

# GREAT THINGS ARE POSSIBLE



# 1.

## INTRODUCTION



The 1921 Nobel Laureate for Literature, Anatole France, stated that “to accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream, not only plan, but also believe.” Dreaming and believing become, without doubt, two fundamental elements to be able to create “great things.”

In the book of Genesis we find one of the most striking stories in the history of salvation: the story of Joseph, who knew how to unite dreams and faith. Joseph was Rachel’s first son, followed by Benjamin. They completed the dozen sons of the patriarchs who formed the twelve tribes of Israel. What can we learn from Joseph’s story? What enabled this great dreamer to do great things and remain faithful to God?

We, the Lasallians of today, inspired by the story of Joseph, must ask ourselves what the great “possible things” are, so that we can respond to the challenges posed by the world today.

# 2.

## A LOOK AT THE WORLD



**“The world will never be calm,  
this sea cannot be calmed.”\***  
**St. John Baptist de La Salle**

Joseph was frowned upon by his brothers because he was Jacob's favorite, they projected the envy and jealousy of their mothers onto him. For this reason, his brothers decided to kill him and get rid of him. But thanks to the compassion of Reuben, his older brother, instead of killing him, they sold him as a slave to some Ishmaelites who were travelling to Egypt. Then they took his tunic, stained it with goat's blood, and took it to his father, who mourned the death of his favorite son.<sup>1</sup>

The young Joseph experienced human wickedness, envy, jealousy, betrayal, and violence. But God was with him. The injustice that he experienced did not change his nature, his character, or his ability to dream. Today, we find people like him, committed and capable of doing great things in the midst of a world in which, in many cases, injustice prevails.

Joseph's ability to interpret dreams arises, no doubt, from the gift he received from God, but also from his sensitivity, his deep knowledge of humanity, and his ability to always keep his feet firmly on the ground. For all this, he has become an example of an idealism that balances the deep knowledge of human reality and the dream of achieving a better world.

Looking at our world, we find great, positive things in committed people and in social movements that fight for rights and equality, and that are consistently committed to the care of creation. Examples can be found in the speech known as “I Have a Dream” of Martin Luther King, Jr. or the constant commitment of Pope Francis to a more human, more just world. They, like Joseph, dream of a world that is more in accordance with the dream that God has for humanity.

Within the Lasallian community, we also find great things in our 300 years of existence: our commitment to achieving an inclusive school, our commitment to solidarity, our goal of putting the neediest at the center of our mission, and our commitment to the defense of children's rights. These are just some examples, to which you could add initiatives from your local environment, such as “beyond the border” projects.

And even with all this, the earth is still bleeding. Many things still need to be done. Pope Francis reminds us that “Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years ... these situations have caused sister Earth, along with all the abandoned of our world, to cry out, pleading that we find another way.”<sup>2</sup>

\* Spiritual Songs, 3, 8, 11.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 37:12-36.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* of the Holy Father Francis on care for the common home. (LS) No. 53.



Migration, nationalist movements, exacerbated individualism, and attacks on the dignity of the human being, all mentioned in the same encyclical, are signs that must be read through the eyes of faith. Reading those signs of the times will lead us to provide the pertinent answers that our society needs in order to transform itself. Our task is to keep our feet on the ground, to be in direct contact with those who suffer, to be in communion with those who want to change the world, and in dialogue with those who think differently. Only in this way will we have a deeper knowledge of reality and our answers be meaningful.

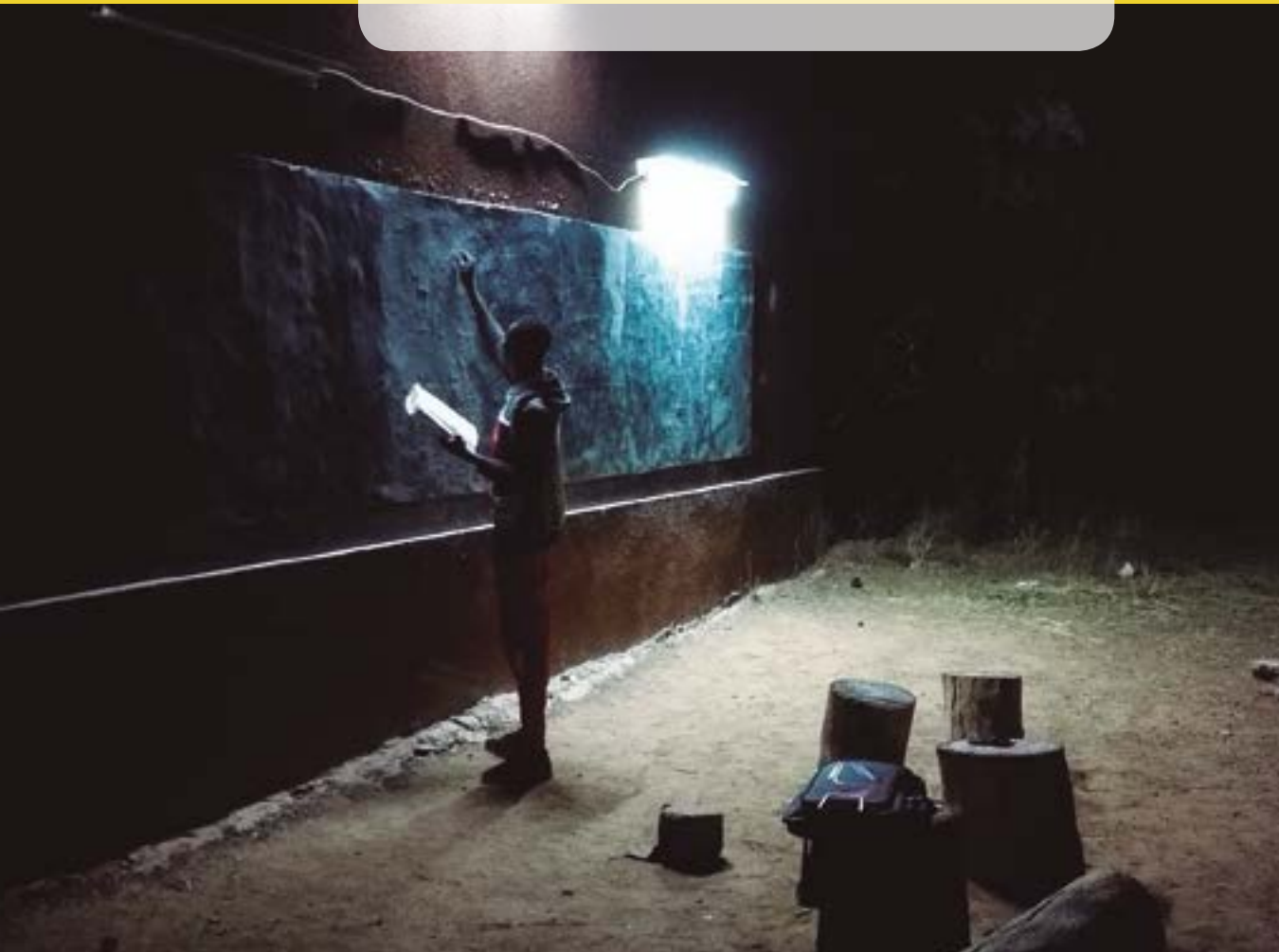
Reality confronts us because “we should be indifferent toward nothing in this world.”<sup>3</sup> God calls on each of us to contribute to its transformation. Because we believe that another world is possible, we must remember that “the Catholic school is particularly sensitive to the cry which arises from all around for a more just world, and strives to respond to it by contributing to the establishment of justice.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*, 91.

<sup>4</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, No. 58.

# 3.

## “ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE” FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE



**“It is not enough to feel love toward our neighbor in our heart, we have to witness it... in practice.”\***  
**St. John Baptist de La Salle**

# POSSIBLE WORLD

Joseph had a deep faith in God who gave him the gift of interpreting dreams. After the interpretation of the dreams of the cupbearer, the baker and the pharaoh, the latter appointed him Governor of Egypt.<sup>5</sup> Joseph ruled wisely over all the land of Egypt. For example, in anticipation of the long period of deprivation that would ravage Egypt according to the Pharaoh's dream, he stored grain in abundance. In addition to governing wisely, he also governed fairly. He was respectful of the beliefs of Egypt and its ethical codes. At the same time, he remained faithful to God, even when he was questioned, tempted, and challenged. He did not need to step over anyone to exercise his authority.

Joseph's wisdom and justice can be reference points for the political, social, economic, and cultural structures created to build new types of relationships toward the emergence of a fairer world. For example, the World Social Forum, an annual event that used the theme *Another World is Possible* for its fifth round, opens us up to the hope which, in our case, is based on faith that another world is possible. Do we believe it? Do we want it? How can we make it happen?

Below, we suggest some ways:

- ▶ Collaborating with intellectuals and media who support the efforts of believing communities who defend the values of the Kingdom. This will require us to build bridges leading to places of dialogue and encounter.
- ▶ Reinforcing international organizations and making them more effective. This will help to harness the energies invested in so many initiatives.
- ▶ Seeing that the lessons of the past have a significant influence on the construction of the future. There is so much we can learn from history!
- ▶ Having faith in one's own humanity. This faith will overcome the obstacles posed by those who try to subdue it.
- ▶ Moving from a culture of imposition to one of dialogue and peace. This will demonstrate that the pen is mightier than the sword.

\* *Duties of the Christian* I, 201, 3, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 41: 37-46.

We suggest that you expand this list with your own contributions.

Everything said above may seem utopian; however, we cannot forget that “for God nothing is impossible.”<sup>6</sup> Maybe it’s our focus that is a bit lost. We Lasallians must develop the focus of faith, which is part of our spiritual heritage.

Faith, together with zeal, identifies us. Without faith, we run the risk of fatigue, loss of meaning, and weakening of our commitment to change. Alternatively, supported by faith, we make room for God to come and change us.<sup>7</sup> When we change, the world changes, because faith is witnessed with love, especially toward the most needy. We must always remember that the “center of faith is in the periphery.”<sup>8</sup>

A very good suggestion would be a shared re-reading of the book of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in which he states: “man tends by natural inertia to the visible... He has to make a change to realize how blind he is in trusting only what his eyes can see.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Mark 9:23 / Matthew 19:26.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, Santa Marta, March 16, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Faith on the Edge: Religion and Marginalized Existence*. Harper & Row, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*. Ignatius Press, 2004.



# LASALLIANS

# 4.

## GREAT THINGS BEGIN WITH SIMPLE THINGS



**“The Gospel, likewise, tells us that the reward of heaven will be granted to fidelity in doing things that appear small in themselves...”.\*  
St. John Baptist de La Salle**

From his youth, Joseph understood the importance of being responsible in the tasks that his father gave him, no matter how small they were. He worked with joy and worked hard to make everything come about in the best possible way. Later, when he was bought by Potiphar, Joseph decided to be loyal to him in everything. This attitude guaranteed a closeness between them and, as a consequence, Joseph was promoted to a noble job in his master's house.

It may seem like a paradox, but it is a great truth. All those who have done great things have started on their own, taking steps, small steps. Entrepreneur John W. Marriott often said: “It's the little things that make great things possible.”<sup>10</sup>

If each of us contributes something to make others happy, however small, the world will improve. Give without expecting anything in return, spread optimism and joy, listen actively, maintain a cooperative attitude, do not judge, put yourself in others' shoes... Everything starts with something simple that we are capable of doing, because he who is faithful in small things is also faithful in great ones.<sup>11</sup> Simplicity, the attitude of service, and humility are indispensable because, as Pope Francis affirms: “God is able to do great things through the humble because humility is like a void that leaves room for God.”<sup>12</sup> As the priest and activist Primo Mazzolari said during troubled times in Europe:

**“The river starts with the first drop of water,  
love with the first look,  
the night with the first star,  
spring with the first flower.”<sup>13</sup>**

Lasallians can do little things at home, in their families, in their educational works, in their cities, in their faith communities. Do all these things together with others, with whom you share the same ideals and dreams. Working together, they manage to do great things. This is how Eduardo Galeano expressed it: “Many little people, in many little places, doing little things, can change the world.”<sup>14</sup>

\* *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, 13, 16, 2, (Lasallian Publications, p. 50).

<sup>10</sup> John Willard Marriott 1900-1985. Utah (USA). Marriott was the entrepreneur and founder of Marriott hotel companies.

<sup>11</sup> Luke 16:10.

<sup>12</sup> In the Assumption of the Virgin, August 15, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Italian priest who fought against fascism and communism. Cremona, 1890 – Bozzollo, 1959.

<sup>14</sup> *The Book of Embraces*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1992.

# 5.

## OUR OPPORTUNITY



**“Have you sometimes reflected on the commitment you have made...?”\***  
**St. John Baptist de La Salle**

Looking at the life of Joseph as a whole, even adverse events were seen as opportunities granted to him by God by which he took advantage for the salvation of his family. The precursor to his “great opportunity” was interpreting the dreams of his companions while experiencing misfortune in prison. Always guided by God, he demonstrated the astuteness with which he saw and interpreted the future.

The Third International Assembly of the Lasallian Educational Mission (AIMEL) to be held in 2020 will be a great opportunity for today’s Lasallians. Inspired by the theme *Identity, Vitality and Transformation*, we will look at our current reality and interpret the signs that can help us respond to the challenges of the Lasallian educational mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will soon be called upon to perform various tasks of great importance.

The first of these tasks will be *to find ourselves*. When we are together, we will have the opportunity to listen to each other and, consequently, to get to know each other better. We will come from remote and geographically diverse places. However, together we must answer the questions: Who are we? Where do we come from?

Next, we must *celebrate*. After Joseph “revealed” himself to his brothers, the celebration of the reunion began. The brothers caught up with each other. Joseph had many questions about his father, his brother Benja-

min, and the rest of the family. His joy overflowed. His heart was filled with gratitude as he understood how God had guided him to become the savior of his family, of his people. In the same way, we will have the opportunity to “catch up with each other.” And as we see the wonders the Lord has done through us, we will sing “the Lord has been good to us.”<sup>15</sup>

Motivated by the invitation to be God’s collaborators, together we are called to carry out the third task: *to identify the challenges* we face in order to continue our mission. This task will require a great deal of discernment, from the viewpoint of faith to the signs of the times. The fruit of our discernment will be the answer to the question: What should we do?

The next step will be to prepare ourselves for action, that is, *to offer answers* to the questions: Who are we? To whom are we sent?

As Lasallians, we are all called to participate in the accomplishment of these tasks; no one should feel excluded, even if they are not part of the groups convened for the Regional assemblies or for the group gathered in Rome for AIMEL 2020. The preparatory phase and, above all, the phase that will follow the Assembly, will give everyone the opportunity to “be a part” and to “do their part.” Like Joseph, let us take advantage of the opportunity that God gives us to enable people to have life and live it in abundance, like the seed that falls on fertile soil and bears fruit.

\* Meditations for Feast Days 137.3.2.

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 125:3.



With regard to the Lasallian family, in addition to the celebration of the Third AIMEL, we have two more important meetings that will take place in November 2020. One is the International Symposium of Young Lasallians and the other is the International Assembly of Young Brothers. Both meetings will bring together representatives from around the world to share experiences, reflections, challenges, opportunities, and life. These meetings will also be opportunities to prepare for both the AIMEL and the 46th General Chapter. Undoubtedly, your vision and your contribution will enrich Lasallian vitality and commitment for the coming years.



# OPPORTUNITIES

# 6.

## OUR SECRET



**“Entreat the God of hearts to keep your heart and those of your Brothers one in the heart of Jesus.”\***  
**St. John Baptist de La Salle**

Joseph’s secret was to remain always united with his family in his heart, without thirst for revenge, and to forgive his brothers. He acted with astuteness, with foresight, organizing the “learning process” for his brothers with educational and creative finesse. He thus obtained the fruit of the family reunion, the definitive embrace.

We do not act alone; we walk “together and by association.” Like Brother Álvaro Rodríguez, we think that solidarity is our wealth, our treasure, and our secret.

Within the Lasallian family and the Lasallian educational network, we are key players in the theology of communion, we are committed to inclusion, dialogue, respect, and to develop a culture of encounter,<sup>16</sup> or, as Pope Francis said “a culture of resurrection” (Papal Audience of May 16, 2019). There are no secrets to our educational work, only the strength of unity, of building solidarity together with others, of cooperating with everyone. In words reaffirmed by Mother Teresa of Calcutta, it is about: “I do what you cannot do, and you do what I cannot do. Together we can do great things.”

Lasallians do not close their doors to dreaming and believing. We want to think big, to get rid of old dreams and give God the opportunity to shape His dream for humanity through us. We expect great things from God and undertake great things for Him. We do it “together and by association,” without fear of sharing our faith and our dreams.

\* Meditations for Sundays 39.3.2.

<sup>16</sup> *Evangelii gaudium* 220.

# 7.

## OUR TRUST



**“The Resurrection of Jesus Christ also ought to procure for you the benefit of making you rise spiritually...”\***  
**St. John Baptist de La Salle**

Joseph’s family went to Egypt due to hunger and fleeing from certain death. Thanks to Joseph’s forgiveness and his trust in God, the family was able to find new life and resolutely follow God’s plans for them. The psalmist’s expression reflects the strength of trust in God, which led the people of Israel to their journey of salvation: “Many trust in their chariots and horses, but we trust in the Lord of hosts.”<sup>17</sup>

Christians, along with other men and women of goodwill:

- ▶ Are reluctant to accept that life is too short; on the contrary, we believe that God leads us to the fullness of life, of justice, of peace. This grounds our desire to do great things.
- ▶ Rebel against the belief that the vast majority of sufferers are forgotten forever.
- ▶ Trust in a life where there will no longer be poverty or pain, nobody will be sad, nobody will have to cry.
- ▶ Live with hope, knowing that nothing we have lived for and built with love will be lost.
- ▶ Want to collaborate in building the Kingdom of God so that love, truth, and prosperity can become part of our world.

While respecting other religious traditions with which we share a path to God, we believe in the Risen Christ who invites us to follow Him and to continue His work. Perhaps this is the greatest thing we must achieve to strengthen “the awareness that we are one human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, and there is even less room for the globalization of indifference.”<sup>18</sup>

We need creative minorities to share the strength and beauty of the Gospel as a lifelong plan in which following Jesus is central. In short, to repeat the experience of Peter when the Risen Jesus speaks his final words: “Follow me!”<sup>19</sup>

\* Meditations for Sundays 29.3.1.

<sup>17</sup> Psalm 20:7.

<sup>18</sup> Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis on care for the common home, 52.

<sup>19</sup> John 21:22.

# 8.

## CONCLUSION



**“Example makes a much greater impression on the mind and the heart than words, especially for children . . . .”\***  
**St. John Baptist de La Salle**

Two years ago, two Brothers of the General Council visited De Marillac Academy in the heart of San Francisco in the United States. This is an inter-congregational school that educates the children of immigrants. It is the custom of the school to choose two students as guides for visitors. At one point during the tour, one of the Brothers asked his guide, a 12-year-old boy of Mexican origin: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” The boy answered: “A film director.” The Brother, somewhat surprised by the answer, said to him: “And what does your dad say about that?” To which the child answered without hesitation: “My dad tells me never to stop fighting for my dreams.” Brave answer. Brave lesson.

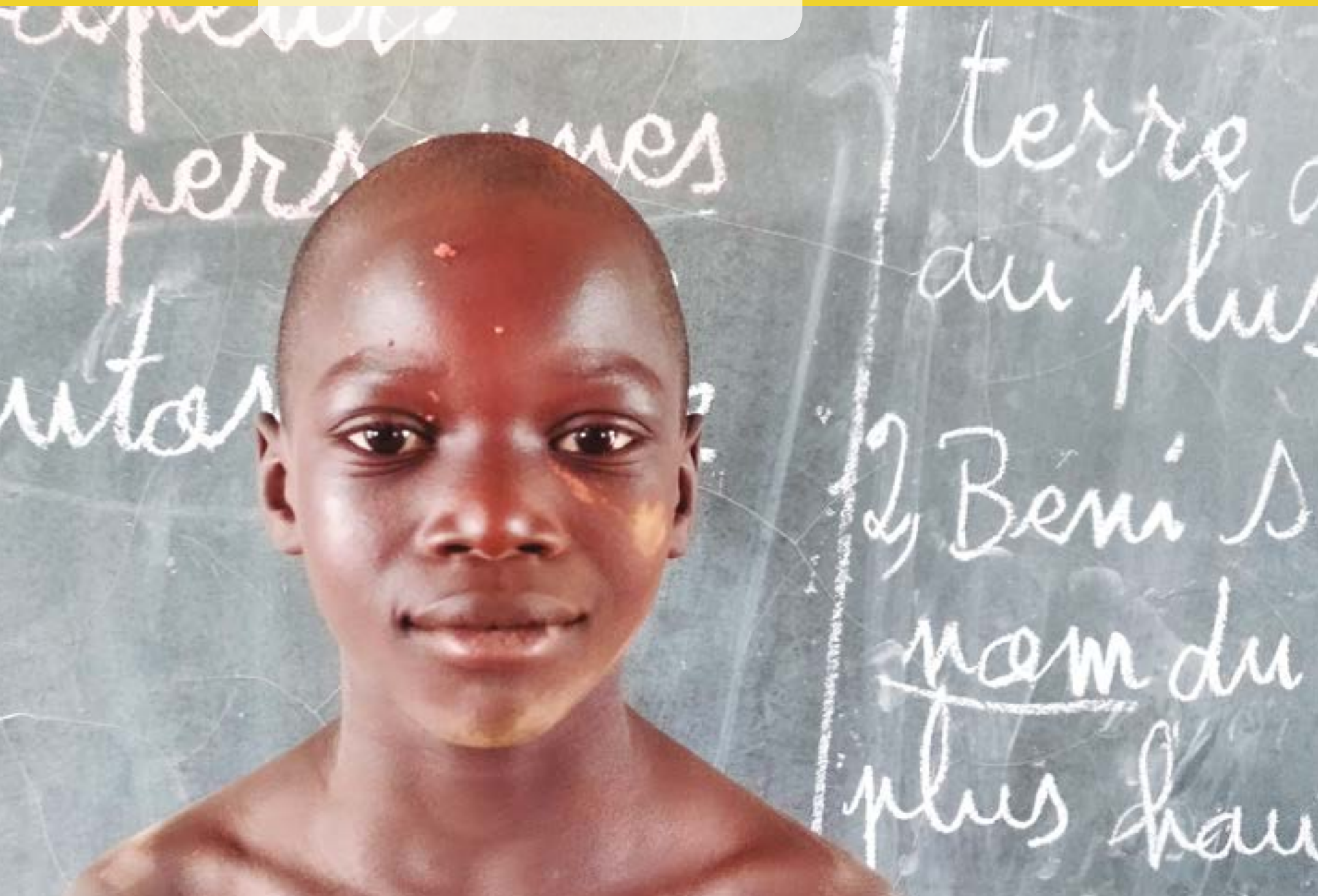
The point is that “all the dreams that come from the heart have wings.”<sup>20</sup> It means flying, and flying high, so that you can land and move from the world of ideas to the world of attainment. This changes us significantly and contributes to changing our world, because great things are possible, if we want them.

\* Meditations for the Time of Retreat, 202.3.2.

<sup>20</sup> *The Kingdom of Fantasy*. Geronimo Stilton. Ed. Planet. 2005.

# 9.

## FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION



1. Reality confronts us all because “we should not be indifferent to anything in this world.” God calls each one of us to contribute to its transformation. *To what extent am I aware of this call? In what concrete ways can I contribute to this change?*
2. Joseph used his gifts for the realization of God’s plan. *What gifts can I use for the transformation of our world?*
3. We want to dream big, to let go of old dreams and, by doing so, collaborate in fulfilling God’s dream for humanity. *What are my dreams? How can I make them come true?*
4. We need Lasallians to spread the good news. To do this, our personal experience of God is vital. *What place does God occupy in our life? How do we nurture our relationship with Him? How can we increase our trust in God?*



## TO SHARE IN A GROUP

1. We use the icon of Joseph. The part of his story that we have recalled shows us that trust in God makes it possible to achieve “great things.” *What other lessons do we learn from Joseph’s story?*
2. The theme of the Fifth World Social Forum, *Another World is Possible*, opens us up to the hope that, in our case, is based on faith. As Lasallians we believe that another world is possible and we ask ourselves: *How do we achieve it? What small and simple things can we do in our educational community that can turn into great things for the benefit of our immediate environment?*
3. During the year 2020, Lasallians are called to celebrate the Third International Assembly of the Lasallian Educational Mission (AIMEL). *How are we going to contribute to the enrichment of this Assembly? In what way could we bring to life the proposals and actions that the Assembly invites us to undertake?*
4. For us, solidarity as brothers and sisters is a strength. “Together and by association” we can achieve much more. *How can we strengthen, intensify, improve our relationships? How can we promote a sense of community in our educational work and in our life community?*

**LIVE JESUS IN OUR HEARTS...  
FOREVER!**



The General Council wishes to express its gratitude for the significant contribution of the International Council for Lasallian Association and the Educational Mission (CIAMEL) to this Lasallian Reflection.

We would like to receive your reflections and contributions, which can be sent by email to: [comunicazione@lasalle.org](mailto:comunicazione@lasalle.org)



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## LASALLIAN REFLECTION

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2. "One Call, Many Voices"

2017 - 2018

3. "Lasallians Without Limits"

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### NEXT ISSUE

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6. "Our Vision. Our Passion.  
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