the Christian Brothers and their philosophy. We learned to "teach always and, if necessary, use words." That speaks to the heart of St. La Salle's mission by the way we conduct ourselves and interact with others.

Invited to Serve

Many educators have become living witnesses of the Gospel by discovering the worth of their mission through the journey and spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle. This vocation of education in Lasallian institutions is a mission shared and sustained by Christian Brothers, lay partners, sisters, and priests. We are challenged to reflect the religious and cultural variety and complementarity of those involved in the Lasallian mission. We must

renovate, adapt, and create new structures for Brothers and colleagues to assure the vitality of this mission entrusted to us by the Holy Spirit, the Institute of the Brothers, and the Church for the 21st century. (fr. The Acts of the 44th General Chapter, pp. 26, 28).
—*Brother Robert Schieler, F.S.C., Ed.D., '72*
General Councilor



to prepare the laity for sacred participation in ecclesial life. We have witnessed an increased demand for mission formation programs offered on the international, regional, district, and local levels, programs such as the Lasallian Leadership Institute and the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies.

These formation opportunities—along with participation in school or institutional communities—have given new life to the Lasallian educational mission. The once-fledgling dependence of the laity upon the Brothers is maturing into a “communion” of individuals who are passionate about providing a human and Christian education.

Ongoing formation opportunities should reflect the critical role of the laity in the life of the Church and in the life of the Lasallian world. Who better than the Brothers of the Christian Schools, laymen themselves consecrated to Christ and to the teaching mission of His Church, to offer a guiding hand at this hopeful moment in time?

With the Emmaus story as our inspiration and decades of experience as our guide, our mission is discovered when Brothers and Partners join in discernment and prayer to act

upon the pressing needs of those entrusted to our care. We are impelled by St. La Salle's words, “Lord, the work is yours!” This is our deeply held conviction. This is the journey of faith about which we shall excitedly proclaim, “Were not our hearts burning?”

—*Br. Kevin Dalmasse, F.S.C., '81, is the Director of Education for the Christian Brothers Conference in Washington, D.C. He also represents the U.S./Toronto Region on International Council for the Lasallian Educational Mission. Over the last 11 years, he has been involved in the planning, development, and implementation of mission formation programs on the provincial and national levels.*

For more information on Lasallian formation programs or volunteer opportunities, please e-mail Ray Ricci, Special Assistant to the President for Mission Integration, at ricci@lasalle.edu. We welcome feedback on this issue. Please contact Marian Butcher at butcher@lasalle.edu.



Jim Lynch, '71

**Managing Partner of Patriot Financial Partners L.P.
Board of Trustees at La Salle Academy, Philadelphia
Former Chair, Board of Trustees at La Salle University**

The Christian Brothers recognize that an affordable, inner-city Catholic education is a huge challenge for the Church. La Salle Academy addresses that challenge, with lay leadership taking on that responsibility. With the Board of Trustees owning this school that serves underprivileged children, the Christian Brothers and lay leaders are having a huge impact on how these students grow to live productive lives.

J. Michael Whitaker, M.D., '72

**President, Doylestown Orthopaedic Specialists
Founding Trustee of La Salle Academy and
Chair of the Trustee Committee**

In 2001, I visited La Salle College in Thailand, which educated more than 5,000 poor children. It was then that I understood the



universal nature of the Christian Brothers and their call to educate the most vulnerable in society. Shortly after, I joined the development of La Salle Academy in one of the poorest parts of Philadelphia. We have the blessing of the Holy Spirit and continue to work with the guidance of the Christian Brothers to meet the educational needs of the poor.



Deborah Yost, Ph.D.

**Professor of Education at La Salle University
Lasallian Leadership Institute, 2006–09**

During my Lasallian Leadership Institute (LLI) experience, I learned the power of connectivity. This idea has filtered into my work as I strive to create a community of learners in my classes at La Salle. I help students make meaningful connections between course content and their personal experiences. I also have established relationships with my LLI cohorts from La Salle and other diverse Lasallian ministries. These relationships have taught me that my work is a small but integral part of the greater Lasallian mission.