

**THE MINISTRY
OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

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**PART 2. THE MINISTRY OF THE
BROTHER OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
AS RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR**

Let us define the scope of the article by asking
—and answering— a question:

- * What connection is there between Baptism and the Religious Life?
- * They are two complementary ways of answering the same Divine Call.

1. Every ministry owes its existence to the constantly renewed call of God to the Christian. The dialogue between his call and our fidelity constitutes the life of the ministry and is a visible witness to the Kingdom of God among men.

2. First of all we are consecrated by baptism. By means of this consecration, God chooses an individual who, from then onwards, can respond as a Christian and as a member of Christ's Church.

He calls upon him to bear witness before all men today that everything in this world is included in God's plan of Salvation: consequently, everything has meaning, every thing that is human is his concern.

That is the first answer, and it forms the basis of every ministry, including that of education.

3. The call to the religious life constitutes a further step: it is God's constantly renewed call now inviting the individual to involve himself in a more specific task. He calls upon him to witness with his whole being to the Mystery which Jesus' contemporaries glimpsed in his Word and which they saw fully only at Easter.

And so, as a religious, the Brother takes on in the Church the ministry of being a witness by his whole life and as a member of a community, to the absolute transcendence of the Kingdom.

That is the second answer, and it forms the basis of a specific ministry, that of the religious educator.

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In the light of what we have said about the theology of mediation, we realise that neither of the answers given is first or second.

1. The life of a Brother, consecrated as a religious in the Church, is seen in the context of a specific task and in a specific area of the life of the Church. The task is that of mediation. Without it there could be no ministry, for there would no longer be any content.

2. Through the intermediary of his Church, the Lord sends the Brother into the world of young people, in particular to that of the poor; to that section of mankind which is poor and immature.

The ministry of the Brother of the Christian Schools is specifically that of Christian education: the Lord and the Church ask him to go and help others to read, right at the very heart of the process of promoting human development, the visible presence of the One who transcends all things.

3. The Brother knows that as a result of his "second" call, everything about him in the eyes of others has the seal of the Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection: he is called upon to show that this world, while being the place where God's love is made manifest, is "no lasting city".

In this way, the Brother sees his ministry as a combination of service to his fellow men and witness to the Kingdom. His fellow men must see quite clearly and in concrete terms that, when the Brother deals with the sciences and the arts, he believes in this world here below as well as in something that transcends it.

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The ministry of the Brother finds its authenticity in the life of St. John Baptist de La Salle as a member of the Church.

1. In the same way as the Founder gave the Brother a Rule of Life, and the Church approved it, so the Brother sees two elements in his ministry:

* there is the active side, since he is the brother of the poor, and since he lives with them and helps them to improve their lot through education;

* and there is the silent side that could even be called contemplative, which enables him to stand aside from everything and to forego living like other people.

2. These two elements combine to produce that mysterious feeling of peace that every educator who is a Brother feels. The human relationships involved in his work become a specific ministry from the moment that people around him see in him the unbelievable combination of creative flair, self-denial and a zest for life. That is the way a Brother works for his fellow men while at the same time being the visible presence of God.

3. By the very fact that he is “a minister of Jesus Christ”, to use the words of the Founder, the Brother is finding, to his great surprise and joy, that at the present time, opportunities are becoming

available for him to become a new kind of witness to the Kingdom for his fellow men.

For, as he goes about exercising his ministry, he discovers that there have come about in recent times some extraordinary cultural changes, all of which offer so many more and new opportunities to be the visible presence of God. However, he does not draw from this the conclusion that what he is doing now is dependent on what went on in the past. On the contrary, he finds that the fact of being a Witness to the Hereafter enables him in some mysterious way to recognise the signs of the times very clearly and to make the right response.

4. It is exactly this ability that the Church recognises when it makes it the specific aim of its Mission.

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One could say, then, that the ministry of the Brother is built up of the following elements:

1. The call from God to be a Sign of the Hereafter.
2. Mediation through the educational service of the poor.
3. Creative flair and joy stemming from self-denial.
4. His connection with the role of St. John Baptist de La Salle in the life of the Church.

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