

MEL Bulletin 66: Some “new” Virtues of a Good Teacher

“The virtues of a Good Teacher” have been part of Lasallian ethical and spiritual heritage since the early days. In the first editions of the Collection of Short Treatises, we already find the list of twelve virtues: seriousness, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, restraint, gentleness, zeal, vigilance, piety, and generosity. The first printed edition is from 1711. It is very likely that these short treatises had a previous autonomous and handwritten existence.

What is striking about this list is that, to a certain extent, it formed the ethical framework of the first Lasallian community. We could understand them as a harmony of echoes of the spirit of the Institute in the pedagogical relationship.

A little less than a century later, it was Brother Agathon, Superior General during the French Revolution, who attempted to rethink the whole from the perspective of his contemporary culture. Those teachers had become sufficiently professionalised and specialised to review their own foundations. Their endeavour was to create a new specific literature. Among other initiatives, he wrote a commentary on the twelve virtues. In it, he even argued for a reform of the order that Mr. De La Salle had given to the virtues in order to articulate a more logical discourse.

Now, more than a century later, Brother Gabriele Di Giovanni has sought to draw attention to one of the most important documents that the Institute has produced at the beginning of this 21st century and to find in this Declaration on the Lasallian Mission, once again, a teaching ethic rooted in spiritual experience.

We thank him for his work and hope that it will help us all to experience our task as a fruitful ministry that bears witness to another possible world.

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