Preface

The life and ministry of John Baptist De La Salle accomplishes a cardinal fact. Dedication to God and Self denial to one’s basic needs can contribute immensely to the education of Christian educational structures. The Exodus which is the essence of Christianity constitutes is the Liet Motif of De La Salle’s journey. The missionary zeal fuelled him to abandon his home, his social circle, his familiar territory to associate himself with service-minded Brothers towards launching the Lasallian schools of International repute.

Worth mentioning and remembering is the complete sacrifice made by De La Salle when he willingly resolved to give away his wealth to the poor. Again the apostolic did not die in-estate. In his testament signed four days before his death he made the necessary provision. He made provision for his needy nephews from the little he possessed as property. The rest he left behind to the Brothers in the person of Brother Barthelmy.

In normal course of events the material elements of such legacies are either dissipated or transferred on recommendations or quickly forgotten in the passage of time. But the saint in the making is remarkable for leaving behind a legacy whose value increased by leaps and bounds. If the Brothers are to be considered beneficiaries of the will they were in turn automatically his legacy for both the church and the world for generations to come.

It is customary on the death of a loved one for the survivors to treasure any available physical images that will help keep the memory of the deceased alive. What is astonishing is no painted portrait of De La Salle was made during his life time. Of course several attempts to fashion his portraits were made shortly after his death. But all failed to be photographic reproductions. All his biographers have been graceful enough to fill up the huge vacuum by giving descriptions that are almost identical.
“De La Salle stood a little above average height, well proportioned and well developed: his complexion was delicate at first, but became stronger with age; his nose too was large and well formed, but not aquiline; his blue eyes were lively; his hair which was thick and blond in his youth, turned grey and white in his later years, giving him a venerable appearance. His voice was strong and distinct. Externally he appeared cheerful, serene modest and pious. His skin tanned by his long travels, usually appeared slightly flushed. His manners were simple, gracious and inviting, without affectation. His hair chestnut and curly in his youth had with years become grey or white and made him look venerable. Finally grace enthroned so to speak, on his countenance, made him amiable and inspired piety.

One factor is crystal clear. No artist for that matter will find it difficult to capture in a portrait these unusual qualifies of De La Salle to serve as an adequate memorial of such a personality. To sum up, the hallmark of this exodus experience, it is fitting to quote De La Salle “Our Institute is God’s Creation” It is a testimony of Christ’s passion and his sacrifice.
ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
(1651 - 1719)
(Founder of the Mission)