Volmer, Mary. "A Lasallian Spirituality of Sport." *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education 16*, no. 2 (Christian Brothers Conference: 2025).

© Mary Volmer, M.A., M.F.A. Readers of this article have the copyright owner's permission to reproduce it for educational, not-for-profit purposes, if the author and publisher are acknowledged in the copy.

A Lasallian Spirituality of Sport

Mary Volmer, M.A., M.F.A.[1]

Introduction

At the center of a campus embraced on all sides by rolling hills, the Saint Mary's College Chapel is a radiant Spanish-style white structure with a spire that tops all but the redwoods. You can't miss it, and yet in the two days I spent on campus as an eighteen-year-old basketball recruit—two days touring the gym, the residence halls, attending classes, hanging with the team, and getting to know my very kind, and very tall, host—I hadn't stepped inside. Now, alone on my way back to the car, recruiting trip over, for some reason I walked through the double doors and sat down. No white lights. No angels. I heard no voice from above, no sound at all. But sitting there alone in the relative dark, I felt an overwhelming sense of rootedness and belonging along with a quiet joy that was in its own way terrifying.

Mom insisted I go on this visit; I'd had no intention of accepting the scholarship offer. For one thing, I'd already verbally committed to play ball at another, bigger school in Colorado. Saint Mary's was two hours from my home in the California foothills—too close to home in other words—and I wasn't Catholic, and the scholarship offer came late, and, and, and. . . . Yet, alone in the chapel, all of my half-cooked rationale spilled to the flagstone with the stained-glass light of early evening.

This was, for lack of a better word, a call.

Probably I mistook this as a call to athletic greatness, glory no less, which proves delusions of grandeur can, on occasion, lead us in the right direction. Obedient, yes. Enlightened, no. At eighteen years old, all concerns—social, academic, and spiritual—came second to my obsession with sport. Although a capable student, drawn to the divine, my identity and sense of self-worth were then so tightly tied to the game that any struggle on the court, and there were many, sent me spiraling into existential crisis and despair. In four years, three of them championship years, I never cracked the starting lineup. I thought about transferring but didn't. I felt love and fierce loyalty to my teammates and classmates; and after a few minutes in the chapel, the same, quiet solace would return to anchor me, as it still does today.

Slowly, under the guidance of professors, mentors, and coaches, my academic, artistic, and faith-life began to grow. As they did, my athlete-self became an integrated part of my identity rather than the whole. This ongoing journey toward wholeness describes the great gift of a Lasallian education and one of the reasons I returned to become a professor and later an interfaith lay chaplain for athletics at Saint Mary's.

It is my pleasure, each day, to counsel and attend to the spiritual well-being of student-athletes, each on their own journey toward wholeness, and my pleasure now to share some of what I've come to recognize as a uniquely Lasallian Spirituality of Sport.

What Did the Founder Say about Sport?

Nothing, it turns out. Indeed, from a cynical distance, sport, especially team sports, appears combative, subject to outrageous passions, immodest, and in every way the antithesis of the Founder's ideals. In *The Rules for Christian Decorum and Civility*, he cautioned against all intemperate forms of recreation. While game playing "might be a pastime permitted on occasion," games, he said, should "be engaged in only with great precaution" and "with due restraint."[2] In *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, he forbade play of all kinds, especially near the school. Children who "love to run about and play" miss school and are "inclined to evil."[3]

Play, especially the rough forms his streetwise charges might have engaged in, undermined the decorum and the devotional sincerity he expected of students and brothers alike. More importantly, it undermined the good order that characterized his schools.

The Founder, a student of the Sulpicians, was a practical man whose genius was more administrative and adaptive than poetic or visionary. "His originality," says Brother Michel Sauvage, FSC, "comes through in his ability to assimilate . . . other sources for his own use."[4] Many of his educational innovations—free education for the poor, teacher education, and classroom management methods, like the iconic school bell—were pragmatic measures put in place to alleviate the poverty, ignorance, and spiritual vacuity in the lives of poor students beyond the walls of the school.

Sport in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France would not have aided in this endeavor as the Founder envisioned it. While the well-healed of French society might have played genteel games like lawn tennis, sport by and large meant *blood*sport: cockfighting, boxing, horseracing, uncivil spectacles to bet on, not to participate in, and of quite a different character from organized sports as we know them. What we think of as sports—rugby, for example—emerged from the playing fields of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British public schools.

The Founder did not foresee the centrality of sport to modern culture any more than he foresaw the myriad ways the Institute has changed since its beginning. Says Brother Luke Salm, FSC,

> If John Baptist de La Salle were to return today he would not recognize the Institute he founded. . . That is the way it should be. If the Institute were still limited to one hundred Brothers, all in France, teaching only in elementary schools and living according to the prescriptions of the 1718 Rule, that would be a sure sign that the Lasallian charism had no vitality, that it wasn't a charism at all.[5]

"The Lasallian charism," Salm goes on to say, "is not the same thing as the structures, practices, and regulations which embodied that charism in institutional forms."[6] It is, instead, a spiritual gift given new life and form by people led by faith and zeal.[7] When I look back at my spiritual life as a Lasallian, the basketball court has been as formative as the classroom and the chapel.

From conversations with coaches, athletes, professors, and Brothers I have learned that my experience is not exceptional but close to the norm.

The question is, How do the structures, practices, and conventions of sport embody the Lasallian charism today?[8]

A Lasallian Spirituality of Sport

I did not come to Saint Mary's to serve anyone but to pursue my own ambitions. I had no desire to become a teacher or a minister. I was drawn to college by sport, and it was because of sport, not in spite of it, that Lasallian spirituality began to transform me. We are not merely becoming who or what we think we should be or want to be. Within each of us there is a larger, ultimate self, infinitely unfolding as an image of God. Each manifestation—athlete, author, mother, teacher, chaplain—is but another form of the divine expressed in this gift of a life. This gift, what the authors of *Lasallian Spirituality Today* call the "deep gift,"[9] underpins our talents and passions but is not defined or limited by them. It adapts to the needs of our communities and becomes itself an expression of community.

"A living Lasallian spirituality," the authors continue, "never stops interpreting and describing itself, specifying and adapting the expression of its core elements for each new generation, enriched by their insights, experiences, and conversations. This is how Lasallian spirituality thrives."[10]

To define a Lasallian Spirituality of sport, therefore, is to describe how these core elements manifest in sport and contribute to the deep gift of our lives in community. To do this, I'll start by considering the role of a coach as a teacher. I'll then discuss the concept of fraternity as it relates to Lasallian coaches, athletes, competitors, and their communities. I'll finish by describing how the further development and promotion of a Lasallian spirituality of sport contributes to the "five horizon commitments for the common good," outlined in *Lasallian Spirituality Today*.

My examination will not be exhaustive, but will provide, I hope, a compelling summary and an invitation to other Lasallians to think deeply about the ways sport is (or might be) an expression of their Lasallian spirituality. There are many ways to define sport and many ways to define spirituality. We could spend pleasant hours debating these terms, but that is not the focus of this essay. Instead of definitions, I offer a description of a Lasallian Spirituality of Sport as I have lived it; in doing so, I extend an invitation to other Lasallians to think deeply about the ways sport is (or might be) an expression of their Lasallian spirituality.

Coaching Is Teaching

Good coaches are good teachers, and not merely of their sport. No one states this more eloquently than Hall of Fame Georgetown basketball coach, John Thompson, who practiced Lasallian spirituality without even knowing it.

> I always planned to be a teacher, not a basketball coach. I used basketball as an instrument to teach. My classroom was the court. When I say teach, I'm not talking about how to run 2-2-1 zone press or the fast break, although we did those things quite well. I

> felt a responsibility to broaden my players' perspectives, of the world and of themselves. I had to expose my kids to their own intellects and give them a sense of self-worth beyond their physical attributes. I tried to praise them for their minds as much as for making the quick trap off the inbounds pass. But I always knew the reason I had their attention was basketball. Basketball was my instrument to make them listen to everything else.[11]

Coaching is teaching, and a Lasallian coach understands that the discipline, devotion, teamwork, and sacrifice a student-athlete learns through sport can be applied to any endeavor. By simple act of substitution, the twelve virtues of a good teacher—gravity, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, reserve, gentleness, zeal, vigilance, piety, generosity—can be translated into the virtues of a good coach.[12] Like good teachers, good coaches accompany their athletes through seasons of growth, adapting year to year to the challenges presented by each team, and by each individual athlete. Like teaching, coaching requires a dynamic intelligence and its gifts are reciprocal: coach and athlete accompany each other in an ongoing journey toward wholeness.[13] You cannot accompany anyone if you stay in one place. Indeed, it is the journey I take with athletes and the joyful discovery of my own, ever-merging self that draws me to coaching and to chaplaincy.

Of course, no coach is perfect; coaches who lack obvious virtues abound. Any given day on the sideline of a CYO or AAU or Little league game is enough to confirm this. We all know this guy:

Vectorbomb

The overbearing, testosterone driven, ego-freak, living out his failed dreams though the hide of his (and everyone else's) kid. And what about the college coach making millions off the muscle of talented young people—often young men of color—while ignoring their mental and spiritual growth?[14] Or the sadistic rowing or swimming coach allowed for years to exact harm on athletes because, supposedly, their ruthless methods won races? No need to be explicit in these examples. Most of us can picture specific people who fit these categories.

But, even if they don't embody all virtues (and who does), I believe most coaches mean well. While there is a lot of money funneled into the youth sport industry, most youth coaches are paid little, if at all, for their hours of time, effort, worry, and attention. Why do it then?

I asked coaches who attended or work at Lasallian schools, "Why do you coach?" The answers varied to some degree, but most resonated with Sonja Garnett, head coach of the Saint Mary's Softball Program. She loved the game, and she says, "I always wanted to teach." When she came to campus and learned more about the Lasallian tradition, she thought, "Okay, this is about coaching, this is teaching, I can grow a program here."[15]

When first hired, there was little expectation that she would win. She was hired, she said, to change the culture. The team, at the time, had a dismal record and GPA. Another coach might have considered performance on the field to be her only concern. Not Garnett. "I knew we first had to get better in the classroom," she said. She implemented study halls and created a "set of principles to guide us on and off the field and this has built on itself." In the last few years, I've had the pleasure of working extensively with her players, counseling and teaching meditation and centering prayer. As the student-athletes responded to coach Garrnet's holistic approach, they improved in the classroom. The culture of the team shifted, and performance on the field improved.[16]

Now the two-time reigning West Coast Conference Champion and coach of the year understands explicitly what she felt upon arriving at the college: a Lasallian coach is called to mentor the whole athlete, her posture is relational. She views her assistant coaches as teammates and knows that all of them, players and coaches, must be invited to grow into whole people if they are to play together in a meaningful, rigorous, and, yes, joyful way.

Garnett's approach is mirrored by other Lasallians including famed De La Salle High School Football coach Bob Ladouceur and Saint Mary's Basketball Coach Randy Bennett. This approach exemplifies a pedagogy of fraternity.

A Pedagogy of Fraternity and Lasallian Spirituality of Sport

> Ever since the origins of the Institute, fraternity has been a central feature of the Lasallian school, as it is of the Brothers' Community.[17]
>
> Our world today has a great need for educators who will commit themselves to promoting universal fraternity. The forces of division and violence are still operating in present day societies, and the education of young people can help to mitigate and overcome them. Experiencing fraternity in school so as to become builders of it in society: such is the educational dream of all Lasallians.[18] (Brother Léon Lauraire, FSC)

A Pedagogy of Fraternity animates a Lasallian spirituality of sport. It does this by framing the athletic endeavor as a community endeavor and by recognizing the value of sport in forging meaningful relationships across lines of difference.

The root of the word *fraternity* means "brotherhood."[19] The earliest uses, traced to fourteenth-century France, describe "a body of men associated by a common interest." While Pope Francis

brought the term back to the forefront of the Catholic imagination with his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti,* the concept has been an essential organizing principle of Lasallian life since the 1680s when Christian school teachers under De La Salle's mandate expressed their desire to be called *brothers* rather than school *masters*. Later, when convening into a religious order, the brothers again honored the call to humble accompaniment by deciding to forgo paths to priesthood in favor of a mutually beneficial association.[20]

Gendered, as it is, fraternity is not a word with which I'm completely comfortable. I've played with synonyms, "sodality" among the most promising. In Anthropology a "sodality" indicates a non-kinship group that transcended individual families and villages, often organizing around a common purpose or identity. A sodality is a bridge between individuals who might have no shared identity beyond a shared purpose. I use fraternity here, honoring the spirit of the term even as I recognize its linguistic weaknesses.

The spirit of the term propounds an alternative to the hierarchical models of governance that were then, and still are, dominant–an alternative that follows the example set by *the Teacher.* "Jesus," Cyntha Bourgeault reminds us, "was not a priest. He had nothing to do with the temple hierarchy in Jerusalem, and he kept a respectful distance from most ritual observances."[21] Instead, Jesus taught and fed and healed and walked with the people; without the people there would be no teachings, no healings. At the center of his journey, and at the center of Lasallian Spirituality, lives a holy reciprocity that honors, indeed celebrates, our essential interdependence.

From the start, the brothers embraced and modeled a theology that honors our essential interdependence. Combative, warlike visions of sport abound that cast competitors as enemies and winning as a kind of conquest. Because of this we might assume that sport flies in the face of the brothers' example. But viewed through the fraternal lens of interdependence, a competitor is not an enemy to be vanquished but an ally without which there would be no competition. An athlete is not sufficient on their own. An athlete needs someone to compete *with*, not *against*. Indeed, the Latin root of the word *compete* means "to strive with" or "to strive together."

By striving together, competitors reach levels of excellence neither would have achieved alone. Though I never succeeded in winning a starting spot as a point guard in college, by competing for the spot I became a better player than I would have otherwise. We became a better team by competing with other teams who tested and challenged us. Whether we recognized it or not, all of us, all the players and all the teams within the conference, were engaged together in a fraternal act of perichoresis, "a dance of mutual love," which crossed lines of kinship and race and loyalty and was both communal and, in its own way, sacred.[22] This vision of competition, this "wide-angle view . . . encompasses both opponents as partners in the dance," says hall of fame basketball coach Phil Jackson. It "honors the humanity of both sides while recognizing that only one victor can emerge."[23] Without this awareness, says Pope Leo XIV, "sports becomes nothing more than an empty competition of inflated egos."[24]

Teammates, too, are partners in this dance. This might seem obvious, but in this Instagram age of self-aggrandizement, it is easy to forget. Those highlight reels and video clips of little Suzy or Jamal's singular displays of dominance do not tell the story of sport, which is a story about community. Such fragmented views tout our strengths and deny our limitations, but it is the combination of our strengths *and* limitations that allows us to find a purpose and place on a team,

for a team is a small community. A Lasallian spirituality of sport, grounded in a pedagogy of fraternity, invites us to recognize that it is not only our unique contributions to our team but the team's reciprocal embrace that makes us whole.

I was a backup point guard on the basketball team, for I was not exceptionally tall. It was my job to bring the ball up the court and pass to taller, stronger teammates who lacked my playmaking ability. The more skillfully I protected and passed the ball, the more dominant my teammates became in the post. The more dominant they became, the more the defense had to double-down and the more shots opened for me on the perimeter. We played to our strengths but could only play the game well by depending on each other. When playing well together, we could respond and react to our opponents as one cohesive whole.

If you have ever experienced these moments of cohesion, you know that they are not just physical but spiritual and psychic. Because teams are made of individuals with egos, ambitions, attitudes, and world views of their own, these moments, when they do happen, are miraculous. String these moments together over the course of the game and, no matter the outcome, play becomes a form of collective prayer, "a dance of mutual love."

If this sounds idealistic, it is. If this sounds transcendent, it is. If these moments sound rare, consider how many sports are played each day on playgrounds, blacktops, and open fields throughout the world. Consider the number of fans who clamor to witness these moments and, by witnessing, become part of them. Even I, a bench player who sometimes didn't get into the game, would be overcome by these moments playing out before me on the court.

Why? Are we all delusional? Or does Hugo Rahner, author of *Man at Play,* have it right when he says that, through play, "man participates in the divine" and "achieves the intuitive imitation and the still earth-bound recovery of an original unity he once had with the One and the Good."[25] It is a unity with God achieved through the fraternal bond of sport.

A Lasallian spirituality of sport, anchored in a pedagogy of fraternity, aspires to this kind of engagement among players and between players and the divine. It requires our complete and undistracted presence—mind, body, and spirit, a sacred synergy. This is ultimately what attracts us, what attracts me to sport, the opportunity to be fully present. This is why so much of my life has been dedicated to play of some kind, whether it be on a court or on a sideline.

This wider, spiritual approach to sport does not blunt ambition, but demands that we broaden our definition of success beyond the accumulation of wins and titles and personal glory. Famed De La Salle High School football coach Bob Ladouceur agrees: "I don't believe you can be truly successful if you focus solely on winning."

> In my opinion, a successful program must be about more than outcomes. Kids will fight for you and will achieve amazing things if you stand for more than that. It's about getting kids to play together, work together toward a common goal, and mature into adults. We were never fighting for wins. We were fighting for a belief in what we stood for, the way we believe life should be lived and other people should be treated. Winning is a byproduct of how you approach life and relationships."[26]

Notice that after framing the statement "I don't believe," coach Ladouceur uses the plural "we": "What we stood for. . . the way we believe. . ." In placing himself within, not above, the community he served as a teacher and coach, he models the posture of a man guided by the fraternal foundations of the Lasallian charism. He loved the players as himself, and recognized coaches and players, however diverse in background, race, and religion, to be part of a community that forged itself into something holy by playing a game.

Horizons of Lasallian Spirituality of Sport

While the Lasallian spirituality of sport is alive and well, we have yet to make the traditions that inform this spirituality explicit in formations geared toward coaches, athletic administrators, and student-athletes. Edward Russell Keefe's 2017 master's thesis, *A Lasallian Formation Program for Coaches and Athletic Staff*, provides high school athletic programs an admirable model.[27] But there is more we can do to reveal and build on the transcendent power of sport across the Lasallian world.

Following Brother George Van Grieken's example, this work might begin by simply rereading Lasallian documents (founding and contemporary) through the lens of sport, thereby opening the athletic arena to the Lasallian imagination.[28] Notice, as an example, how adding a sports context to Horizon Commitments 3-5 in *Lasallian Spirituality Today* broadens the scope of the conversation.

Horizon Commitment 3: Promoters/Advocates of Dialogue

- How can sport be a means by which we pursue and support interreligious, interfaith, intercultural, intergenerational, and other inter-dialogues?
- How can we live our experience of sport and spirituality, walking together and sharing our faith with openness and synodality?
- How can sport be a means by which we develop an inter-faith Lasallian spirituality that involves members of the Lasallian Family from all religious backgrounds?

Horizon Commitment 4: Models in Accompaniment

- Develop different pedagogical approaches to Lasallian spirituality adapted to different audiences and contexts, including the context of sport.
- Establish a formal ministry and a global network of Brothers and Partners as ministers of individual and community spiritual accompaniment, who provide ways of sharing their experiences of sport to grow deep in Lasallian identity. Work towards setting up a team of formators in Lasallian spirituality of sport in each District made up of Brothers and Partners.

Horizon Commitment 5: Agents of Transformation

- Develop accessible spiritual practices related to sport that are part of a daily commitment to educational ministry, personal growth and religious transformation.

- Develop, create, and provide space, opportunities, activities, and specific spiritual formation programs for Lasallian coaches, educators, and leaders, including emerging women leaders.[29]

By reading Lasallian texts through the lens of sport, we are, as Brother Luke Salm, FSC, advises, attempting to give new life and form to the structures and practices that embody Lasallian charism.[30] We have a chance, now to "[adapt] the expression of its core elements" to sport, not because sport is any more important than any other human endeavor, but because it is human to play and to compete, and to do both well, to do both with and for community, is a sacred act.

We are already on our way. Four Lasallian higher education institutions in the United States—Saint Mary's College of California, Manhattan University, Christian Brothers University, and La Salle University—have partnered with the Sport for Humanity Higher Education Initiative to develop curricular, co-curricular, and service projects that utilize sport as a vehicle for promoting the common good.[31] The grant program, developed here at Saint Mary's, grew out of the 2016 Global Conference on Faith and Sport, inspired by Pope Francis. The Higher Education Initiative is part of a nascent movement that calls on people of all faiths to utilize the transformative power of sport to create communities where everybody, not just the exceptional or "able" body, contributes, belongs, and learns from each another. In this age of autocrats and toxic isolationism, we seek to find in sport what Douglas V. Steele calls "luminous moments of profound communion, of truly coming into the presence of the other."[32] And Lasallians know that as we come into the luminous presence of each other, on the court, in the classroom, and in the chapel, we arrive also in holy presence of God.

---

[1] Mary Volmer, the author of two novels – *Crown of Dust* and *Reliance, Illinois* – is the Mission Fellow for Athletics at Saint Mary's College of California. In this interfaith, lay-chaplaincy position, she counsels and attends to the spiritual well-being of NCAA athletes and coaches. And she is the founding director of the Saint Mary's Sport for Humanity Higher Education Initiative. In private practice, Mary works with artists, especially writers, helping them to uncover the voice and the underlying emotional, spiritual, and dramatic structures of their work. As an athlete and a working novelist and essayist, Mary understands the rigors and joys of discipline, the quiet rush of the flow state, the pain of failure, and the courage it takes to try again. It is her mission to help artists and athletes of all spiritual and religious traditions to grow into their many gifts and to share those gifts with the world.

[2] John Baptist de La Salle*, The Rules for Christian Decorum and Civility,* trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1990). https://lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Christian-Decorum-reprint-2007.pdf.

[3] John Baptist de La Salle*, The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, trans. F. de La Fontainerie and Richard Arnandez, FSC (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1996). https://lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Conduct-2007-reprint.pdf.

[4] Michel Savage, FSC, "The Gospel Journey of John Baptiste de La Salle," trans. Luke Salm, FSC, in Robert C. Berger, FSC, ed., *Spirituality in the Time of de La Salle* (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1999), page 223.
[5] Luke Salm, FSC, "The Lasallian Charism in Religious Life Today," in *Spirituality in the Time of de La Salle,* Berger, FSC, ed., page 258.
[6] Ibid.
[7] For a concise summary of how the Institute adapted between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, read Leon Lauriere, FSC, "An Ambitious Fraternity," section 5 of *The Challenge of Fraternity: A Reflection and a Personal Testimony*. MEL Bulletin no. 56 (March 2021).
[8] Patrick Kelly, *Play, Sport, and Spirit*. This book by Fr. Kelly is a compelling and deeply engaging description of the spirituality of sport. This lovely work summarizes the spiritual history of sport, examines Ignatian spirituality and sport, and incorporates Mihaly Csikszentmilhalyi's work on the psychology of "flow."
[9] https://www.lasalle.org/en/lasallian-spirituality-today/
[10] George Van Grieken, FSC, et. al., *Lasallian Spirituality Today* (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 2023).
[11] John Thompson with Jesse Washington, *I Came as a Shadow* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2020), page 1.
[12] Created by Saint John Baptist De La Salle, the twelve virtues of a good teacher were adopted and expanded by Brother Agathon, the fifth successor of De La Salle as Superior General of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. A valuable formation exercise would be to define each virtue from a coaching perspective. Alternatively, coaches might be invited to discuss what virtues are missing from this list (joy, for example) and what virtues might be combined were we forced to trim this list to six. While published versions of "the twelve virtues of a good athlete" and "the twelve virtues of a good coach" exist, the exercise remains valuable because it encourages participants to think deeply about how each virtue manifests in their own vocation.
[13] I am not suggesting that one should not make money off sport, but that the increasing commodification of sport blinds us to the sacred as well as to the playful, autotelic qualities that mark its true value. Recent legal settlements, such as the House settlement, implicate institutions of higher education and the NCAA in the exploitation of athletes as much as, or more than, coaches. A detailed discussion of this, of NIL's effect on the mental, spiritual, and physical health of student-athletes, and of the inequities exacerbated by pay-to-play youth sport models are beyond the scope of this essay. These topics need further attention and study from a philosophical, ethical, and spiritual perspective. Randolph Feezell's *Sport, Play, and Ethical Reflectio*n. University of Illinois Press, 2006) would be a good place to start such a discussion.
[14] Brother Patrick Moore, FSC, reminds me that the root of the word *holy* is the old English word for *whole* or in good health. To become holy, then, is to become whole and in good health (body, mind, and spirit).
[15] Sonja Garnett, Head Women's Softball Coach, Saint Mary's College of California, in discussion with author, July 2025.
[16] According to the Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR), Dr. Chris Jones, the cumulative GPA of the softball team of Saint Mary's College, California, was 3.25 in the fall of 2024. It would be fascinating to conduct a broad survey of Lasallian coaches at the secondary and tertiary levels to discover how or whether Lasallian spirituality influences their approach. I suspect, from

conversations I've had, we'd find that even coaches unaware of the language are influenced by the culture and the daily exercise of Lasallian pedagogy and spirituality on their campuses.
[17] Leon Lauriere, FSC, *The Challenge of Fraternity: A Reflection and a Personal Testimony* MEL Bulletin 56 (Rome: Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, March 2021), page 31.
[18] Ibid., page 4.
[19] As a gendered word, I'm not completely comfortable with the term *fraternity*. I've played with synonyms, with *sodality* being one of the most promising. In Anthropology, sodality refers to a non-kinship group that transcends individual families and villages, often organizing around a common purpose or identity. A sodality is a bridge between individuals who might have no shared identity beyond a shared purpose. I use fraternity here, honoring the spirit of the term even as I recognize its linguistic weaknesses.
[20] Léon Lauraire, FSC, "A Pedagogy of Fraternity," *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 7, no. 3 (Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2016).
[21] Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus* (Bolder, Colorado: Shumbhala, 2008), 24.
[22] Pope Leo XIV, "Solemnity of the Holy Trinity," Jubilee of Sport, June15, 2025.
[23] Phil Jackson and Hugh Delehanty, *Sacred Hoops* (New York: Hyperion, 2006), page 135.
[24] Pope Leo XIV, "Solemnity of the Holy Trinity."
[25] Hugo Rahner, *Man at Play* (Providence, RI: Cluny Media LLC, 2019), page 16.
[26] Bob Ladouceur with Neil Hayes, introduction to *Chasing Perfection: The Principles behind Winning Football the De La Salle Way* (New York: Triumph Books, 2015).
[27] Edward Russell Keefe, "A Lasallian Formation Program for Coaches and Athletic Staff" (master's thesis, Saint Mary's College of California, 2017).
[28] We can find precedent and license for this exercise in Brother George Van Grieken, FSC, "A Well-Played Match." https://georgevangrieken.blogspot.com/2019/01/lasallian-reflection-well-played-match.html.
[29] Adapted from Br. George Van Grieken, FSC, et. al., *Lasallian Spirituality Today* (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 2023).
[30] Luke Salm, FSC, "The Lasallian Charism in Religious Life Today," in *Spirituality in the Time of de La Salle,* Berger, FSC, ed., page 258.
[31] Sport for Humanity Initiative at Saint Mary's College (CA). https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/office-mission/sport-service-humanity-ssh-higher-education-initiative.
[32] Douglas V. Steere, "On Being Present Where You Are" (Jack Backhouse Lecture, 1967).

Bibliography

Berger, Robert C., FSC, ed. *Spirituality in the Time of de La Salle.* Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1999.

De La Salle, John Baptiste. The Conduct of the Christian Schools. Translated by F. de La Fontainerie and Richard Arnandez, FSC. Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1996. https://lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Conduct-2007-reprint.pdf.

De La Salle, John Baptiste. *The Rules for Christian Decorum and Civility.* Translated by Richard Arnandez, FSC. Landover, MD: Chistian Brother's Conference, 1990. https://lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Conduct-2007-reprint.pdf.

Edgar, Brian. The God Who Plays: A Playful Approach to Theology and Spirituality. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.
Feezell, Randolph. "Sport, Bodily Excellence, and Play." In Sport, Play, and Ethical Reflection, University of Illinois, 2004.

Fischer, Norman. "Competitive Sport's Imitation of War: Imaging the Completeness of Virtue." Journal of the Philosophy of Sport 29, no. 1 (2002): 16-37.

Garnett, Sonja, Head Women's Softball Coach, Saint Mary's College of California. Discussion with the author, July 2025.

Huizinga, Johan. Homo Ludens, Roy Publishers, 1950.

Jackson, Phil, and Hugh Delehanty. Sacred Hoops. New York: Hyperion, 2006.
Keefe, Edward Russell. "A Lasallian Formation Program for Coaches and Athletic Staff." Master's thesis, Saint Mary's College of California, 2017.

Kelly, Patrick, Fr. "Flow, Sport and the Spiritual Life." In Theology, Ethics and Transcendence in Sport, [Please insert page range here]. Edited by Jim Parry. Routledge, 2011.

Kelly, Patrick F. Play, Sport, and Spirit. New York: Paulist Press, 2023.
Ladouceur, Bob, with Neil Hayes. Chasing Perfection: The Principles behind Winning Football the De La Salle Way. New York: Triumph books, 2015.

Lauriere, Leon, FSC. The Challenge of Fraternity: A Reflection and A Personal Testimony. MEL Bulletin 56 (March 2021). Rome: Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.
Lauraire, Léon, FSC. "A Pedagogy of Fraternity." AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education 7, no. 3. (2016).

Lauriere, Léon, FSC. The Challenge of Fraternity: A Reflection and a Personal Testimony. MEL Bulletin no. 56 (March 2021). Rome: Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Leo XIV, Pope. "Solemnity of the Holy Trinity." Jubilee of Sport (June 15, 2025).

Mayo, Zakary, Mathew Klosky, Alice Bettag, et al. "Athletic Identity in the Lasallian Educational Context." AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education 12, no. 2 (2021).

Miller, Theresa. "Sport and Spirituality: A Comparative Perspective." The Sport Journal, United States Sports Academy 11, no. 3 (2008).

Rahner, Hugo. Man at Play. Providence, RI: Cluny Media LLC, 2019.

Steere, Douglas V. “On Being Present Where You Are.” Jack Backhouse Lecture, 1967.

Van Grieken, George, FSC. “A Well-Played Match.” https://georgevangrieken.blogspot.com/2019/01/lasallian-reflection-well-played-match.html.

Van Grieken, George, FSC, Jill Gowdie, Paco Chiva, FSC, et al. Lasallian Spirituality Today. Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 2023.