



5. Appendixes

Appendix A

“The fragile promise” contained in our foundational icons which point towards the horizon of the Brothers’ community

When you consider the most significant Biblical icons that were enlightening the vocational, community, and missionary journey of the first association, we can get a better idea from the inside of the most obvious symbolic and operative forces that led De La Salle and the first Brothers to those unprecedented places where the Spirit took them.

Rather than giving a lot of attention to the personal and Biblical icons of De La Salle, we will focus on the “*corporate icons*” of the community. Especially those that appeared in the very important crossroads of the foundation, the Assembly of 1694. Adding still other icons that appeared towards the end of the community journey, such as those that are spelled out in the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, which was written after 1705 and before the Founder’s death in 1719. That is to say, we focus here exclusively on the corporate icons identified during his mature years, from the forties to the sixties and after his having gone through a long Gospel journey.

The Icons of 1694

For that reason we examine in the first place, the icons of that common journey of the community in 1694, gathered together for a retreat and the assembly. We focus our attention on the scripture readings for those days: from the Rogation days after the Fifth Sunday of Easter up until Trinity Sunday, the day on which the Brothers and De La Salle consecrated themselves formally to the Most Holy Trinity “*to procure your glory, as far as they were able, and as God will require of them.*”

We need to explore therefore the following Meditations: Meditation 37, for Rogation Monday; 38 for Tuesday; 39 for the Eve of the Ascension; 40 for the Feast of the Ascension; 41 for the Sunday in the Octave of the Ascension; 42 for the Eve of Pentecost; 43 for Pentecost Sunday; 44 and 45 for Monday and Tuesday after Pentecost, and, finally, Meditation 46 for Trinity Sunday.

The first thing that caught our attention is the interplay between the Biblical icons and the experience of the community gathered together in assembly, which finally converged on Trinity Sunday. It was about this “*sacred mystery, the object of the Church’s most profound veneration in heaven as well as on earth,*” the beginning and the source of all other *mysteries*. And, we could add, the center towards which all of them are headed.

Trinitarian life, then, as the source from where every journey of faith starts, “*Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed*” (John 20:29), and the center towards which all journeys converge. On this day “*you should pay special honor, and dedicate yourself entirely, to the Most Holy Trinity, to contribute as far as you will be able to extend its glory over all the earth.*” This sentence explicitly recalls the rite of association of Brothers, their consecration to keep together gratuitous schools. At the same time it points toward an obligation: to reveal this mystery to those to whom they have been sent. “*They, too, were consecrated to the Most Holy Trinity in baptism, just as you were.*”

The consecrated life of the Brothers, who are associated to share the mission, is nothing other than participation in Trinitarian life. A life that is focused totally on the contemplation of



that unfathomable mystery, in order to reveal it to others.

That convergence appears gradually in the Meditations for the previous days. The Most Holy Trinity is the most significant founding icon of the association of Brothers, but throughout the assembly during which they were making decisions for their community life and for their professional life, the Brothers followed no other iconographic trail than that proposed by the liturgy of the Church. It is in that icon where the icons of Sacred Scripture are opened. In that icon the mysteries are made present to us.

The texts that shed light on this experience of the Brothers as they gathered in assembly are the following:

- The icon of the *incessant request of a friend* who receives another friend in the middle of the night (Luke 11: 5-6). An icon for Brothers who feel driven to pray to the good and loving Father of orphans and the poor, to the Father who has called them as his children to care for other abandoned children.
- The icon of *Jesus praying for his disciples*, consecrating himself to the Father for those whom the Father has entrusted to him (John 17: 15). An icon for the community of Brothers,

in which each Brother prays from the profound center of Jesus present in the community, for his own disciples. Entreating the God of hearts, that your own heart and that of your Brothers, will be one in the heart of Jesus.

– The icon of the *apostolic community gathered together and praying* as they wait for the Holy Spirit. An icon of a fragile, fearful, weak community, but united with one another in prayer, they believe in the promise by which Jesus assures them “that our heavenly Father will send his Spirit, filled with love and goodness for us, to all those who ask him” (Luke 11: 13). The promise of the Advocate (John 14: 15-16). The strength of the Spirit that opens eyes of faith, now enlightened, they are now able to understand the Scriptures and to explain them clearly. A founding icon for the community of associates whose obligation it is to touch hearts, an aim they cannot achieve without the strength of the Spirit.

– Finally, the icon of an *apostolic community* that is now able, not only to see all things with the eyes of faith, but is now given the fervor, the passion to move and to act by grace. A living icon for the spirit that characterizes them, the gift of faith and impassioned love.

In short, when you explore the Biblical icons, even superficially, that enlighten the *place* from where the first community of Brothers consecrated itself for the first time to the Holy Trinity, all of them seem to converge in that Trinitarian life as lived in this association for mission. We are Brothers because we are children of the compassionate Father who calls us to care for those who are abandoned. We are Brothers because we are brothers of Jesus, participating in his own mission, that of giving life. We are Brothers because we have been enlightened in the midst of darkness, in order to be able to understand, in order to be able to proclaim the Gospel of life to the poor. We are Brothers, mystical and active. We are contemplative Brothers who represent the mysterious plan of salvation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the daily life of educational service.

Gradually, day after day, through prayer and Eucharist, year after year, during their annual retreat, the Brothers continue unawares to go more deeply into that unfathomable mystery of Trinitarian life which consecrates them as Brothers.

Appendix B

The Icons of the Meditations for the Time of Retreat

With this as a backdrop, we can now discover the richness and the profundity of the perspectives and the horizon of the Meditations for the Time of Retreat.

– Lay Brothers as well as other men and women teachers, Brothers for our brothers, “fathers and mothers,” who have neither training nor the time for their own children, whom they have abandoned. We are God’s **cooperators**, the Father’s workers, his **ministers sent** to the city, to the vineyard (MTR 1 and 2).

- We are called by God the Father, as his cooperators, his workers, his ministers, from the place of darkness and destruction where many men and women experience the absence of God. From those places of darkness, with enlightened eyes to see and with impassioned hearts to touch other hearts, we are gratified with the gift of faith and the loving passion of God for the poor. We cooperate in making a new creation.
- We are not priests. We are laity who exercise a lay ministry, gratuitously, for education. We are called as others are called, men and women teachers, also lay, also inflamed by the passion of God and also sent to the vineyard. But we are not like them. Neither priests nor laity, but Brothers. We consecrate ourselves and we form one body, a society called to live the exclusivity of this call of the Father, giving gratuitously what we have received. For this purpose, we consecrate ourselves, as far as we are able and as God requires of us.

– Brothers and disciples of Jesus, his **ambassadors and ministers** to represent his power for those who are far from salvation (MTR 3 and 4).

- We are invited to walk in pursuit of Jesus, to follow him on his journey. Our following him does not have as its object personal perfection, but perfection in compassion. That is to say, our “Following Christ” requires, not only an exterior imitation of Christ, but that we are united with Him in such a way that He is the center of the community of the Brothers. Identified with our only teacher, the power of the passion and the resurrection is made present in each of us for those who have no hope of redemption.

- Disciples and ambassadors of Jesus, we are not his priests. Our participation in the mystery of reconciliation is not from the altar, but in our relationships with our disciples: it is there that the powerful force of grace is made present.
- The other men and women teachers also are invited to discipleship to proclaim the Good News to the poor. We do it as consecrated men in a community of disciples where we commit ourselves to read Scripture every day, to learn how to act as Jesus did, so that we can do the same with our disciples. From the community, we become the visible sacrament and sign of Jesus. In the community, each branch is connected to the one vine. All our actions aim towards Jesus and from Him comes forth all the power of our new actions in the ministry that makes Him present.

– **Contemplative and active Brothers, messengers that know the mysterious plan of God, and who are sent to the heart of the world which is in darkness, like visible angels that know the mystery and that accompany and reveal the Good News of salvation** (MTR 5 and 6).

- We are sent to the world. We do not flee from the world. We are not monks. We live a rhythm that is similar to that of monastic life, of prayer, and of work, but we live it in a different way. As in monastic life, we are impassioned by the love of God and we seek to know Him, to contemplate on Him in prayer every day. But our prayer is apostolic, we go up to God and we come down from Him with the needs of our disciples and to know the mystery and God’s plan for our disciples, we come down with that knowledge to reveal it to those who are far away. The going up and the coming down, like one movement, are centered in God and his saving plan for the poor. Our life does not consist, then, in “Fleeing from the World.” On the contrary, the sending obliges us to incarnate ourselves in the world of abandoned children and young people, to accompany them from that place, as angels proclaiming the Good News. Each place is, then, a place of contemplation and of action. Each place is, at the same time, a place of incarnation and openness to a transcendent God. Our teaching roles are that privileged place of the experience of the saving action of God.



JAWarletta

– The **“community of Brothers” in the Church**. As a *community of equals*, it is a *sign of communion and of mission* that puts the evangelizing roles of those who have been destined by God and by Christ to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom within reach of those who are far from salvation. We are not presbyters but apostles of the Gospel, builders of the Church in service of the Word. We are ministers of the Church (MTR 7 and 8).

- Like the apostles and the bishops who succeeded them in the history of the Church, by means of our roles and professional work, we participate in a Church ministry, the ministry of the Word. Our entire educational project is, therefore, one of evangelization. Initiation into the mysteries of faith, the practice of the Gospel maxims, of prayer and of the sacraments, are framed within education, so that those who have lived without hope, can now participate in life to the full.
- We are not concerned about honorary titles nor privileged rank within the Church and we do not aspire to ecclesiastical status that will assure for us recognition and brilliance. We are simply Brothers to our brothers and sisters. Nor do we act independently from ecclesial authority. Together and by association, we are in the Church signs of what it means to be truly a Church that is stripped and poor, consecrated for mission, fraternal communion, where charisms are shared to fulfill the one mission.
- In a certain way, our fraternity provides for many lay persons and for many young people, who otherwise would feel marginalized within the Church, the place for living covenants and for building the Kingdom.

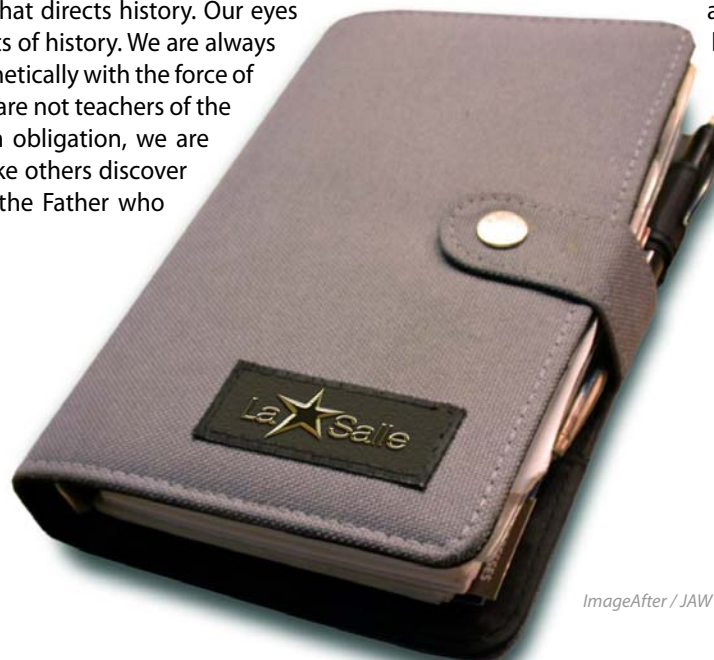
– Brothers who live the **same demands as did the prophets: an impassioned love for God and the procurement of God’s glory, and an unconditional and ardent love for those who have been entrusted to us** (MTR 9, 10, 11, and 12).

- Like Samuel, we are sentries and prophets captivated and seduced by the love of God, with our eyes set on the powerful Word of God that directs history. Our eyes are also set on the events of history. We are always ready to intervene prophetically with the force of that powerful word. We are not teachers of the law that oppresses with obligation, we are prophets of love. To make others discover the mysterious plan of the Father who

pardons, reconciles, sanctifies.

- We are not fanatical and inflexible defenders of the law, we exercise our role as prophet in the daily exercise of our employ, inventing the best teaching methods, mentoring, encouraging, critiquing, leading. Always loving with the passion of God for those who suffer.
- We are **God’s stewards and deputies**, visible signs of God’s saving love. We are the bursars, the servants sent by the father to work in the Kingdom (MTR 13, 14, 15, 16).
- As stewards, we do not act like landlords. We are workers in the Kingdom, building day by day through our work that new world and new creation, which will reach its fullness in Christ at the end of time. We do not dominate others. Our leadership is that of faith and love.
- We do not run away from the eschatology of end-time nor are we prophets who threaten with destruction and punishment. Builders of the Kingdom, we believe that the saving force of the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, is here already and now active. We rejoice daily in the gifts and talents that we put into action to proclaim and to build the Kingdom that is growing in history without our being aware of it, until reaching its fullness.
- At the end, all icons are turned around. We are not the ones who are the saviors; rather it is those whom we serve, who become our defenders and saviors. We see ourselves associated with them, gathered in one communion, in one contemplation of the unfathomable mystery of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we will shine like the stars, with that light that burst through the darkness at the beginning of our journey.

In summary, we can say that the Biblical icons of MTR resound and converge with those proposed by De La Salle during those days of assembly in 1694. Each Brother, associated from deep within himself, from deep within each Brother, from deep within the community, is invited to follow a continuing movement which, pulled away from his daily life, with its joys and doubts, its promises and hopes, leads him toward that center which is Jesus. From that center he goes out, driven to fulfill his ministry, to represent what he has seen and lived.



ImageAfter / JAW