



## NOVEMBER 21, 1691 THE HEROIC VOW

... NOVEMBER 21, 2014 THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

So often when we hear the word *RELIGION* we think of a corpus of time-tested beliefs, or an institution that has weathered centuries of spiritual and temporal highs and lows, or maybe we even experience it as an organized approach to our relationship with God. If this were Final Jeopardy I hope that Alex Trebek would accept any of the above ... but let's look a bit deeper at the basic Latin root of the word.

According to Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, noted author on topics of contemporary spirituality, religion has a main and final goal. It is to **RECONNECT** us (*re-ligare*) to the whole, to ourselves and to one another – and thus heal us. So the purpose of religion is to bind us together so that as a community we can be healed.

This sounds to me a lot like the religion that Pope Francis now calls us to live ... a community of believers who carries each other's burdens, forgives one another, tries hard not to judge, celebrates together and seeks Jesus in the faces of the most neglected. For this purpose we are re-connected. Not to be a mutual admiration society but to be bound to one another knowing that as individuals we wouldn't be able to carry out the gospel mission on our own.

Now let's turn back the clock 323 years to the year 1691. John Baptist de La Salle had begun the work of the schools with his rag-tag band of Brothers about ten years before and was in the throes of indecision as to whether or not to continue this seemingly foolish enterprise. Brothers were dying from exhaustion. Many had left the rigor of his fledgling community. He was ridiculed by the local Church and terribly misunderstood by his own family. It was definitely the moment to abandon ship or find a new way of shoring up this leaky arc. He needed to find a way reconnect with the God who called him, with the Brothers who supported him and with the Mission that brought healing to the neediest of children.

On November 21, 1691, along with two of his "principal Brothers," Nicholas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin, De la Salle took the proverbial "leap of faith." In secret from the rest of the community, he and his closest confidants made what today we refer to as the HEROIC VOW. They vowed to the God of the Trinity, that they would remain in a life-long association for the running of the Christian Schools no matter what ... even if it meant to beg in the streets and to live on bread

alone. They “bought territory,” as the prophet Jeremiah proclaimed, in order that the Brothers, their students and families would have HOPE. This pragmatic act of apostolic heroism has had a ripple effect among the Brothers for more than three centuries now. Each of us vows before the same Holy Trinity to live in Association with the Brothers of the Christian Schools for life. We do this so that the Lasallian Mission may continue to educate the minds and touch the hearts of countless children, youth, adults and families who live on the periphery and are in need of “healing.”

As we begin this Year of Consecrated Life in the Church, it is good to *reconnect* with our own roots of consecration as Brothers, and for all of us Lasallians, to remember what a difference one’s willingness to make an extravagant gesture with his or her life can mean. Jesus knew it. De La Salle found his way to it. All of the saints, recognized or not, understood the price that had to be paid in order for their dreams to come true.

Consecration means becoming *holy with ...* with the Brothers of the Christian Schools, with the entire Lasallian Family, with the Church and with the all embracing Kingdom of God. Why did Jesus make the ultimate sacrifice? Why did De La Salle make the Heroic Vow? Why do we remain in Association? The answer is really quite simple. We *re-ligare* – reconnect – so that others may be healed. We join in consecrated community life so that our students may *be saved*.

In this year of celebration of Consecrated Life let us reconnect to the whole, to one another and to ourselves so that Jesus may live in and heal the hearts of us all ... FOREVER!

Brother Charles Kitson, FSC  
Auxiliary Visitor, DENA