

Lasallian Thoughts for Teachers
John Baptist de La Salle's Meditations for the Time of Retreat
summarised by Bro. Damian Lundy FSC

1. God in his providence has established the Christian schools, because he wants everyone to be saved. He has called you to this ministry, kindling a light in your heart, to announce his word to children. Speak simply, so that every word will be clear and easy to understand.
2. Many unfortunate children suffer poverty and neglect. God's response to their situation is to establish Christian schools. These children need you to give them the Christian spirit, to teach them the practical truths of faith in Jesus Christ and the maxims of the gospel. You must be full of zeal, so the Spirit of God can work in you.
3. Jesus Christ has died for everyone, but each of us must realise redemption personally. Since you are ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the work that you do, you must act as representing Jesus Christ himself. He wants your disciples to see him in you and receive your teaching as if he were teaching them.
4. Earnestly ask Jesus Christ to make his Spirit come alive in you, since he has chosen you to do his work. Be a Good Shepherd like him, seeking the lost sheep, placing it upon his shoulders, and bringing it back to the fold. Pray constantly for your disciples. Look to Jesus for an example of how to act. Enter into his way of thinking and adopt his goals.
5. You are a guardian angel for the children to whom you are sent. The message comes from God, who, in his goodness, calls you to give it to his children. Purely doctrinal instruction is not enough. Be practical. You must win them! Look after your children watchfully. Pray to God for light. Be faithful.
6. It is your duty to go up to God every day by mental prayer to learn from him all that you must teach your children, and then come down to them, by accommodating yourself to their level. Chosen by God to announce the truths of the gospel, you share in the ministry of the guardian angels by making known these truths to children. Like St Paul, be zealous for the spiritual welfare of the body of Christ.
7. The task of teaching youth is one of the most necessary in the church. Like St Paul, you are called to build the church. Commissioned by Christ and the church, you share in the ministry of the apostles and saints, because teaching was the first ministry Jesus Christ gave to his apostles.
8. Act with zeal to be a good minister, since you are a successor to the apostles in their task of catechising and teaching the poor. Prepare yourself through prayer and study. The sacraments are at the centre of your ministry. But remember to ask yourself what good it is to teach your children the truths of faith if you do not teach them to practise it. Faith without good works is useless.
9. Do not doubt that God has given you a great gift in calling you to teach the young, to announce the gospel to them. You work for the church, which is the body of Christ. Act with love, with a sincere and true zeal. Let your zeal give tangible proof that you love those God has entrusted to you just as Jesus Christ has loved his church. Tell the parents, too, what Jesus Christ said about the flock which he shepherds and saves: "I came that they might have life and have it to the full."
10. Be zealous to protect the children from sin. Teach them to pray and to practise well the good of which they are capable. You must encourage them not to set their hearts on riches, but to have a love for poverty, because our Lord was born poor and loved the poor. He was glad to be with them. Remember that example makes a much greater impression on the mind and heart than words. This is especially true of children.

- 11.** You must correct the children when they commit some fault, ... it is typical of children that they often make mistakes by doing many things without thinking. Correction is the only way to heal them. For this you need gentleness and patience, and prudence in your reproofs and corrections. You will have to render an account to God for the faults they commit.
- 12.** Human beings, and even children, are endowed with reason and must not be corrected like animals, but like reasonable persons, ... with justice. They must be helped to recognise the wrong they have done, to understand the correction which their fault deserves, and to agree to it. "Correction" is distinct from "punishment", and it is to be given with gentleness, love and kindness; never with anger or uncontrolled emotion.
- 13.** St Paul says that you are co-workers with God in his work, and the souls of the children whom you teach are the field that he cultivates through your labours. You will have to render an account of your ministry. Examine yourself honestly each day. Come to know yourself just as you are, so that you will be able to face God's judgment without being afraid. The salvation of your students is your personal responsibility. Be faithful to your mission: to help children grow in all things to the full maturity of Christ.
- 14.** Since God has called you to procure his glory, be particularly conscientious in the religious education of your children. Check whether you have not neglected some students, because they were the slowest or the poorest. Watch over their conduct in church and in school. Examine your motives, intentions and attitudes. Don't let your feelings run away with you.
- 15.** God is good. He will reward your efforts in his service with great happiness. Devote yourself with zeal and affection to your work, since it will be one of the most helpful means to assure your salvation. When your pupils grow in faith, you will be full of joy, and your faith will grow. Thank God every day for the Christian schools. Ask him to make your Institute grow and bear fruit day by day.
- 16.** Look forward to your reward in heaven. Consider that it will be as great as the good you achieve in the lives of the children who are entrusted to your care. What joy you will have when you see a great number of your students in possession of eternal happiness, for which they are indebted to you by the grace of Jesus Christ! What a sharing of joy there will be between the teacher and his disciples! What a thrill of joy you will get, when you hear the voices of those whom you have led almost by the hand into heaven! To gain for yourself all these blessings, all these kinds of glory, act with goodness and wisdom in the care of those who are entrusted to you.