

Being Brothers: A Mystery at the Heart of the Lasallian Mission

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Introductory Remarks

As we continue our reflection this morning on the meaning of our *being Brothers today*, I would like to begin by recalling and paraphrasing the words that Brother Superior spoke on the day of his election in June 2000:

Being Brother is a great mystery at the heart of the Lasallian educational mission . . . it's a strength and a treasure . . . that cannot . . . should not . . . be lost . . . The God who guides and conducts all history with wisdom and love³ is with us today . . . His presence is close⁴ . . . We've been called⁵ . . . and are being called again today . . . to participate in God's holy work⁶ . . . for the good of the world.⁷

These inspiring words touched the hearts of so many of the Brother capitulants at the 43rd General Chapter . . . and, subsequently, the hearts of so many other Brothers from all around the world . . . and, I suggest, they provide a lens for us as we consider what *being Brothers today*⁸ means for us.

The mystery of which Brother Superior spoke . . . the mystery at the heart of what it means to be Brothers of the Christian Schools . . . is the mystery of God revealed in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world . . . This is the backdrop . . . the charismatic backdrop⁹ . . . against which this morning's reflections are being offered.

An examination of three clusters of the Founder's meditations¹⁰ will form the major part of the presentation, but this examination of these seventeenth-century meditations will be complemented by, and interspersed with, a series of suggestions about what all of this might mean – in the twenty-first-century context – for our *being Brothers today*.

The order of the presentation will, therefore, be as follows:

1. the foundational vision of God's universal salvific will as presented in the retreat meditations (*Meditations* #193 to #208) will be considered;
2. some implications of this foundational vision for our *being Brothers today* will be suggested;
3. the essential union of our will with God's will for the salvation of the young (*Meditations* #36 to #39), in the Founder's understanding of our vocation, will then be examined;
4. the current distress of "children and young people in an age of turbulence" will be highlighted;

5. a moment to lift our minds and hearts heavenward, in the spirit of the Founder (*Meditations* #40 to #45), will follow;
6. before some final observations about the implications of this foundational vision for our *being Brothers today* will be made; and
7. an invitation to re-discover or re-claim our identity within the heart of the Triune God (*Meditation* #46) will conclude the presentation.

The Foundational Vision of God’s Universal Salvific Will

So we begin by recalling John Baptist de La Salle’s foundational vision of God’s universal salvific will. The Founder’s *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (MTR)¹¹ open with the biblical vision of *1 Timothy* 2:4: “For God wants all to be saved and come to know the truth.”¹² This is, for Lasallians, an expression of “God’s universal salvific will” . . . which calls and invites us to be cooperators in God’s plan for humanity . . . or as one modern writer recently expressed it . . . “God’s intention for the world . . . that in every respect it should show forth the way God is . . . the way of love, community, equality, diversity, mercy, compassion, and justice.”¹³

The image (or *icon*¹⁴) being here presented by De La Salle is that of the God of Jesus Christ; and the Founder ties this passage of *1 Timothy* 2:4 to that of *Romans* 10:14 (Paul’s reflection of hope for the inclusion and salvation of Israel . . . for the unenlightened . . . for the unaware). De La Salle ties this to a consideration of conditions that leave young people in ignorance and result in their being excluded . . . he writes of “parents not sufficiently enlightened . . . taken up with their daily concerns and the care of their family; and parents, under the constant anxiety of earning the necessities of life . . . who cannot take the time”¹⁵ . . . parents “allowing their children to live on their own, roaming all over like vagabonds . . . parents . . . obliged to look for work . . . abandoning their children to themselves.”¹⁶ “God cannot truly desire this [the salvation, enlightenment, inclusion of youngsters],” De La Salle writes, “without providing the means . . . teachers.”¹⁷

We encounter here the image (the twin images) of a God who enters history and of the one(s) in and through whom Jesus enters the world¹⁸ . . . the means (persons) in whom the desire of God is made flesh . . . these Christ-bearers . . . instruments of salvation . . . by means of whom the God “who conducts all things with wisdom” . . . accomplishes the work of salvation.¹⁹

Recall for a moment the Gospel journey of John Baptist de La Salle²⁰ as expressed in his own *Memoir on the Beginnings* (“It was undoubtedly for this reason that God, who conducts all things with wisdom and serenity . . . willed to commit me entirely to the development of the schools . . . in an imperceptible way and over a long period of time . . .”).²¹ Ours is an incarnational God who invites and draws us into this mystery as ministers and cooperators²² in what God-in-Christ is accomplishing for the salvation of the world.

This backdrop, which is found at the opening of the MTR (“God wants all to be saved and come to know the truth”), is further tied in the first retreat meditation to two other scriptural passages: (a) that of *2 Corinthians* 2:14 (God who “employs us to diffuse the fragrance of his knowledge [the knowledge of truth] everywhere”) and (b) that of *2 Corinthians* 4:6 (“the God who commands light to shine out of darkness” . . . who “kindles a light” in our hearts . . . that the

“glory of God” might be unveiled . . . revealed . . . made accessible to others in and through our human frailty). This latter passage itself evokes the memory of the image of the God of creation in *Genesis* 1:3²³ . . . but does so within Saint Paul’s reflection on the “treasure in earthen vessels”²⁴ . . . out of which light shines . . . and God’s glory is unveiled.

De La Salle also reminds the Brothers in this meditation of our own vowed consecration to procure the “glory of God” (“I consecrate myself entirely to you to procure your glory as far as I shall be able and as you will require of me”²⁵) . . . Note, in this regard, the final line of *Meditation* #193.3 (“Be faithful . . . in order to contribute as far as you are able and as God requires of you to the salvation of those whom he has entrusted to you”).

This image . . . this revelation . . . this glimpse or vision into the very mystery of who God is and what God is doing in the world . . . is an invitation and a call to be the “ministers and dispensers of his mysteries” . . . of mystery²⁶ . . . a mystery that draws into itself only to reveal itself. By our living the mystery in the heart of the Lasallian educational mission, we contribute both to the revelation of, and the invitation into, mystery.

This is the God . . . the image of God . . . through whose prayerful meditation (contemplation) an invitation is made . . . a mystery that draws us into communion and associates us with God and, consequently, with one another²⁷ as . . . according to the principal biblical images of these retreat meditations the Brother-teachers are viewed as:

⇒ *co-workers* (*Meditations* #193 & #194) . . . participating in the ongoing work of creation . . . cultivating a field of young plants . . . good architects laying a foundation . . . complementing the work of mothers and fathers . . . and pastors . . . reconciling . . . helping draw students to the knowledge and wisdom of God.

⇒ *ministers* (*Meditations* #195 & #196) . . . ambassadors . . . branches drawing strength from the vine . . . a letter dictated by Christ to us that we write not on paper but in the hearts of students . . . a good shepherd who seeks out the lost, restores to the fold the abandoned, and procures the conversion of hearts . . . cooperators in the salvation of others.²⁸

⇒ *watchful guides* (*Meditations* #197 & #198) . . . angels accompanying the weak . . . guardians making known the “holy will” and leading from darkness to life . . . visible agents of instruction and good example.

⇒ *builders* (*Meditations* #198 to #200) . . . of the body of Christ . . . of the Church . . . of the living temples in whom the Spirit dwells . . . good architects . . . laying a foundation . . . a community of apostles . . . announcing the Gospel to the young and the poor.²⁹

⇒ *prophets of the new covenant* (*Meditations* #201 to #204) . . . men of deep faith and ardent zeal . . . willing to sacrifice ourselves and to spend our whole lives for Jesus and to procure for children “the life of grace in this world and eternal life in the next” . . . who, like Jesus in the washing of the feet, begin by doing (“example makes a much greater impression on the mind and heart than words”³⁰) and then by teaching³¹ . . . and who, in

the manner of the Prophet Nathan with King David, lead to a conversion of heart and conduct by a “wise correction” given with patience, moderation, gentleness, and charity.³²

⇒ *managers and stewards of the household of God (Meditations #205 & #206)* . . . using wisely the talents and graces intended for the service of others . . . exercising responsibly and diligently a ministry of service as guides and leaders of those entrusted to our care.

Some Ideas about Being Brothers Today

So many powerful and plentiful biblically-based Lasallian images (or *icons*) to contemplate . . . as we are gathered here these weeks . . . as a multigenerational community of seventy Brother-leaders from all around the world . . . remembering . . . recalling . . . re-visioning.

Might these meditations of the Founder offer us, Brothers, some assistance as we strive to:

⇒ re-embrace the mystery of *being Brothers today* in this twenty-first-century Church and our post-modern and globalized societies?

⇒ re-consider the mystery of our fraternal life together . . . our first association (with the Triune God and with one another³³) . . . its need to be holy, hopeful, prayerful, joyful, hospitable, dynamic . . . and our vocation and consecration as religious Brothers in the following of Jesus . . . its need to be renewed, adapted, meaningful, integrated, attractive, visible, credible?

⇒ re-imagine the role and the unique, but complementary, contribution we Brothers and our communities of Brothers and shared communities of Brothers, Lasallian Volunteers, and Associates make . . . and can make . . . in the network of Lasallian ministries?

According to the theology of Saint Paul that underlies these retreat meditations, it is the “Christian life lived in its fullness” that “produces an emotional shock on the uncommitted observer similar to that produced by the resurrection on the first disciples” . . . “Unless the apostle has truly ‘put on Christ’ (*Galatians 3:7*)” . . . “Jesus Christ as totally similar to us (Jesus the man) and at the same time totally ‘other’ (the risen Christ, the Savior)” . . . a quality of “otherness” that “is sanctity, or transcendence, made manifest”³⁴ . . . in attractive human form . . . then, the ongoing invitation and call to Christian discipleship and cooperation in “God’s universal salvific will” is in danger of not being announced to or heard by successive generations.

The accessibility of the apostolic educator (who is wise, patient, prudent, humble, and gentle³⁵) . . . combined with a sense of mystical “otherness” . . . both tangibly human and interestingly transcendent . . . is capable of producing within the observer (the student) . . . a “shock . . . similar to that produced by the resurrection.”³⁶

However, the importance of recovering and re-discovering this mystical sense of our lives as religious and in community . . . a holiness that manifests itself in joyful simplicity, selfless

service, and God-centered living³⁷ – not because we are caught up in some overly monastic tradition of consecrated living . . . but because it is inherent to our very identity . . . in the Church and for the world – is central to the foundational vision of our origins.

What was expressed in the *Declaration* some forty years ago remains true even today . . . The “world has more need than ever, even at the very center of human and temporal existence, for the witness given by those who are consecrated and who know and love God as a living reality.”³⁸

The Union of Our Will with God’s Will for the Salvation of the Young

Our attention now turns to a different cluster of the Founder’s meditations (*Meditations* #36 to #39) . . . a series of meditations that open with the biblical admonition of *John* 16:24 (“Ask, and you will receive”), a passage which is echoed throughout these four meditations either in that Johannine formulation or as it is found in the synoptic Gospels (*Matthew* 21:22 and *Luke* 11:9) . . . These meditations are not so much about the power of the prayer of petition (as they have sometimes been understood) as they are about the need, once again, to align “our human will” with “God’s universal salvific will . . . God’s intention for the world”³⁹ . . . and then, when we are one in mind and heart with God, to ask boldly . . . persistently . . . in confidence.⁴⁰

A vision (or *icon*) of a God who is always present is suggested . . . a God present to assist in the doing of “good” . . . in the practice of “virtue”⁴¹ . . . God who gives us the graces needed to accomplish the work given us to do . . . within the mystery of the divine plan . . . God’s design for humanity.

De La Salle notes that sinfulness obstructs the doing of “good” . . . but that regular prayer is not without consequence.⁴²

God is the primary actor here. God sends . . . protects . . . entrusts . . . forms and exhorts others . . . in and through us . . . if we truly want what God wants.

Note the choice of pertinent (powerful) biblical passages by which we are invited in these meditations and called upon to reflect on our participation in God’s holy work for the good of the young and the poor:

⇒ the *father of the possessed boy* in *Matthew* 17:14-21 (“Take pity on my son, who is demented and in a serious condition . . . I have brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him” . . . “This kind does not leave but by prayer and fasting”).⁴³

⇒ The *neighbor who asks for assistance in the middle of the night* in *Luke* 11:5-9 (“Friend, lend me three loaves for a friend of mine has come in from a journey and I have nothing to offer him . . .”). They turn “to you in distress, looking for help . . . persuaded that you have received the grace to support the weak, to teach the ignorant, to correct the wayward.”⁴⁴

⇒ The *parable of the seed* in *Matthew* 13:4-9 (“A farmer went out sowing . . . part of the seed fell on rocky ground . . . part of it fell among thorns . . . part of it, finally, landed on

good soil and yielded grain . . .”). “The children who come to you either have not had any instruction, or they have been taught the wrong things, or if they have received some good lessons, bad companions or their own bad habits have prevented them from benefiting. God sends them to you.”⁴⁵

⇒ the *Canaanite mother of a possessed daughter* in *Matthew* 15:21-28 (“Lord, Son of David, have pity on me. My daughter is terribly troubled . . . Help me, Lord! . . . Please, Lord . . .”).⁴⁶

Scriptural passages . . . so rich for those like us who assist parents in the education and formation of children⁴⁷ . . . passages that call to mind a phrase in De La Salle’s Christmas meditations: “The angels of God will make you known and will inspire fathers and mothers to send you their children.”⁴⁸

As De La Salle encourages us in these meditations to want what God wants . . . he proposes as a final image that of Jesus praying for his disciples on the night before he died . . . the Founder suggesting that we listen to what Jesus wants as he prays for the disciples that he has chosen and sent on mission⁴⁹ . . . that they (we) be given the graces needed to accomplish the work entrusted to us.

⇒ *Jesus at prayer for his disciples* in *John* 17:9-26 (“For these I pray . . . these you have given me . . . guard them from the evil one . . . consecrate them by means of truth . . . that they all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you: I pray that they may be one as us that the world may believe . . .”).⁵⁰

“Make his prayer your own,” De La Salle suggests . . . want what God-in-Jesus wants for us . . . and go to God in the confidence that God has been wanting to give you these graces even before you thought to ask for them⁵¹ . . . “Ask, and you will receive.”

Children and Young People in an Age of Turbulence

Just last week the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences met in Vatican City to discuss the theme of “Vanishing Youth? Solidarity with Children and Young People in an Age of Turbulence.” While acknowledging a “surprising vitality among young people” and noting that “their generosity and creativity” remains “always the greatest resource any society possesses,” their concluding statement⁵² nevertheless highlighted some significant problem areas:

⇒ the “dark shadows” of “oppression and exploitation” where “many do not live to see the light of day or are abandoned to die in the first days of life” . . . “poverty, armed conflict, HIV/AIDS, child labor . . . pushing children to the margins.”

⇒ the “demographic winter” of one-child families . . . “a certain ‘refusal of the future’ that will lead to a culture without brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, or cousins.”

⇒ a world of “vanishing parents” where “children are forced to grow up so quickly . . . having to take on the responsibilities of adults or being pressured to adopt the

preoccupations and problems of older people but without the support they deserve from us.”

⇒ a syndrome of “prolonged adolescence” that is “marked by an avoidance of responsibilities, a desire to maintain all available options instead of permanent commitments, and a refusal of moral limitations in the sphere of human sexuality.”

⇒ a “spiritual emptiness” in some parts of the world . . . a sense of “disillusionment” . . . “existential emptiness” . . . a domination of “electronic entertainment” such that “the sphere of values and religious education is marginalized.”

While this is certainly not the whole picture, it nonetheless poses a challenge for those of us who, in the words of John Baptist de La Salle, share in the ministry of the apostles and bishops⁵³ . . . of mothers and fathers⁵⁴ . . . of guides,⁵⁵ guardians,⁵⁶ and prophets⁵⁷ . . . in the world of the young and the poor.

Lifting Our Minds and Hearts Heavenward in the Spirit of the Founder⁵⁸

“The Son of God,” wrote the Founder, “has come to earth and wishes to come into our hearts, to make us share in his nature and help us become altogether heavenly persons.”⁵⁹ He speaks here not only about the Brother-teachers. He is also speaking about the students and about the relationship between the teachers and the students. You ought “to have an altogether special esteem for the Christian instruction and education of children,” wrote De La Salle, “since it is a means of helping them become true children of God and citizens of heaven.”⁶⁰

The Meditations for Ascension

De La Salle’s meditations for the Ascension (*Meditations* #40 & #41) can, in some ways, help deepen our appreciation of what is being proposed.

In these two meditations, we contemplate and are invited to honor the sacred humanity of Jesus . . . in whom is revealed “all the treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge.”⁶¹ And how, we might ask ourselves, is such honor, according to De La Salle, to be rendered?

⇒ by living like “heavenly persons” . . . by lifting our “minds and hearts heavenward”⁶² . . . in the manner of Saint Stephen⁶³ . . . willing to suffer and perhaps even to die.⁶⁴

⇒ by teaching “children who do not know God, because they have been brought up by parents who do not know God themselves.”⁶⁵

⇒ by striving “to know God so well” . . . that we “may be able to make him known to others and make him loved by all those to whom [we] have made him known.”⁶⁶

The Meditations for Pentecost

The Pentecost meditations (*Meditations* #42 to #45), on the other hand, deepen this reflection by returning us again to the theme of that essential harmony between God's will and the human will⁶⁷ that is the necessary consequence for De La Salle of loving God and giving ourselves entirely to God.

These meditations open with the image of a scattered and fearful post-resurrection community of disciples . . . a community of the apostles gathered in prayer and discussion in the "upper room" . . . apostles who on Pentecost are transformed . . . becoming "a community reunited and assembled by the Spirit and sent to proclaim the Good News."⁶⁸ "Perhaps, like those . . . disciples at Pentecost . . . we are, in a way, experiencing the same passage."⁶⁹

The Spirit communicated to them "new life" . . . "breathed into them his divine Spirit to give them some share in God's own divine life"⁷⁰ . . . making of them a new creation⁷¹ . . . transforming them into a fearless community of encouragement⁷² . . . enlightened miracle workers zealous to "procure the salvation of others."⁷³

Some Final Observations about Being Brothers Today

And so we now come to some final observations about the implications of this foundational vision for our *being Brothers today*.

The prayer for the 43rd General Chapter of 2000 began with the words: "Holy Spirit, whose mission it is to direct and guide our lives, draw down upon us the wind and fire of a Pentecost for our times . . ."⁷⁴

We are, Brothers, without any doubt on my part, witnessing in these days an "aggressive unleashing of the charism and vision of De La Salle" in so many parts of the world . . . an unprecedented interest to share in and be associated with Lasallian spirituality and mission.

We are witnessing a glorious flourishing of the preferential option for the poor . . . (a) in long standing educational and childcare schools and centers . . . and . . . (b) in bold and creative initiatives begun since the 39th General Chapter of 1966-1967 . . . a flourishing whose flowering in these recent years was so gloriously reported at the Inter-Capitular Meeting of May 2004.⁷⁵

We are witnessing so many encouraging examples of revitalization . . . signs of new life . . . islands of creativity . . . steps forward in a desire to clarify, re-found, and re-configure our understanding of the role of Brothers and our Communities in the emerging form of Lasallian association for mission:

⇒ as guarantors and guardians of the charism;

⇒ as spiritual companions, guides, and friends;

⇒ as fountains of living water, apostolic prayerfulness, joyful inclusion & hospitality, faith formation & catechesis, availability for mission & stability, missionary zeal, and communion & solidarity within the Lasallian educational mission;

⇒ as a friendly face of the Church in today's world;

⇒ as those committed to the witness of life and of respectful inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue in the varied and diverse realities in which we live and work;

⇒ as promoters of multiple, but complementary, vocations within the Lasallian Family;

⇒ as stewards and change-agents in the organizational re-structuring of the Lasallian educational mission at local and regional levels in response to the urgent needs of our time; and

⇒ as men willing to confront in faith our own inner, cultural, and communal barriers to the Spirit who is breathing new life into the Lasallian educational mission and the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

We are witnessing a resurgence of that heroic mindset . . . so obvious in De La Salle and his first Brother-disciples at the time of our origins⁷⁶ . . . a resurgence manifesting itself . . . inspiring us to do our part to assure the future of this Society and this glorious mission . . . “to discover, in faith, the new direction toward which the Spirit of God is leading us”⁷⁷ . . . to be better able, in these times, to contribute to the fullness of life (*John* 10:10) of the young and the poor . . . to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity.

Re-discovering Our Identity within the Heart of the Triune God

In the Founder's meditation for Trinity Sunday (*Meditation #46*), we are presented with an image of what it means to live as Brothers of the Christian Schools . . . This meditation invokes the powerful memory of the Community of the origins . . . Brothers just like us . . . who assembled in the pre-Trinity Sunday period of the Pentecost season . . . in 1686,⁷⁸ in 1694,⁷⁹ and in 1717⁸⁰ . . . three pivotal moments where the first Brothers acted co-responsibly, in association with De La Salle, to assure the vitality and viability of the Society and its mission:

⇒ a group of men . . . our brothers . . . drawn to find their identity within the very heart of a Triune God . . . situating and rooting their very existence in the sacred mystery of Trinitarian life . . . the primary image of association . . . Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁸¹

⇒ a group of men acknowledging their nothingness and helplessness before this mystery⁸² . . . which “deserves all glory” . . . which “humbles our reason” and calls “for a deep faith.”⁸³

⇒ a group of men consecrating themselves to the Most Holy Trinity . . . the Triune God to whom the young themselves are also consecrated in baptism . . . “these living plants in

the field of the Church” . . . the Triune God to whom we dedicated ourselves “entirely . . . to contribute as far as [we] will be able to extend its glory over all the earth.”⁸⁴

Concluding Remarks

It is, then, in this spirit of De La Salle and of our charismatic origins that we strive, Brothers, to do our work here these days . . . and to “live this year of preparation for the [44th] General Chapter” in the hope that “we may joyfully discover the newness of what the Lord is raising up in our midst.”⁸⁵

May God bless us and accompany us as we journey together these days; and may God bless this Institute and its mission all around the world.

Endnotes

1. These remarks were delivered on May 13, 2006, at the International Lasallian Center (CIL) in Rome, Italy. For two weeks, all of the Brother Provincial Visitors and Auxiliary Visitors were at the Casa Generalizia of the Brothers of the Christian Schools to launch a program organized by Brother Miguel Campos on *Being Brothers Today*.

2. Brother William Mann, who holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Colgate Rochester Divinity School (1990), serves as the president of Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota since 2008 and as the president of the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU) since 2015. He is a former vicar general of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (2000-2007).

3. From the “Memoir on the Beginnings” as cited in *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 80.

4. This is what the Cf. John Baptist de La Salle’s *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, edited and revised translation by Donald Mouton (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1995), page 25: “We can consider God present in the place where we are, because God is present everywhere” (*Psalms* 139:7-10).

5. Cf. “You, then, whom God has called to this ministry . . .” (*Meditation* #193.2); and “But in calling you to this holy ministry, God . . .” (*Meditation* #201.1).

6. *Domine, Opus Tuum* (Lord, the Work Is Yours). Cf. John Baptist de La Salle’s “Rules That I Have Imposed on Myself” #8 in *Rule and Foundational Documents*, translated and edited by Augustine Loes and Ronald Isetti (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), page 200.

7. Cf. *Bulletin of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* #246 (Rome, 2000), pages 55 and 59-61.

8. Cf. *Toward the 44th General Chapter #3: Being Brothers Today* (Rome, 2006).

9. Cf. *The Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration* (Rome, 1967): “The Brothers are convinced that in the life, work, and writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the Holy Spirit is revealed in a privileged manner, and that they will find there even today a living principle for their guidance.”

10. Cf. *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, edited by Augustine Loes and Francis Huether (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994).

11. While the MTR (the first cluster of the Founder’s meditations to be examined) are clearly a vital source for “touching” the charism of the Founder and an energizing force for the “living members” of this Institute, the MTR are not a simple set of meditations to use to uncover . . . discover . . . specify only the role of the Brother in the emerging association in favor of the Lasallian educational mission (LEM). In its dedication, it is noted that they were intended “for the use of all persons who are engaged in the education of youth and especially for the retreat which the Brothers . . . make”

12. The opening lines of *Meditations* #193.1 & #193.3.

13. Chrys McVey, OP, “The Dying That Is Mission” in *Religious Life Review*.

14. An icon is a holy image (sometimes “images” are “painted” with words) . . . a sign or symbol . . . proposed for reflection or meditative contemplation . . . capable of “opening a window” to the divine . . . offering an encounter with transcendence.

15. *Meditation* #193.2.

16. *Meditation* #194.1.

17. *Meditation* #193.3.

18. The Brothers and Lasallian educators in the schools [as per the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (#193 to #208)].

19. De La Salle evokes this same vision of 1 *Timothy* 2:4 in *Meditation* #163.1 (Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary): “God who conducts all things with wisdom, having the plan to save his people and to be born like them, chose for himself by preference a virgin” Furthermore, the words De La Salle uses here recall his own experience with God as reflected in the “Memoir on the Beginnings” as cited in *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 80.

20. Cf. “The Gospel Journey of John Baptist de La Salle (1651-1719)” by Michel Sauvage in *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1999), pages 221-246; and Edwin Bannon’s *De La Salle: A Founder as Pilgrim* (London: De La Salle Provincialate, 1984).

21. From the “Memoir on the Beginnings” as cited in *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 80.

22. Cf. *Meditation* #86.3: “You will draw them to God only insofar as you resemble them and Jesus at his birth.”

23. Cf. *Genesis* 1:3-4: “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.”

24. *2 Corinthians* 4:7: “Now we hold a treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God, and not from us.”

25. Cf. “Formula of Vows” of 1694 in *Rule and Foundational Documents* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), page 204; and *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (Rome, 1987), #25.

26. Cf. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “The Presence of God through Christ in the Church and in the World” in *The Presence of God*, edited by Pierre Benoit et al., Concilium, Volume 50 (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), pages 107-120.

27. Too little attention is being paid these days to the vertical (transcendent) dimension of our being associated with the Triune God; and an over focus on the horizontal (human) dimension of the association of Brothers and Lasallians is, from my perspective, today’s unfortunate reality. This over focus is perhaps understandable (even if disappointing) in the secular, post-modern societies that are the context of the Lasallian educational mission in much of the world today. This imbalance is perhaps reflective of a desire to be more inclusive and not offend non-Christian or secular members of the Lasallian Family. How we do such will, undoubtedly and hopefully, continue to evolve and mature.

28. Cf. Jean Pungier’s *Ministers of Grace: The Work of Christian Education according to Saint John Baptist de La Salle*, translated by Oswald Murdoch (Rome, 1983).

29. Cf. Miguel Campos and Michel Sauvage’s *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor: The Spiritual Experience and Spiritual Teaching of Saint John Baptist de La Salle* (Romeville, IL: Christian Brothers National Office, 1981).

30. *Meditation* #202.3.

31. Cf. *Meditation* #202.3.

32. *Meditations* #204.2 and #204.3.

33. Let’s not forget this phrase from the Rule #48: “In their relations with one another, the Brothers make every effort to model their community life on the relations of knowledge and love

that constitute the life of the Holy Trinity” (*The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* #48 (Rome, 1987).

34. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “The Presence of God through Christ in the Church and in the World,” pages 114, 115, and 113.

35. Cf. *The Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher* by Brother Agathon: gravity, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, reserve, and gentleness.

36. Cf. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “The Presence of God through Christ in the Church and in the World,” page 114.

37. Cf. *Vita Consecrata* by John Paul II (Vatican City, 1996), #41 to #60 (and especially #42, #45, and #60).

38. *The Brothers of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration* (Rome, 1967), #11.4.

39. Chrys McVey, OP, “The Dying That Is Mission” in *Religious Life Review*.

40. Cf. *Meditation* #37.3: “God wants you to ask for these blessings [piety, self-control, reserve, purity, the avoidance of companions who would be dangerous to them] for them [the children whom you are charged to teach] frequently, fervently, and insistently. In this way, thanks to your care, nothing will be lacking to them that they need for their salvation.”

41. *Meditation* #36.1.

42. *Meditation* #36.2.

43. *Meditation* #36.3.

44. *Meditation* #37.1.

45. *Meditation* #37.2.

46. *Meditation* #38.2.

47. Cf. William Mann’s *The Lasallian School: Where Teachers Assist Parents in the Education and Formation of Children* (Narragansett, RI: Christian Brothers Provincialate, 1991).

48. *Meditation* #86.3.

49. Cf. *John 17: The Prayer of Jesus*.

50. Cf. *Meditation* #39.

51. Cf. *Meditation* #38.1.

52. Mary Ann Glendon, “Closing Statement on ‘Vanishing Youth’” in *ZENIT New Agency, The World Seen from Rome* (May 3, 2006).

53. Cf. *Meditation* #199.3.

54. Cf. *Meditation* #193.2 and #203.3.

55. Cf. *Meditation* #197.3 and #203.3.

56. Cf. *Meditation* #198.2 and #203.3.

57. Cf. *Meditation* #202.1 and #204.

58. The third cluster of the Founder’s meditations to be examined include the meditations for Ascension (#40 & #41), Pentecost (#42 to #45), and Trinity Sunday (#46).

59. *Meditation* #85.3.

60. *Meditation* #199.3.

61. *Meditation* #40.2.

62. *Meditation* #40.1.

63. *Meditation* #40.2.

64. *Meditation* #41. Cf. *Meditation* #201.3: “For this had to be the kind of ardent zeal you had for the salvation of those you have to instruct when you were led to sacrifice yourself and to spend your whole life to give these children a Christian education and to procure for them the life of grace in this world and eternal life in the next.”

65. *Meditation* #41.3. Cf. *Meditation* #37.2: “Your simple faith in the mysteries may be enough for you yourself, but not enough if you are to be able to give them what they need.”

66. *Meditation* #41.3. Cf. *Meditation* #101.3: “Do you have these sentiments of charity and tenderness toward the poor children you have to educate? Do you take advantage of their affection for you to lead them to God?”

67. Cf. *Meditation* #24.1: “Strive after the example of your divine master Jesus Christ to what only what God wants, when he wants it, and in the way he wants it.”

68. “Introduction” in *Circular 447: The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter* (Rome, 2000), page i.

69. “Introduction” in *Circular 447: The Documents of the 43rd General Chapter* (Rome, 2000), page i.

70. *Meditation* #43.1.

71. *Meditation* #43.1.

72. *Meditation* #43.2.

73. *Meditation* #43.3.

74. *Prayer for the 43rd General Chapter of 2000*: “Holy Spirit, whose mission it is to direct and guide our lives, draw down upon us the wind and fire of a Pentecost for our times. Spirit of God, help us to see the signs of the times, and open our hearts so that the Brothers, Sisters, and Lay Lasallians may all respond to the calls you make to us in the world of young people and, especially, of the poor. Help us to find the right guidelines and priorities to respond to these calls. Spirit of love, renew our fidelity to the living charism of our Founder, teach us to find new vocations, and raise up new saints for the service of the young people of the new Millennium about to begin. Strengthened by your support and bound together by ties of solidarity, may we use our talents and our resources in the service of a mission adapted to present-day conditions. We ask you this through Jesus, our brother and Lord. Amen.”

75. The Brothers of the Christian Schools hold a General Chapter once every seven years. At the midway point between two General Chapters, the leaders of the Brothers around the world (Brother Provincial Visitors) gather with the Brother Superior and General Council for what is called an Inter-Capitular Meeting. [Many of the participants at the May 2006 CIL Session were also participants at the May 2004 Inter-Capitular Meeting.]

76. Cf. “The Heroic Vow” of November 21, 1691 in *Rule and Foundational Documents* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), page 203.

77. *Circular 454: Convocation of the 44th General Chapter, #6* (Rome, 2006), page 17.

78. “Their first general deliberative assembly took place from the feast of the Ascension until Trinity Sunday” . . . “the habit, which had been introduced probably during the previous year, 1685, was made official, as was the title Brothers of the Christian Schools” . . . “On Trinity Sunday, 1686, De La Salle and the 12 Brothers pronounced the vow of obedience for the first time.” [Cf. Luke Salm’s *The Work Is Yours* (Romeville, IL: Christian Brothers Publications, 1989) page 45.]

79. “Finally, at Pentecost in 1694, he [De La Salle] brought all 12 Brothers together at Vaugirard . . . It was finally decided that they would take perpetual vows of obedience, stability

in the Society, and association to conduct the gratuitous schools. Accordingly, on Trinity Sunday, June 6, 1694, De La Salle and the 12 principal Brothers made the first perpetual vows in the Institute.” After electing the Founder as Superior (against his will), they all (on the following day) signed a common document that from that point forward “we will not have or accept any Superior who has not associated himself with us, and has not made vows like us and like all those who will be associated with us in the future.” [Cf. Luke Salm’s *The Work Is Yours* (Romeoville, IL: Christian Brothers Publications, 1989) pages 81-84.]

80. “The Assembly opened ... on Pentecost Sunday, May 16, 1717. There were 16 delegates altogether . . . The election of the new Superior [Brother Barthélemy] went smoothly after a day or two of prayer and preparation” . . . “Once the elections were over, the delegates turned their attention to a discussion of [the revision of] the *Common Rules of the Brothers*.” [Cf. Luke Salm’s *The Work Is Yours* (Romeoville, IL: Christian Brothers Publications, 1989) pages 183-184.]

81. *Meditation #46.*

82. *Meditation #46.1.*

83. *Meditation #46.2.* Cf. “Rule of 1705” and “Rule of 1718” in *Rule and Foundational Documents*, translated and edited by Augustine Loes and Ronald Isetti (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002)), pages 16-17: “The spirit of this Institute is, first, a spirit of faith, which ought to induce those who compose it not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith, not to do anything but in view of God, and to attribute everything to God . . .”

84. *Meditation #46.3.*

85. *Circular 454: Convocation of the 44th General Chapter, #6* (Rome, 2006), page 17.