

The Buttimer Institute: “A Formation Program of the Heart”

Sitting on the spacious deck of the Aquinas dormitory lounge at Saint Mary's College on a balmy July evening, the thirty participants at this summer's Buttimer 1 session introduced themselves to one another and began to tell their personal stories. Who were they? What brought them to Buttimer? What did they hope to gain from their experience? One high school counselor shared his feelings: In order to guide young mens' lives in the fullest Lasallian tradition, he must have a strong, fundamental understanding of the person of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, his teachings and philosophies. Another, a campus minister at a Lasallian school, hoped to enrich her school's staff formation and spirituality programs with the knowledge gained at Buttimer. Not only Partners were there to learn, but Brothers as well. One Brother remarked that he finds himself “reinvigorated by the experiences of other teachers ‘in the trenches’ - especially by our lay Partners.” Another participant, a former Brother, hoped to be able to better articulate to his faculty and students the qualities which distinguish a Lasallian school. These stories and more formed the basis on which a singular community would be formed during the three weeks of the summer 1999 program, over the three years of the Institute cycle, and beyond, in the lives and work of the participants.

The Buttimer Institute, named for Brother Charles Henry Buttimer, first American Superior General of the Christian Brothers, was developed in 1986 as a formation program for Brothers. However, in recent years, with an increased emphasis on Lasallian

Lasallian works. By looking back at De La Salle's world, Brothers Jeff Calligan and Gerard Rummery enable participants to discover the contemporary relevance of De La Salle's educational philosophy in today's classrooms.



Partnership, the program has attracted more and more Partners. The comprehensive education provided at Buttimer helps to ensure that those who work in Lasallian schools and apostolates gain a deeper understanding of the Lasallian tradition.

The Buttimer Institute is completed in a three-summer cycle. Year One (Buttimer 1) introduces participants to the life and spirituality of De La Salle through study and discussion of the works of various biographers and the Founder's own writings. Lectures and multimedia presentations by Lasallian scholars Brothers Luke Salm and Augustine Loes transport Buttimer participants back to seventeenth-century France and introduce them to a wealthy and influential young priest, called by God to leave his comfortable life and respond, often in the face of substantial resistance, to a great need to provide educational opportunities for the children of the poor and the powerless.

Year Two (Buttimer 2) examines the educational vision of De La Salle and its application to current

Year Three (Buttimer 3) examines the religious vision of De La Salle. Through study of the Founder's *Meditations* and *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, Brothers Donald Mouton and Bill Mann provide participants with new insight into the spirituality of De La Salle.

For both Brothers and Partners, the Buttimer Institute offers a comprehensive look at John Baptist de La Salle. Since the 1960s, much to the credit of the French Christian Brothers, a vast amount of in-depth, historical research has been conducted about De La Salle's life and work. Until fairly recently, many Brothers in formation had little access to such detailed information about the Founder. Much of the valuable information gathered over the past thirty years is new to many Brothers. Along with De La Salle's own writings, much commentary on his works is now available. Brothers Luke Salm, Augustine Loes, and other members of Lasallian Publications have translated recent research into English from the original French, making a large and comprehensive