



CO-WORKERS WITH GOD: WHAT LASALLIAN SPIRITUALITY OFFERS TODAY'S PROFESSIONALS AND ENTREPRENEURS

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At a time in history when quality education was inaccessible to all but the wealthy, the Christian Schools catered to the sons of the working class and the poor. Since their survival depended on learning a trade or profession, the Christian School had the dual purpose of initiating these boys in Christian living and preparing them for the world of work. Lasallian tertiary institutions today resemble the original Christian Schools in that both share a concern for preparing students for the world of work. Young people in tertiary institutions today however face a challenge quite different than that of the illiterate poor struggling to better their lives. The pressing question today is how to live as Christians and professionals in a world struggling with massive poverty, global warming, environmental destruction, pandemics, political turbulence, corruption, and a global economy that undermines the wellbeing of people and planet. Whereas De La Salle prepared young people to “rise-up” in society, part of our challenge today is to help humanize and transform it. The premise of this essay is that how we understand the nature and purpose of work as well as the way we participate in it is crucial to addressing many of the crises affecting society today. It draws inspiration from the late Pope John Paul II who in *Laborem Exercens* asserted that the issue of work and how to humanize it – is the key to the social question.¹

More than 50 years ago, Vatican II lamented the split between faith, professional life, and concern for society as a serious error of modern times.

They are mistaken who, knowing that we have here no abiding city but seek one which is to come, think that they may therefore shirk their earthly responsibilities. For they are forgetting that by the faith itself they are more obliged than ever to measure up to these duties....Nor are they any less wide of the mark who think that religion consists in acts of worship alone and in the discharge of certain moral obligations, and who imagine they can plunge themselves into earthly affairs in such a way as to imply that these are altogether divorced from the religious life. This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age...Therefore, let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other. Christians who neglect their temporal duties, jeopardize their eternal salvation.²

Compartmentalization characterizes the lives of many Christians today. Some of us could be described as secularizers who keep their faith separate from their occupations and public life. Others are spiritualizers whose piety fails to translate into just and humane business practices or support for needed political reforms. The upshot of compartmentalization is the “de-moralization” of work which opens the door to unethical and dehumanizing practices on the personal and social levels.

The Lasallian spiritual tradition on the other hand is one that highlights participation in work as a means of growing in holiness. De La Salle reminds his Brothers that they are co-workers with God in the work that they do. This is a perspective that professionals today may find both enriching and challenging. Regarding the work one does as part of God’s work in the world

¹ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, Art. 3.

² Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, Art. 43.

offers a way of overcoming the dichotomy between the faith we profess and what we do to make a living that is at the root of much of the disengagement and moral malaise we find in the workplace today.

In a list of personal resolutions possibly made during a personal retreat, we find the Founder making the following claim: “It is a good rule of life to make no distinction at all between the work of our vocation in life and the work of our salvation and perfection. We can be sure that we cannot work out our salvation better or achieve perfection more surely than by discharging our responsibilities, provided that we accomplish them in view of the will of God. We must try to keep this precept ever in mind.”³ While the profession he is speaking of is that of the educator, there is nothing that suggests it cannot be treated as a general principle applying to any work that addresses genuine human needs. Key to this spiritual intuition is the idea that God calls men and women to participate in God’s loving and providential care for creatures, and that work finds its truest meaning within the context of God’s own work in the world.

Building a Home for God and the Human Family

What is God doing here and now and how can we participate in it? This is the central concern of a spirituality of work inspired by the Lasallian tradition.

But just what is the work of God? Like most Christians of his day, De La Salle spoke of the work of salvation in terms of “saving souls.” This language underscores the truth that salvation has a personal dimension that involves the union of the human will with God’s will. Without in any way disputing this, it must be pointed out that an exclusive focus on personal salvation fails to do justice to the breadth of God’s saving work in the world. In the first place, salvation has societal and cosmic dimensions that are not captured by the metaphor of “saving souls”. Moreover, the use of the word “soul”, which to most people suggests an immaterial being, plays into the dualistic assumption that the created world has value only as a temporary setting in which one prepares for a disembodied existence in a nonmaterial heaven. In this popular view, creation, which is destined to disappear, can have no eternal value. This raises an important question for a spirituality of work: if the world is going to be discarded anyway, does “this-worldly” work really matter? Does the work of scientists, artists, policemen, mathematicians, pastry chefs, plumbers, electricians, janitors, architects, novelists, actors, carpenters, and engineers have any place in God’s plan? Wouldn’t all work unrelated to the salvation of souls be ultimately meaningless – consigned to the category of those earthly realities destined to pass away?

Interestingly enough, the biblical tradition points not to the annihilation of creation but rather its renewal and consummation. Note that the story of creation begins in a virginal garden (Genesis 2:8-9) but ends with a city (Revelation 21:2-3). This seems to suggest that whatever the new creation is that God is bringing about, it bears to some degree, the marks of human ingenuity and effort. Moreover, the passage from Revelation does not speak of people escaping up into the holy city in heaven, but of the heavenly city coming down and making of this world a new creation. Contemporary artist Makoto Fujimura, a practicing Christian, draws the implications of creation’s goal being the union of heaven and earth: “God is not just restoring us to Eden; God is creating through us... an abundant city of God’s Kingdom. What we build, design, and depict on this side of eternity matters, because in some mysterious way, those creations will become part of the future city of God.”⁴

In a nutshell, God’s intention is to make of this world a home where human beings can dwell with God in joy, solidarity and peace. This is the “New Creation” God is bringing about even today. The vision of God’s holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven like a bride seems to suggest that the work of God involves bringing human civilization and culture into full

³ St. John Baptist de La Salle, *Rule and Foundational Documents*, trans. Augustine Loes FSC and Ronald Isetti (Lan-dover, MD: Lasallian Publications, Christian Brothers Conference, 2002), 195.

⁴ Mark Legg, The “theology of making” is indispensable for modern Christians: A review of “Art and Faith” by Makoto Fujimura, April 18, 2022, <https://www.denisonforum.org/book-reviews/the-theology-of-making-is-indispensable-for-modern-christians-a-review-of-art-and-faith-by-makoto-fujimura/>

alignment with God's purposes and plans. The human vocation is to order the world according to God's intentions, to help make of it a suitable home for God and all God's children.

Home entails not just a welcoming and appealing physical space, but a way of being together with others, a set of relations that contribute to the joy of God and the flourishing and fulfillment of God's creatures. If human tears are to be wiped dry, it will be because God is the love that moves human beings to care for one another as sisters and brothers and to care for the world as their common home. Wherever people dwell in peace and love, God is there, building a home.

Yet the earth is not "home" today in the sense that all that we have made of it, all of human civilization and culture, is warped by pride, greed, envy, and violence.⁵ All the crises we see today – from climate change, to political unrest, to an inhumane economy, to growing inequality and world hunger, to human rights abuses, to brutal and senseless wars – are manifestations of what happens when human beings seek to build cultures and civilizations without the love of God and neighbor as their foundation.

There is a sense in which all human work is related to creating and maintaining human communities and caring for the people who live within them. Let me propose then that building and sustaining communities, cities and societies that reflect the love of God and neighbor is the primordial human vocation and the way we participate in God's home-making. Of course, no human effort can by itself turn this hostile and divided world into God's home. But human efforts can contribute to what God is accomplishing. Work that embodies genuine concern for stakeholders can participate in the consummation of creation, a point of special significance to Christians like Fujimura who regard work as embodying faith and love :

I use an analogy of a father taking his son to the beach. The son creates a sandcastle, and the father knows it's going to be washed away. But the father happens to be an architect, so he builds a real, enduring castle based on his son's design. What we do on this side of eternity may not seem like much to us. But we don't have the perspective, authority, or power to say that. God takes what we make and brings it into the new creation in ways we don't fully understand. That's why we need faith.⁶

Likewise, *Gaudium et Spes* tells us:

...while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God. For after we have obeyed the Lord, and in His Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured, when Christ hands over to the Father: "a kingdom eternal and universal, a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace." On this earth that Kingdom is already present in mystery. When the Lord returns it will be brought into full flower. ⁷

Not all the fruits of human work are destined for incorporation into the future God is bringing about, for not all that we think of as work today can be ordered towards God's purposes and plans. But one might be surprised at just how many kinds of professions have the potential to create value for eternity. It seems that the most significant criterion is this: can this work be a fitting vehicle and expression of self-giving love? In this case, any work that by its object contributes to meeting genuine needs and promoting the common good can be "holy" work, provided that the intentions that animate it are consistent with God's care for human beings.

⁵ St. Augustine saw this as the historical tension between the City of Man built on pride, ambition and the will to dominate and the City of God built on the love of God and neighbor, justice, and humility.

⁶ "Get to Know God the Artist with Painter Makoto Fujimura," December 6, 2021, <https://uscatholic.org/articles/202112/get-to-know-god-the-artist-with-painter-makoto-fujimura/>.

⁷ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 39.

For this reason, any work that prioritizes people and contributes to building, sustaining and enhancing the social conditions required for a life of dignity is capable of participating in the work of God. Through faith professionals find the true meaning of their work by locating it in God's work, bending their efforts to the service of human dignity, solidarity and the common good.

Of course, the New Creation, when it comes to fruition, comes as God's gift. The transition from work in the old dispensation and its consummation in the new involves both continuity and discontinuity. Something of our good work will subsist in the future God is bringing about- but it will do so as something transformed and elevated, just as grace makes the fruit of the earth and the work of our hands into something infinitely more than mere bread and wine.

The Spirit of Faith

De La Salle was deeply convinced that God acts in the concrete circumstances of one's life, revealing what is required of us in situations that invite a loving, practical response to the needs of others, of society, and of the Church. But recognizing and responding to God requires that one see things from a Christ-like perspective and act from a Christ-like set of motivations. This is what is entailed in the disposition that De La Salle calls "the spirit of faith."

The spirit of faith directs all of one's self towards the love and service of God and neighbor. It involves bringing a gospel perspective to one's life (seeing in faith) in order to direct our lives totally to the love and service of God (doing everything in view of God), while accepting that nothing that befalls us lies outside of God's wisdom and providence (attributing all to God). It is faith working through charity and sustained by hope. For De La Salle, acquiring and preserving this spirit is essential for God to fully accomplish his saving work in us and through us for the life of the world. It is also the principal way of being conformed to Christ whose single object was to do the will of his Father, abandoning himself totally into his Father's hands. Professionals who seek to serve God through their work are invited to make this same this spirit their own.

Faith for De La Salle is not just an interior disposition- it leads to participation in God's work. Thus the direct consequence and practical manifestation of the spirit of faith for De La Salle and his followers is zeal for the salvation of young people expressed through a commitment to instruct and guide them in the Christian way of life. For professionals today, such zeal, I suggest, needs to be directed towards serving, building and sustaining communities that reflect the love of God and neighbor.

Zeal is expressed in active solidarity with a suffering world. It is the energy, attentiveness, and resolve we bring to the work God calls us to accomplish. It is opposed to lassitude and distraction, to being content with mediocrity, and to mere compliance with external authority. Those who possess it are aware that God has entrusted them with a commission dear to God's heart and correspondingly give their work the quality of attention and purity of motive they believe God would expect in entrusting such work to them. Nor do such people flinch from what is difficult or risky if they believe fidelity to God's purposes requires it. While the sacrifices of the early Christian martyrs express zeal at its most dramatic, the service of God today usually requires more mundane forms of "martyrdom" such as persisting in necessary tasks that bring little recognition and few financial rewards, maintaining integrity in corrupted and corrupting work environments, acting with patience and charity when confronted with toxic co-workers or clientele, and enduring skepticism, resistance and ridicule for putting the welfare of people before profit. All these are expressions of the attentiveness, courage, persistence, tenacity and hope that are characteristic of zeal in the face of challenges that doing God's work involves.

The spirit of faith, which St. John Baptist de La Salle extolled and lived, invites us to cooperate in God's work of homebuilding by learning to see as Christ would have us see, to align our will with God's loving intentions, and to trust that God is at work for good in all that befalls us as co-workers with God. The professional who undertakes to do so will often find himself asking "How can I serve God's love here and now in the people I encounter and in the duties and responsibilities before me?" That is work's daily challenge.

Going over the episodes of the Founder's life, his practical mysticism seems to hinge on five

characteristics. These characteristics, reflected in the attitudes and practices he commended to the Brothers, outline the contours of a spirituality that I believe has relevance for Lasallian professionals today.

These characteristics are:

(1) His awareness of God's presence in all the events of life.

De La Salle rejected in practice the kind of religiosity that restricts the divine presence and action to explicitly religious times, activities and places. This dualistic mindset is behind the compartmentalization and privatization that separates the religious dimension of life from all other aspects of human existence. The reality, of course, is that nothing in creation exists as separate from God who loves and holds all things in being. The divorce between God and humankind does not occur on the level of being, but on the level of consciousness and willing. In truth, nothing is actually "secular" if by that term we mean unconcerned with God or religion. The challenge then is to live in the awareness of what is already the case – that union with God is not a goal to be achieved but a reality to which we need to awaken and in which we need to participate actively. Those who believe this are poised to recognize God's presence and action in creation and to respond to the invitations of the Spirit in all the events of life.

(2) His readiness to bring a faith perspective to his work and engagement with the world.

De La Salle in one of his meditations for the Brothers writes, "Faith should be for you a light that guides you in all things."⁸ Gospel perspectives and his experience of God shaped the Founder's understanding and responses to the realities he faced. Through his prayerful engagement with the Word of God, the saint came to recognize that the God he met in scripture was also present in every moment of his life, inviting him to bring the wisdom of the gospels to bear on everyday living. Sacred scripture led him not only to understand events in terms of God's saving plan, but taught him how to respond to persons and events with the mind and heart of Christ.

Key to understanding God's intentions is the person of Jesus who, through word and deed, reveals simultaneously who God is, the kind of persons God wants us to be, and the destiny of creation. For this reason, Christians construe reality differently from other people. The mystery of God, humanity, the world, life, joy, suffering, death and ultimate destiny is grasped through the lens of what God is doing through Christ and the Spirit. What Jesus reveals about God is God's gratuitous and unilateral commitment to the good of every human being without exception, a good that involves loving union with God and participation in God's gracious, provident, and inclusive love for the world. Working out the implications of this revelation for the decisions we make and the way we lead our lives is what it means to "see with the eyes of faith."

De La Salle urged the Brothers to see their profession as means of serving God and growing in holiness. Work, when undertaken from views and motives of faith and charity, opens one to the sanctifying power of God's Spirit even as one seeks to respond to the needs of others for God's sake. Thus he says of teachers, "when they carry out well the service of guides and leaders of the souls entrusted to them, they fulfill at the same time their own duties before God. God will fill them with so much grace that they will be made holy while

⁸ De La Salle, *Meditations* 178.1, 333.

they are contributing as far as they are able to the salvation of others.”⁹ For this reason, he urged his followers to make no distinction between striving for holiness and doing their work well. From a faith perspective, they are one and the same.

(3) His obedience and devotion to the will of God as discerned in the events of life.

The Founder held that one’s overriding concern should be to do what God wills. For this reason he exhorted his followers to avoid acting from “natural motives” (self-interest, worldly pragmatism, or personal preference) and “to want only what God wants, when he wants it, and in the way he wants it.”¹⁰ Elsewhere he counsels: “So that Jesus Christ may reign over your souls, you must pay him the tribute of your actions. They ought to have no other intention than to accomplish his holy will, which ought to direct all of them, so that there may be nothing human in them.”¹¹

This has relevance for professionals at work in cultures and environments shaped increasingly by the profit ideology that the late Pope Francis decried as our modern idolatry, the new “worship of Mammon.” From an ethical standpoint, we need to recognize that the profit motive, which has a legitimate place in any economic enterprise, becomes problematic when it overrides moral and spiritual considerations as it often tends to do. Pursuing the good of all stakeholders often pits professionals against structures and policies designed to increase efficiency, productivity and profits. Helpful as these structures are, the logic of profit maximization which underlies them tends to colonize the culture of work communities, eventually displacing more altruistic values and motives. If one is serious about making of one’s work a Christian vocation, one needs to establish early the choice of God over Mammon, and be vigilant in defending the priority of integral human development in organizational systems, policies and structures.

(4) His solidarity and love for the poor.

For the founder of the Christian schools, the children of the poor are objects of God’s gratuitous and preferential love. They are to be loved and honored because Christ does so and because they are his living images.

Because you are under the obligation to instruct the children of the poor, you must, consequently, cultivate a very special tenderness for them and procure their spiritual welfare as far as you will be able, considering them as members of Jesus Christ and his well-beloved. The faith that must inspire you ought to make you honor Jesus Christ in their person and prefer them to the wealthiest children on earth, because they are the living images of Jesus Christ, our divine Master.¹²

De La Salle’s discovery of the world of the poor and the misery of the children unable to escape it was an experience that disrupted his life’s trajectory, moving him to relinquish security and social standing in response to what he came to see as God’s call. To the saint, the enslavement of young people to poverty, sin and ignorance was the burning bush from which God called to

⁹ Ibid. 205.2, 463.

¹⁰ Ibid. 24.1, 77.

¹¹ Ibid. 22.1, 74. The phrase “nothing human in them” is best interpreted as “undertaken from views of faith” rather than self-interest or other mundane motives.

¹² Ibid. 80.3, 366.

him, raising him up to become an instrument for their liberation. The situation and actual needs of the poor were a constant reference point for the way the Institute's educational projects developed, determining to a great extent what the Christian schools prioritized, what was taught, and how. Solidarity with the poor enabled De La Salle and the Brothers to apprehend the "pain points" of the educational experience and to address gaps and lacks with zeal and creativity. The objective criteria of a school's success could be determined by how well it responded to the needs and aspirations of its most disadvantaged clients.

(5) His abandonment to God's Spirit in faith, love and hope.

Abandonment to God is an expression of trust founded in the hope that nothing lies outside the scope of God's mercy and providence. God is at work in all things and can use any circumstance to serve his ends. Even what we perceive to be setbacks and failures can be integrated by God into his healing and liberation of creation. Recognizing that everything lies in God's hands invites us to realize that there are times that call us to strive and times that invite us to surrender, times when we must lead and times when we must let go. Wisdom is knowing which response the present moment requires.

De La Salle regarded the figure of Job as an icon of abandonment to God. Job's attitude- which De La Salle commends- is a hope and trust in God that is not tied to material success or the ups and downs of external circumstances; such hope is rooted in an abiding belief in a merciful and dependable presence that will hold on to him even when everything else around him crumbles and falls away. Because he trusts in God, Job accepts what he cannot understand believing that what God does or allows is ultimately for some greater good. What is important for Job is to embrace in faith and hope what he discerns God asks of him in the present moment, even if this only means resisting despair and clinging to God in darkness and affliction.

While we can trust that God always wills our good, we must also admit that like Job we do not always understand why God allows things to happen as they do, nor does God's particular agenda in a given moment necessarily coincide with our own. God does not promise to spare us from suffering and hardship, nor does he remove occasions that test our faith, generosity and integrity. What he promises is to be "God-with-us" in all of it.

What This Means For Professionals Today

What can this mean for professionals and people of business today?

1. Awareness of God's presence invites professionals to transcend the dualistic and compartmentalized mindset that separates the service of God from the work one does by reframing what they do in terms of participation in God's work in the world. It also sensitizes them to the way in which events and relationships mediate to them something of God's intentions which need to be discerned. The model here is De La Salle recognizing the call of God in the needs of poor and abandoned youth. Those who live in the awareness of God's presence begin to see their life journey as an ongoing dialogue with God who addresses them through people and events, inviting responses of loving service and surrender. This awareness enables us to recognize the sacred dimension of work, inviting one to unite one's work to God's.

2. From the perspective of faith, work is a way of making God's love visible and effective in the world. Bringing the light of faith to bear on work enables the worker to judge what aligns with God's loving intentions and what does not.

Contemporary Christianity proposes a worldview in which God the Father, who created the world, is in solidarity with suffering humankind, working in history through Son and Spirit in order to create a dwelling place for God and human beings, a home where humanity's as yet

unmet desires for truth, justice, beauty, love and unity are finally consummated. The human vocation is to be a coworker with God in building this common home. More than 80 years ago, Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker put it this way: “To build up the City of God, that is to say, to express the spiritual in the material through the use of pure means, such is the task of professing Christians in this day and age.”¹³

Catholic social teaching derives from the ideals of the gospel three important principles that should guide the conduct of work today: that all human beings are equal in dignity, that all are co-responsible for promoting the common good which supports that dignity, and that God wills that the goods of the earth benefit all. The principle of human dignity makes the integral development of the human person an ethical standard by which all work must be judged. Work is subjectively good if it makes us better human beings, that is to say more capable and more loving. The principle of the common good invites us to assess what objective impact our work has on communities: whether the goods and services created meet genuine needs, improve our shared conditions of life. The gospel stance towards material goods is one that de-absolutizes the right to private property making its use subject to God’s primordial intention that no one go hungry, naked, unhoused, or uncared for.

From this perspective the professional or businessman is fundamentally one who creates wealth in order to share it equitably for the good of all. God’s ownership of what God creates is not annulled by the right to private property but rather imposes on those who possess more than they need the obligation to respect the intentions of the Creator-Owner-Giver by increasing the common good and coming to the aid of those deprived of dignity, rights, and opportunities for development. This is only justice, as says St. Ambrose points out when he says that in helping the poor one only gives to them what is already theirs by right. “The world is given to all, and not only to the rich.”

3. Devotion to God’s will allows professionals to transcend the tyranny of the ego and the cultural pressure of contemporary “Mammon-worship”. It invites them to rethink priorities and find ways to make one’s work and business organizations more just and reflective of God’s loving concern for all.

Mammon does not just mean material wealth; Mammon is a value system, a way of life shaped by the drive to accumulate more than we need; it is the spirit of a world that rejects the preeminence and providence of God, looking instead to temporal goods as a bulwark against death, annihilation and ultimate insignificance. Another way of expressing this same insight is to say that we live a shadow existence thinking that accumulating more of what the world gives will give substance to our unreality, that possessions gives us solidity. But the gospels suggest that the reverse is true. It is self-giving that makes us real, sacrificing for others, that gives substance to our lives. As the gospel says, “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt. 16:25). For many people today, the struggle between God and Mammon is most explicitly played out in the worlds of business and politics where cupidity and the lure of power often wage war against the angels of our better nature.

The values of Mammon tend to cluster around our fundamental ego needs for self-preservation, esteem, and control. These needs, it must be said, are entirely legitimate— meeting them adequately is essential to healthy human development. Yet, we often fail to recognize that these same needs, which persist over a lifetime, ultimately point us beyond ephemeral earthly goods towards the Good in an ultimate sense, towards God who created us to dwell in love with him forever.

The mistake is to believe that anything short of God can fulfill us. Human beings are made for God. To the extent that trust in God becomes the source of our security, God’s

¹³ Quoted in “The future of the Church is on the land, not in the city” – Peter Maurin, and Fr. Vincent McNabb O.P.
<https://longthewayblog.net/2021/11/29/the-future-of-the-church-is-on-the-land-not-in-the-city-peter-maurin-and-fr-vincent-mcnabb-o-p/>

love for us the ground of our self-worth, and obedience to God's will our fulfillment and joy, we are to that degree becoming persons who are truly free, whole and holy. Progress in the spiritual life is impeded by our tendency to cling inordinately to lesser goods which end up distracting us from our heart's true goal. This is why De La Salle urges his followers to "live for God alone" and put their trust in God's providence. Any other motivation would have been unable to sustain commitment to a work that brought no honor, offered little security and no material rewards.

4. Charity - loving union with God lived expressed in self-gift and solidarity is the appropriate response to God's loving initiative in one's life. For those who hold this view, work is a response to a love gratuitously given and never withdrawn, our acceding to God's desire to love the world, and the most vulnerable in it, through us. Such love can be costly - it unfolds in the shadow of the cross. Solidarity with those deprived of dignity and opportunities for development spurs creativity and innovation in the effort to meet people's needs. It is a significant indicator of whether the integration between work and gospel values has been achieved.

Solidarity invites one to see the things from the perspective of the most disadvantaged person whom one's profession or business touches. It invites one to ask the question how one can help. If work is a way of making God's love visible. Then the success of one's work must be judged in terms of lives bettered and transformed, especially for those most in need.

5. Finally, through abandonment to God one can persevere with hope and fortitude in what serves God's purposes despite risks, obstacles and sacrifices.

Our modern society is obsessed with control - we believe that human effort, ingenuity and technology can solve every problem and smooth every road. The attitude of abandonment to God however invites us to surrender control and become receptive and available for what God wills. This involves accepting the present reality as it is, with all its light and shadow, as the place where God is present and active for our good and the good of the world; we are not alone in our projects, concerns and struggles, nor do their outcomes depend solely on our efforts. This has the effect of centering our hope in God while cultivating a necessary detachment from the fluctuations of fortune which can often be a source of anxiety and a barrier to the necessary risk-taking in pursuit of the good we are called to accomplish.

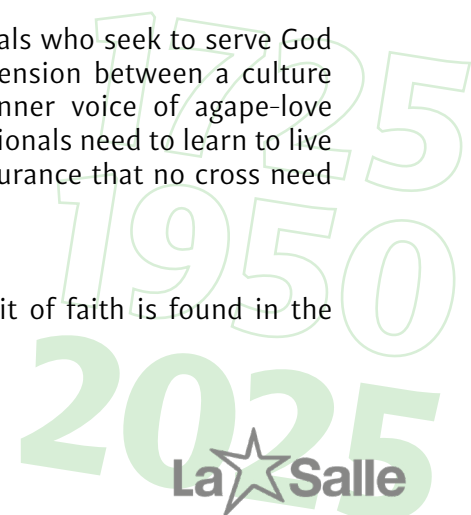
These characteristics are suggestive of the kind of "practical mysticism" that the Founder might commend to professionals wishing to participate in God's work.

Work has both an objective and a subjective dimension. Good work done well meets genuine needs and contributes to the common good. This is its objective purpose. Just as important however is the reality that good work summons us to become better human beings, not just more adept in the exercise of our talents and gifts, but better at actualizing our nature as beings made in the image and likeness of a loving God. The subjective dimension of work is realized as work becomes a way of loving and caring for those whom it serves as well as for those who work alongside us. As we do so, we are slowly being conformed to the person of Christ, the paradigmatic man of the Beatitudes, who represents the consummation of God's intention for human beings. Work is how we prepare ourselves for life in the New Creation.

In a Mammon-dominated world, it is inevitable that the professionals who seek to serve God through their work will find themselves having to negotiate the tension between a culture defined by the pursuit of worldly glory over and against the inner voice of agape-love prompting then to solidarity and self-gift. It is a tension that professionals need to learn to live with, bearing it as Jesus bore his cross. Faith however provides assurance that no cross need be borne alone.

A Contemporary Reading of the Spirit of Faith

A contemporary elaboration of De La Salle's thoughts on the spirit of faith is found in the Brothers' Rule of 2015:



By faith, they judge all the realities of life in the light of the Gospel. By faith, the Brothers find God in their work, in their concerns, and in their joys. By faith, the Brothers learn to discern in every event, and in every person, especially in the poor, a sign and a call of the Spirit. By faith, as “cooperators with Jesus Christ,” the Brothers dedicate their whole life to the building up of the Reign of God through the service of education. By faith, the Brothers abandon themselves, like their Founder, to God’s guidance. The spirit of faith inspires the Brothers with an ardent zeal to serve those entrusted to them and to work with those who share this aim. This zeal, stimulated by the Holy Spirit, infuses life into their apostolic prayer and into all the activities of their educational ministry.¹⁴

A simple way to enter into a Lasallian spirituality of work would be for a professional to take the present text of the Brothers’ Rule and replace the word “Brother” with his/her profession and to do the same with every mention of educational work. What would it mean for a lawyer or CEO to judge all realities in the light of the gospel of God’s inclusive and redemptive love? For a doctor, chef, game designer, engineer, accountant, seaman, or architect to find God in their work, in their struggles and in their joys? What would it be like if bankers, entrepreneurs, and politicians were to discern in the plight of the poor an invitation to cooperate with God in creating more just and humane societal and economic conditions? What if we were all to align our work with God’s work through a commitment to help others live with dignity and to contribute to the common good? What if we were to set aside the self-protective fears and anxieties that prevent us from doing what we know to be right, entrusting ourselves and our families to the providence of God? This is the invitation in a Lasallian-inspired spirituality of work.

¹⁴ Brothers of the Christian Schools, *The Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (Rome, Italy: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2015), Art. 6-7.