



Lifting our Students to God in Prayer

BROTHER MICHAEL LIVAUDAIS, FSC



“When you encounter some difficulty in the guidance of your disciples, turn to God with confidence.” (MTR 4.1 [Med 196.1])

Let Us Remember.....

The great success of ‘Lasallian education’ can be traced back to our Founder and his small band of religious Brothers. In the late 17th century, De La Salle and a ‘rag-tag group of Frenchmen’ formed a community of teachers some of whom, with a view to establishing our Institute *at all costs*, vowed to stay together for the work “even if they were reduced to begging on the streets for their own bread.”

Our mission today flourishes across much of the globe, animated by some 4000 DLS Brothers and thousands of our Lasallian partners. Today our brand of *transformative education* is thriving and it is now more than 300 years old. Many readers of these words today are a vital part of this important educational ‘force for good’ in the world.

The dual spirit of our Institute is *faith* and *zeal*. Our partners today have begun to enthusiastically identify more and more with that spirit, and the whole of Lasallian spirituality.

In some ways we are forming a ‘new institute’ for the mission of the Christian education of youth. It is encouraging to note lay partners using terms like ‘*our mission*,’ ‘*our district*,’ and ‘*our Superior General*’. More than 85,000 lay colleagues, in association with us, are essential parts of our Lasallian mission today. We are fortunate to be *in association* with **them**.

It is gratifying also to note that many of our colleagues come very soon to see their roles in our schools as **vocational** rather than as ‘mere employment.’ This view mirrors the early Brothers’ understanding of their roles and of our founding spirit.

Many of our partners today are also creating for themselves a deepening daily prayer life—which certainly sustained our *earliest members*, and will surely help to support us all today.

To that point: De La Salle urged his Brothers “*to pray constantly for their students and to bring all their daily teaching concerns to God.*” The booklet you are holding (inspired by Br. Krause’s Buttimer project) is an attempt to assist *all Lasallians*—Brothers and lay partners—in this important and helpful practice.

Lifting Students to God

The listing of students included here is, of course, incomplete. If we were to add additional students to the list, they would surely reflect not only other types of students, but also the varieties of schools we work in, and the particulars of local apostolates.

As you will note, there are no simple answers offered in these guides. Rather, there is the invitation to view our students and our mission with the eyes of faith, and then a moment to consider and discern how God is accompanying us as a wise and gentle Father.

Once we see how simple and helpful this can be, we might begin to create our own lists and guides. Such a creation might encourage other Lasallians in the practices. It will enrich our prayer, our work. It may also re-establish this FSC tradition in *our* time and place..

Here are some additional *types of students* that may help get us started: “The Student Always in Trouble.” “The ‘Perfect’ Student.” “The Extremely Shy or Insecure Student.” “The Gay Student.” “The Student from a Dysfunctional Family.” “Seniors in their Last Semester.” “The Student Handling a Health Crisis.” “The Apathetic Class.” The list will be as varied and challenging as are our days in the classroom.

May all Lasallians learn to praying this way, raising our **students** and **concerns** to our God—who is always present to us—in our mission, in our school communities, in our lives, and in the lives of the students entrusted to our care.

—in our hearts,
Br. Michael Livaudais, FSC
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A Popular Student

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and who is also in the presence of our God, Source of all good gifts.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. Consider how this student's popularity is manifesting itself.
4. Why do I think this student is popular? Is the popularity seen as a positive thing about this student? Are there any negative elements of it?
5. What are my feelings toward this student? Is the student aware of my feelings toward him/her? What are his/her feelings about me? Are there ways to improve this relationship?
6. Consider what needs this student may have well-hidden below the blush of his/her personal popularity?
7. What could I do for this student? Are there ways to get the student to become more of a brother or sister to fellow students? Do I need assistance to accomplish this?
8. What do I want to say to this student today? Is there a best time?
9. I spend some time holding this student before God, valuing his/her popularity and the influence it has over other students. I ask God to guide me in helping the student to see *and use* this power for goodness and growth. I pause to consider with the eyes of faith what God may be asking me to consider, and be/or do for this student.

An Unhappy Student

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and in the presence of God, whose Son was buffeted, even betrayed by his closest followers but who promised to be with us always.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. I reflect on what I know about possible causes for the student's unhappiness. Does it seem based in the home or as the result of efforts at school? Is the source rooted in what is going on among his/her classmates, or does it seem tied into some personal struggles he/she is experiencing? Is a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend a complication? What do I know about the student's life outside of school?
4. Consider what my feelings are toward this student. How is our relationship? What are his/her feelings about it? Are there ways to improve our relationship? Am I an encouraging factor in his/her life or am I, even unwittingly, contributing to the feelings of unhappiness?
5. How can I show my concern for this student? I give some thought as to how might I be able to help, encourage and support him/her.
6. Is there someone else available who might be of assistance?
7. Is there something positive I could say or some encouragement I could offer to this student today? Is there a best time?
8. I spend some time holding this student before God, placing myself in his/her shoes, trying to understand feelings and asking God to guide me in serving this student well. I pause to understand what God may want to say in my heart about this student or what I may be able to do to help my brother or sister in their present circumstance. In this *Meditations* St. La Salle wrote: "You must pray not only for yourself but also for those whom you are guiding." And so I do.

Student Involved in Destructive Behavior

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and in the loving presence of our God, who builds us up, never tears down.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. I reflect on how this student's destructive behavior is manifested. What might be the possible causes for this behavior? Is it seen only at school? Are situations in school giving rise to the behavior? What is the home-life like for this student? Does he/she have many friends? Are they close friends? Do they see any of the destructive behavior? Are they part of it?
4. Is the destructive behavior something that requires that I speak with the parents or an outside authorities? Is he/she hurting others with this behavior?
5. What are my feelings towards this student? What are the student's feelings toward me? Is there a possibility to deal with the issue? Would he/she be willing to talk about it?
6. What might I be able to do to help this student? Is it smart to deal with this alone? Who else might I call upon to help?
7. What could I say to this student today? Is there a best time?
8. I spend some time holding this student before God, placing myself in his/her shoes, and asking our Father to guide me in helping. Additionally, how can I sensitively seek additional help for the student in this situation. I ask for the strength to help protect him/her and others from harm. I pause to give God time to speak to my heart and consider what to do, say, or be for my student.

Student Failing Academically

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the loving presence of God, who wants only the best for us—and for *all* His children.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. What are my feelings toward this student? The student's feelings toward me? Am I seen as positive or negative person in his/her regard? What is our relationship like? Can I do something to improve it?
4. Consider the possible causes of the student's failure in the classroom. Time expended? A lack of study skills? Organization? 'Studying'? Reading ability? What needs to happen in order for this student to become more successful? Is tutoring a possibility? Even if the major reason for the lack of success is N.'s motivation and effort, is there something I can do to help him/her to improve in these two areas? What can I do for this student?
5. What do I know about the student's home-life? Should I speak with N.'s parents about the situation? Whom could I seek out for a better understanding of this student and/or for advice in how to be of assistance?
6. What do I want to say to this student today? Is there a best time? Is tutoring available? Are lessons on how to improve reading, study, and organize time available to this student? Can the guidance department be of help? Are there other students willing to assist?
7. I spend some time holding this student before God, placing myself in my student's shoes, and asking the Father of us all to inspire me in my guidance of the student. I pause to listen and consider what the God of Love is suggesting to me in the quiet of my heart.

Student from a Family That is Poor

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N before me—and also in the loving presence of God, who hears the cry of the poor.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. What do I know about the family's economic situation? Are other students aware of his family's economic status?
4. How do I see the situation affecting this student? Are there feelings of exclusion or ridicule? Do others at school react positively or negatively toward this student?
5. What are my feelings toward N.? Is he/she aware of them?
6. What do I see as needs this student may be having at present? Are there riches he/she possesses beyond economics?
7. Following De La Salle's loving propensity for poor families, what more can I do for this student? Is there anyone else who can help this student? How can I assist getting such help for the student—sensitively so as not to draw attention, cause embarrassment, or create additional difficulty.
8. What do I want to say to this student today? Is there a best time? Am I the person to speak with this student?
9. I spend some time holding this student before God, trying to empathize with him/her. In God's presence I ask for an ability to help serve this student, with compassion, and sensitivity. I ask also for guidance as to how to include the student in activities with others that teach acceptance and inclusivity—thereby reminding all of us that we are members of the Body of Christ deserving the respect and care that we say our school is all about.

Student Who is Frequently Absent

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and in the presence of God, who has promised to be present with us always.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. What are my feelings about this student's pattern of absence? Is there something in the school, our activities, our classes, my specific class, his/her workload, or schedule of classes that is contributing to the problem? Is there something the student is afraid of, or trying to avoid at school? Is there a lack of success in the classroom? Does he/she get along with classmates?
4. Are the student's parents aware of the fact that absence is an issue with their child? What are their feelings about the situation? Is there some home-based causes for the absences? Should the parents be called?
5. Does the student see our school, faculty and our students as welcoming, secure and supportive? If not, what can be done to improve the situation?
6. Do I have other students who could help in making the student feel more welcomed, more successful, and more secure? Should the school counselors be made aware of the situation?
7. What do I want to say to this student today? Is there a best time?
8. I spend some time holding this student before God asking our Father to help me impress my students with understanding the importance of investing in education by *active participation*. In the center of my heart I ask God for help and to grant me wisdom in encouraging students to be present to our school and the opportunities we afford those entrusted to our care.

Student Succeeding Academically

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, in this place and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—also in the loving presence of God who blesses our hard work and success.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. What are my feelings toward this student? What do other students think about this student and his/her success? Do they accept the success positively?
4. Am I providing an appropriate and sufficient challenge for this student? Do class work and studying come easily to the student?
5. Is the student handling his success appropriately and graciously?
6. Can I encourage this student to help and serve his/her fellow classmates with their academic classes? Are there ways he/she could help others by tutoring, studying together, after school help sessions, reviewing for tests, helping explain difficult subject matter, working together on group projects, etc.?
7. What concerns do I have for this student? Is there any help I can point out or provide? Are there others at school willing to help?
8. What can I say to support and/or challenge this student today?
9. I spend some time holding N. before God, valuing the academic success that he/she is experiencing and asking God to help guide me in serving the student well and then, demonstrating for this student the *responsibility* and the *opportunities* he/she has to help others. I listen to God and ask God to show me with eyes of faith how to better understand and learn what can best assist this student in this situation.

A Student In Need of Correction

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the loving presence of God.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. Why do I feel there is a need for ‘correction’ of this student? How well do I understand the situation that is causing difficulty? Have I tried other ways of dealing with the student and the problem behavior? Have I sought assistance in dealing with him/her?
4. What are my feelings toward this student? Are they positive? How does he/she feel about our relationship?
5. What inspires my correction? Is it detached, unemotional, devoid of any notion of revenge or anger? Do I see the difference between correction and punishment?
6. Will my correction be seen as just and will it appear as just in the eyes of the student? Is it possible for the correction to be seen as inspired by love?
7. Will the correction be accepted so that the student recognizes the fault or problem behavior, and is willing to correct it?
8. Can my correction be administered and received calmly?
9. What will I say to this student as the correction is administered? After the correction is completed, what should be said? Is there a way to ensure the teacher-student relationship is not damaged? Is there a need to speak to N.’s parents about the situation?
10. I spend some time holding the student before the Lord, placing myself in the student’s shoes, and asking our Father for wisdom and guidance in administering correction prudently and effectively. In my heart’s reflection I ask God for patience and wisdom in dealing with this student and that the need for the correction is dispassionate and without anger.

A Student I Find Hard to Like

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the loving presence of God who love us unconditionally.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. How long have I had negative feelings about this student? Can I identify what about this student I find 'unlikeable'? When did I start having these feelings? What are my feelings about him/her? Is the student aware of my feelings? Do I treat the student with fairness and calm regard, or do I lose patience with him/her?
4. What would I like to say to this student today? Might this move us toward a better understanding, move us closer together, or drive us further apart? Is a calm discussion possible? How do I assess the situation?
5. Is it possible to rise above my feelings and seek ways to improve the situation? What is a positive characteristic or behavior of this student's that I could 'notice' and make use of, as a starting point in beginning to improve our relationship? Can I commit to finding some encouraging thing to say to the student on a regular basis to begin to turn the tide? Am I willing to do this and invest the time necessary to improve things? Are others able to assist us?
6. I spend some time holding N. before God, asking for His guidance in treating the student fairly, patiently, and as my brother or sister—a child of God. In this meditations St. La Salle wrote: "You must pray not only for yourself but also for those whom you are guiding." And so I do. I enter a quiet moment in which I listen to the murmurings of my heart and consider my responsibility to love all my students as Jesus loves us.

A Student Who May Be In A Faith Crisis

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the loving presence of God, even in what appears as a crisis.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. As ambassadors of Christ for our students, to use De La Salle's words, we are naturally interested in nurturing faith and religious practice, and concerned when we see students struggling with such matters. What makes me think that my student may be having a crisis of faith or experiencing a difficulty in regard to religion or its practice? How have I become aware of this? Is there a way to verify whether or not this is a valid observation?
4. Is there a religious environment in N.'s family? Does my student accept this or reject it? Is there a rejection of all religious notions or just of the way that he/she sees or experiences the practice in the family?
5. Do I have the impression that my student is willing to speak about this kind of subject? If so, what could I say to the student today?
6. If I think the student is unwilling to speak about such matters, is there another approach, or another person who may be willing to speak with him/her about this? Can I approach this person?
7. Am I willing to be patient in this situation, establish a guardian-angel-like relationship with the student, and gently invite conversation? Is sharing my faith perspective a possibility without it looking like judgment or 'preaching'? Do my students truly see me as Christ's gentle representative? Does this student see me like this? How can I improve this?
8. I spend some time holding this student before God, asking Our Lord for help in guiding him/her toward a closer relationship with our Father, and a stronger sense of Faith in Him and His Son. I ask 'Abba' for the grace to touch my student's heart. In my heart's depth I search out love and gentleness and a sense of "invitation" in dealing with this student. I remember things always happen in God's time and not necessarily in mine.

A Marginalized Student

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the loving presence of God who calls us into relationship with Himself and all our brothers and sisters.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. How and why do I see this student as marginalized? Is the student merely isolated, or experiencing active discrimination from others? Do I see the marginalization as a result of economics, personality, family, behavior, ethnicity, religion, academic success or the lack thereof, awkwardness, insecurity, lack of self-esteem, or some other cause? How long do I think this has been going on? Does N. have a circle of friends who support him/her, or is he/she 'alone' in this regard? How severe is the marginalization?
4. What are my feelings toward this student? Am I, in any way, adding to the problem? Am I seen as an adult in his/her life who lives out the notion of inclusivity?
5. What could I do for N.? Am I willing to invest the time to assist this student in this situation? Should I speak with the student's parents? Is the counseling department aware of what is going on? Should they be?
6. What could I say to this student today? Is there a best time?
7. I hold this person before God, trying to understand and empathize with his/her feelings, and asking God to help me in serving this student well—helping him/her feel more a part of our inclusive Lasallian community. In this meditation St. La Salle wrote: "You must pray not only for yourself but also for those whom you are guiding." And so I do. I enter a quiet moment and examine my heart for understanding and wisdom in dealing with this student? What is my heart saying to me?

A Student I Like Very Much

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N before me—and also in the loving presence of God, the Object of all our affection and the Source of all our joy.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. Do I understand why I like this student and what my feelings are toward him/her? Is this student aware of my feelings; how does this student feel about me? Has the student ever spoken about his/her feelings? What has been my response?
4. Do I express my feelings appropriately and in a way that does not look like favoritism? How do other students feel about my relationships with students? How do I attempt to monitor my relationships and ensure that expression of my feelings remains healthy and positive?
5. I spend some time holding this student before God in thankfulness and peace, asking our Father to bless and grow our relationship. I speak to Him with the language of my heart and ask that the student and I both may grow in His loving gaze and with the affection of His Christ.

Student Who May Be Depressed

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the loving presence of God, who supports and sustains us in undying love as His own children.

In the presence of God I seek better understanding and insight:

3. Why do I think this student is depressed? How does the depression manifest itself? Does the student isolate himself/herself? Is there withdrawal from friends and normal activities? Is academic success waning, grades dropping? Has impulsive or risky behavior become evident?
4. Why do I feel that the student is more than just sad, but is, in fact depressed? Do I understand the difference? Do others notice any signs? Do I think the student is willing to discuss his/her feelings or even, as a start, how 'life is going'? Is there someone else N. Who might be able to talk with about the matter?
5. Is the problem something that suggests a need for some professional outside intervention and support? Who could reach out to help this student? Have I spoken with N.'s parents? Are they seeing the same thing in their child as others are? Do they see a need for assistance? Is counseling or therapy being indicated/considered? Can the guidance department help out?
6. What do I want to say to this student today? How can I show him/her support and yet also be strong enough to recommend some help and remedy that we may learn is important?
7. I spend some time holding this student before God, placing myself in his or her shoes, asking God for wisdom and patience in supporting in assisting this hurting student. In my heart's quiet, I consider avenues of help and what I should do in trying to be an older brother/sister to this student in my care.

A Student Who Is Being Bullied

1. I recall the presence of God in my life every day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the loving presence of our God of peace, gentleness and invitation.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. Why do I think the student is being bullied? Is it something I have witnessed, or has it been simply reported to me? Is the bullying happening on campus, off campus, or both? Do I know the person doing the bullying? Do I have a good relationship with the child being bullied? Or, with the child causing the harm? Are the parents of either student aware of their children's experience? Is there cyber-bullying involved? How do I know this?
4. Have I reported the bullying to school authorities? Is this something required by policy? Are there ways that this can be done without making the matter worse for the student being hurt? Should this happen soon? Are there others I can call upon who can help deal with the situation sensitively and effectively?
5. I spend some time holding the student before God, asking for help and guidance in supporting the student and in finding ways to stop the behavior. I also pray for the student doing the bullying. I look for ways to have the child recognize the hurt he/she is causing and to assist in stopping the cycle. From the depths of my heart I ask our gentle God to help me see ways to deal with both children, stop the behavior, and change their views about others. Certainly both children need God's special care and attention. I pray that I may be able to assist.

A Student Who Has a Hard Time Fitting In

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the loving presence of our God who, like the Good Shepherd, is always searching for us—to join us together, grow us closer, and dwell peacefully in our hearts.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. Why do I think my student is having a hard time fitting in at school, especially since we Lasallians boast of being an inclusive Lasallian community? Is behavior, or are the choices that the student is making a part of the problem? What are some ways I can help my student see this? What could I say to him/her today? Is my relationship such that he/she would enter this discussion?
4. Does my class, team or club need to be reminded that we claim to be an *inclusive community*, and that in our school we want *everyone* to feel at home and experience a sense of belonging—that this is our *responsibility* making others feel this way? What's the best way to do this? Do I need some help?
5. I spend some time holding the student before God, asking the Trinity, the community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit to assist me in helping create for all my students an inclusive space in our school community. In the center of my heart I consider the responsibility of my invitation to *all* my students—that they find a place in our community, and that I discover creative ways to be a support to all of them and better include one another.

A Student Who Is Over-Anxious about Grades and Performing Well

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the loving presence of God, who loves us just as we are, and invites us to grow into an even closer relationship with Him.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. Is my feeling that the felt-anxiety initiates from within the student, or is it the result of pressure from parents, the need for earning scholarships, or some other external source?
4. How is the anxiety manifesting itself? Irritability, inability to relax, worrying—even about unrealistic things, difficulty in concentrating, fatigue, trouble sleeping, sweating, nausea, headaches, depression—what am I noticing in the student's behavior and demeanor?
5. Do I feel the student's anxiety is from an unreasonable striving for perfection or approval, or is it simply masking a lack of confidence? Could it be something else? Let me consider this.
6. Are his/her parents aware of the situation? Is the guidance department? Are other students? Am I able to/ should I speak to others about trying to help this over-anxious student?
7. Is the student aware that I know of this situation? What could I say to help this student today? Is there a best time? Approach?
8. I spend some time holding N. before the Father, asking our God to assist me in expressing concern for this student. In my heart's prayer I seek out ways to relieve some of the stress, to teach the student about acceptance of self, and supporting the student in creating a more balanced perspective. I ask God to help me show this student that His love is for *who the student is*, and not dependant on what he/she may earn or accomplish.

A Student Who has Lost a Loved One or a Friend

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me both in the loss and supported by a loving, constant ever-present God.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. I recall any of the circumstances of the death and the loved one. When did the loss occur? Is the deceased person a family member or a friend? How close was my student and the lost loved one? Do I know the person who died?
4. Is the family being supportive of one another, and specifically, supportive of the grieving student? Are other friends supportive as well? Can I discern how the grieving/adjustment process is progressing? Is my student still grieving the loss?
5. After a reasonable time is the student showing signs of adjusting appropriately and is he/she able to re-engage with others? Is N. yet able to begin to re-enter school with its schedule of classes, assignments and responsibilities? Can I encourage this?
6. Have I expressed my sympathies to the student? The family? Should I say something to my student today? Is there a best time?
7. I spend some time holding my student before our God, asking Him in prayer to comfort the student and the family and to assist me in expressing concern, encouraging him/her to eventually move beyond the hurt, and re-enter life with relatives and friends in great love and acceptance.

A Student with an After-School Job

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—he or she also living and working in the loving presence of God.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. Am I aware of the circumstances that require my student to hold down an after-hours job? In addition to family and school duties and responsibilities that are required N., is the job having an impact on his/her personal or school life? Is the job necessary to help support the family, pay for necessities, or school tuition? Something else? Students felt similar tensions at home even in St. LaSalle's day, supporting the family.
4. Is the student's job something that he/she is handling with some balance—along with the other responsibilities? Is the student aware of my level of understanding of the situation?
5. Is there something that I can do or say to help in creating the necessary balance, and assist the student to deal with school *and* job responsibilities? Are other teachers aware of this student's special circumstances and duties? Are they willing to accept the situation as necessary for the student at this time?
6. Does the student feel like he can approach me when school or the job become overwhelming or hard to bear? Can I make that offer to him/her? What do I wish to say to this student today?
7. I hold up N. before God and ask for blessing and wisdom in helping the student through this circumstance. Can I become an advocate for this student to others who may not understand the pressures that are creating this situation for my student?
I listen and search out God's assistance.

A Student Who Aggravates, Bothers or Bullies Others

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. in front of me—and also in the presence of our gentle, loving God.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. Have I witnessed this negative behavior on my own or has it simply been reported to me? What have I witnessed? How long has this been going on, and how widespread has it become? What have been any repercussions/consequences of the behavior?
4. What is my understanding of the reason(s) why this behavior has shown itself? Has the student ever been a *victim* of any similar behavior himself/herself? For how long has this been happening?
5. Is the student aware that I know of his/her behavior? Has there been any attempt(s) to deal with the student and/or the behavior? Has there been any success in dealing with it? What has worked? Who has been involved in handling the difficulty?
6. Are the student's parents aware of the behavior? The guidance department? The administration? Should they be?
7. Whose help could I enlist to gather a better understanding of the student, the behavior, its motivations, and perhaps search out ways to deal with the situation, *as well as* for the student(s) who have been bothered or bullied?
8. Is there a best way to confront and challenge the student and the behavior, (and, in the case of bullying, have it understood as intolerable/forbidden in a school that boasts of 'respect for all persons')? Do potential solutions suggest some guided group process as well as/or individual counseling?
9. I spend some time holding all the students affected by the behavior before our God who desires that all be respected and allowed to pursue their education in our schools securely and peacefully. I ask our gentle God for patience and direction in dealing with this student and with students he or she is hurting.

A Student Who is Hyper-Active or Has Learning Disabilities

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. in front of me—and also in God’s presence, a loving Father who is always with us in our struggles and trials, as well as in our victories.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. What are my observations about the difficulty my student is experiencing? Have I sought advice about the student from the guidance department or from other teachers? Have I shared my thoughts as to what I am observing?
4. Have I spoken to N.’s parents and counselors about whether or not there is a need for formal testing? Should I? Do I have a plan if there is resistance?
5. Is the student able to speak about his/her experience or is N. simply confused about what is going on—not really knowing what to do? Is my relationship with N. such that he or she would trust my guidance and offer for help? If the relationship is not trusting, I will consider what I can do to help build it up or bolster it.
6. If there is a professional diagnosis available? Consider learning about the specific disability that will assist in supporting the student and getting him/her back on track? Is there a support system to assist us? Who is available to provide some professional help? Is the system strong enough to be of help?
7. I spend some time holding up the student before God asking for wisdom in seeking good advice and assistance. I ask too, for strength in developing patience for the student, to learn to utilize the tools and techniques offered to strengthen his/her approach to learning and achieving greater success. I listen from my heart for His instruction. Teaching minds and touching hearts.

Student Having Trouble Balancing Activities and School Responsibilities

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining this student in front of me. Like all His children, N. is always in God's affirming presence.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. How aware am I of N's schedule and level of classes? How involved is he/she in extracurricular activities? What are the signs that show a lack of an ability in the student to balance both activities and academic responsibilities?
4. Does the student yet recognize the problem and potential consequences at school, among friends, in the family? Has his/her involvement in extracurricular activities or on a sports team yet been jeopardized because of poor performance in the academic program? Do I feel that N. is blind to the problem, or just *unwilling* to admit what is happening?
5. Have I tried to discuss this with the student? Have others? Is my relationship with the student such that I think he/she would be *willing* to speak with me about it?
6. Once the problem is in focus, could I help N. put some action steps in place? Can we make sure the situation doesn't get worse? Am I prepared to help N. adjust if changes in the schedule of his/her activity are required? Have I lifted up this student in my prayer?
7. I spend some time holding up the student before God, asking for wisdom and clear thinking. Also, for strength and patience in helping the student make the necessary changes and adjustments to create a balance that helps ensure greater success. Remember that teaching minds and touching hearts are among the greatest miracles we can perform.

A Student in Troubled Relationships

1. I recall the presence of God in my life this day, and in my prayer.
2. In silence I imagine my student standing with me—and also in the presence of God.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. I spend some time considering generally the importance and challenges of relationships. What is *my* relationship with the student about whom I am concerned? Is our relationship a trusting one—affectionate, fraternal, supportive? Is the student aware of my feelings toward him/her? Are the feelings mutual? Do I know how this student feels about me?
4. What is my understanding of the relationship that is in my focus and my concern today? Is the troubled relationship with N.'s parents, a friend, a teacher, a boyfriend/girlfriend? Someone else? How much do I really know about the situation? Personal relationships may require different approaches, understandings, discussions and 'solutions'. How well do I understand the complexities that are revealing themselves?
5. Is the relationship broken, damaged, fragile? Is my student the hurt party or is he/she causing the hurt? Are both elements at play? Does the troubled relationship contain elements of violence, anger, or abuse? Is there bullying? Is social media involved?
6. Is there enough trust and affection in my relationship with the student so that he or she would be willing to talk openly with me about these relationships? Should I inform/request assistance from an outside authority? Do I have an obligation to do so?
7. I spend some time holding up the student in prayer before God asking for His benediction and His strength in helping to build healthy relationships for the student through honest discussion. Is my heart directing me to help N. to increase the trust, support, and affection that grows in all worthy relationships when we mirror the love of the Father and His Son. Next steps?

A Student Who is Unmotivated

1. I remember the presence of God in my life, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time holding N. before our God, remembering that we are all loved and always in His supportive presence.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. What are the signs of the lack of motivation I notice? What do I think are some possible reasons for it? Is he or she *able* to do the required work? Does the work and effort to complete it seem overwhelming? Does the payoff for doing the required work seem 'inadequate'? Are matters of low self-esteem or low confidence at work? Are the classroom methods that are used by the teacher un-engaging? How is the teacher-student relationship?
4. Are there other factors that are influencing the student's lack of motivation? Family, girlfriends/boyfriends, personal issues? Is there seen a lack of motivation in other areas of his/her life?
5. Most of the checklist (in #4) involves the student *and* teachers. Teachers cannot do the work *for* students but they are in the ideal position to teach necessary skills and methods, offer encouragement, design engaging classes, improve confidence and self-esteem, etc. It appears that when there is a willingness to work together, teamwork promises the best result.
6. Do I remember a time in my life when I felt unmotivated? Does this help me understand the student better? Can I empathize?
7. How pronounced is the lack of motivation? Is N. at the point of giving up? Would talking and pledging to help form a 'team' to address the situation have any chance of success?
8. I spend time holding up N. in prayer before God asking from my heart for the Spirit's gift of fortitude. Am I willing to try to increase the trust, support, and affection that grows in all worthy relationships? Am I willing to stand by him/her in this difficulty, taking the time to increase motivation and grow success?

A Student Who May Have a Religious Vocation

1. I recall the presence of God in my life, in my prayer, and at the very center of my heart.
2. I spend some time holding up N. before God remembering God is present to all and invites us all to a full life in Christ.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. Are there aspects of this student's character and personality that suggest to me the generosity and dedication required of people who devote lives to service in the church? What are they?
4. Has the student expressed an interest in a life of service to others? To whom has he/she spoken?
5. Do I feel I could bring up the topic? Am I willing to voice an invitation to encourage more thinking about this? Could I suggest that N. speak with some one who might help guide or accompany him/her in a period of prayer, discussion, and discernment? Am I willing to do that myself? Do I feel comfortable in this role?
6. Are there others who might be willing to do help? Am I willing to share my own vocation story with this student?
7. Are there people nearby who could explore vocation choices: religious life, priestly life, consecrated single life, and/or a number of options in Lasallian vocations?
8. Does the school have programs in place in which a student could seek involvement in service projects, tutoring, visiting the sick or elderly, assisting the poor? Do we at our school also explore married life as another holy vocation option? Husband, Wife, Motherhood, Fatherhood, Parenting.
9. I spend time holding up N. in my prayer before God and asking for His guidance/encouragement to 1) Voice the invitation, 2) Encourage prayer, thought and discussion, 3) Explore vocation options, and to 4) Accompany this young man or woman in discerning what God's plan for his/her life might be.

Student Experiencing Racial, Ethnic or Religious Tension

1. I recall the peaceful presence of God in my life today, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the presence of the God of peace and inclusion.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. Even in the most diverse and inclusive schools some such tensions occasionally show themselves. How have I become aware of this tension? How deep is it? Is it subtle or overt? How is the student affected?
4. Does the tension spill out only on campus? Usually, where does it occur? Is it across class levels or mainly in a smaller circle? Does it occur mostly in classes, in organizations, on teams, at lunch, in the schoolyard, waiting for the bus? Is it also present off campus? Has the tension been raised to the level of bullying? Have there been elements of violence involved? Is the situation exacerbated by use of social media?
5. Has the student who is feeling the tension spoken to me about what is going on? Have others? Are there opportunities to confront the tension, and/or to discuss the thinking or beliefs that give rise to the tensions? Does the guidance department have personnel trained to deal with these areas?
6. Is it possible to deal with both the people causing the tension and those who are victims of it? Do we confront it all at once or do we divide up the problem? What do I think would yield best results?
7. I spend time holding up N. in my prayer before God asking for His guidance and strength to support the student, confront the perpetrators, and find opportunities to discuss and deal with problems before tensions grow into destructive action. I listen to the yearnings of my heart.

A Narcissistic or Self-Centered Student

1. I recall the presence of God in my life today, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—remembering that we are always in God’s unconditional and loving presence.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. Narcissistic students can behave poorly, even rudely, and may need to be dealt with directly. What do I see going on? Some narcissistic students (some times called ‘self-entitled’) are apt to challenge teachers—even on relatively small matters. Cheating without guilt in order to show off to others is another behavior of these students, as is exhibitionism and making oneself the center of attention. Another frequent behavior is arriving late, and turning in homework late and expecting it to be accepted. Reasonably sticking to class rules is important for all students.
4. Is there something in our very school system that feeds this self-centeredness? What is my methodology saying to the students? Am I teaching 21st century students with 20th century methods? Some theorists claim that technology and social media are creating problems more than they are assisting us. Is there a balance in my approach that is open to technology and engaging my students in new methods of learning?
5. Can I tell if this student is simply behaving badly, or truly possesses NPD (Narcissistic Personality Disorder)? Is the problem affecting other students? Do I have assistance available?
6. I must learn to pick my battles. I won’t convince a narcissist that he/she is wrong. Though my relationship with the narcissist may prove important and perhaps even key, some authorities believe that “talk therapy” is the way to treat NPD (Narcissistic Personality Disorder) head on. Counseling may be necessary.
7. I hold up this student up before God and from my heart I ask that I be given strength and insight into helping this child effectively and the students that his/her behavior is affecting.

A Student Who Has Leadership Potential

1. I recall the presence of God this day, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me remembering that we are all God's children and that He wants the best for all of us, as we use our gifts to serve others and grow closer to the Father of us all.

In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. What characteristics or aspects of personality are visible in this student which suggest leadership potential to me? Do others notice the same? Do students recognize these characteristics?
4. How can I teach with the expectation that people will give their best and help others engage, contribute and produce the best of which they are capable. Research has pointed to *attention*, *encouragement*, and *staying positive* as key elements to encouraging students to *serve others*. Celebrating achievement in groups can also be very helpful.
5. We can be reminded of the Lasallian slogan "To Touch the Heart" in some websites that explore creating effective student leaders. Here is a quotation: "Encouraging the heart is how leaders visibly and behaviorally link rewards with performance and behavior with cherished values. Leaders know that celebrations and rituals, when done with authenticity and from the heart, build a strong sense of collective identity and community spirit....Caring is the heart of leadership." (*studentleadershipchallenge.com*)
6. Is it possible to create a team of teachers among the faculty who are willing to pledge to identify and encourage potential student leaders? Teamwork may be more effective than acting alone. Developing leaders can be a team effort.
7. I hold up this student before God. What am I thinking is the best way to grow N.'s gifts to help him/her to serve others in leadership roles. My heart's hope is to encourage behavior that will become personality characteristics.

Student Constantly Seeking Attention

1. I recall the presence of God in my life today, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the presence of our constant and eternal God.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. I recall that there are many reasons/causes for student attention-seeking behavior. Low self-esteem, loneliness, inferiority, the need to feel valued. Also, there are a variety of approaches to dealing with this behavior.
4. Perhaps no ready solution will come to mind during reflection. Researching the topic or discussing with members of the school guidance department might provide me some clearer understanding and maybe some creative assistance. Perhaps other teachers have developed successful methods for handling a student like this.
5. Some misbehavior can be aimed at getting attention from the teacher, and often times it doesn't matter if the attention is positive or negative. Once the attention is achieved, a cycle of behavior might continue and even escalate.
6. Some teachers find ignoring for a while some of the behavior helpful, and then randomly giving positive attention at other times, but *unconnected to the misbehavior*. How often to use this approach needs to be considered. Fading the random positive attention is the final step. It may not work at first try.
6. This attention seeking behavior may need a unique strategy and even attempts at relationship-repair may help. Some outside assistance may be required. Do I have the ability to see beyond the behavior to what is really happening so as to correctly apply an effective strategy?
7. I hold N. up to God in prayer, and in my heart I consider what I could do to serve this student appropriately, and correctly respond to his/her need for attention. I understand that I need to approach the student (and the behavior) wisely and with care.

Student Who Appears to Have Given Up

1. I recall the presence of God in my life today, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time imagining my student before me—and also in the presence of our loving God who never gives up on us.

In the presence of God I seek understanding and insight:

3. The pressures that are mounting on my student: are they Academic? Social? Personal? Relational? Are there problems involving parents or the family?
3. Why do I feel that N. may have arrived at the point of giving up? Am I sure? Have others noticed the same? Do I have a strong enough relationship with the student that suggests I may be able to bring up the topic and discuss issues?
4. How can I give the student a sense of hope; how can I help N. feel that his/her choice of behavior, doing the right thing, coming to school: all of it is worth the effort—and more beneficial than consequences of the bad behavior?
5. Can I create tasks that the student can master and/or accomplish so that he/she can see the benefit? Experts tell us that both the teacher's relationship with the student *and* the ability to create a sense of hope are both beneficial to helping students re-engage. Also, that it is important for the teacher to be patient and remain optimistic. One of the keys is "not giving up on *them*."
6. I hold this student before our God, who is Love, Patience and Peace. In my prayer I ask for the grace to be positive and untiring in my efforts. I need to find strategies that encourage students and grow hope in those distressed. My heart's hope is to remain tireless in trying to be encouraging and full of confidence in the future. May my confidence and hope become contagious!

Student Living with Violence

1. I recall the presence of God in my life today, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the presence of our gentle God, the Prince of Peace.

In the presence of God I seek more understanding and better insight:

3. What do I know of the nature of the violence with which the student is/has been living? Is it physical? Psychological? Does it involve gun violence? Has it occurred in the past—with the student still living with the repercussions and collateral damage? Is it occurring now? Do I know that the situation has been acknowledged with appropriate people and has there been an attempt to come to terms with the situation?
4. Is there knowledge or evidence of abuse that requires me to report the incident to authorities? Is the situation still occurring? Are others aware of the situation? Does the violence include alcohol or drug abuse? Is it presently involving other members of the family? Do I need to seek help in getting the student or family members removed from the violence?
5. What assistance is available which would help me deal with both the situation and my student effectively and appropriately?
6. Do I understand that most times the threat of physical or psychological violence will require me to move beyond my own knowledge and expertise and seek professional help?
7. What do I want to say to this student today that would be wise, supportive, and yet strong enough to be helpful and effective?
8. I hold up this student before our God, who is Love, Gentle and Just. In the prayer of my heart I ask for wisdom and fortitude. My efforts in this situation must be loving, understanding and supportive—yet effective and strong enough to protect all those entrusted to my care.

Student Who is Angry

1. I recall the presence of God in my life today, and in my prayer.
2. I spend some time in silence imagining N. before me—and also in the loving presence of God, who is love and peace.

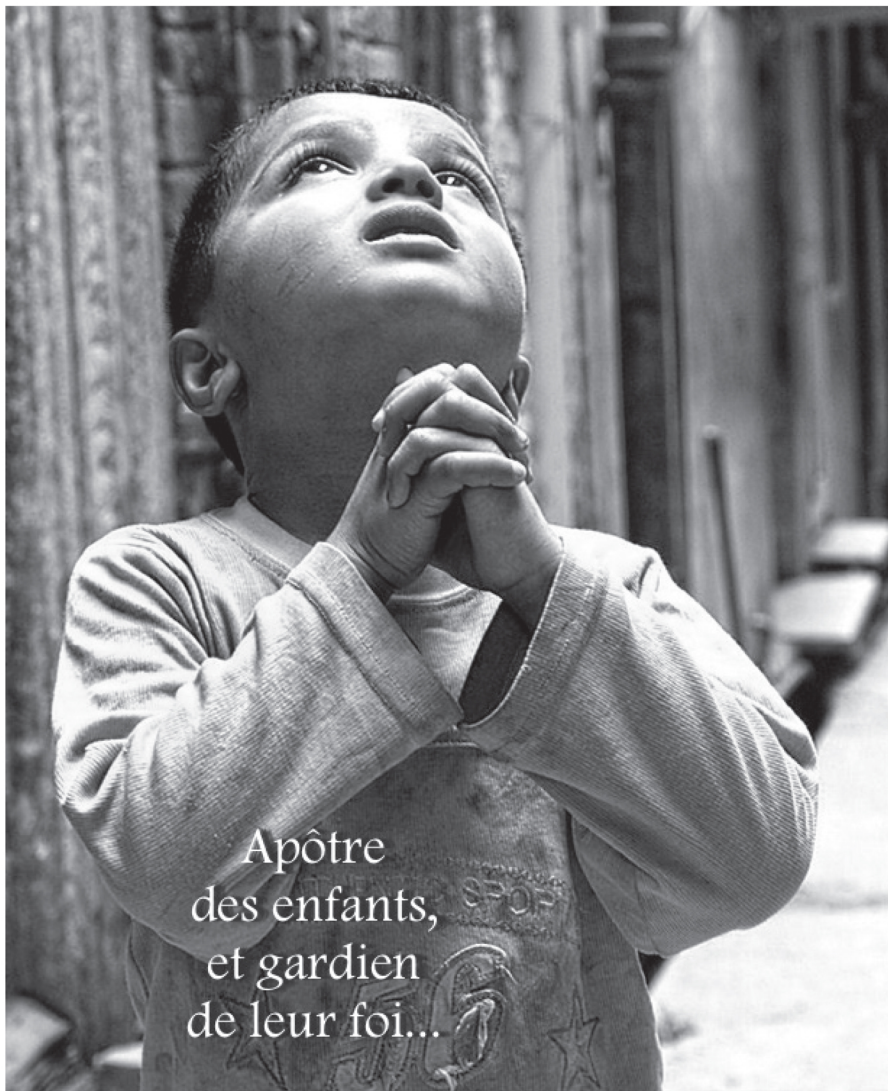
In the presence of God I seek insight and better understanding.

3. What are my observations about this student, and what makes me feel that anger is an issue with him/her? How is the anger exhibited? Is the anger aimed at any individual person or group? Or, does he/she seem angry at everybody?
4. Is it possible to discern the cause of the anger? Is the student reacting to feeling attacked or embarrassed? Is the anger the result of the student needing to defend himself/herself? Is the student defending himself/herself at school, in the family, among friends? Anger is powerful and, at times, difficult to pin down with absolute clarity and understanding
5. Is my relationship strong enough with N. that I might be able to enter into a conversation to discuss and better understand the issue? Would he/she be open to discussing his/her feelings honestly and perhaps, possible solutions or ways to defuse feelings?
6. I spend some time holding this student up before our wise and gentle God. I remember that God never forces our inclinations but constantly invites us into a relationship sustained by peace and to growing in wisdom, age and grace before God and all.



**TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
ONE HEART AT A TIME**

Notes and Resolutions



Apôtre
des enfants,
et gardien
de leur foi...