

**DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS
OF LASALLIAN EDUCATION**

**Brother Jose Maria Valladolid.
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One often hears the expression Lasallian Education. I believe that in commenting on this expression we refer to a special and distinct style which has resulted in Lasallian schools having their own educational stamp.

In pointing out our characteristics, we have no intention of denying that there are other educational groups which also have these characteristics. We simply want to say that these are the traits which distinguish us as educators.

I arrange them in three groups:

1. Philosophy of education.

- a. The student in the Lasallian school, as subject and agent of his own education, is not considered just as a human being but as "son of God". This sets the scene for the whole of our educational philosophy.
- b. The Lasallian school results from a community which has committed itself to carry out its educational activity as a group and together. They maintain the school and keep it in operation as a community; as a community they answer the problems which arise; and as a community they keep adding, day by day, to their own "Conduct of Schools". The isolated educator or the educator who is too individual does not fit into the concept of the Lasallian school. Although responsibilities are shared, the running of the school belongs to the community. And by mutual commitment, in an expression loved by de La Salle, they ensure that the school runs well.
- c. The Lasallian school manages to deal with the needs which arise day by day. It has the ability to adapt itself; it is not static and unchangeable. On the other hand it avoids changing for changing's sake. As a community it studies the present situation and sees how it needs changing.

2. The student:

- a. He is a person, an individual, with his own characteristics. He is not diluted by the crowd nor in the group. The teachers should know each student as well as possible. This presupposes a study of the individual, his family, the society in which he lives, what kind of person he is etc., The teacher keeps this record up to date. The individual record card which the early brothers kept, a few samples of which are found in the Conduct of Schools, show that the brothers of the 17th Century kept personality profiles of each student which are well up to modern standards.
- b. The student is one who is learning and whose duty as such is to work hard at learning. He is not a passive being, but someone who acts, who tackles his difficulties, keeps up his own spirits and makes progress...under the attentive eye of the educator, who encourages the initiatives of the student.

- c. The student is the "Son of God", who should look on himself as such and on the other students as "his brothers". From this will result friendly and courteous relationships which create around one a special atmosphere where it is enjoyable to live.
- d. The student should learn how to become a good citizen and a good Christian, without making those two aspects clash. Therefore the school must give a good foundation in secular knowledge as well as a good Christian formation.
- e. The student must share his goods with the others: in the Lasallian school the most advanced were told to teach the slower ones; each morning they took their meagre breakfast to school so as to learn how to eat properly but also so that they could share it with one another.

3. The educator:

- a. The Lasallian teacher is above all the representative of Christ and must take care of his students. As the representative, minister, ambassador and apostle sent by Christ, he must be worthy of this position and faithful in fulfilling its duties. By doing this, which is his career, he will become a saint. No further miracles are asked of him.
- b. The Lasallian educator is a man full of faith and zeal. Faith makes him look on and evaluate everything from God's point of view, by whose word, as found in sacred scripture he is inspired. His zeal causes him to communicate this faith to the students and to help them to live by faith so that they will become worthy Christians.
- c. The Lasallian educator, to do his job well, should above all else teach carefully and competently the subjects he has been given to teach. He must see that the students understand them and make progress in them. He should possess the science and art of communication: he should be an educator.
- d. The Lasallian educator at one and the same time is a teacher and an educator in the Faith. By his example, personality and attitude he transmits to the student the message of the Gospel. Even if he has not to give religion lessons, he continues being an educator in the faith. All the more so if he has also to give lessons in religion. Therefore the Lasallian educator must be as competent in the science and arts subjects which he teaches as in his knowledge of religion.
- e. The Lasallian educator is for the student a "brother". As such he must understand the student and be always at his side, especially when he has any difficulty. He should help him, says de La Salle, as if he were his "guardian angel".
- f. The Lasallian educator lives for the human and christian education of his students, who are the object of his thoughts, cares and prayers.
- g. The Lasallian educator becomes part of a teaching community; he puts at the disposal of others his activity, knowledge, qualities, life and faith.
- h. The Lasallian educator, finally, in order to be faithful to such responsibilities and in order to be an example to his students, should especially practise twelve virtues, the "twelve virtues of a good teacher" which were classics in Lasallian pedagogy. Nowadays they don't have the same names since language has changed; but they are worth recalling since the modern Lasallian educator still needs them: Seriousness, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, judgment, mildness, zeal, watchfulness, piety and generosity.

I believe that the above summary gives the essential characteristics of Lasallian education as they have appeared over the past three centuries. I believe that on the whole they are relevant today, and that we should continue living these characteristics if we want to be faithful to what we call the Lasallian teaching method or pedagogy and which is our own special style of educating.