

“Year of Faith” and the Brothers of the Christian Schools

The Apostolic Letter, *Porta Fidei*, by Benedict XVI, declaring the Year of Faith from October 11, 2012 to November 24, 2013, cites the first five paragraphs of the Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* (Christ is the Light of the World), as the foundation of the new papal proclamation:

1. The Church is the sacrament of union with God, and the union of all humanity. Given today’s world of technological and cultural realities, the union of all humanity is an urgent task.
2. It is God’s plan from all eternity that all creation be joined to his Son. This plan unfolds in the Old Testament, and through the life of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. Jesus came and began by announcing “The Kingdom of God is here.” The Paschal Mystery of Jesus, which is celebrated in the Eucharist, and the power of the Holy Spirit are the means of achieving this.
4. At his death, Jesus gave “His Spirit.” The Spirit works through the Church to achieve the union God intends.
5. The life of the Church patterned upon Jesus and empowered by the Spirit, moves through all humanity and creation to realize the Kingdom of God.

All who are baptized into the Body of Christ—the Church—share in the life of Jesus. They are members of his Body; they share in the prophetic mission of Jesus, which is to announce the Kingdom; and they share the Priesthood of Jesus, which is to bring the entire world to God. The first movement in this Year of Faith becomes that of the baptized realizing and accepting their own being, and their own calling.

If we speak of Evangelization, the first to be evangelized are the baptized. Kevin Seasoltz in his latest book writes: “...contemplation comes before action.” The Year of Faith does begin with us.

We Brothers, and Lasallians, in the vision of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools have as our basic spirit “Faith and Zeal.” To live according to our spirit today is to nourish our own faith.

Several writers of theology and spirituality note the fact that the rapid development of the world, of knowledge, and the understanding of the human person come to our aid in understanding our faith more deeply. So, we could use the title of Marcus J. Borg’s book “Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time,” as an encouragement to examine our own understanding of the scripture, of sacraments, and our understanding of God.

De La Salle in his meditations frequently exhorts the Brother to keep up the study of religion, and the scripture. Our habit had the inside pocket to carry the New Testament.



This was one of De La Salle's incentives to live by the gospel. "From our studies," he said, "come our enthusiasm, and devotion to share the faith with our students."

Pius X gave the Brothers of the Christian Schools the recognition of "Apostles of the Catechism." We may have appreciated this in one way or another. Yet, it may be a good move to ask ourselves what we may think of that today. Catechism has become a word with several connotations. It does give a specific definition of what is called "Religious Education." I remember very well the turmoil which took place among us in the 1970s when the concept that each Brother teach religion came under scrutiny, and, unfortunately, sometimes caused division.

Examining the concept of the Year of Faith, we might also look beyond the children and teenagers, college students who are in our schools. It might be good to realize that those who are being encouraged to participate in the Year of Faith are mostly adults, the life-long Catholics, as well as young people. Growing in faith is a life-long process and journey. De La Salle, in speaking of religious education to children always counsels: use language that their age can comprehend. The unfathomable mystery of God is at the basis of our faith. As adults, our life experiences give us the capability to comprehend this mystery. Of course, we can appreciate the fact that the grace of the Holy Spirit helps our human intellect as much as we are able. In fact, if we go back to the Vatican II document, I think it is obvious that *Lumen Gentium* addresses adult Catholics.

In the exhortations for the Year of Faith there is appeal made to religious to be among those who encourage adults to deepen their faith. This may be a position we older Brothers can consider. Could we support a local parish in its efforts to provide sessions for adults in this Year of Faith. Possibly there are other venues as well as a parish in which people gather to deepen their faith.

De La Salle in his *Meditations* has an insightful statement about the mission of education: "We teach all the human sciences so that the mind may tolerate mystery!" Education helps develop and open one's mind as well as embrace life. De La Salle also encourages the Brothers to remain faithful to religious instruction "in the hope," he writes, "that some of your students *may* become Christians".

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