

**Lasallian Educator's Meditation on Saint (Brother) Mutien-Marie Wiaux
January 30**

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Louis-Joseph Wiaux (Brother Mutien-Marie) grew up in a simple, working-class and devout Catholic home in Belgium. His father was a good-humored blacksmith while his mother, in addition to her household chores, ran a haberdashery and an inn in the home. Louis had five siblings, and the entire family gathered at the end of each day for recitation of the rosary. Louis-Joseph was a bright student in primary school, and he emerged as a leader among the children of Mellet. At times, when he would lead his gang of friends to school, he would bar mischievous schoolmates from crossing a small foot bridge until they pledged to improve their behavior. He also persuaded classmates to accompany him to the local church to say the rosary or make the Way of the Cross together.

Have you, like Louis-Joseph Wiaux, used your faith, your upbringing, your good character, your leadership skills to influence your peers? Can they observe from your actions that you are a person of faith? What a joy it would be for you to instill, by your example, an ardent desire in your colleagues to mature in a faith-filled life of following Christ! Remember well the words of St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach [the Gospel] often, but seldom use words."

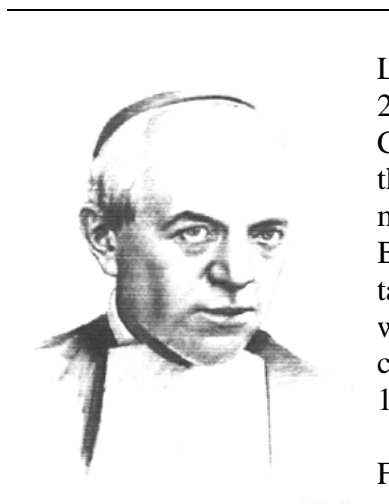
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With the completion of his primary education, Louis-Joseph's father took him to his forge to teach him the blacksmith's trade, but Louis-Joseph secretly longed for a different life. He was attracted to the life of the Christian Brothers who had recently opened a school in a neighboring town. With the help of his pastor, he was able to persuade his parents to allow him to enter the Brothers' Novitiate in Namur. Upon receiving the Brothers' habit, he was given the religious name Mutien-Marie. While a novice, he assiduously learned and followed the Rule of the Brothers. After less than a year was assigned to teach the primary class at Chimay and the following year the second level at Brussels under the watchful eyes of mentor Brothers even though he was still a teenager with little more than an elementary formal education. His third assignment was to the St. Berthuin boarding school at Malone, where, as an assistant teacher and prefect, he experienced difficulties in teaching a class of 4th-5th graders. After a year of struggles and failures, he was taken under wing by a skilled senior teacher, Brother Maixentis and was assigned to the humanities section of the school where he became an able teacher.

Remember your initial years as a student teacher and beginning teacher. How has your early experiences formed you into a better instructor? Have you had the fortune to experience master and mentor teachers who have helped you move from problems and struggles in the classroom to being an accomplished teacher? If so, thank God for their care and guidance. Have you offered to mentor new or struggling teachers? Do you consider teaching a ministry to which God calls you as he did Brother Mutien-Marie? Know that if you are doing God's work in instructing youth, He will not fail to provide you with the help you need to support you in your work

At the suggestion of Brother Maixentis, Brother Mutien-Marie learned to play the harmonium (a simple, foot pumped organ) so that he could teach this instrument to beginning students. He soon became a proficient teacher of this instrument. Later he was asked to learn and then teach the flute, double bass, tuba and piano. Brother Mutien was then again asked to learn and teach classical drawing. Although he was never an accomplished musician or artist, his gentleness, patience, organization and encouragement made him a skillful teacher of music and art. Brother Mutien's desire to teach catechism found an outlet in the local parish school where he taught for 15 years in addition to his classes and prefecting duties (which included hall, lavatory and cafeteria supervision) at St. Berthuin. He early acquired the nick-name "Brother Harmonium" due to his daily practice with and years of teaching the instrument. Later he was known as the "Brother who is always praying" yet managed his teaching and supervision duties unflinchingly. For 57 years he taught, prefecting, prayed and lived in community at St. Berthuin. He was never a superior or administrator; he obediently accepted his assignments from others. As a follower of St. John Baptist de La Salle, he possessed strong faith and zeal and was keenly aware of the presence of God throughout his life. Even before this death, his apparent sanctity was known among the students and inhabitants of Malone. After his death this knowledge turned to devotion and spread.

Do you faithfully accept teaching and supervision assignments given to you even the onerous hall and cafeteria duties and substitutions? Do you see them as opportunities to do your Father's will? Do you support and encourage the teaching of the arts in your school? Do you recognize how the humanities can make your students more humane and a way of adding to the beauty of this world? Are you committed to work tirelessly at your ministry year after year as Brother Mutien did? Is an awareness of the presence of God a daily, hourly practice you maintain? Realize from this saint's example that true sanctity and satisfaction can be found in a faith-filled, simple, committed life dedicated to leading those under your care to God.



Louis-Joseph Wiaux was born in Mellet, Belgium March 20, 1841. He entered the novitiate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at Namur on April 7, 1856 and was given the name Mutien-Marie when he received the habit three months later. He took perpetual vows in 1869 at St. Berthuin boarding school in Malone, Belgium, where he taught for 57 years until his death on January 30, 1917. He was beatified by Pope Paul VI on October 30, 1977 and was canonized a saint by Pope John Paul II on December 10, 1989. His feast day is January 30.

For a highly readable biography of Saint Mutien-Marie pick up

Salm, Brother Luke. *Brother Mutien-Marie Wiaux, FSC*. Romeoville: Christian Brothers Publications, 1989.