

LASALLIAN PEDAGOGY, A LIBERATING PEDAGOGY (2/2)

II. MEANS:

Communion, Association, Brotherhood.

Another aspect of the Lasallian school is that of communion, which implies association and brotherhood.

A. Association.

The Lasallian educational programme is implemented "together and by association" by Brothers and lay people, who are aware of the historical inspirational qualities of the legacy of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

From the very first years of working with his teachers, De La Salle realised that, to meet the needs of poor children efficiently, there had to be total commitment on the part of the teachers, and all had to work together, thus ensuring continuity of schooling.

For Lasallian teachers, working together and by association means not only following the same educational programme, but considering themselves partners in its implementation, responsible for its success and personally committed to its fulfilment.

This willingness to be associated is translated into concrete terms by a common acceptance of human and evangelical values, a desire to live according to them, and to encourage others to do so also.

It is shown by behaviour and attitudes in everyday life. Conflicts can arise. This is human and fortunate, because it is a sign of life. Conflict is enriching as long as it is faced up to and resolved.

B. Brotherhood.

The second aspect of communion is the atmosphere of friendliness or brotherhood to be found in a Lasallian school.

Whereas in French schools, before the 18th century, personal relations were strongly influenced by authority, discipline and recourse to punishment, in his

schools, De La Salle seems to have tried to change this situation by reconciling the need for order, so that work can be done, with respect, amiability and friendliness in relations.

The Meditations often speak of "touching the hearts of pupils", and of "loving them tenderly".

The Lasallian school, faithful to its origins, tries to create and promote an atmosphere of friendly relations among all the members of the educational community.

Is it not this atmosphere that makes people return again and again to Lasallians schools?

III. BASIC FOUNDATION: Faith.

How can we live according to our faith as Christian teachers?

If founders of orders based their spirituality on some specific virtue, for De La Salle this virtue was the Spirit of Faith.

Based on the Spirit of Faith and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Lasallian spirituality is christocentric.

We have now moved into the area of Christology. This can perhaps be seen from different points of view depending on geographical location, historical period and sociological context. Most recent writing on the subject takes into account a whole range of complementary factors which enable us to gain some idea of what Jesus did.

This brings us to the idea of a "liberating" Jesus:

«Too often we would look for a comforting tranquilliser in a personal image of Christ. This enables us to put to one side questions affecting common humanity, while all the while surrounded by a sea of misery and massive unemployment, and to find a sense of security in our religious practices». (Tissa Balasuriya, "Jesus-Christ et la libération humaine")

No one can deny that Christ opted for personal freedom.

In a Roman society that was sick, full of inequality and exploitation, he preached personal human dignity. There are innumerable situations in the Gospel where there was a clash of values, and where he chose those that promoted the dignity and freedom of the individual.

But if Jesus came to promote personal freedom by freeing people from all their interior blockages and their source, personal sin; he showed by his actions that he was likewise opposed to another type, namely, collective sin.

In a society in which social conformism was the rule, he had the courage to question values that held sway and which crushed poor and unimportant people.

Jesus called upon people to make a clear choice of God and justice rather than money and greed. (cf. Lk. 16).

Henceforward, witnessing to the Gospel is not possible without at the same time undertaking to remove the obstacles to the values preached by Christ. This brings us back to the Rule, article 14.

IV. WITNESS.

If our communities are communities of faith, they will quite naturally bear witness to this.

If the sociological context of past centuries explains why evangelisation came to be thought of as active transmission of propaganda, even as external pressure, the pluralist world in which we live must make us revise totally our ways of thinking in this matter.

While we do not have to create separate religious groups for their own sake, we do have to remain within the human community, within a specific Christian community.

The question is to know how to live within it, not separately but likewise not swallowed up by it.

We do not have to be a Church of silence, forgetful of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, we must bear witness to an explicit faith in Jesus Christ.

One of the fundamental questions, and one that can sometimes cause anguish, is how to suggest to others to seek Jesus Christ who is our life, while respecting fully their liberty, and in a way that enables them to make a free choice.

V. THE ECCLESIAL DIMENSION.

How should our educational communities be the Church, build the Church?

It has been rightly said of the Founder that he had a "prophetic vision" of a renewed Church.

The first Brothers were led to be constantly aware of the importance of their work in the Church.

«Consider that you are working in your ministry for the building of the Church through your teaching of the children whom God has entrusted to your care.» (MTR, 8.1)

But if De La Salle presents the Church as being at the same time mystical, christological and spiritual (cf. Sauvage and Campos), he shows it also at the same time to be part of human reality and therefore sinful.

In Meditation 205, he urges the Brothers to make it holy and to "purify" it with the word of life.

De La Salle knows that for it to become credible it must divest itself of its privileges, honours, possessions, culture, in a word, of all that prevents it from being the spouse of the One who was despised and poor, and whose only concern was for the Kingdom of his Father.

Our love for the Church must go so far as to make us dare to denounce by silent or even vocal opposition certain unjust situations, structures and methods that it supports even if it is only by its silence.

Let us not end, however, on a rather negative note: rather let us rejoice at all the things that makes her a spouse worthy of the Master.

Let us remember the true witnesses to the Gospel, Proagno, Romero, and all those thousands of priests, men and women religious and lay people who have been imprisoned and tortured because they had taken up the defence of the unimportant people who are crushed by regimes who betray the name of Christian.

CONCLUSION.

A committed community, one that has a critical spirit, a community of faith, bearing witness to the faith, an ecclesial community, will find its fulfilment in the liberating sacrament, par excellence, the Eucharist; the sacrament which authenticates a coming together for a great cause, that of the liberation of the world.

«Jesus Christ unites himself to you in holy communion in order to transform you into himself, so that you thus form but one heart and soul with him, and his interior disposition become your own». (Med. 54. 3)

Brother Philippe Stienlet