

And he began by saying:
"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!"

Dear lasallian family

When Jesus speaks about the scripture being fulfilled, he does not mean that everything is over and done with. No, rather he means that God's promise to Isaiah still stands and has meaning for the future.

Spreading the joyful message to the poor, giving hope to the disadvantaged – this is work that will never end. It is put into practice whenever and wherever people strive to incorporate the joyous message of Jesus in their daily lives and to live by the principles of that message.

We see the same thing with Jean de La Salle. At the end of his life, he had fulfilled his life's work, brought it to an end, but on his death, his work passed into the hands of others, who have been continuing it now for 300 years. It is this legacy which is at the heart of the anniversary year that has now begun all over the world.

The symbols shown here represent ideas that were of great importance to Jean de La Salle. Of course, over so many years the outward manifestation of our educational work has changed greatly. Especially in the present day, we are constantly seeing new methods and approaches in our work with children and young people.

However, what remains unchanged is the core message: to be whole-hearted in our commitment to young people's development, and in trying to meet the special needs of those who are in our care.

Nowadays you will often hear the word “empathy” used to describe the basis for human communication. Letting other people be themselves, understanding them and responding accordingly – this is what I see as the essential prerequisite not only in all educational work but also in our dealings with anyone with whom we come into contact in our daily lives.

We need to be able to listen and understand what the other person is thinking and feeling, what they have in mind.

Our fellow human beings expect us to take them and their feelings seriously. Everyone wants their problems to be respected. It is of no help at all to them if we simply come along with our teachings and tell them our own story. There has to be an interplay between compassion and sympathy on the one hand and objectivity and distance on the other – a clear distinction between “I” and “you”.

We need to maintain some emotional distance. Of course, it may well be that we are confronted with difficult problems. But we must not go to pieces in sympathy, or allow ourselves to share their anger or grief. Powerful emotions can make us blind to the real issues.

Look at the **heart** and the map of the world. This is intended to show how nearly 94,000 teachers, educators and Brothers in 984 schools and 78 countries are reaching out to a million students around the world. Together, they are all doing their best to ensure that the Lasallian heart continues to beat in every one of us.

The **two hands** symbolise the responsibility of so many people who feel committed to a very special mission. They dedicate their time, abilities and enthusiasm to the goal of making the world a fairer and more humane place.

How often do we set about our work with so much idealism and eagerness and such big ideas? We have our sights set on an idealised image of our students and our work. Yet often the reality does not match up to our ideas. We are brought back down to earth here in the real world, we experience disappointment and failure.

That is often when we need to remember Jean de La Salle. He too suffered setbacks and was close to giving it all up. We have to understand that, ultimately, not everything depends on our own efforts but that we can confidently leave some things in God's hands.

One of the most important tasks of a school is to take a creative approach to life's challenges and not simply to deliver more of the same. The **lightbulb and the plant** are supposed to symbolise life. Light and life belong together.

Working together to find new ways of teaching and educating, seeking new ways into the world of faith – these are the constant challenges to which we must rise.

Here are a few questions that we should remember all year round:

- How can I show more heart and more empathy in my work?
- How can I show my commitment as an educator, especially to those who need special attention?
- How can I apply creativity to bring more light into the lives of others?

Our daily routines often mean that we become lost in the detail and lose sight of the bigger picture. The challenging behaviour of some students, and other accompanying unpleasant problems during the school day, can often obscure our view of the important and also very fulfilling work that we do with young people.

I pray that none of us lose sight of the essentials, and that, aware of our responsibilities, we may succeed in carrying forward the legacy of Jean de La Salle into the future.