

MAKE NO DISTINCTION AT ALL BETWEEN THE WORK OF YOUR STATE AND THE WORK OF YOUR SALVATION AND PERFECTION¹

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to update the understanding of the axes of Lasallian spirituality. These axes are: Mission, Consecration, Community, and Evangelization. They articulate Lasallian identity in such a way so that their re-reading from the spiritual perspective may also contribute new values in their integral understanding. Specifically this reflection will suggest two criteria about the play between Consecration and Mission, always seen from the context of a concrete community and at a concrete historical time. For the idea of "Consecration" I propose a concept that is closer to prayer than to the vows; and for the idea of mission I propose a concept closer to a sign than to commitment. From this idea will emerge various suggestions to consider based on faith in terms of what has been happening in the Lasallian community during the past half century.

Key words: Lasallian spirituality, mission, consecration, community, prayer, sign.

In the Lasallian history of the last century, during the first session of the General Chapter of 1966 - 1967, there occurred a significant event from the point of view of this reflection: the first presentation of the Prologue for the new Rule which occurred on May 14, a Saturday.²

That morning the applause of the assembly opened the door for the renovation of The Rule and this gave meaning to what the Chapter wanted to accomplish. The capitulants were moved to be challenged by a text that resonated more in their hearts than in their heads.

¹De La Salle, *Collection of Short Treatises*, 16.1.4

²Luke Salm, *A Religious Institute in Transition*, Romeoville, Illinois, 1992; cited here is the French version which the author confided to Michel Sauvage in 1995, page 24. (There is also a Spanish version, Madrid, 2000). The Chapter had begun on April 27 and would continue until June 21, which would come to be known as the first session in 1966, along the lines of the Council. The next year the capitulants gathered again in Rome on September 30 and they remained until December 16.

It began like this:

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Brothers, you have known the desire to serve God and men; you have noticed the cravings that cause poverty and need in the world and in the poor; you have discovered in you the inclination to teach and to sow goodness around you; and you have come here with the hope of realizing your ideals in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Without understanding it very well yet, you came because God himself was looking for you and you began to find him and because in the depths of your heart you wanted to love him, praise him and give yourself entirely to his service...³

Again, the tone was clearly spiritual and the Chapter, assuming it as a provisional formulation of the spirit of the Rules and renewal in general, was aware that the renewal of principles was inseparable from the renewal of the heart. This would be reflected in the first pages of the Chapter's great contribution, the *Declaration on the Brother in the world today*⁴, in whose light, as Brother Superior Charles Henry would say in its presentation, the Rules and all the work of the Chapter had to be read.

The text of the prologue itself was based on the beginning of the Rule of Taizé, which Brother Roger had written 13 years before. Brother Michel Sauvage, who had known him at the Second Vatican Council, also knew that text and used it as a reference for the draft he prepared on the night of May 13th -14th. The Chapter was experiencing a certain blockage after the successive drafts of the Rule. Its sequence, in fact, provoked more interest or curiosity than rejection or acceptance, although both sensations were present. What was missing was a kind of spirit which everyone understood and with which all could identify. Thus they welcomed with hope what was proposed to them when, with their sensitivities sharpened by tension, they received the proposal to look at everything and express things more from fidelity to the Lord than from organizational accuracy⁵.

Afterwards and throughout the year and a half that the Chapter would last, that enthusiasm and that unanimity would be important losses. This is reflected in the final decision to include or not the final version of the prologue in the Rule that had been born of his spirit: 63 yes, 47 no, 3 abstentions. It was an absolute majority but it fell short of the 2/3 required for such a vote. (In the

³See the full text and its presentation/comment in P. A. Jourjon, *Pour un renouveau spirituel*, F.E.C. [1969], 404 pp. The text in question, p. 385. Brother Jourjon, a capitulant in 1966/1967, assumed the task of commenting on the Rules and Constitutions established by the Chapter. It turned out to be wonderful example: faithful, detailed, serene, contextual. It is an important document in the Lasallian history of the 20th century.

⁴*Declaration on the Brother in the world today*, numbers 1-4, the Introduction, about renewal, understood above all as the spiritual renewal of people. *The Declaration ...* was published as number 1 in the series of small volumes of the minutes of the Chapter (number 2 was that of the Rules and Constitutions). Brother Superior presented it and in doing so he affirmed what we already have written: everything related to the Chapter had to be read from it. On various occasions and anniversaries, in all the Lasallian languages, comments have appeared about this document. Due to its proximity to these reflections, we will only mention the volume published in Madrid, 1998: *The Declaration ... thirty years later*: it contains, in addition to the text of the document, a series of pertinent reflections filled with suggestions

⁵See the book about Brother Michel Sauvage in *The Fragile Hope of a Witness*, Rome, 2014, 696 pages. See also the studies of J. A. Villalabeitia, *A false dilemma* vol.1: I. Religious or teacher; vol.2 : II. The Chapter response, Rome, 2008, pages 286 and 263: these offer an extremely detailed analysis of what happened and an excellent theological interpretation on the whole.

end it was decided to print it as a loose leaf insert in the booklet that would be published with the new Rule: 74 yes, 37 no, 7 abstentions)⁶.

Today we can evoke all of those feelings by reading the final text of that prologue. It helps to situate ourselves in terms of these issues, 50 years later, when perhaps we are better positioned to consider them. This is the paradox of elapsed time. Maybe this half-century will make us see, today, the importance of that approach when it comes to finding theoretical and organizational guidelines for our future. Perhaps the key to the future is in this approach.

Veilleux, a well-known and experienced author on these subjects, in a text written almost contemporaneously to ours, cited a maxim that the years have confirmed: the heart of change is change of the heart⁷. From that conviction we dare to propose the following guidelines for a renewed arrangement of the Lasallian spiritual plan. It is evident, as the quoted adage recalls, that such plans not only affect the makeup of spirituality, but clearly point to the makeup of the Lasallian identity. That is why we can say in summary that they propose a way to consider what the Lasallian tradition has left as an inheritance over the course of 300 years.

So then for half a century this heritage has centered around three dimensions: consecration, community, and mission. Between these three are contained the foundational data and the summary of the path of the first inheritance over the course of three centuries. They contain the way of relating to God, to the community and to the ministry of education. They are intimately united, so that one can not define, for example, Lasallian pedagogy without doing it from the point of view of consecration and from the mission. Logically, the same must be said about the other two poles. This is not the time to comment on this it; we recall it merely to point it out as something obvious which, if one speaks of spirituality in the Lasallian world, it will have to be done in relation to these dimensions and their interaction.

In this commentary we reflect from the point of view of spirituality on that overall system. This is a specific consideration that immediately points out two guidelines for the interaction between Consecration and Mission.⁸ Today, at a time characterized above all by the emergence of new forms of Lasallian community, this can contribute to the redesign of the identity of the Institution. This will help in understanding that, in the spirit of that Prologue, the spiritual perspective can be the common one, peacefully now and in the future, where the different ways of understanding it converge.

⁶P. A. Jourjon, previously cited, page 386.

⁷Veilleux, A., affirms this in « Evoluzione della vita religiosa nel suo contesto storico-spirituale », (Evolution of the spiritual life in its historical-spiritual context in the collective work *Per una presenza viva dei religiosi nella Chiesa nel mondo* (Through a living presence of religious in today's world), edited by Agostino Favale, Ed. LDC, Rome 1970. The work is not easy to find today. Fortunately, in the following year, 1971, the author published this text, in English, in the journal *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*. The French and English versions are on the author's website. See: www.scourmont.be/Armand/writings/evolution-fra.htm. (The page implies that the author responds in 2008 to what is contained in it). The phrase quoted is in the final pages, in the fourth part of the article.

⁸Its first and fundamental reference in the *Declaration* is in number 25. Later on there is the structure of the revisions of the Rule in 1987 and 2015. While applauding the structuring of the Rule around these three dimensions, it is good to note that differentiating each of them in a chapter of the Rule can lead to its denial, by distancing one from the others.

1. Interpreting Consecration as a journey in the relationship with God, over and above any reference to the vows.

We find the first of these two guidelines clearly proposed in the history of Lasallian tradition. It is suggested to us in the parallel nature of the vow formulas of 1691 and 1726.⁹ One can sense this immediately.

In 1691 De La Salle, Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin used this formula:

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, prostrate with the most profound respect for your infinite and adorable majesty, we consecrate ourselves entirely to you to procure with all our ability and efforts the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools, in the manner which will seem most agreeable to you and most advantageous to the said Society.

And, for that purpose, I, John Baptist de La Salle, priest, I, Nicolas Vuyart, and I, Gabriel Drolin, from now on and forever until the last surviving one of us, or until the complete establishment of the said Society, make the vow of association and union to bring about and maintain the said establishment, without being able to withdraw from this obligation, even if only we three remained in the said Society, and if we were obliged to beg for alms and to live on bread alone.

In view of which we promise to do, all together and by common accord, everything we shall think in conscience, and regardless of any human consideration, to be for the greater good of the said Society.

Done on this 21st of November, feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, 1691. In testimony of which we have signed...¹⁰

There were three of them and they were determined to give their lives to a cause. They believed that it was God's plan for them. That is why each one commits to the other two, to live together their response and for their whole life. Their formula underscores, logically, their response to God's call and their group commitment to the call. They give their lives to that group and to the God who calls them. It is not, obviously, a "vow formula" in common use.

That is why the impreciseness of the language does not matter very much in terms of an analysis which we can see right away. For example: no matter what you say, what is not very clear is the scope of the verbs "promise" and "make a vow" since the relationship between "association" and "union" is not clear.¹¹ But it does not matter. What gives meaning to each of the terms is the dynamic of the whole.

⁹These are two key dates in Lasallian origins: the first, called the "heroic vow" is an act of faith during times of perplexity and suffering; the second is the General Chapter's response to receiving the Bull of Approbation.

¹⁰See the text in the J. M Valladolid version of his monumental translation of the *Complete Works* of Saint John Baptist de La Salle (three volumes, Madrid 2001), volume 1, page 95.

¹¹It seems logical that "to make a vow of" means the same as to profess, in a religious community. But the object or content of that "vow" does not correspond to the conventional vows, (sanctioned since the sixth year of the reign of Boniface VIII in 1298 and especially that of Innocent VII in 1405, endorsed by Trent - although only for solemn vows - and the Circa Pastoralis de St. Pius V in 1566). That is why we say that it is legitimate to ask ourselves about the

In this text we see that the important thing is the faith of each one in the others and in the same God who is present in all three of them. What counts is the awareness and the response they share, the surrender of their lives to the Most Holy Trinity, that movement of the whole is expressed in the verb "consecrate" or, better yet, "consecrate oneself." The whole text is ... its consecration, without being able to distinguish between the first paragraph and the second, for example.

So also in its renewal three years later, on June 6, 1694, of which we note only its innovation regarding 1691:

...to live on bread alone, or to do anything in the said Society at which I shall be employed, whether by the body of the Society or by the superiors who will have the government thereof, I promise and vow association as well as stability in the said Society, and of obedience, I promise to keep inviolably all my life.¹²

This formula will continue to be used substantially until the days of the Bull of Approbation, that is to say, until profession in August 1726 in this case. In this formula we should note that their experience obliged them to add or to nuance the expression of their commitment and their resultant expectations. Thus we find especially the presence of a "promise and vow of obedience" next to the expression "association/stability" which may replace – or be equivalent to – the prior notion of "association/union"...

It is not difficult to overcome these apparent inaccuracies by imagining that group in 1694 and how many would follow until 1726: everyone wants to express the movement of the Spirit in their lives and they do so in the same spirit as in the first days. What counts for them is expressing their awareness of being called to and belonging to God's plan.

Between 1722 and 1724, in response to the suggestion of J. Digne, they include the three vows within the set of references which they sent to Rome for approval.¹³ Having received this, which expressly includes the triad of vows at the last minute, they understand that they have to accommodate both their rule of life and their formula of profession and convene a Chapter to make it official. So when in August 1726 they have to be consistent with what they have introduced in the Bull, they use the following formula (of which we will show only the innovations):

scope of the term itself in our formula. It is also often distinguished between "association" and "union" as expressions referred, the first to the whole and the network of the Lasallian Society and the second to each community and the life of relationship: it may be easier to talk about the two dimensions of the life of the community within an institution, which is what the three protagonists claim. The fundamental thing about this text – which Lasallian tradition has called the "heroic vow" – is to appreciate the heroic part over the vow itself.

¹²CL, 3, 7-8.

¹³Cf. M. A. Hermans, *The Vows of the Brothers of the Christian Schools before the Bull of Benedict XIII*, volume 1, CL 2, 110 - 111. This volume finds its completion in the next volume (CL 3) with the study of the formulas of vows. There is an edition in Spanish, the two volumes of the original CL in one volume again due to the great work of J. M. Valladolid, Madrid, 2003, 389 pages.

...I promise and vow to unite myself and to remain in Society with the Brothers of the Christian Schools who are associated together and who, together and by association, conduct free schools wherever they may be sent or to do whatever they may be assigned by the body of the Society or by the Superiors now and in the future. Wherefore, I promise and vow poverty, chastity, obedience, to teach gratuitously and I vow stability in said Society according to the Bull of Approbation of our Institute given by Pope Benedict XIII. Which vows of stability and obedience both to the body of the Society and to the Superiors of the Institute, as well as poverty, chastity and to teach gratuitously I promise to keep...¹⁴

...The change and its message can be seen. We refer to this to emphasize our idea of considering consecration more in terms of a lifelong journey than something expressed by specific vows.

Between 1691 and 1725 the initial formula is maintained, with the logical accommodation of institutional settlements and developments. In 1726 we see an element appear that does not correspond to any innovation in the body of the Society itself. With the three newly arrived vows or without them, the daily reality remained the same. Their lives were shaped by all the dimensions of their belonging or to their lives in relationship: the community, the school, and God. It is what was expressed in the Rule or in the Meditations about their employment, during the days of their annual Retreat: in neither of these two sources did the triad of vows mentioned in the Bull come into play.

This meant, in summary, that their lives were governed by faith: by living all these dimensions simultaneously, everything was marked by a shared task and by faith in the presence of God. They could rightly say that the spirit of their community was that of faith and zeal simultaneously. Their lives were in a state of consecration that manifested itself and at the same time was ordered by certain patterns of conduct, from celibacy to the periodic interview with the Brother Director.

The meaning of the vows prior to and subsequent to the Bull is very clear. The previous ones, without canonical support, expressed the core of their faith. They had been born of the conviction of a shared call and the decision to respond to living it out in a certain way. The ones after the Bull, on the other hand, did not take this into account. They referred to the way of living out the commitment of the response, not to its meaning. That is why we can say without exaggeration that they were dispensable: the Brothers themselves had not included them among their 18 defining articles. They had not done it because those vows did not exist among them; which means that they were not defined.

If, over the course of time, at a certain moment in history, those vows came to be defined, then something fundamental would have disappeared or would not be considered. It seems, however, evident that for canonical orthodoxy those three vows ended in their basic definition, so that the true meaning of that community was in fact unknown. Logically, there was a greater emphasis in the fulfillment of the requirements of Canon Law than in the shared fidelity and search for God's call.¹⁵

¹⁴This text is found in G. Rigault, *General History of the Institute...* volume 2 (Paris, 1938, vi + 653 pages), page 115.

¹⁵In reality the acceptance of the Lasallian community among religious Congregations took place starting with the Apostolic Constitution of Leo XIII *Conditae a Christo*, in 1900, and it was sanctioned by the 1917 Code of Canon

Under those conditions, for the maintenance of identity, it was and is essential to recover the spiritual side of the commitment that constitutes the community. Without that recovery, there was no future, for the simple reason that only the Spirit enables us to perceive the signs of the times as an occasion for a shared encounter with God's plan. Now, that can not be done without going from one conceptual model to another.

Doing that can help us consider Consecration from the same perspective that we use for the relationship between "sacrament" and "mystery."¹⁶ Both terms, in fact, not only refer to a language – Latin (sacrament) or Greek (mystery) – but to two ways of considering the same experience. "Mysterion" emphasizes the character of a way to the transcendent that there is in that experience. "Sacramentum," on the other hand, is the ritual or necessary side of the way to access the situation and how to act in it. Obviously both concepts are complementary, but their meaning is broken when one of the two predominates: without mystery there is no sacrament, and vice versa.

In the area of consecration, the same thing happens. In this case the two terms are "euché" and "votum", Greek and Latin again.¹⁷ "Euché," a term less known in the West, is nevertheless the most used in the East and in the old Church. It emphasizes the offering, the dialogue call/response, fidelity and continuity, the covenant, communion. It is very close to "prayer" and it means supplication, petition, as well as offering to reinforce the supplication itself.¹⁸ "Votum," on the other hand, emphasizes the legal guarantee, commitment, verifiability, requirement, uniformity,

Law. Therefore it is easy to see the parallel between what happened then and the Bull of 1725. At the beginning there was the need to be recognized by law or by French law, as an entity capable of effecting institutional activity, something that the pontifical approval (with the inclusion of vows) left open. In 1900 it was the law of Associations in France and elsewhere, which required it for its new civil recognition. In both cases the Institution-Vows equivalence was used. It is by no means exaggerated to speak of the two models of "consecration" in the context of utilitarian considerations. That same year and – coincidentally – a few days after the publication of the *Conditae*, the ecclesiastical authority gave permission to print a collection of texts by the Founder entitled *Doctrina Spirituelle de S. J.B. De La Salle*, confirmed by some examples (Paris, xxxii + 689 pages): Among the 72 concepts collected, the vows do not appear. They do not appear even though there was a careful tribute on the occasion of the canonization of De La Salle, a few months before.

¹⁶To understand the play between these two terms better, just a note with almost no bibliography is enough. It is understood when one realizes that during the first ten centuries of the history of the Church nobody was very clear about what we today call a "sacrament" – about what that could mean and if there was one or more. Only starting from Hugo de San Víctor (in his *De Sacramentis* ...) and Pedro Lombardo (in his *Sentences*), around the middle of the 12th century) is there a definition and decision about the number 7. But this, while undisputed and clear, does not mean that before that time the reality was not lived out. That was the way it was, only that we lived more from the reality of the mystery of God than from the rite itself. That life was animated by God meant that He could be made manifest in so many existential situations. For these privileged situations reflection and pastoral work would end up being assigned the qualification of "sacraments," places of mystery par excellence. It is better understood if we evoke everyday expressions such as "Jesus, sacrament of God," "the sacrament of the poor," "the sacrament of the Church"...

¹⁷Cf. The article Religious Vows, by Mariano J. Sedano, within the Theological Dictionary of Consecrated Life (Claretians, Madrid, 1989, xxviii + 1987 pages), in particular the section on Greek and Latin speaks of the vows (pages 1888 ff.)

¹⁸Its best Lasallian translation is in the final synthesis of Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos at the end of their work on *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* (pages 369-441, citing the edition of Madrid, 1993, xxi + 444 pages). In conceiving it, the authors have consciously gone beyond the Lasallian "letter of the law" to describe the heart of the situation which De La Salle calls "prayer". That movement of transcending of the text to its inner core is the best translation in our time. This commentary it is an excellent exposition of what we understand by "consecration."

the contractual. Again we see that without the one there is no other, that when one of the two perspectives predominates, the other loses in terms of humanity and meaning.

But our discussion is not centered in the area of vows. The area is that of faith and that is why we referred to 1691. Now, as then, it is up to us today to find an expression for our shared faith. And, as then, we will find it in the area we share: faith in the call of the Lord, expressed in the giving of our lives to our common endeavor.

This change in the conceptual model opens at least two doors for the Lasallian institution. The first, the most evident, is the awareness that members of this community have of themselves. It is not the same, in fact, to be considered defined by a bond that in the first instance evokes renunciation and subjection, than by another that first of all recalls the grace of the Lord who calls and welcomes. It is not the same. It is evident that the grace of the Lord, his welcome and his constant call, also requires renunciations and submissions. Like any love, consecration needs fidelity. But it is very different to reach it by one way or another. And above all in our time, when perplexity is settled many times in our hearts rather than in a change of era.

But once entered, this first door leads to another. This leads to what resembles and unites the members of such a community with any other believer. Because the model change does not make them the same, but more similar than what you may think. We will discuss this in the second part of this article, but, faced with the challenge of the new communities, we point out now by way of suggestion that it is much simpler and more understandable to share the offering of oneself than religious vows. Without a doubt, this was also discussed in that Chapter of 1966/1967 with its insistence on the baptismal root of religious consecration.¹⁹

Just as in 1691, only He knows where that path is leading today.

2. Interpreting the Mission based on the Sign, over and above any reference to commitment

Specialists have made us see in the New Testament an important process: at the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus, people looked at his words and what he said; little by little, however, they ended up looking at Jesus as the Word. They went from his sayings and deeds to his person. And so what they have ended up telling us is about everything they felt that He was and not so much about exactly what He was saying.

That human, comprehensible and repeatable process, helps us to understand both the deep insight of Lasallian tradition and the theology of Consecration. And it is not going too far, because it happens in our lives as we move forward in the life of relationship: we see actions first and we end up encountering people.

Like so many other traditions, the Lasallian tradition is made up, at all times and in all places, of situations in which one begins by observing the results and then moves on to consider the persons,

¹⁹ *Declaration*, 17 and 18.

the group of people. It is the path starting from the school schedule which goes to the person of the teacher. It never loses sight of first needs or the daily urgencies, of course, but very soon the criterion for the quality of the results is the quality of the people, or of the group of people.

This is a fact. And it surprises us a bit by showing us that within the mission there are two dimensions which, perhaps, we don't usually think about: task and meaning. "Mission" refers to what is done and the image that is expressed about the meaning of what is done.

Said in that way, it seems very obvious, natural, and indisputable: in every institutional action the mission must be present. It is clear that the mission is something more than work (in education, in this case). In practice, however, we behave as if the second, the global or feeling part, did not exist or was not relevant. We speak, for example, of "sharing the mission" but we want to say "sharing the work," which is not the same. And yet life shows with insistence that only the second meaning or dimension, that of meaning, has real importance. Its lack, insignificance or simply its disappearance, empties the meaning and the future of the institution that produces those results, however excellent they may seem. Its immediate results are ephemeral, without guarantee. We would say that the "mission" refers to the task, work and commitment... and at the same time to the sense, to the model of society and future, to faith. That is why the task of a school is not only to train for a job but to offer a future model where hope has a place.

...That is where we calibrate the true importance of the previous discourse on the nature and expression of consecration. Thus the renewal of that conceptual model takes us to another step: from the mission as commitment to the mission as a sign.

In fact: when a group lives its association as "euché" (offering, prayer, covenant, fidelity, hope, community, life, etc.), it necessarily arouses curiosity or even interest in its identity. People begin by looking at their behavior and their work, but soon examine their "why." Then, normally, they are surprised at what seems to go a little beyond the organizational and contractual. They realize that at some point that known group was born of an interpretation of life in which God counts. More precisely, the process is based on the words of Jesus to Jesus, the Word.

At that moment, when that perception is awakened, the mission begins to be fulfilled. In positive and solemn terms, the Declaration spelled it out this way:

...the Brothers are signs of the action and the presence of the Spirit of God in our history; signs that the new world inaugurated by Christ and announced by the teaching of the Church is a present reality; signs of the power of the risen Christ that grants to sinners the ability to respond to the Lord who calls them. This they do, without destroying their human dignity, their love for life on earth, or their readiness to serve others, by willingly making sacrifices that make them less self-centered in their activities, more all-embracing in their charity, more available in their service. Such a witness is more necessary than ever in our scientific and technological world, where people in some way have to touch a thing in order to believe in its reality. It is advantageous that this witness be given by those who are not estranged by their consecration from participating in the life of the

world...True community life constitutes a living sign of the central reality that is the mission of the Brothers to announce (*Declaration* 26: 2, 3, and 4).²⁰

An important nuance: the origin, the presence or the sense of the group may be accepted or rejected, but if it has raised the question by its nature, it has already fulfilled its mission. Brother Jourjon speaks with total precision that as a religious a Brother "affirms eschatology." And he nuances this, anticipating what today is the almost universal circumstance of the Lasallian presence: "...and yet, he does so while aware that it is a mystery. The sign of God that discovers and gives of itself is just a question. Religious life is a sign for the believer, it is a sign in the field of faith. We can only understand it within the faith. For the non-believer and for the one who has not heard the word, it is just a question."²¹ The idea is to raise the question, not necessarily the acceptance of the answer.

Obviously none of this will ever be true if there is no quality in mediation, that is, in the social service or the work of that group. The cited texts take it for granted: the visible face of the sign must be itself significant. That is why we say that the one does not replace the other even if it is what gives it meaning. It is not even possible without it. It is a sociological constant beyond all discussion, the dialectic that shapes all social models.

Thus we understand, again, the consequences of considering this topic from the spiritual perspective: understanding the "mission" from the perspective of a Sign and not just from the commitment that leads to a comprehensive review of the Lasallian Institution.

We understand that the sign is neither possible nor has any value if the service does not have quality and quality, meanwhile, does not exist if there is no meeting of people within the service. If there is no personal encounter, in fact, there is no true service. Now, as believers, we count on God being the soul of every encounter, specifically all the givens in the educational relationship. Then, if we add it all up, it will turn out that God is the last guarantor of the value of the Sign.

This is the case, whether we believe in Him or not. He does believe in us. He is the guarantor of the quality of every human relationship and that is why every human relationship is His face, His sign, His work. It is, quite simply, the mystery of what we call school.

That is why we say that the commitment itself must feed the professionalism of the committed: it seems like a platitude but it is not, if we look carefully. Unfortunately, more than one committed person is convinced that their dedication is directly nourished in their relationship with God, regardless of the concrete circumstances in which they live. In fact for them the task in itself has no relevance or significance. It is a distraction or a sacrifice. That is why they keep their person apart from their work, convinced that with God they find themselves in another place, space or dimension. They live thinking they are angels, someone from another world, and this is said without any irony.

²⁰Some of these ideas had already been proposed in the *Declaration* in point 11.

²¹P. A. Jourjon, op. cit., page 170.

Very different is the deep sense of the Lasallian maxim of the origins: not to differentiate the duties of your sanctification and those of your state. They coincide, they are the same, we must add, and they can not be separated without mutilating them. That is why the place where the Brother's faith is nourished every day is his work, so much so that the Founder does not hesitate to assign the highest qualifications for this: you are Jesus for your students, in whose hearts you write the word daily by force of the Spirit.²² A single condition for this: to treat the school as a Sign, in response to God's Plan.

Experience teaches that this is true in any institution that is devoted to the Gospel. The Word of God is embodied in a concrete need that is thus transcendent in itself, so that its value is now another. That need is now the place of Jesus, the Lord. The first, that of his profanity, has not been lost or annulled. Quite the opposite: that profanity is transcended means that it is assumed as the face of God, who is thus shown in his Incarnation. It is the profound mystery of kenosis and exaltation, which we read in Philippians 2: 9, which can very well be understood as a synthesis of sacramental theology.

This is how consecration and mission in the community and the school that lives them out become one. And it is how the work of the teacher and the school themselves become a sacrament. Because if in truth the mission consists in the summoning of the reality of God and if that God who is evoked in the mission is the one who calls and is called and agrees and is faithful and gives shape to the life of his servant ..., it is clear that Consecration consists in a determined way of living out one's duty and vice versa. And school is what it is when it goes beyond itself. Because "consecration and the "sign" now become one.

This is a reciprocal constitution: each principle exists because the other is like it. Do not confuse this with a bad vicious circle. No. They are dimensions of the same reality. That is why it is easy to betray this synthesis by imagining a "mission" for which "consecration" was only an instrument, something external. And vice versa: "consecration" for which the "mission" was only a non-essential dedication and a real distraction from what is important. In the latter case we find, on the side of consecration, its mechanistic understanding of a supposed triad of vows without any relation to the mission. And an inconsequential understanding of the mission reduced to work, reflected in a community that has ceased to be, reduced to organization. Simply, schizophrenia, the antipodes of the beginning of the Collection ... that guides us in this reflection.

Tasks, work, commitment... are the place where the "euché" is fed. Thus we see that the consideration of consecration (the vows) from this perspective leads us to a change of horizon or a model full of hope, both in the intimate and personal, as well as in the institutional and the community. That our life and our institution are signs of God has important consequences in the face of our possible future.

²²Cf. De La Salle, *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, 193, 195, 196, 199, 200. There is still no better reference to this than to read Miguel Campos in the second volume of his work on the Evangelical Life Journey of SJB De La Salle, particularly Chapters II (77-112) and IV (149-180), on the identification with Jesus Christ and the sacramentality of the ministry (the pages correspond to the Spanish edition of Madrid, 1988, 324 pages).

Very specifically, this thinking allows for greater realism in the consideration of both personal and institutional responsibility in the field of the mission and its guarantors. In fact, as we place all in the intimate reality of the encounter and the relationship with God, everyone – people and institutions – accept the fact that we are not the definitive owners of what we do and live out. We accept, in particular, not to be able to guarantee the definitive quality of our lives and our commitments. Not even its durability. We accept, along those lines, the difficulty that sometimes will happen in our regard in terms of the awareness of our own unworthiness and even our sin before the transcendence of our responsibility. We can not pretend, obviously, that we are not responsible for our results, but we must place ourselves in the acceptance that "only He causes the growth" (1 Corinthians 3) and that we are ministers, agents of Him, capable of something because we are the object of his love.

In this way we understand the strength of the saints and of all great men and women, for whom the awareness of their own limits was not an obstacle to boldly take on commitments like those of 1691 and 1694 or the definitive return of the Founder to Saint Yon in 1718. And we understand the apparently illogical conclusion that errors and even occasional scandals are not always followed by collapse or institutional failure.

In short, both errors and failures, when they seem to occur, may be due to ignorance or the inability of the members of the institution or the whole, certainly. But they may also exist only in the ignorance and inability of those who look at these situations from the outside, that is, regardless of the perspective provided by the dimensions of which we are speaking. It may very well be that there is failure or error and yet in another way that may not be true. History, and not just the history of religious institutions, is filled with examples.

It is indispensable in times like ours, in this change of historical cycle, when all the social institutions that were minted according to the model of bourgeois modernity have to disappear. Seeing things in this way helps, in fact, to situate oneself with a much more realistic vision in the face of change and re-foundation. It allows us to consider our present and our near future in an integral or historical way, that is, not limited to the re-creation of known institutions. Unfortunately it is very easy, when we speak of re-create, to underline the reference to the past over and above hope and thus to lose the horizon of any hope. Instead, understanding Commitment as a sign helps us to remember the alliance between organization and transcendence or between plans and the mystery of people, between directing and accepting historical changes.

To consider Mission from the point of view of Consecration, that is, to deepen the dialogue between institutions and spirituality, shows that, beyond the most resounding modifications in the design of institutions, there can be continuity and silence that fill us with peace. Because peace is not born from success, but from another source, using the vocabulary of Saint John of the Cross.²³

²³A few years ago, in a text entitled *La théologie des conseils évangéliques de la vie consacrée apostolique*, Sister Sylvie Robert, specialist and authority in spirituality and religious life, expressed it this way: "...Religious life lives that sending in its own way: differently from ministry, religious life, even the most apostolic, does not consist first of all in a mission to be carried out. Apostolic work is the work of God in the religious; the apostolic instrument of the religious is his or her person worked on by God, and a religious who can no longer do anything is no less apostolic." Sister Robert, as seen in the place of the publication, references these issues and that is why it is important to qualify

Change in general and the changes that we have known for fifty years, are overwhelming realities and make us tend to the trap of taking success as a sign of the future. We know this. And we know that overcoming it requires demanding resources from the person that we often think we do not have. Thus, when the cycle of great vitality has passed, one tends to forget everything, to surrender the witness, perhaps abandoning the vision of the story in which he had believed. On the other hand, considering these processes from the point of view of faith, considering the presence of the Spirit in these processes and our inclusion in God's plan of salvation, all of this makes personal exhaustion and peace, hope, and continuity reconcilable. Living out education as a Sign or signs of the presence of the Spirit gives unity to what we are proposing in our institutions ever since the days of the Council, at least. In their opposites, although sometimes disguised as something else, we find, on the one hand, those who every ten years discover the definitive clue about the future, ignoring what others said and proposed fifty years ago. And there are those who, tired of so many discoveries during the decade, declare everything before them wrong and meaningless and propose the strict restoration of the order of things contemporary to the Council. Between the two examples we know a wide range of situations, all marked by discontinuity and the transience of hope.

In essence, the question of whether to renew, update or re-found does not even make sense. It is, simply, a matter of living while being attentive to the Spirit, accepting that He guides his Church and constitutes it in His own signs. That is why nothing changes, nor is renewed, nor is it re-founded: because everything changes, is renewed and is re-founded. We live in time and in history; and time and history are for us the face of God, who is contained in neither time nor history. We are the Sign of something that transcends us, of Someone who calls us before the creation of the world, as the Founder points out in his first Meditation for the Time of Retreat, citing Saint Paul very forcefully.²⁴

It is the essential discourse of spirituality, in these times of exhaustion and emergence of the forms of consecrated life.

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...Looking at these two proposals and commemorating 300 years, it is not difficult to evoke the last phases of the vital life journey of De La Salle under a renewed light.

the quote: if the second half of the paragraph were missing, we could not accept the first. If by "function" or "ministry" we understand the testimony of that "work of God," then yes; we will agree and place it in the realm of what "euché" means. Otherwise, in this Lasallian reflection, it would be difficult to reconcile with its use in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, for example. The text is from the UISG Bulletin (Number 145, a monograph on *Identité et signification de la vie religieuse apostolique*, 2011, pages 10-17, the quotation is on page 12).

²⁴Due to the closeness of its themes with this reflection, two works by two Brothers of the Christian Schools, which appeared in 1952, deserve more than just a mention: *À l'école de S.J.B. de la Salle, introduction à sa spiritualité*, by Brother Alphonse (LIGEL, Paris, 369 pages); and *Par le mouvement de l'Esprit, la dévotion au Saint-Esprit dans les écrits de S.J.B. de la Salle*, by Brother Clément Marcel (Lethielleux, Paris, liii + 254 pages). In both cases we clearly perceive what twenty years later Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos will later describe as the *Lasallian life journey*, that is, the discourse of life.

At the age of 60, in 1712 he leaves France and marches to the south. Avignon, Marseille and Grenoble are witnesses to his silence, his faith and his institutional sense. He tries to consolidate the association between the different cells of his society. He shrinks inside of himself seeking light in his fidelity to the Spirit. He creates, or he imagines he creates something in Marseille. He experiences failure and he hides in Parmenie. In Grenoble he sees the community and the school; he receives the call from the Brothers in 1714, and reacts serenely and with experience. Once again in France, he settles his work obligations and he retires. Finally, in a final exercise of institutional responsibility, he returns to the community and he dies there.²⁵

We do not know what awareness the Founder had of the nature of his work in those final years. We know about his struggle to guarantee its overall design, that is, the association of school communities. Surely he understood that his personal work was ending, with the establishment of a global guideline, and he left the plan for others to make it their own. He accepted the fact that his life and his mission consisted in its establishment, just as we can imagine this in his last testament²⁶ and his final gestures regarding local diocesan structures.

We do know what he was doing about the internal life of the institution. He wrote it out during the last year of his life in the fundamental alterations he made to the common rules and the unaccustomed introduction of the chapter on regularity. It starts like this:

"It is necessary that the Brothers take for the foundation and support of their observance of the Rule what Saint Augustine says at the beginning of his Rule: that those who live in community should, before all else, love God and next their neighbor because these are the principal commandments given to us by God and because any observance of the Rule is useless if separated from the observance of these two commandments and is quite useless for salvation because it is established in communities only for the purpose of giving the members facility to observe with exactness the commandments of God." (RC 16, 1).

This is his true testament. And we can understand it as such if we understand by "regularity" the daily life of a community, that is, the visible face of the "common" rules. In this case his inheritance is very clear: to live out the Rule from beyond the Rule.

He would have liked to put that article ahead of all the others, as the Prologue of the Common Rules that he left as an inheritance.

²⁵Miguel Campos, in the first volume of his work already cited *The Evangelical Life Journey...* (edited in Spanish Madrid, 1980, xiv + 312 pages) interprets the whole life of the Founder, structuring it around four fundamental experiences, four forceful situations. In that light many things take on meaning and, of course, appear as the soul of what we have presented here as Consecration and Mission. It is worth re-reading, forty years later. And, from the most important points of view of the conversion of all this into a kind of tool for the spiritual awareness of the Lasallian communities, the reference to the work of Antonio Botana is obligatory, particularly in *The Story of Lasallian Spirituality* (Madrid, 2013, 175 pages): the fact that the author dedicates his work to Miguel Campos is sufficient guarantee of the continuity between the two reflections.

²⁶See the text in the *Complete Works*, the version by J.M. Valladolid, volume 1, page 125. See also a detailed analysis, in CL 26 (pages 286-305), by León Aroz.

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