



## The Holy See

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In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, peace be with you.

*Your Eminence,*

*Dear brothers and sisters, welcome!*

I am very pleased to receive you, in the third centenary of the promulgation of the Bull *In apostolicae Dignitatis solio*, with which [Pope Benedict XIII](#) approved your Institute and your Regulations (26 January 1725). It also coincides with the 75th anniversary of the proclamation, by [Pope Pius XII](#), of Saint John Baptist de La Salle as “Heavenly patron of all educators” (cf. Apostolic Letter *Quod ait*, 15 May 1950: AAS 12, 1950, 631-632).

After three centuries, it is good to see how your presence continues to bear the freshness of a rich and vast educational entity, with which, in various parts of the world, you still dedicate yourselves to the formation of the young with enthusiasm, fidelity and a spirit of sacrifice.

Precisely in the light of this anniversary, I would like to pause and reflect with you on two aspects of your history that I consider important for all of us: *attention to current events* and the *ministerial and missionary dimension of teaching* in the community.

The beginnings of your work say a great deal about “current events”. Saint John Baptist de La Salle began by responding to the request for help from a layperson, Adriano Nyel, who was struggling to maintain his “school of the poor”. Your founder recognized in his request for help a sign of God; he accepted the challenge and set to work. Thus, beyond his own intentions and expectations, he brought to life to a new teaching system: that of the Christian Schools, free and open to everyone. Among the innovative elements he introduced in this pedagogical revolution were the teaching of classes and no longer of individual pupils; instead of Latin, the adoption of French as the language of instruction, which was accessible to all; Sunday lessons, in which even young people forced to work on weekdays were able to participate; and the involvement of families in the school curriculum, according to the principle of the “educational triangle”, which is still valid today. Thus, problems, as they arose, instead of discouraging him, stimulated him to seek creative answers and to venture onto new and often unexplored paths.

All this can but make us think, and it also raises useful questions. What, in the world of youth today, are the most urgent challenges to be faced? What values are to be promoted? What resources can be counted on?

Young people of our time, like those of every age, are a volcano of life, energy, sentiments and ideas. It can be seen from the wonderful things they are able to do, in so many fields. However, they also need help in order for this great wealth to grow in harmony, and to overcome what, albeit in a different way to the past, can still hinder their healthy development.

While, for example, in the seventeenth century the use of the Latin language was an insuperable barrier to communication for many people, today there are other obstacles to be faced. Think of the isolation caused by rampant relational models increasingly marked by superficiality, individualism and emotional instability; the spread of patterns of thought weakened by relativism; and the prevalence of rhythms and lifestyles in which there is not enough room for listening, reflection and dialogue, at school, in the family, and sometimes among peers themselves, with consequent loneliness.

These are demanding challenges, but we too, like Saint John Baptist de La Salle, can turn them into springboards to explore ways, develop tools and adopt new languages to continue to touch the hearts of pupils, helping them and spurring them on to face every obstacle with courage in order to give the best of themselves in life, according to God's plans. In this sense, the attention you pay, in your schools, to the training of teachers and to the creation of educating communities in which the teaching effort is enriched by the contribution of all is commendable. I encourage you to continue along these paths.

But I would like to point out another aspect of the Lasallian reality that I consider important: *teaching* lived as *ministry and mission*, as *consecration* in the Church. Saint John Baptist de La Salle did not want there to be priests among the teachers of the Christian Schools, but only "brothers", so that all your efforts would be directed, with God's help, to the education of the pupils. He loved to say: "Your altar is the cathedra", thus promoting a reality hitherto unknown in the Church of his time: that of *lay* teachers and catechists, invested in the community with a genuine "ministry", in accordance with the principle of evangelizing by educating, and educating by evangelizing (cf. Francis, *Address to participants in the General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, 21 May 2022).

In this way the charism of the school, which you embrace with the fourth vow of teaching, besides being a service to society and a valuable work of charity, still appears today as one of the most beautiful and eloquent expressions of that priestly, prophetic and kingly *munus* we have all received in Baptism, as highlighted in the documents of the Vatican Council II. Thus, in your educational entities, religious brothers make prophetically visible, through their consecration, the baptismal ministry that spurs everyone (cf. Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 44), each

according to his or her status and duties, without differences, “as living members, to expend all their energy for the growth of the Church and its continuous sanctification” ([\*ivi.\*](#), 33).

For this reason, I hope that vocations to Lasallian religious consecration may grow, that they may be encouraged and promoted, in your schools and outside them, and that, in synergy with all the other formative components, they may contribute to inspiring joyful and fruitful paths of holiness among the young people who attend them.

Thank you for what you do! I pray for you, and I impart to you the apostolic Blessing, which I gladly extend to all the Lasallian Family.

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