

**THE COMMITMENT
OF THE LASALLIAN TEACHER
(2/2)**

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**4. A COMMITMENT TO THE MINISTRY OF
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

The second commitment of the Lasallian teacher is his ministry, his ecclesial role as an educator, his contribution to an eschatological educational programme which directs all his efforts to cooperate in the salvation brought to us by Jesus. This salvation is that of the pupils, their parents, colleagues, administrative staff and others who are part of the educational process. It is also that of religious going through a time of crisis, something that is very human and easily understandable. The Lasallian teacher is a Christian who professes his faith visibly, more by his behaviour than by his words. He is not alone in working for salvation: with him there are pupils, parents, colleagues, Brothers, chaplains, and administrative and maintenance staff who are Christians. The Lasallian teacher, therefore, works with others in the educational community which, as a Church community, is a "sacrament of salvation" (LG 48). As a Lasallian lay person, he follows St. John Baptist de La Salle who was first to consider education as a ministry delegated by Jesus Christ and the Church.

He works with the Brothers for the salvation of others within the framework of an educational programme with salvific aims. In this work he is not a "subordinate", since the Brothers do not belong to the hierarchy of the Church and, therefore, do not have either any sacramental jurisdiction, or leadership role in the ecclesial community. He works with the Brothers as a lay person who recognises in other lay persons the profession of the spirituality of a Christian teacher, whose life is a "ministry", and who is dedicated to the practice of the charisms proper to this "ministry". Even when he shares in the pastoral ministry of cha-

plains, the Lasallian lay person acts as a disciple of Jesus Christ who, when necessary, can give back sight - like Ananias in the case of Paul (Ac 9, 10-19) - or reprimand Peter (Ga 1, 11-14). Together, lay people seek to fulfil God's plan regarding the total salvation of the pupils in the concrete situation of their school, society and Church. A way lay people can practise apostolic creativity is to form a team and run retreats for teachers.

One must not confuse the subordination of the lay teacher as a member of staff in an educational establishment, where he is committed by contract to implement a particular educational programme, with his relations on equal terms with the Brothers who share the same salvific mission stemming from the baptismal alliance concluded on joining the People of God. In the apostolate, all Christians have both the right to be creative and the duty to remain in communion with others in order to discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

In the educational apostolate, it is not the educational establishment that should dominate, but rather the quality of the charisms put at the service of an eschatological objective. An educational establishment is Lasallian if in real terms it serves a salvific end. If the contrary is true, it has no meaning, and does not have the right to call itself even a Christian school. The commitment of the Lasallian teacher to the ministry springs from his faith. It is a commitment to the Holy Spirit as is his personal commitment as a Christian. The Christian school must enable Brothers and lay people to discern together the signs of the times both in their work at school and in extracurricular activities. It should enable them as Christian adults to seek the will and orders of God. It should make it possible for them to pool their complementary expertise and experience in order to discover the present-day requirements of the Kingdom of God, that is, the means needed to enable the greatest number of persons within the school and outside to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (1 Tm 2,4). In the light of the present state of society, they must seek to discover together how God wants the school to be and to live.

There is normally some friction between institutions and charisms. It is up to those who are in charge of educational establishments to make sure that everything is "done with propriety and in order" (1 Co 14, 40), so that "the school runs well", as St. John Baptist de La Salle wanted so much. This depends on a certain number of factors: the good use of available resources through solidarity with the Congregation; a sufficient sharing of responsibilities in keeping with the apostolic aims pursued; the encouragement of good relations in order to establish genuine discipline; the desire to involve the whole community in implementing the educational programme; and providing help for needy people in the locality.

Those in charge have all the authority they need to insist on all this.

The charismatic leaders that promote the salvific aims of a school are not always those who are in charge of it. These leaders can be Brothers, chaplains or lay people. It sometimes happens that Visitors, making their canonical visit as lawfully constituted pastors, make use of their right to intervene in the school in order to preserve its Christian aims. All these leaders have the prophetic role of watching over the purpose of all that is being done in order to preserve the only thing that is necessary (Lk 10, 42), the primacy of the Kingdom of God (Mt 6,33).

In the Bible, with very few exceptions, all the prophets were lay people. It is a commitment proper to a lay person and Christian to raise his voice and act, in order to preserve the salvific aims of the Christian school as well as the united front of those in charge of the school who may be put off or stopped by the divergent interests of the various members, groups or organisations of the educational community, or by external social pressure, connected or not with the school.

5. A COMMITMENT TO PROMOTE LASALLIAN VOCATIONS

Lasallian vocations come in many forms. There is that of the lay prophet; that of the member of the administrative or ancillary staff who is committed to the school which he sees as a place of salvation; that of the priest who works to make the educational community truly so; that of parents committed to ensuring that the school preserves its evangelising role; that of the lay person with annual vows who belongs to the Signum Fidei association; and that of the Brother of the Christian Schools or of the Lasallian Sister of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Aware of the original apostolic significance of the Christian school, the Lasallian lay person manifests his commitment to the God that has led him along this path: with gratitude, he encourages Lasallian vocations among his colleagues, the people he works with, parents and in particular among the pupils with whom he is most closely involved.

The new generation can renew the world. If some children or young people were gradually to discover in their Christian schools how faith and culture can come together to form a Christian person capable of bringing about renewal; if at the same time they became acquainted with St. John Baptist de La Salle and his work, then perhaps some Lasallian vocations might appear in their midst, and even some vocations to a fully consecrated life. If we fail to encourage such vocations it is probable that the seed placed in their hearts by God will fall on soil that is not conducive to its germination or growth.

An effective way of encouraging these vocations is prayer at home or in class. The Master asks us to do this (Mt 9, 36- 38). Another practical way of encouraging Lasallian vocations consists in promoting the pastoral ministry to children, pre- adolescents and young people by running prayer groups and Christian Action groups. In such groups there should be frequent mention of what St. La Salle said, and of his life and work.

School catechism lessons afford another appropriate opportunity to encourage admiration and attraction for the vocation of a consecrated teacher, or for that of a teacher associated with the spirituality of St. La Salle. There exist special vocation groups for adolescents and young people who are interested in the idea of consecrated life. The Brother in charge of the pastoral ministry of vocations in the District is responsible for these groups.

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- What does the Spirit of Jesus ask of us today in order that we may grow according to our own charism?
- What enrichment has the fact of belonging to a "Lasallian educational community" brought us in the way of relationships, as well as from the educational, missionary, apostolic and spiritual point of view?
- What importance do we attach to the Lasallian apostolate in our thinking, feeling and our commitment as Christian educators?
- With reference to part 5 of this article, what has been done in our Lasallian educational communities to promote vocations?