



# Lasallian Reflections

No. 5d

Brothers of the Christian Schools

March 2002

## Unity in Diversity

*When people are animated by the charity of Christ they feel united – and the needs, sufferings, and joys of others are felt as their own. (John XXIII)*

*Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.*

**Opening song** As appropriate [for example, “We Are One in the Spirit”]

**Reading** from John Johnston’s *Pastoral Letter: Look to the Future*, 1 January 1998, pp. 63-64

Brothers of varying ages, temperaments, characters, races, ethnic groups, and even nationalities constitute our communities. The Pope reminds us that religious communities are “signs that dialogue is always possible and that communion can bring differences into harmony” (*Vita Consecrata*, 51). But we know that achieving unity in such diversity is not easy. Certainly it is essential that we have realistic expectations. St. De La Salle wrote that “union in a community is a precious gem” (M 91.2). But he also said that “a community in which charity and union are lacking is a hell” (M 91.2 & 65.1).

With striking candor he asserted: “It is impossible for several persons living together not to have to suffer from one another... If you believe that you have come to community without being obliged to suffer the defects of your Brothers, you are deceiving yourself and you made a mistake in coming here. Take proper measures in this regard for the future and for all the rest of your life” (M 74.1,2).



**Our response** *Psalm 80:1-4, 15-20*

**Side One:** O shepherd of Israel, hearken,  
O guide of the flock of Joseph!  
From your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth  
before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh.

**Side Two:** Rouse your power and come to our aid.  
O Lord of hosts, restore us;  
if your face shine upon us,  
then we shall be safe.

**Side One:** Once again, O Lord of hosts,  
look down from heaven, and see;  
take care of this vine,  
and protect what your right hand has planted.

**Side Two:** Let those who would burn it with fire  
or cut it down  
perish before you at your rebuke.

**Side One:** May your help be with those at your right hand,  
with those whom you yourself made strong.  
Then we will no more withdraw from you.

**Side Two:** Give us new life  
and we will call upon your name.

**Side One:** O Lord of hosts, restore us .  
If your face shine upon us,  
then we shall be safe.

**Side Two:** Glory to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit;

**Side One:** As it was in the beginning, is now,  
and will be forever. Amen.



**Reading** from Melanie Svoboda's *Of Clogs and Stocking Feet: Reflections on the Future of Religious Life*

Community living will always be a challenge for us. Sometimes, I think, we make that challenge unnecessarily more difficult by holding up too high an ideal from Scripture. When speaking of the early Christian community, for example, we often quote these words from Acts: "See how they love one another." But we must remember that those words are only part of the ideal. Acts also tells us of several major disagreements and arguments within the same early Christian community. Even the leaders, Peter and Paul, "had it out" with one another on more than one occasion. "See how they love one another" is only half of the picture of community living. See how they *disagree* or *argue* with one another is the other half. More accurately we should say, "See how they *argue* with one another and yet still *love* one another." In community life today we are experiencing more freedom to disagree with one another. This, too, is "good news."

### **Pause for quiet reflection**

- *do you strive to overcome the differences you have with others and seek harmonious communion with those with whom you live in community?*
- *are your expectations of community living and of those with whom you live in community realistic?*
- *how attentive are you to the needs of others? how attentive are others to your needs?*
- *how have you grown as a human being as a consequence of your life in community?*

**Intercessions** • *for whom or for what do we pray?*

## Closing Prayer

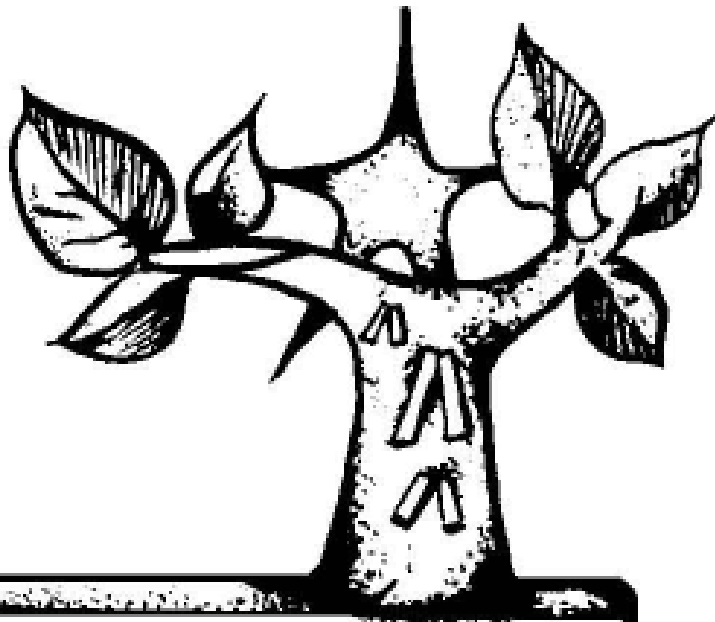
**All:** Lord, when we look at all of life around us,  
may we see the world as you see it.

Lord, when we hear others speak,  
may we listen to them as you listen to them.

Lord, when we speak to others,  
may we use words of respect and kindness.

Lord, when we use our hands,  
may we place all of our energies in your service.

Lord, as we live each day,  
may we walk always in your presence. Amen



**Saint John Baptist de La Salle,  
pray for us.**

**Live Jesus in our hearts, forever!**