CONCLUSION

“I recommend my soul to God and, next all the Brothers of the Society of the Christian Schools with whom he has associated me. I urge them above all else, to always show entire submission to the Church, especially in these evil times, and to give proof of this by never separating themselves from anything from our Holy Father, the Pope and from the Church of Rome, always remembering them that I sent two Brothers to Rome to ask God for the grace that their society might always be entirely submissive there to” (Last Testament and Final words “in John Baptist de La Salle.

This moving confession by John Baptist de La Salle shows that a dedicated response to God’s grace can accomplish milestones worthy of importance which time cannot ever destroy. His conviction in providence and his inordinate faith in his faculties made him spell out his vision in action. The fostering of Christian relationships and the Catholic Church’s ecumenical pilgrimage testify enormously to this marvelous providence. Thus the La Sallian school is an important locus for not only nurturing this spirit but for also imparting this vision – spelling out the religious, spiritual experimental content of the ecumenical movement. The La Salle school does not stop with sensitizing hearts but delivers specific information about the progress made by churches in response to God’s prayers. The quest for Christian unity is not to be viewed as an institutional matter pertaining to catholic life. It can be spelt out as an attitude of the minds and the conversion of the hearts.

However, the job cannot be left in the hands of catechists, chaplains and campus ministers. What is of paramount value is a dedicated faculty with commitment to Christian values who possess a sacramental consciousness.
The most significant aspect of Lasallian unusual educational reforms is experienced in the classrooms. A special ambience is created in the classrooms where students irrespective of their status and calibre are treated with self respect. What teachers adopt to the children under their care can be described as ‘benevolent dictatorship’.

Lasalle’s educational philosophy is remarkable for it is innovative, adjustable and flexible. It is person – centred. It is open to changing needs but oriented towards educating the complete person – resulting in the total integration of personality. In short it is both educative and vocational – a heritage which is a combination of theoretical teaching and also mentoring students to be adept at vocational training. It can best be described as experimental training which results in intellectual, spiritual and personal growth.

The key to De La Salle’s creativity, innovation courage and fortitude was his solid and unshakable faith. It is not surprising he appreciated the Magi for following the star of Bethlehem highlighting their ‘holy audacity in going before King Herod. This in fact is repeated in De La Salle’s life. De Salle voices in his Meditations. “Are we attentive to the inspiration we receive from God? Are we quick to follow them as the Holy Magi were led and be guided by the star which guided them? Frequently the happiness and salvation of the soul depend on this prompt fidelity to Grace”.

This is manifested in the schools where students are led to cultivate a natural boldness, a sense of adventure and a power of imagination exhibiting in turn firmness and a sense of adventure to discovering the creativity and presence of God in the world around them. It is here the teacher student relationship comes into focus. It is teachers who with their empathy and detachment, demonstrate in teaching practice the individual care and corrective
standards of justice and mercy, consistently pursue innovative methodologies to demonstrate the Lasallian dimensions in full measure. This is implicit in teachers who stop from being merely caring people but who penetrate beneath the rags of those children entrusted to their care and see Jesus in them. La Salle is a pedagogical thinker and is the founder and formulator of a distinctively modern pedagogy. In addition to the founding of schools in twenty two cities De La Salle contributed significantly to the terrain of education through his innumerable writings of value. As already pointed out, La Salle’s programme did not stem from either theoretical reading or philosophical intentions.

In responding to the needs of the marginalised De Salle realized his Utopian zeal was directly linked to the teachers. Those in charge were in need of preparation, discipline and devotion. The radicality of the La Sallian program and the response were taken into account. Thus the pedagogy should be targeted not merely on academic disciplines or obtaining scholastic success. It should veer around a system of humanistic and social education which will automatically promote solidarity among the young, alleviate social differences and foment collaboration and interdependence. The inclusion of extra curricular activities into the curricular – such as excursions, cultural visits and sports naturally exclude a preference for the elite and talented. The heroic vow of 1691 helped De La Salle in his mission. Wherever disaster seemed certain De La Salle displayed courage and fortitude. What is vitally worth remembering is the Saint in the making prayed fervently, sought divine guidance, trusted God implicitly and pursued his work with dogged determination. He would even take the risk of fasting. In case he felt the Brothers were becoming too dependent, he would disappear for a few years and return after being called back due to the vow of obedience.

Thus Lasallian pedagogy does not simply comprise of rules to be faithfully adhered to by the teachers as part and parcel of the academic. It is
inseparable and interlaced with Lasallian spirituality. It is teaching the students with love. It rules out incompetence and sloth and instead embraces into the teaching methods – spirituality. Those intellectually impoverished in their spirituality are accepted as they are entrusted by Christ into their care. It is induction of zeal so that the learning becomes more contextual than pedantic. It is not a herding of students for vocational insufficiency. It is Liturgical Thanks giving – to see God in themselves and others. It is the need to work together and by association. It is team work – model team work involving trust accountability and the desire to solve conflicts. It is communal life extended to communion with others. It is love that wins love.

De La Salle founded the Institute as a Gospel-based group than a church based group. He worked and demonstrated that the Gospel is for everyone and everywhere. He quotes the gospel constantly in his Meditations. This is evident in the classrooms. The climate is conducive for the students to feel safe to both tell and listen to each others’ stories. In the bargain they are converted into a small faith community where they reflect at length the divine narrative and see its echo in their own personal narrative. This fosters faith and community, generating in turn to perform genuine, heartfelt authentic services. Instilling Gospel values can bring about a change of heart and values among the students and teaching faculty. In the old Lasallian spiritually handbook is the oft quoted refrain “Loving Jesus is being charged. “La Salle often refers to the teachers as teachable ones to the teachers are the long learners and seekers. Hence there is the necessity to grow instant fear and phobias. Like the Magi they experience death of old outmoded ideas and usher in its place time-based values. Thus teaching becomes transformed into a spiritual birth that demands to be renewed personally and institutionally.

The educational reforms thus planned out and carried out by him gives unmistakable evidence that providence had raised him upto be the law given of
primary and elementary teaching, as well as the creation of a new system of intellectual training, and combining it with old methods. It is the precision of the traditional method with the wide scope of the new one. By assimilating the best of the tradition he had become cognizant of the efficiency of the old system to meet the requirements of new conditions and created schools administrations of the teachers. He was thus activated by the highest and purest motives.

It is a catholic pedagogy of love through the lens of compassion and service with its intention on alleviating the hardships of the students that can inturn establish thriving and meaningful relationship in classrooms. In Christian Brothers University whose intentions it centres on holistic student development.

He also foresaw while the guiding spirit of such an Institute should remain the same its scope as a permanent organisation working for the welfare of the community should have the character of a social force answering to the needs of any age of any community.

He gave the Institute a distinctive characters that of a teaching body consecrated to the work of education with a scientific insight. Abolishing Latin paved the way for National Literature. He thus paved way for all those avenues of real knowledge that children delight themselves in.

Today the work of De La Salle is continued by Christian Brothers by dedicated laymen and women and associated religious priests who bring about a Lasallian distinctness to myriad educational institutions throughout the world. De La Salle who realized “not only is God so good as to have created us, but desires all of us to come to know the truth. He inspired how to teach and care for the destitutes, how to meet failures, treat frailty with compassion, affirm
and armour people below poverty line through love and education. It is fitting and justifiable to sum up the tremendous impact De La Salle has had by recalling the assessment of His Excellency, Pope Pius XII, during the occasion of the cannonisation.

“The saying of St. Bonavenume that the only is a true educator who can kindle in the heart of his pupil the vision of beauty, illumine it with the light of truth and form it to virtue is particularly appointed at the present time when education of the young is not only frequently at variance with the principles of true moral training but is often godless and irreligious, and so harmful in the extreme. For this reason holy Mother Church cherishes with a solicitous affection those whose duty it is to educate children, all the more so as the welfare and increase of the Christian commonwealth depend on them in no small measure. A man of outstanding holiness and remarkable genius, John Baptist De La Salle, once educated the young, and still through the Society founded by him, continues to do so according to excellent principles and methods. Moreover, to main teachers for their important mission he established colleges which catered especially for village schoolmasters. The origin of training colleges for teachers, now to be found everywhere, must truly be attributed to him. So great, besides, was the esteem of this eminent pioneer in education for the office of teacher that he would not permit the Brothers founded by him to become priests lest they should be turned aside from their principal function, and he was convinced that their vocation could lead them to authentic sanctity. In order, therefore, that teachers and student teachers might have a model whose example and virtues they could imitate, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, through their Postulator General, begged Us that on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the canonisation of St. John Baptist de La Salle by our predecessor of esteemed memory. Leo XIII, this saint should be proclaimed heavenly patron of all teachers of both sexes clerical or lay, whether actually engaged in teaching or preparing for the
profession. We, for our part, convinced that the education of the young is of the first importance, and desirous that those to whom this task is confided or who are preparing for this mission should have a further powerful incentive to fulfil their exalted vocation, in accordance with the principles of faith, most willingly accede to their wish. Wherefore, having consulted our Venerable Brother, Clemente Mirara. Cardinal of the holy Roman Church, Bishop of Vellerri and Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and having attentively considered the matter, with sure knowledge and after mature deliberation, in the fullness of our apostolic authority, by virtue of this brief and for all time, we constitute and proclaim St. John Baptist de La Salle. Confessor, principal patron before God of all teachers of youth and accord him all the Brugical honours and privileges going with that title, all things to the contrary notwithstanding. Given at Rome, from St. Peter’s, and sealed with the Fisherman’s rings, the 15th day of May, 1950 Feast of St. John Baptist de La Salle, in the twelfth year of our pontificate.

The modern global scenario is one of cut throat competition where the thrust area is consumerism, money multiplication and power politics. The Lasallian school is worth cherishing in this context. Its aim and vision is valve oriented. Its focus is on educating young souls, sensitizing their hearts towards evolving them to be God’s special children spelling out the catholic pedagogy of love through the lens of compassion.