

De La Salle Brothers and other Catholic teachers

The wonderful Christian vocation we have in common

[Brother Alfred Calcutt](#)

By baptism we are all children of God and loved by him. St John tells us: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are." To the newly-baptised St Peter wrote: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Together, we form one body with Christ, united in love for one another; together we offer in the Mass the sacrifice of praise; we share the banquet of the body and blood of Christ. By Confirmation the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit is given us all; we are all strengthened by the Spirit to proclaim our faith. At the same time, we are individually gifted by the Spirit – charisms, they are called - to work in our own way and together for the good of the Body, the Church. We benefit by the power Jesus gave his Church to forgive sins; we have the sacrament of healing.

The married vocation

Most of you, by marriage, have given yourselves to one another in the sacrament of matrimony. The Holy Spirit is with you in all your married and family life. It is a vocation with its joys and difficulties. Lay people are called to sanctify society.

The Brothers' vocation

The Brothers are not called to the sacrament of matrimony. From another Brother or in other ways they have felt the call when young to centre their lives on telling the young – the poor young – about Jesus. That call developed into consecrating themselves to God for life to work together in association for the Christian and human education of the poor, wherever they may be sent. It means forgoing conjugal love and the married state as Jesus said: "for the sake of the kingdom." St Luke writes: "There is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom

of God, who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life" (Luke 18:29-30).

They are a society of consecrated laymen. For them, living the Gospel in community and commitment to the educational service of the poor "demands the whole man" as their Founder says. It is a commitment that you share as Catholic teachers in addition to your married vocation.

As members of the Body of Christ, the Church, and each of us gifted in different ways by the Holy Spirit, we are all called to make Christ known by example and word, and to work for the renewal of the temporal order.

The function of the Christian teacher is one remarkable way of working for this because it aims at leading youth, especially deprived and wayward youth, to Christian and human maturity and capability and responsibility. The Catholic teacher adds, to his or her need to find employment to support their family, and to his or her qualification and attraction for certain subjects, a commitment to develop our students to become enlightened Catholic adults, maturing personalities, able to take on work or a profession for their own good and for the good of society.

The Brothers hope that contact with them will encourage you to see that your work is a ministry, and one of the most important in the Church, as De La Salle tells us, and for which the Spirit gives us his gifts or charisms. They would like to help you to see the value of this ministry, and how to live a deeper and richer Christian life because of it.

From the outset, De La Salle and the first Brothers realised that the foundation of their success with children in the work of education was to work *by association*, as a community and not as individuals. For this they make their

fundamental vow of association for the educational service of the poor, promising to go wherever they may be sent and to do whatever they may be assigned. They do not plan a career. If you read the curriculum vitae of any Brother, you will see how they carry out this promise, and exercise their gifts in new situations where they work in association with their new community. Some may be transferred several times, some to be given posts of responsibility. Others are moved less, like Saint Brother Mutian Mary, who lived a life of holiness in one school in Belgium.

“Together and by association”, the Brothers are strengthened to build up an interior drive based on the work of the Holy Spirit to have an alert attitude of faith in living their vocation from day to day. They develop a view of the events of life that develops through acquaintance with the Gospel that comes from daily interior prayer. Towards the young, especially the poor, they develop an impassioned eagerness to work for their Christian and human development. Their work is not simply teaching, but *accompanying* the young as they move towards maturity and acquire the Catholic view of life and service in the Church and in the world. This inner dependence on Christ for their work, and attitudes it develops, and trust in their charisms of teaching and touching hearts, is the spirituality of the Christian teacher.

Teachers may come in contact with the Brothers, for instance, because they teach in a school where there are Brothers, or even where they are no longer, but the school lives by their ideals, or by attending an educational meeting at

Kintbury organised for teachers by the Brothers. The Brothers’ sense of unity in outlook, of brotherhood, their sense that this is a fundamental ministry in the Church, may lead teachers to want to learn about and share their spirituality. Perhaps singly, better if there is a group, these teachers remain independent of the Brothers, but, if they contact the Brothers in order to begin to adopt their spirituality and sense of ministry, and decide on a prayer life and on some form of regular meeting, they will be seen as their *associates*. It should help if such a group should be invited from time to time to join a Brothers’ community for prayer, for a suitable discussion and a meal. They may find it helps to give their group a name – that of a canonised Brother, for instance, to get to know his life, to pray to him and be encouraged by him in their work.

Such association has to respect the needs of family life. Those who are not yet married can even join the community for a while and share its life and ideals. Those who are married may find that the Lasallian spirituality can inspire their family life. Associates will want to learn of St de La Salle and the first Brothers, of canonised Brothers and of the Institute of the Brothers worldwide.

Such a group of Lasallian associates is not alone. They exist in many countries. There are groups of Lasallian associates around the world. In Rome the Secretariat for the Lasallian Family and Association supports existing groups. The Brothers in Great Britain have annual assemblies at Kintbury to which associates are invited, and which are concerned with their formation.