



Lasallian Reflections

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Brothers of the Christian Schools

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A Synthesis and Some Reflection Questions on Brother Superior's Pastoral Letter: The Image of the Brother Today

[Adaptation of a synthesis by Brother Gilles Martineau of Canada]

In Bro. Álvaro's letter, there seem to be two basic questions:

- Who are we?
- Who ought we to be?

Within the Institute we certainly see signs of life existing. Bro. Álvaro suggests these are:

The human and religious qualities of many Brothers.

The fidelity of our older Brothers.

Our fraternity as a distinctive sign.

A desire to respond to the needs of today.

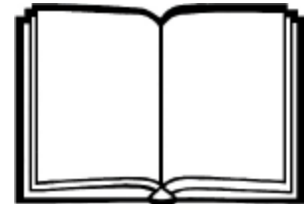
Respect for persons and their ideas.

The spiritual wealth of the Brothers.

A willingness to share **spirit** and **mission**.

Spiritual concerns.

An openness to dialogue.



But, it is also true that we are affected by a crisis of identity:

Brothers are members of a Church with a growing appreciation of the laity.

Brothers work in schools, the function of which has been devalued.

Brothers work in schools teaching the middle class.

Brothers are immersed in their professional work and are little involved in catechesis.

Brothers are retired and divorced from what traditionally constituted their whole life.

This crisis is partly because we have lost our traditional roles which were expressed in terms of **acting** (functional identity), rather than in terms of **being**. And so we confuse our identity with the role we are called to exercise today.

Yet, in fact, we are called to be open to new paths without changing our identity. What we need to do is to live according to our charism in the present age; but this may also call us to make profound changes in ourselves.

We must, therefore, consider for ourselves what De La Salle and the first Brothers did in 1694:

Live as consecrated religious.

In community.

At the service of the education of poor youth.

Making the living God visible by our lives and our service of the poor.

We must attach greater importance to our fourth Vow: The educational service of the poor.

What are the consequences of this for community life?

- De La Salle founded a community in order to serve poor youth (associated to conduct together, and...).
- Even today, and more than ever, we find in this founding event our basic motivation.

It is the **identity** we have always had:

Alliance with God and alliance with others,

“**Companions**” in the educational service of the poor.

Our three classic vows simply express in greater detail our fundamental vow:

Association for the educational service of the poor.

That is our founding spiritual inspiration for today.

Poverty: denunciation of money.

Obedience: renunciation of power for the sake of service.

Chastity: announcement of love for Christ present in the poor.



Denunciation, Renunciation, Announcement

Our choice today is educational work, with everybody, but especially with young people and the poor.

Our fifth vow, **stability**, means a **total commitment** to Christian education.

CONCLUSION:

Our wealth lies in being “companions” in community so that:

Our good example can be visible and stimulating.

We can pray together for young people and the needs of the world.

This prayer must be more visible, embodied in a person, more open.

Being a “companion” leaves no room for retirement.

Spiritual life consists of life, events, the poor. God is there!





Reflections

Pastoral Letter to the Brothers: The Image of the Brother Today

Bro. Álvaro Rodríguez, Superior General

25 December 2000

A Few Questions for Personal Reflection or Communal Sharing

What are some of the more significant ideas or insights that have emerged for you as a result of your reading of and reflection on this pastoral letter?

What seems most important for you (or for us) to take away from the reading of this pastoral letter?

What do you agree with, disagree with, or add as a recommendation?

What are some of the roadblocks that you (or we) might experience to implementing the vision here articulated by Brother Superior?

What do you imagine a renewed commitment to our association for the educational service of the poor would ask of you (or of us)?

As you reflect on what you have read, is there a decision or a sense of renewed opportunity emerging for you?

Can you imagine ways to enhance your (or our) commitment to our fourth vow: association for the service of the poor through education?