



*Meditations  
for the Time  
of Retreat*

Saint John Baptist de La Salle

*A Lasallian Home Retreat*

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Brother Vincent Pelletier, FSC

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# Preface

The *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (MTR) by Saint John Baptist de La Salle were first published, after his death, in 1730. They represent, along with the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, the foundational texts of Lasallian spirituality. Yet, it seems that by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the retreat meditations had receded in the spiritual practices of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. That is, they were not regularly used for end-of-year retreats and only used on occasion in community prayer. They were waiting to be rediscovered.

Brother Michel Sauvage, one of the pioneers in the renewal of Lasallian studies, recounts his experience of rediscovery, and even today one can feel his energy and joy. It was “like a bedazzlement, a lightning bolt. I discovered a realistic, dynamic, theological, mystical, apostolic, and—in a nutshell—deeply spiritual text.” And it wasn’t only the text that struck him. The MTR also opened up a deeper understanding of the spiritual personality of De La Salle: “. . . this was a completely different Founder whom I met: positive, open to human life and to the Mystery of the Living God and the salvation of humanity” (*Fragile Hope of a Witness*, p. 267).

In the same year as Brother Michel’s rediscovery, the 38<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (1956) established a commission dedicated to research and critical studies of De La Salle’s writings. It set in motion a resurgence of interest in foundational texts such as the retreat meditations. As foundational texts were retranslated and reintroduced the Lasallian charism could be seen for what it had always been: an integrated and relevant apostolic spirituality. When in 1953 the first English translation of the Lasallian meditations since 1882 was completed by Brother Clair Stanislaus (W. J. Battersby) it was enthusiastically received. Brother Augustine Loes’ translation of

the MTR in 1975, along with the masterful introduction by Brother Miguel Campos, made a significant impact as both a text for prayer and for critical study. Between 1987 and 2002 Lasallian Publications translated the complete works of De La Salle and published critical studies. The whole corpus of meditations was translated by Brothers Richard Arnandez and Augustine Loes in 1994; a revision of that work was completed by Brother Paul Grass in 2007, the version that is employed in this edition.

This retreat book based on the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* represents a creative breakthrough in this ongoing growth of the Lasallian tradition. It responds to a commonly expressed need for a deeper relationship with God when getting away for a retreat is a challenge. Brother Vincent Pelletier prepared these meditations in the context of a home-based retreat for those who want to continue growing in their prayer life so as to sustain their educational ministry. His keen insight is that these meditations are meant to stir a conversation with Jesus, who sends us forth as “God’s co-workers” (1 Corinthians 3:9). Here, he has done something original and intuitive. He complements each meditation point with a passage from Scripture in order to deepen the conversation.

It is a touchstone of the Lasallian spiritual vision that an encounter with young people is an encounter with God. This retreat encourages one to listen to one’s encounters and to discern the loving and living presence of God with De La Salle and Scripture as guides. Brother Vincent accompanies the retreatant by way of his commentaries, but especially through the Scriptural passages he recommends for deepening one’s encounter with Christ. I’m confident that this retreat will offer moments of discovery and rediscovery and food for the journey, whether one is a seasoned veteran or a learning apprentice.

*Brother Timothy Coldwell, FSC, Editor*



# I. Introduction

Saint John Baptist de La Salle developed the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* for the annual retreat of the Brothers and “all people who are engaged in the education of youth.” These sixteen meditations, written by De La Salle over a number of years, frame what may be one of the first “interactive” retreats we know of, given that they were in “dialogue” with the shared apostolic experience of the Brothers.

In the final portion of this book I offer orientations for the experience of prayer, particularly prayer that is relational and in dialogue with God, one’s experience and one another. Titled “Dwelling in the Presence: Prayer as Relationship,” it provides a perspective on Lasallian prayer that may be of help in preparation for the retreat or in the integration period following.

It is helpful to keep in mind De La Salle’s historical and cultural context. For instance, it is noteworthy that he devotes so little time to the examination of conscience of a Brother’s sinfulness, understood as the breaking of commandments. The examination that De La Salle puts before the Brother is notable for that time in history, in that it is focused on fidelity to the exercising of one’s responsibility as an apostle to one’s disciples. His approach is not negative but very positive. This is rather remarkable when one considers the historical reality of the Church in seventeenth and early eighteenth-century France.

Though these retreat meditations represent one of the great living contributions he has made to those who live and practice the educational spirituality he introduced, such factors as time, travel, and expense can make it difficult or even impossible to participate in an eight-day retreat



away from home at the conclusion of the academic year. It is in response to these limitations that a Lasallian “home retreat” was composed—to bring the retreat to the retreatant.

Each of the meditations in the home retreat is preceded by a short commentary to prepare you to pray. In this home retreat, it is recommended that you receive each meditation as your focus for one week, and that you spend at least a few minutes each day on the meditation. The number of periods of time of prayer is flexible and will need to be worked out as the retreat unfolds and time allows. It is important that the retreatant recognize that the Spirit, who is the true director of the retreat, guides each person uniquely. Some may need three periods of prayer, another four or five. Five is not necessarily better than three; it is about quality, not quantity. How often you pray is entirely up to you. How long the retreat takes is also entirely up to you. The objective of the retreat is not to finish the retreat. Also, a retreatant may need to spend more time on one meditation topic than another. If the first meditation is nourishing and does not seem finished, and the retreatant senses that there is more there that the Spirit wants to reveal, it is recommended you stay on that point. The objective is that, as a Lasallian, each prayer time deepens your relationship with God, who dwells in the depths of the heart and soul.

The *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* are saturated with Scripture. De La Salle uses Scripture to help the Lasallian see his or her unique vocation within the structure of the Church, as People of God, and to help the retreatant focus on the greatness of this call and the responsibilities that come from this call. The narrative of each meditation is meant to (1) focus the retreatant on one’s unique and particular vocation, vowed or un-vowed, and (2) point the retreatant to Scriptural passages illuminating his or her call and ministry. It is in this spirit that De La Salle advised,

“Strive after the example of your divine master, Jesus Christ, to want only what God wants, when he wants it, and in the way he wants it” (Med 24.1).

The meditations can be grouped in the following narrative themes. If more time is spent on a particular meditation, you may find that you do not need to spend as much time on the other meditations with a similar theme.

**Meditations 1-4:** God’s Plan for Salvation and the Brother’s Role in that Plan

**Meditations 5-6:** The Brother as Guardian Angel

**Meditations 7-9:** The Importance of the Role of the Brother as Educator of Children in the Church

**Meditations 10-12:** The Spirit of Zeal and an Examination of Fidelity to a Spirit of Zeal

**Meditations 13-16:** The Judgment of a Brother’s Fidelity to His Vocation to His Students

Select a location to pray each day. This place needs to be quiet and as free as possible from outside distractions. The less sensate stimulation, the better. Posture is a personal preference. Some retreatants like to kneel while others prefer to sit. If you sit, the chair should be neither too comfortable nor too uncomfortable. Some people like to have a candle lit before them or an icon or holy picture. This is simply personal preference.

The format for the home retreat is uncomplicated. Each of the sixteen meditations is preceded by an introductory commentary. Each meditation is presented in three points.

It is recommended that you place yourself in the presence of God before reading through the meditation's first, second, or third point. You are encouraged to stay with a meditation point for as long as it is fruitful.

Scripture passages follow each of the three points of the meditation. The retreatant is, of course, free to choose his or her own passage. In light of the commentary and the meditation, use the Scripture passage as you spend time in God's presence in quiet reflection and prayer. Use your imagination and your feelings and allow yourself to "feel what God feels."

You might ask, quite appropriately, "But how do I know if I'm on the right track or doing it correctly?" First of all, there is no "right way." If your prayer time is bringing you into contact with God and deepening your relationship with God, you're on the right track. At the same time, it is advisable that a retreatant be in conversation with someone about how the retreat is going. For this reason, it is recommended that a retreatant see a competent spiritual director while making this retreat. It is always advisable to meet with the director in person, but this is not always possible. When a personal meeting cannot be arranged, direction can be done via videoconference, phone, and even by email.

Another way of checking on how you are doing is by being part of a "Lasallian home retreat group." This would be a group of Lasallians who are all making the retreat and gather periodically to share their experiences. You can talk about what has happened in the course of prayer, what has been helpful and what has not been helpful, and so on. As a community you can close the physical distance even as together you grow closer to the God who calls each one by name.

*Brother Vincent Pelletier, FSC*

First Sunday of Advent, 2020





## II. Lasallian Home Retreat





# *First Meditation* *for the Time of Retreat:*

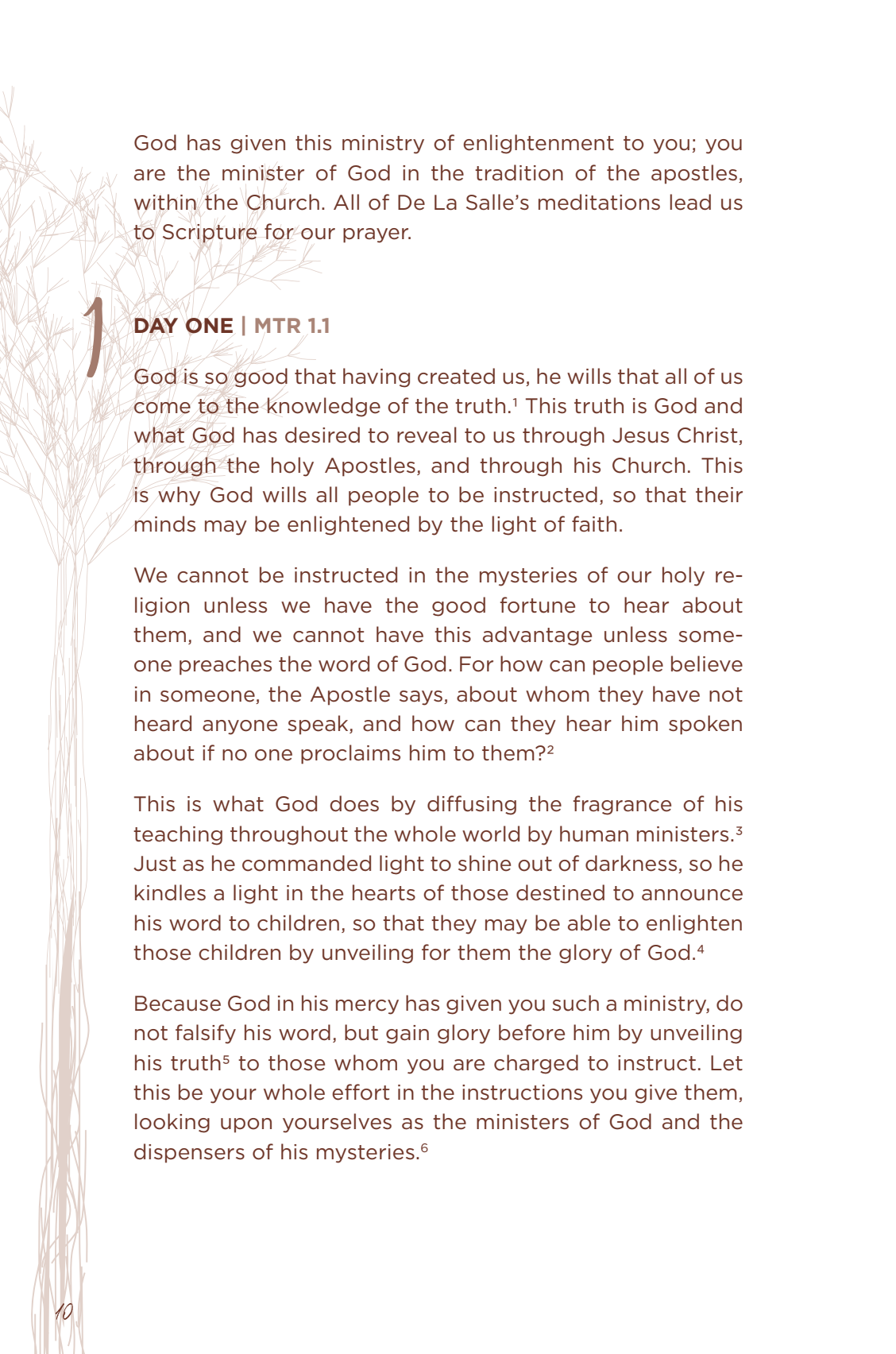
That God in his Providence has  
established the Christian Schools

**COMMENTARY:** The Founder sets the tone for this meditation and for the retreat on a most positive note: “God is so good....” This positive approach is a theme that runs through the retreat when one considers that the Founder is writing this retreat so shortly after the Council of Trent, which so strongly emphasized observance of law and awareness of sin.

The Founder also says, “God desires....” The emphasis here is on the affect of God. God is not presented to you as remote and far removed but a personal God who is engaged in an affective way in you and the unique vocation that God has given to you. This introduction of the feelings of God, again, sets the tone for the relationship that you have with God and God with you, as you journey through the retreat.

This meditation invites you to a spirit of faith, to see as God sees, to see the world and yourself through God’s loving and compassionate eyes. The Christian School is part of God’s plan. God created light from darkness (Gen. 1:3). In God’s providence, God caused the Christian School to come into being to bring children from darkness to light (2 Cor. 4:6). Students are in darkness; God providentially called Brothers to bring students from darkness (Rom. 10:14).





God has given this ministry of enlightenment to you; you are the minister of God in the tradition of the apostles, within the Church. All of De La Salle's meditations lead us to Scripture for our prayer.

# 1

## DAY ONE | MTR 1.1

God is so good that having created us, he wills that all of us come to the knowledge of the truth.<sup>1</sup> This truth is God and what God has desired to reveal to us through Jesus Christ, through the holy Apostles, and through his Church. This is why God wills all people to be instructed, so that their minds may be enlightened by the light of faith.

We cannot be instructed in the mysteries of our holy religion unless we have the good fortune to hear about them, and we cannot have this advantage unless someone preaches the word of God. For how can people believe in someone, the Apostle says, about whom they have not heard anyone speak, and how can they hear him spoken about if no one proclaims him to them?<sup>2</sup>

This is what God does by diffusing the fragrance of his teaching throughout the whole world by human ministers.<sup>3</sup> Just as he commanded light to shine out of darkness, so he kindles a light in the hearts of those destined to announce his word to children, so that they may be able to enlighten those children by unveiling for them the glory of God.<sup>4</sup>

Because God in his mercy has given you such a ministry, do not falsify his word, but gain glory before him by unveiling his truth<sup>5</sup> to those whom you are charged to instruct. Let this be your whole effort in the instructions you give them, looking upon yourselves as the ministers of God and the dispensers of his mysteries.<sup>6</sup>

**ROMANS 10:14-17:** But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring [the] good news!” But not everyone has heeded the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what was heard from us?” Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

## DAY TWO | MTR 1.2

# 2

One of the main duties of fathers and mothers is to bring up their children in a Christian manner and to teach them their religion. But most parents are not sufficiently enlightened in these matters. Some are taken up with their daily concerns and the care of their family; others, under the constant anxiety of earning the necessities of life for themselves and their children, cannot take the time to teach their children their duties as Christians.

It is characteristic of the providence of God and of his vigilance over human conduct to substitute for fathers and mothers people who have enough knowledge and zeal to bring children to the knowledge of God and of his mysteries. According to the grace of Jesus Christ that God has given to them, they are like good architects, who give all possible care and attention to lay the foundation<sup>7</sup> of religion and Christian piety in the hearts of these children, a great number of whom would otherwise be abandoned.

You, then, whom God has called to this ministry, work according to the grace that has been given to you to instruct by teaching and to exhort by encouraging those who are

entrusted to your care, guiding them with attention and vigilance<sup>8</sup> in order to fulfill toward them the principal duty of fathers and mothers toward their children.

**1 TIMOTHY 2:3-4:** This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.

# 3

## DAY THREE | MTR 1.3

God wills not only that all come to the knowledge of truth but also that all be saved.<sup>9</sup> He cannot truly desire this without providing the means for it and, therefore, without giving children the teachers who will assist them in the fulfillment of his plan. This, says Saint Paul, is the field that God cultivates, the building that he is raising, and you are the ones whom he has chosen to help in this work by announcing to these children the Gospel of his Son<sup>10</sup> and the truths that are contained in it.

This is why you must honor your ministry and keep trying to save some of these children.<sup>11</sup> Because God, according to the expression of the same Apostle, has made you his ministers in order to reconcile them to him and has entrusted to you for this purpose the word of reconciliation for them, exhort them as if God were exhorting them through you, for you have been destined to cultivate these young plants<sup>12</sup> by announcing to them the truths of the Gospel<sup>13</sup> and to procure for them the means of salvation appropriate to their development.

Do not teach them these truths with scholarly words, lest the cross of Christ, source of our sanctification, become void of meaning<sup>14</sup> and all you say to them would produce no results in their minds or hearts. Because these children are simple and for the most part poorly brought up, those

who help them save themselves must do this in so simple a manner that every word will be clear and easy for them to understand.

Be faithful to this practice, then, so that you can contribute, as far as you are able and as God requires of you, to the salvation of those whom he has entrusted to you.

**1 CORINTHIANS 3:7-10:** Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor. For we are God’s co-workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But each one must be careful how he builds upon it.

**SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES**

- |                  |                |                          |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. 1 Tim. 2:4    | 6. 1 Cor. 4:1  | 11. Rom. 11:13-14        |
| 2. Rom. 10:14-17 | 7. 1 Cor. 3:10 | 12. Ps. 128:3,<br>144:12 |
| 3. 2 Cor. 2:14   | 8. Rom. 12:6-8 | 13. 2 Cor. 5:18-20       |
| 4. 2 Cor. 4:6    | 9. 1 Tim. 2:4  | 14. 1 Cor. 1:17          |
| 5. 2 Cor. 4:1-2  | 10. 1 Cor. 3:9 |                          |

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# Second Meditation for the Time of Retreat:

The means that those responsible for the education of children must use to procure their salvation

**COMMENTARY:** This meditation invites you to see, in a spirit of faith, the reality of your students' life situation. The first reality is that parents have the first duty to educate children in their faith but are not always able to do this. So then, God in his providence raises you up to fulfill this duty on behalf of the parents, who are not able to do this for a variety of reasons in their own daily lives.

The Founder makes it very clear from the start that Jesus is the foundation of your work of evangelizing the students; God has called you to this ministry and given you the gifts you need to perform this duty. Now you need to trust that God will give you the graces you need to exercise this mission.

You are encouraged in your meditation time to see that Jesus is the foundation for this ministry and that God has given you the gifts needed to accomplish this ministry. Pay attention to this fundamental reality. This is not to be taken lightly or passed over quickly.

The meditation stresses that you perform your ministry "free of charge," emphasizing the call to minister and to live in a spirit of faith. God has created the Christian



Schools and you live in faith, believing that God will guide the endeavor. There is one motive for you to do what you do. Teaching is not enough. Bringing the disciples up in a Christian spirit is what is called for. Again, this is not a job but a call, as a disciple and not as an employee.

This meditation is presented very simply, even starkly and bluntly challenging you. You are not just a teacher; you are a partner in God's plan for the salvation of your students. These are strong words. You must not only teach but you must practice what you preach. Again, these are strong, blunt, challenging words.

In this meditation, be careful not to turn in on yourself and examine yourself introspectively. The challenge is to examine yourself with God, with Jesus. Allow Jesus (or the Father, depending on whom you are interacting with in prayer) to speak. The danger is to put words in God's mouth, assuming what God will say. If you do that, well, you put words in God's mouth. But if you are attentive, you can give God the space needed in order to speak intimately within the depths of your being.

The focus is upon your being part of God's "team"; as the Founder says, you are a cooperator with Jesus. Again, powerful and challenging words. His choice of the word "ambassador" is brilliant. An ambassador speaks with authority for the one whom he or she represents. Do you look upon yourself as an ambassador, a spokesperson for Jesus? Pay attention to your feelings during your prayer time. These meditations will surely provoke strong feelings, which you then need to bring to Jesus.

# 4

## DAY FOUR | MTR 2.1

Consider that it is a practice only too common for working people and the poor to allow their children to live on their

own, roaming all over like vagabonds, as long as they are unable to put them to some work. These parents have no concern to send their children to school, because their poverty does not allow them to pay teachers, or else, obliged as they are to look for work outside the home, they have to abandon their children to fend for themselves.

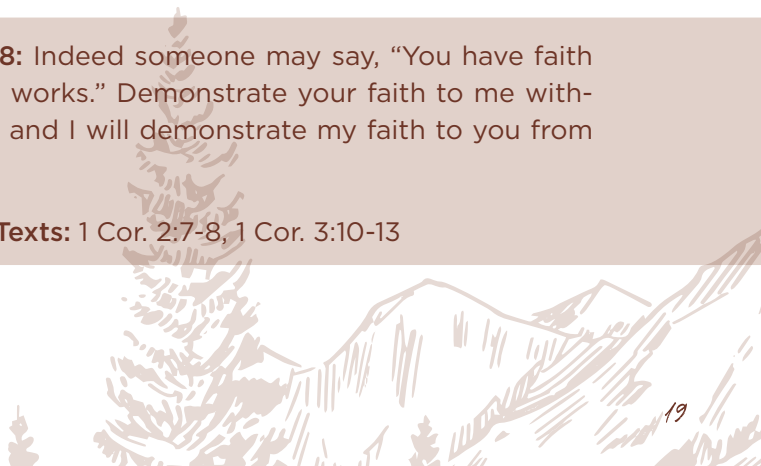
The results of this condition are regrettable, for these poor children, accustomed to lead an idle life for many years, have great difficulty adjusting when it comes time for them to go to work. Furthermore, through association with bad companions, they learn to commit many sins that are very difficult to stop later on because of the persistent bad habits they have contracted over such a long time.

God has had the goodness to remedy so great a misfortune by the establishment of the Christian Schools, where the teaching is offered free of charge and entirely for the glory of God, where the children are kept all day, learn reading, writing, and their religion, and are always busy, so that when their parents want them to go to work, they are prepared for employment.

Thank God, who has had the goodness to employ you to procure such an important advantage for children. Be faithful and exact to do this without any payment, so that you can say with Saint Paul, The source of my consolation is to announce the Gospel free of charge, without having it cost anything to those who hear me.<sup>1</sup>

**JAMES 2:18:** Indeed someone may say, “You have faith and I have works.” Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.

**Alternate Texts:** 1 Cor. 2:7-8, 1 Cor. 3:10-13



# 5

## DAY FIVE | MTR 2.2

It is not enough that children remain in school for most of the day and be kept busy. Those who have dedicated themselves to instruct them must devote themselves especially to bring them up in the Christian spirit, which gives children the wisdom of God, which none of the princes of this world has known.<sup>2</sup> It is completely opposed to the spirit and wisdom of the world, for which you must inspire children with a great horror, because it serves as a cloak for sin. Children cannot be too much separated from such a great evil, for this alone can make them displeasing to God.

Let this be your primary concern, then, and the first effect of your vigilance in your work: to be ever attentive to your students to forestall any action that is bad or even the least bit improper. Help them avoid anything that has the slightest appearance of sin. It is also most important that your vigilance over your students serves to make them be self-controlled and reserved in church and at the exercises of piety that are performed in school. For piety is useful in every way,<sup>3</sup> and it gives a great facility for avoiding sin and for practicing other acts of virtue because of the great number of graces it brings to those who have it.

Do you act in this way with your students? Adopt these practices in the future if you have not been faithful enough in the past.

**1 TIMOTHY 4:6-9:** If you will give these instructions to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching you have followed. Avoid profane and silly myths. Train yourself for devotion, for, while physical training is of limited value, devotion is valuable in every respect, since it holds a promise of life both for the present and for the future. This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance.

**Alternate Texts:** Luke 10:17-24; 1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Tim. 1:14-15

To bring the children whom you instruct to take on the Christian spirit, you must teach them the practical truths of faith in Jesus Christ and the maxims of the holy Gospel with at least as much care as you teach the truths that are purely theoretical.

It is true that a number of doctrines are absolutely necessary for us to know in order to be saved, but what would it serve to know them if we did not take the trouble to practice the good to which we are bound?

Faith, Saint James says, without good works is dead.<sup>4</sup> Saint Paul also says, If I knew all the mysteries and had full knowledge and all the faith such that I move mountains from one place to another but have not charity (that is, sanctifying grace), I am nothing.<sup>5</sup>

Is your main care, then, to instruct your disciples in the maxims of the holy Gospel and the practice of the Christian virtues? Have you anything more at heart than helping them find their happiness in these practices? Do you regard the good you are trying to achieve in them as the foundation of all the good they will practice for the rest of their life? The habits of virtue that are cultivated during youth encounter less resistance in corrupt nature and form the deepest roots in the hearts of those in whom they have been formed.

If you want the instructions you give to those whom you have to instruct to be effective in drawing them to the practice of good, you must practice these truths. You must be full of zeal, so that your students may be able to receive a share in the grace that is in you for doing good and your zeal may draw down on you the Spirit of God to inspire your students in the same way.







# Third Meditation

## for the Time of Retreat:

That those who teach the young  
are cooperators with Jesus Christ  
in the salvation of souls

**COMMENTARY:** At the beginning of the meditation facts are presented:

1. Jesus died for everyone.
2. All have not benefited because they have not accepted it.
3. Each must realize redemption personally.
4. We must will to be saved and thereby complete the work of Jesus.

Saint Paul says, “I fill up what is lacking in the suffering of Jesus.” However, nothing is lacking in Jesus; what is lacking is our willingness to accept redemption. You have the responsibility to enlighten students to this reality.

In the second point, you are reminded that you are an ambassador and minister of Jesus. The focus of this meditation is that Jesus wants your disciples to see Jesus in you. The Spirit acts in and through you and therefore you must give yourself over to the spirit of Jesus. Again, the wording is very blunt and direct. This meditation continues the theme that you are chosen by God, that you are an apostle, that you cooperate with Jesus through your



vocation and ministry. The Founder introduces the image of the Good Shepherd. The Founder again challenges you not only to pray, but to be a person of prayer. He says clearly that the success of your ministry is due, not to your hard work, but to your praying.

Again, strong feelings may arise and you need to allow them to surface and own them. Keep in mind that the challenge is not negative but positive. It is not about what you do wrongly, but a call to do what you do as an apostle.

The third point is a continuation of the meditation for the second day. You are invited to continue to see, in a spirit of faith, that you are called by God to this special ministry to educate children whose parents are not able to teach them how to live the Christian life.

You are reminded that you are to teach practical truths of the faith of Jesus and maxims of the Gospels as well as doctrine. The focus is on virtue, not doctrine. In addition, you are reminded that you must practice what you are teaching your disciples. The image of the vine and the branches offers a strong reminder of how intimately you are united to Jesus in your ministry. You share the same “life blood” that passes through the vine. How do you feel about that? The Founder here uses the word “disciples” rather than “students.” When you say “student,” how do you feel? When you say “disciple,” how do you feel?

# 7

## DAY SEVEN | MTR 3.1

Although Jesus Christ died for everyone, the benefit of his death is, nevertheless, not effected in everyone, because all do not make the effort to apply it to themselves. The response of our will is necessary on our part in order to make it effective. Although the death of Jesus Christ was

more than sufficient to wipe out the sins of all and to be a complete reparation for them, because God has reconciled us through Jesus Christ,<sup>1</sup> nevertheless, the grace that Jesus merited for us effects our salvation only insofar as our will is brought to correspond with it. It is up to each of us to achieve and complete the work of our own redemption.

This is what made Saint Paul say very well, speaking of himself, I accomplish what is lacking in the Passion of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Is there something lacking, then, in the Passion of Christ? Nothing, certainly, on the part of Jesus Christ, but on the part of this holy Apostle, as well as everyone else, what was lacking was the acceptance of his will, the union of his sufferings with those of Jesus Christ as one of his members suffering in him and for him.

Because you are obliged to help your disciples save themselves, you must engage them to unite all their actions to those of Jesus Christ, our Lord, so that their actions, made holy by his merits and by his consecration, are able to be pleasing to God and a means of salvation for them. This is how you must teach them to benefit from the death of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and to make the advantages and merits of his death effective in them.

**2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-21:** And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

# 8

## DAY EIGHT | MTR 3.2

Because you are ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the work that you do, you must act as representing Jesus Christ. He wants your disciples to see him in you and to receive your instructions as if he were instructing them.<sup>3</sup> They must be convinced that your instructions are the truth of Jesus Christ, who speaks with your mouth, that it is only in his name that you teach, and that he has given you authority over them.

They must also be convinced that they are a letter that Jesus Christ dictates to you, which you write each day in their heart, not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God,<sup>4</sup> who acts in you and by you through the power of Jesus Christ. He helps you triumph over all the obstacles that oppose the salvation of these children, enlightening them in the person of Jesus Christ<sup>5</sup> to make them avoid all that could be displeasing to him.

To fulfill this duty with as much perfection and exactness as God requires of you, frequently appeal to the Spirit of our Lord to make you act in your work only under his influence, so that your mind may have no part in it. This Holy Spirit, then, will come upon them generously, so that they will be able to possess the Christian spirit fully.

**LUKE 10:1-5:** After this the Lord appointed seventy[-two] others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this household.’”

**Alternate Text:** 1 Cor. 3:9

All your care for the children entrusted to you would be useless if Jesus Christ did not give the quality, the power, and the efficacy needed to make your care useful. Because the branch of the vine cannot bear fruit of itself (our Lord says) unless it remains attached to the main stem, neither can you bear fruit if you do not remain in me. This will be the glory of my Father, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.<sup>6</sup>

What Jesus Christ says to his holy Apostles he also says to you, that you may understand that all the good you are able to do in your work for those entrusted to you will be true and effective only insofar as Jesus Christ gives it his blessing and you remain united with him. It is the same for you as it is for the branch of the vine, which can bear fruit only if it remains attached to the main stem and draws its sap and strength from the vine, which is also the source of all the goodness of the fruit.

Jesus Christ wants you to understand from this comparison that the more your work for the good of your disciples is given life by him and draws its power from him, the more it will produce good in them. This is why you must ask him earnestly that all your instructions be given life by his Spirit and draw all their power from him. Just as he is the one who enlightens everyone coming into the world,<sup>7</sup> he is also the one who enlightens the minds of your students and leads them to love and practice the good that you teach them.

**JOHN 15:1-8:** “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own

unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

**Alternate Text:** 2 Cor. 5:18

**SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES**

1. 2 Cor. 5:18

4. 2 Cor. 3:3

7. John 1:9

2. Col. 1:24

5. 2 Cor. 4:6

3. 2 Cor. 5:20

6. John 15: 4-8

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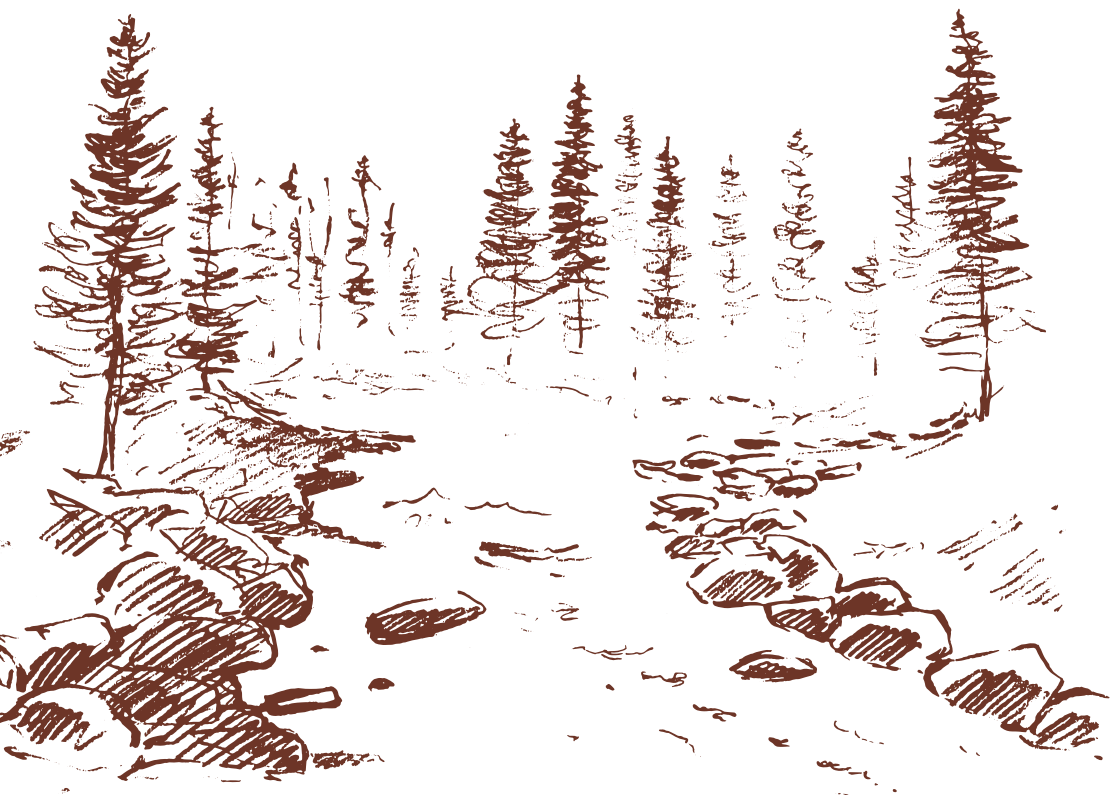
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# *Fourth Meditation for the Time of Retreat:*

What must be done to be true  
cooperators with Jesus Christ  
for the salvation of children

**COMMENTARY:** Some commentators consider this the core meditation. The spirit of faith continues to be the foundation of this meditation. You are challenged to see what you do through the eyes of faith, to see that there is another dimension to what you do.

The first point focuses on the providence of God, God's plan for salvation, and the key role that you play in God's plan. Pay attention to your feelings here, for the challenge is very strong. You plant and water, but God gives the growth and brings the work to fulfillment. When you encounter difficulty, therefore, you are to turn to God who makes the Spirit come alive in you. The challenge is, have you done this?

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. You take up the role of Jesus and therefore need to ask for the grace to do this. Prayer is essential if you are to succeed in your ministry and to present the needs of your disciples to Jesus Christ. Jesus has promised that he will not fail you if you are of this spirit.

This is a very rich meditation and you will probably have to go slowly, taking each piece bit by bit. There is no need to get through it all. It is more important that you go into it



deeply rather than that you cover all of the points that the Founder is presenting. Pay attention to your feelings here.

In the third point you are told that you must not only imitate the behavior of Jesus but must also think of what Jesus did and adopt the spirit of Jesus' goals. Your goal is that, with the help of your teaching, your disciples will live a Christian life. All can be done only through the presence and guidance of the Spirit. You are warned of pride in your ministry. "You must also enter into his purposes and goals." Try to do this in your prayer. Try to *get inside of Jesus* and see things through his eyes. This may sound daunting, but it is possible. In another spiritual tradition it is called the "contemplative experience," to see through the eyes of another and even to feel what the other is feeling.

# 10

## DAY TEN | MTR 4.1

Be convinced of what Saint Paul says, that you plant and water the seed, but it is God through Jesus Christ who makes it grow<sup>1</sup> and brings your work to fulfillment. So when it happens that you encounter some difficulty in the guidance of your disciples, when there are some who do not profit from your instructions and you observe a certain spirit of immorality in them, turn to God with confidence. Very insistently ask Jesus Christ to make his Spirit come alive in you, for he has chosen you to do his work.<sup>2</sup>

Consider Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd of the Gospel, who seeks the lost sheep, puts it on his shoulders, and carries it back<sup>3</sup> to restore it to the fold. Because you are taking his place, consider that you are obliged to do the same thing. Ask him for the grace needed to procure the conversion of hearts.

You must, then, be very devoted to prayer to succeed in your ministry. You must constantly represent the needs of

your disciples to Jesus Christ, explaining to him the difficulties that you have experienced in guiding them. Jesus Christ, seeing that you regard him as the one who can do everything in your work, whereas you are an instrument that must be moved only by him, will not fail to grant you what you ask of him.

**John 10:11-15:** “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep.”

**Alternate Text:** 1 Cor. 3: 5-13

## DAY ELEVEN | MTR 4.2



Jesus Christ, speaking to his Apostles, told them that he gave an example to them, so that they may do as he had done.<sup>4</sup> He also wanted his disciples to accompany him at all the conversions he brought about, so that seeing how he acted, they could be guided and formed by his conduct in all they would have to do to win souls to God.

This is also what you must do, because Jesus Christ has chosen you among so many others to be his cooperators<sup>5</sup> in the salvation of souls. In reading the Gospel, you must study the manner and the means that he used to lead his disciples to practice the truths of the Gospel.

Sometimes he proposed as a happiness everything that the world holds in horror, such as poverty, injuries, insults,

slander, and every kind of persecution for the sake of justice, even telling his disciples that they ought to be glad and rejoice<sup>6</sup> when such things happen to them.

At other times he inspired horror for the sins into which people ordinarily fall, or he proposed virtues to practice, such as gentleness, humility,<sup>7</sup> and the like.

He also made them understand that unless their justice surpassed that of the scribes and the Pharisees (who both-ered themselves about externals only), they would not enter the kingdom of heaven.<sup>8</sup>

Lastly, he wanted the rich and those who have their pleasures in this world to be regarded as unfortunate.<sup>9</sup>

It is according to these and all the other practices of Jesus Christ that you must teach the Christian youth entrusted to you.

**Luke 15:4-5:** “What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy.”

# 12

## DAY TWELVE | MTR 4.3

In carrying out your service to children, you will not fulfill your ministry adequately if you resemble Jesus Christ only in his guidance and conversion of souls. You must also enter into his purposes and goals. He came on earth, as he said, only that people might have life and have it to the full.<sup>10</sup> This is why he said, in another place, that his words are spirit and life.<sup>11</sup> By this he meant that his words procure the true life, which is the life of the soul, for those who hear them and who, with gladness over what they have heard, act on them with love.

This must be your goal when you instruct your disciples, that they live a Christian life and that your words become spirit and life for them. Your words will accomplish this because (1) they will be produced by the Spirit of God living in you, and (2) they will procure the Christian spirit for your disciples.

In possessing this spirit, which is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, they will live that true life which is so valuable to us because it leads surely to eternal life.

Guard against any human attitude toward your disciples; do not take pride in what you are doing. These two things are capable of spoiling all the good there is in the performance of your duties. What have you in this regard that has not been given to you? If it has been given to you, why are you boasting as if you had it on your own?<sup>12</sup>

Keep, then, the goals of your work as completely pure as those of Jesus Christ; by this means you will draw his blessings and graces upon yourselves and all your labors.

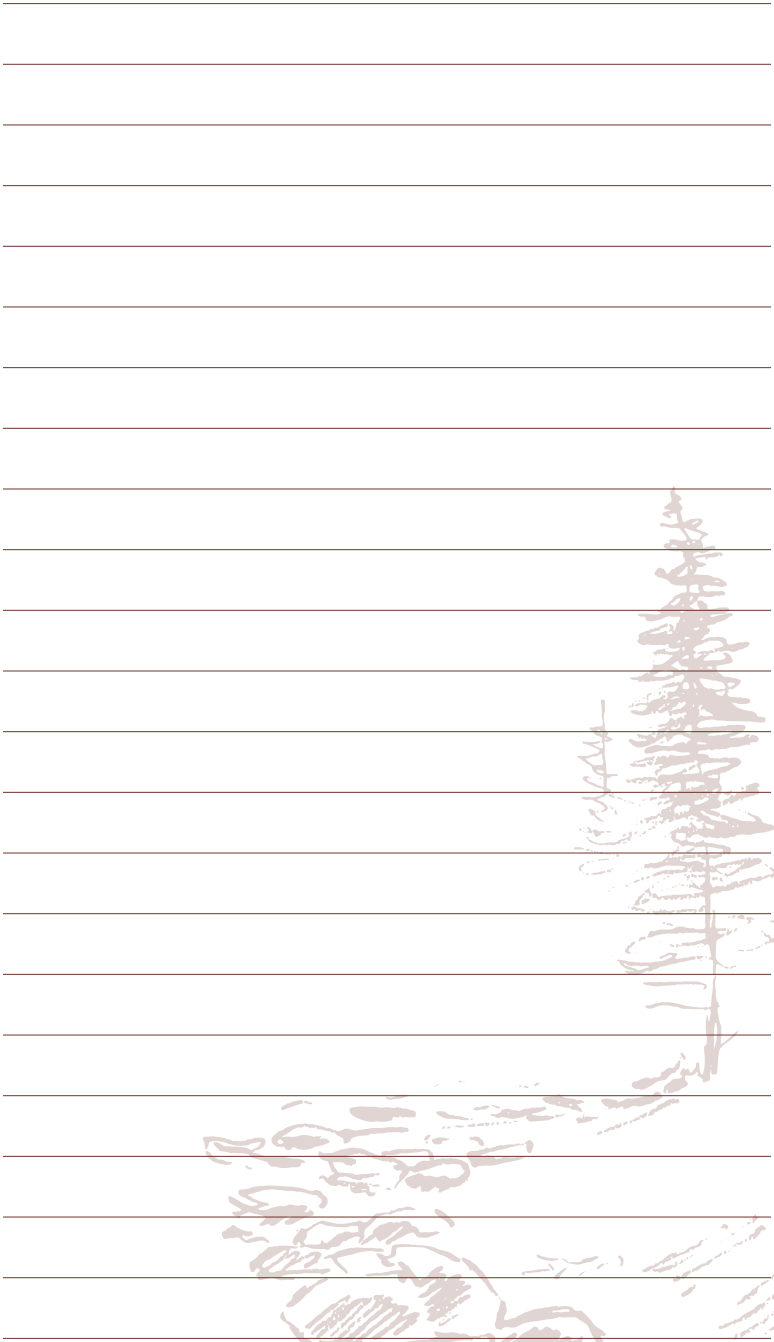
**Matthew 11:27-30:** “All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him. Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

**Alternate Text:** 1 Cor. 3:6

#### SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

- |                |                     |                |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. 1 Cor. 3:6  | 5. 1 Cor. 3:9       | 9. Luke 5:24   |
| 2. 1 Cor. 3:9  | 6. Matt. 5:3, 10-12 | 10. John 10:10 |
| 3. Luke 15:4-5 | 7. Matt. 11:29      | 11. John 6:64  |
| 4. John 13:15  | 8. Matt. 5:20       | 12. 1 Cor. 4:7 |







*God has given this ministry of enlightenment to you; you are the minister of God in the tradition of the apostles, within the Church. All of De La Salle's meditations lead us to Scripture for our prayer.*

— Brother Vincent Pelletier, FSC

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Saint John Baptist de La Salle (1651-1719), founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and patron saint of all teachers, wrote the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* for Brothers and all who are “engaged in the education of youth.” These meditations represent one of the great living contributions De La Salle has made to a Christian spirituality for educators. In view of the difficulties associated with going away for an extended retreat, Brother Vincent offers these meditations in a “home retreat” format, thereby bringing the retreat to you, the retreatant.

It is a touchstone of the Lasallian spiritual vision that an encounter with young people is an encounter with God. This home retreat encourages one to listen to those encounters and to discern the loving and living presence of God in them with De La Salle and Scripture as guides. Brother Vincent accompanies the retreatant by way of his commentaries, and especially through the Scriptural passages he recommends for deepening one’s encounter with Christ.

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Brother Vincent Pelletier, FSC, is a certified spiritual director with decades of experience leading retreats and workshops around the world. He served as a missionary in Ethiopia from 1968 to 2007. He has been involved in inter-congregational religious formation in Africa, the United States, and Italy.

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