

Still & Sail

The Vocations Newsletter of the De La Salle Brothers of the Philippines

Message from the Vocations Ministry Office



Dear Fellow Lasallians,

The world as we know it today is an ocean of rough waves and murky waters.

Living close to two years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that the days have been uncertain, confusing, and despairing at times. These may have brought us thoughts of hopelessness and doubt of what lies ahead of us. But despite all of these, we are thankful for the signs of hope that emerged throughout these challenging times: the development of vaccines, generosity of Filipinos to help those who are most vulnerable, and the the courage of our educational leaders to continue providing human and Christian education to the young, especially the marginalized.

Within this movement of living in doubt to living with hope lies a sacred space of stillness that inspires us as a community to sail on even with the uncertainties that lie ahead.

In this newsletter, you will find reflection materials that you may appreciate little by little, during the periods of stillness that you will find yourself in. These are taken from various authors and sources, that will hopefully help us appreciate the simple, practical, and authentic spirituality that St. La Salle and the Brothers have taught through time.

We hope that with **Still & Sail**, each of us would be able to take time to rest and recognize that sacred space of stillness where we are able to meet with the Captain of our boat, plan with the Captain where to go next, and proceed with hope as we flow with the waves that life may bring.

Be assured that your De La Salle Brothers continue to keep you in our prayers, and we journey together as we say "**Yes, Bro!**" to Christ who continues to call us today to be still, and sail on.

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The Presence of God & The Front Steps

Br. George Van Grieken FSC, 2005 (Abridged)

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For the last year and a half, I have stood on the front steps of the school each morning to greet students as they arrive. What started as only a first-day-of-school occasion stretched into a week, then became a month, and finally turned into a daily ritual. Somewhat to my surprise, people began to express how much they appreciated the fact that I was there, rain or shine, foggy or fair, roasting or shivering. I quickly became a "fixture" in their daily routine of coming to school.

They came to expect me to be there, and now I expect myself to be there as well, despite whatever other obligations and responsibilities await my attention that day. When I stop to think about it, the situation calls to mind our Lasallian prayer: "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God."



Not only am I remembering and encountering the presence of God in those entrusted to our care each and every day, but in a very small way I am a reminder to others of how God is present in their lives each and every day, rain or shine, foggy or fair, and they have a choice of whether or not to recognize it, pay attention to it, and perhaps even encounter it.



"Let us remember..." may be quite challenging, calling for an authentic and active awareness of God's presence within a particular context.

The Lasallian invocation "Let us remember..." that begins each prayer and many activities in the Lasallian world has such evocative power for us because it's something that has grown to become both familiar to hear and challenging to do.

On the one hand, it is something that we hear so often that we rarely hear it at all. Like the greeting "Good Morning," it is easily dismissed as incidental, rote, and harmless; not something that requires real attention. On the other hand, if taken seriously, "Let us remember..." may be quite challenging, calling for an authentic and active awareness of God's presence within a particular context. Ideally, when we use that invocation, we should take a few seconds to do what we are saying; that is, quietly remember that we are in the presence of God (Recall that De La Salle provides six ways to do this in his Method of Interior Prayer).

The Presence of God & The Front Steps

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In my early morning greetings to students, one of the reasons for my growing involvement was the fact that something rote quickly became an invitation to be in relationship. You simply can't say "Good Morning" hundreds of times and mean it without something else going on at the same time. What at first was thought to be rather simple and non-consequential gradually became a personal challenge.

The two or three-second encounters with each student arriving for school, done over a period of weeks and months, built up into genuine, if limited, relationships with readily identifiable personalities. Each person had a specific approach, response, or attitude toward being greeted. It came to the point where I would design a long-term strategy for certain individuals whose sole apparent interest seemed to be to build up my tolerance for rejection, a long-term strategy based on those brief daily observations of their personalities.

“ ———
The words and gesture now become a real invitation to them - all of a sudden, it's no longer dismissible, it's personal. ——— ”

Over a period of weeks or months, their defenses or shyness or simple lack of attention could be incrementally addressed until, at the right time, they could be stopped for a short, profitable conversation. After that, they were hooked and discovered that responding wasn't, and isn't, such a difficult thing after all.

Key elements for success included knowing just when to greet them as they walked by, using the right inflection and loudness in one's greeting, learning their names, smiling, and so on. But the most important element was, and is, eye contact. Once others make eye contact, there has to be some reaction, because a lack of reaction or response at that point puts the responsibility squarely into their court. The words and gesture now become a real invitation to them - all of a sudden it's no longer dismissible, it's personal.

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The interesting question of course is finding out where that crucial "eye contact" with God occurs in our lives.

The parallels with the way that God is present in our lives are no doubt fairly obvious. God also stands at the front steps of our lives, greeting us, rain or shine, foggy or fair. God greets us daily in the people we meet, the situations we face, and even the challenges we encounter. C. S. Lewis wrote that God "whispers to us in our joys, speaks to us in our conscience, and shouts to us in our pain." And God's care is such that there is no giving up. Over a period of weeks or months, our defenses or shyness or simple lack of attention are incrementally addressed until, at the right time, we can be stopped for a short, profitable conversation. After that, we are hooked and discover that responding wasn't, and isn't, such a difficult thing after all. Once God has made "eye contact," the responsibility rests squarely in our court. God's words and gestures now become a real invitation for us - all of a sudden it's no longer dismissible, it's personal.

The interesting question of course is finding out where that crucial "eye contact" with God occurs in our lives. Is it liturgical, interpersonal, aesthetic, kinesthetic, communal, quasi-mystical, or is it more like paying attention to whatever, or whomever, is before us at any one time? I would venture that God's eye contact, God's presence that can't be ignored, is uniquely shaped to touch the heart of each individual - a familiar notion in the Lasallian world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Br. George Van Grieken FSC was born and raised in Holland, he grew up in Napa, California, and has earned a B.A. in Liberal Arts, an M.A. in Theology (Saint Mary's College), and a Ph.D. in Religion and Education (Boston College). He develops curriculum materials for Boards of Trustees at Lasallian schools and has given workshops in the Philippines, Australia, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. Along with his interest in all things Lasallian, he has one published liturgical song (May God Bless You) with Oregon Catholic Press that has a million-plus circulation as part of their annual Music Issue. (from amazon.com)

How can we practice remembering the presence of God?

WATCH VIDEO



The Lighthouse

Looking at our experiences

- In what ways have you experienced God's presence this month?
- What are the 'front steps' in your life where God usually creates 'eye contact' with you?
- In your small simple ways, what can you commit to do to remember God's presence throughout the day?

FOR ASPIRANTS:

- Kindly send a PDF copy of your reflections on 'The Lighthouse' to vocations@delasalle.ph and to your Brother-Mentor within the month.
- Remember to schedule your monthly conversation with your mentor and participate in the activities of your Aspirancy Community.

MORE from the Vocations Ministry Office



BROTHERS' BREAD

Sunday Reflections

Join the Brothers in reflecting on the Sunday readings. For January, Brothers from Bagac, Iligan, and Manila share with us their thoughts on the Gospel. You may access our **playlist** by clicking on the photo.



LIVE, LA SALLE!

Vocation Interviews

For January, we interviewed Br. JJ Jimenez FSC from La Salle University, Ms. Nikki Chan from Hong Kong, and Ms. Kathlyn Lumbres from De La Salle Zobel, as they share with us how they live their Lasallian Vocation. Click on the photo to watch.



WHAT'S UP, BRO? (Season 2)

Vocations TV and Radio Podcast

Catch Br. Nico and Br. Mandy in this partnership with De La Salle University's Green Giant FM, the University's official radio station. They discuss the common misconceptions about the life of the Brothers in the first episode of What's Up, Bro? Season 2!

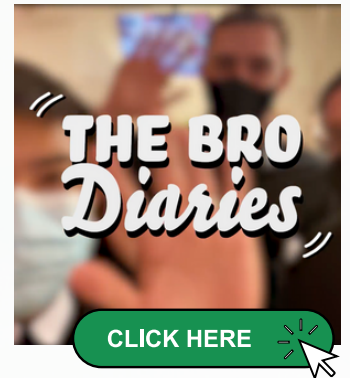


MORE from the Vocations Ministry Office

THE BRO DIARIES

Day to day life of the Brothers

In partnership with De La Salle University's Archers' Network, join us in looking at how Br. Iñigo continues to find meaning in his day to day life.



Thinking about being a Brother too?

LET'S TALK!

Access the link below to schedule a conversation with a De La Salle Brother:

<https://bit.ly/TalkFSC>

