

Brother Visitor's Letter

Dear Lasallians,

On April 30th I was very happy to attend the official opening of St. Matthew's Academy, Blackheath, which has emerged from the amalgamation of a number of schools in the Blackheath area including the former St. Joseph's Academy which, as many of you know, holds a significant place in Lasallian history in Great Britain. The new Academy was officially blessed by the Auxiliary Bishop of Southwark, Patrick Lynch, who, in his brief address to the invited guests, including a couple of classes of enthusiastic youngsters, focused on the impact of good educators on the lives of young people. He illustrated this by giving an example from his own life as a young science student in St. Mary's College, Moraga, California, one of a number of Lasallian Universities in the States. He recounted that, while he could not remember much of what he learned in his chemistry lectures, he would never forget one of his teachers. He recalled that this lecturer began every lecture to a group of forty, gangling students in their early twenties, inevitably with different levels of interest, enthusiasm, and attention, by inviting them to pause to "remember that we are in the presence of God". He added that this invitation was always greeted by an impressive moment of quiet reflection.

According to Bishop Patrick, the lesson he, and, no doubt, many of his classmates, learned through this experience was the very Lasallian lesson of God's abiding presence in our lives, and it was brought to him by a Lasallian educator for whom the "practice" of the presence of God was evidently a way of life. As a way of life, it is gradually assimilated into consciousness and begins to inform the different aspects of our being, including our relationships with others, especially those confided to our care. It also influences behaviour patterns through its impact on our appreciation of truth, justice, fidelity, goodness and beauty. Clearly, too, the practice of the presence of God in the Christian tradition, built on an acknowledgement of the unconditional love of God, the Abba of Jesus, offers a constant and supportive road-map that speaks of God's fidelity in the midst of life's complexities, including its inevitable joys and sorrows. As Lasallian educators, to be able to offer something of that experience to "those confided to our care", especially to young people on their challenging journey to self-identity, is both a joyful privilege and an onerous responsibility. It involves, as St La Salle tells us, "the power to perform miracles by touching the hearts of those entrusted to our care".

As we move into the holiday month of July, I am conscious that for many it is the time when thoughts turn to plans for a well-earned rest and the opportunity to spend quality time with family and friends. I want to take this opportunity to thank all Lasallians, irrespective of the nature of your work, for your commitment and dedication to those entrusted to your care over the last twelve months. May this holiday period be a time of physical and spiritual renewal for all of you, and for all those you love, and may it also be an opportunity for you to continue to appreciate God's abiding presence in your life through your holiday experiences.



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