

Brother Visitor's Letter

Dear Lasallians,

In one of his books of stories, Mark Link, the American Jesuit, tells of an Amazon explorer who attempted a forced march through the jungle. The first two days went remarkably well but, on the third day, the native porters sat on their haunches and refused to budge. Their spokesman said: *"We can't move any further. We have to wait for our souls to catch up with our bodies..."* The more suspicious among us might see this response as a creative ruse to ensure a more leisurely work schedule but those of us familiar with the essentials of Lasallian spirituality will no doubt see some similarities between the attitude of the South American porters and the Founder's invitation to frequently *"remember that we are in the holy presence of God"* which, in some ways, can be seen as the Lasallian way of enabling *"our souls to catch up with our bodies"*.

In the hurly-burly of educational involvement with young people - be it through direct teaching contact, supervision, formal or informal pastoral work, faculty meetings, the myriad forms of administration, extra-curricular activities etc - it is easy enough to lose focus temporarily. Hence the wisdom of the Founder's insistence on taking time out momentarily to recall for whom we do what we do in our commitment in the teaching ministry. In his elevated conception of this ministry, a ministry of salvation, De La Salle urged his followers to recognise that they were engaged in a work of partnership with the living Lord and that, in the ultimate analysis, *"this work is yours, Lord"*.

Yet, in Lasallian spirituality, we are also aware of the integral link between faith and zeal, of the need for faith to find expression in zeal. Consequently, the practice of remembering the presence of God, besides being an occasion to recall this work of partnership with the Lord, also provides the Lasallian educator with a moment to focus on *"those entrusted to our care"* who, as we all know, combine the capacity to inspire with an unpredictability that can, at times, be perplexing to say the least! That unpredictability can also sometimes hide their true dignity. In his day De La Salle challenged his Brothers to look beyond appearances to find that dignity, *"to recognise Jesus beneath the poor rags of the children whom you have to instruct. Adore him in them..."* There is little doubt that, even today, economic poverty continues to blight the dignity of so many millions of young people throughout the world. However, it is also true, especially in the more affluent West, that there are many other forms of poverty that afflict young people today. In ministering to these youngsters, the challenge for the Lasallian educator everywhere remains as it was in De La Salle's day - i.e. to look beyond the "rags" of appearances to recognise the dignity of the person.

The Lasallian practice of remembering God's holy presence, in which we allow our *"souls to catch up with our bodies"*, thus provides us with the opportunity to both acknowledge the dignity of those to whom we minister while recalling our own dignity as co-workers in the Lord's plan of salvation.


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